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BUILDING RACIAL EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

An Analysis on Pan-Asian Perspectives, Curriculum, and Community Accountability



ACENet
Asian Canadian Educator's Network

CCNC-SJ

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As immigrant settlers and members of diasporic communities, we recognize that we live on Indigenous lands and benefit from systems shaped by colonialism and anti-Black racism. This work takes place on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

We honour Indigenous sovereignty, Black liberation, and ongoing efforts toward truth, reconciliation, and justice. We also acknowledge Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people, and commit to building relationships grounded in responsibility and solidarity.

Created in partnership with
Asian Canadian Educators Network (ACENet)
Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC-SJ)

With support from
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Sara Leung and Jennifer Vong

This report examines the progress of anti-racism policies and education in Canada, with a particular focus on Ontario, anti-Asian racism, and Pan-Asian perspectives in social studies education. Developed by **Asian Canadian Educators Network (ACENet)** and **Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ)**, with the support of Social Studies Educators Network of Canada (SSENC) and University of Toronto Social Psychology students, this initiative responds to the ongoing need for schools to move beyond multiculturalism and diversity to adequately address systemic racism through curriculum, pedagogy, policy, and community engagement.

Through conversations with teachers, educators, advocates, and grassroots organizers, this report highlights the importance of community knowledge, truth and reconciliation, anti-Black racism education, Asian Canadian histories, religious inclusion, gender equity, and trans and 2SLGBTQI+ rights. It also identifies ongoing challenges, including uneven implementation, curriculum gaps, resistance to anti-racism work, and the need for stronger accountability.

Aligned with Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028, this report supports Pan-Asian educators, teachers, and community partners in building solidarity, care, and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy toward more inclusive and equitable schools.



Photo: Ryan Rivera, courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ.

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01 INTRODUCTION

Anti-racism education in Canada is rooted in decades of community advocacy, public pressure, and the lived experiences of Indigenous, Black, Asian, Muslim, and other racialized communities. For Asian communities in Canada, this history is connected to long-standing community organizing, resistance to exclusion and discrimination, and calls for schools, governments, and institutions to move beyond multiculturalism and address the roots of systemic racism.

This history begins with communities challenging racism in education itself. Indigenous communities resisted colonial education systems, including residential schools, that separated children from their families, languages, lands, and cultures. Black communities challenged segregated schooling in Ontario and Nova Scotia, while Chinese communities resisted school segregation in Victoria, British Columbia, where students and families organized against separate schooling in 1922. South Asian communities advocated for equitable access to education and challenged racial discrimination that accompanied exclusionary immigration policies, while Japanese Canadian families rebuilt educational opportunities following wartime incarceration and dispossession.

More recently, diverse Asian communities have been organizing together in new ways to address racism affecting students, families, and educators. This growing intergroup and intercultural organizing broadens our understanding of solidarity by connecting communities through shared struggles, histories, and hopes for justice. Together, these histories show that schools have reflected colonialism, exclusion, and racial inequity, while also becoming important sites of resistance, organizing, and community-led change.

Canada’s official multiculturalism policy in 1971, followed by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, marked an important shift by recognizing cultural

diversity, equality, and inclusion. However, multiculturalism alone did not fully address systemic racism in schools. In 1993, Ontario released Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation. This was a major policy moment because it asked school boards to move beyond multicultural celebrations and examine how racism operated through school policies, curriculum, staffing, discipline, and decision-making.

In the years that followed, major social movements and moments of national reckoning further shaped anti-racism education. Indigenous, Black, Asian, Muslim, and other racialized and marginalized communities continued to organize through movements and advocacy connected to Idle No More, Black Lives Matter, rising anti-Asian hate during COVID-19, and national efforts to address Islamophobia and hate-motivated violence. These movements brought greater attention to Indigenous and Black erasure, policing in schools, racial violence, exclusion, and the limits of multicultural policy. They also showed how systemic racism continues to affect students, families, educators, and school communities, while calling for stronger accountability, resources, and action.

In response, anti-racism education became more formalized through Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, the federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate, Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, and the Anti-Racism Act, 2017. These policies officially recognized systemic racism, including anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, antisemitism, and racism experienced by other racialized communities.

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These movements also brought greater recognition of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP), developed by Black scholar Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, who framed it as a framework that supports students academically, culturally, and socially by recognizing their identities, knowledge, and lived experiences as strengths. In Canadian schools, CRRP helps educators teach the realities of colonialism, systemic racism, exclusion, and belonging while also affirming the histories, contributions, and diverse ways of knowing. Through this balanced approach, students develop a more complete understanding of Canada's past and present while seeing themselves and their communities reflected with dignity, complexity, and possibility.

At the same time, anti-racism and anti-oppression education has faced growing resistance. Anti-racism, gender equity, and 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion efforts have been challenged by misinformation, political shifts, school board changes, anti-trans protests, anti-immigrant sentiment, and broader backlash against equity work. These tensions have created real consequences for students, families, educators, and trustees, including fear, public backlash, professional discipline, and the weakening of community and school-based equity work.

For schools, this shows that curriculum must move beyond colonial and multicultural models of education. It must include the histories, contributions, and experiences of communities that have been excluded or misrepresented, while supporting a new generation of students to build more equitable, just, and sustainable systems across Canada. Schools also need safer spaces where students, educators, families, and communities can learn from one another, work across differences, build relationships, and strengthen education through CRRP.

This report examines the impact of anti-racism strategies in Canada and Ontario from 2025 to 2026, with a particular focus on anti-Asian racism and Pan-Asian perspectives in social studies education. It explores how schools can better include the histories, lived experiences, and community knowledge of Asian communities in Canada while identifying the progress made, the barriers that remain, and the steps needed to advance accountable, community-informed, culturally relevant, and responsive anti-racism education.

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND ONGOING CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

02 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND ONGOING CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

Previous research has examined racial inequity in Grades 7–12 by interviewing Asian students and educators about their experiences in Canadian schools (Eizadirad, Reid, & Reid, 2025). This report builds on that work by examining how racial equity is reflected in Ontario's Grade 2 and Grade 6 social studies curricula.

Social studies is important because it shapes how students understand identity, community, history, belonging, power, and social responsibility. While social studies classrooms can create opportunities for conversations about race, these conversations are shaped by both curriculum content and teacher attitudes (Epstein, 2010).

To evaluate how equity-related priorities appear in Ontario's education system, we analyzed publicly available curriculum documents from the Ontario Ministry of Education and collected survey feedback, with a focus on teachers and educators in Ontario. Educators from British Columbia, Vancouver, Alberta, and Edmonton also shared perspectives that provided broader context on racial equity, anti-racism education, and curriculum gaps in other provinces.

Using content analysis, we examined whether the Grade 2 and Grade 6 social studies curricula meaningfully reflect CRRP-aligned themes such as representation, lived experience, community knowledge, identity, belonging, equity-focused systems, and accountability. Grade 2 was selected because it introduces early ideas about identity, community, and belonging, while Grade 6 allows for more complex discussions of history, systems, power, and global perspectives.

This research also responds to the ongoing need for stronger racial equity policy in education. Community and school board resources, including

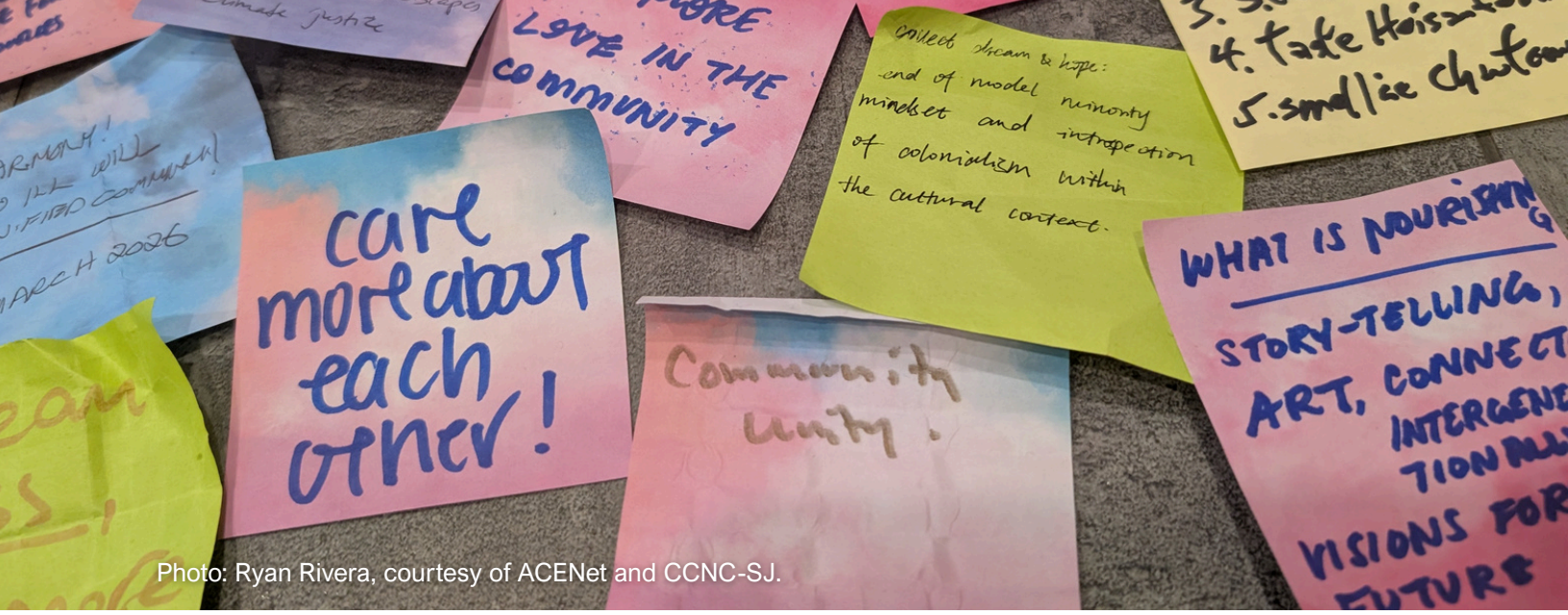


Photo: Ryan Rivera, courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ.

Facilitating Critical Conversations (2024), Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators (2023), and the Dismantling Anti-Asian Racism report (2023), show that meaningful racial equity requires clear implementation, educator training, community consultation, safe reporting systems, curriculum change, and accountability.

Research must be ongoing because racism is not fixed. It changes with society, politics, migration, media, technology, and the lived experiences of students and communities. As AI, digital tools, and new technologies become more common in classrooms, administration, and communication systems, they can reproduce bias, exclusion, and unequal access if they are not used critically. Anti-racism education must continue to evolve in collaboration with digital literacy and community engagement.

Ongoing research is needed to understand how policies, curriculum, school board plans, and classroom practices affect students, educators, and communities in real time. This includes examining whether schools meaningfully address racial inequity, anti-Asian racism, and Pan-Asian perspectives, while making culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, anti-racism resources, and community-informed supports more accessible, especially in rural communities.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM AND RACIAL INEQUITY IN CANADIAN EDUCATION

03 ANTI-ASIAN RACISM AND RACIAL INEQUITY IN CANADIAN EDUCATION

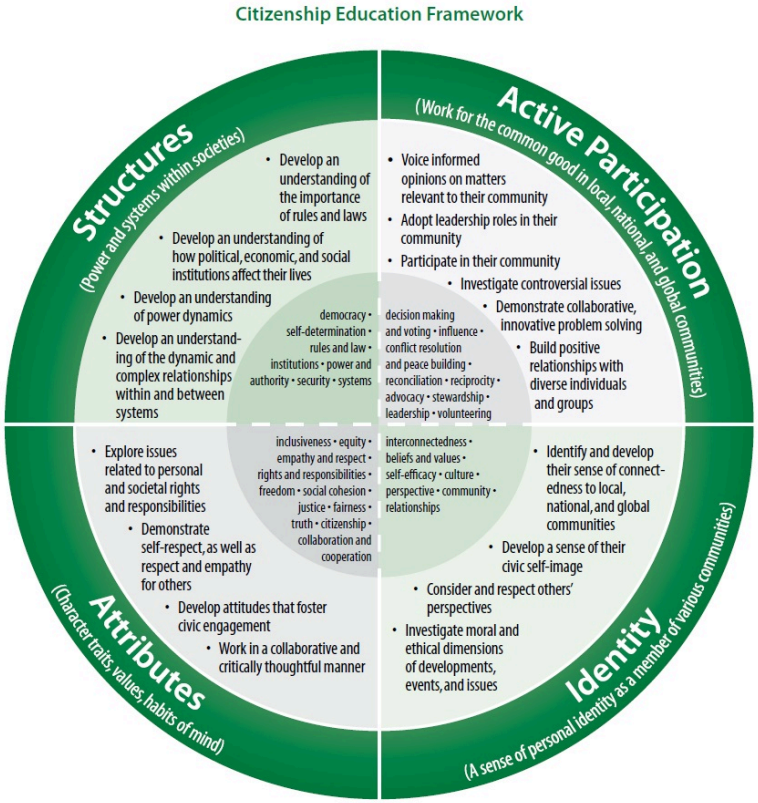
Anti-Asian racism has often been left out of mainstream conversations about racism in Canada, even though it is deeply rooted in Canadian history, law, institutions, and public policy. In this report, anti-Asian racism refers to racism affecting Asian diasporas in Canada, including communities with roots in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia, a region often referred to as the Middle East.

Asian communities are often treated as one single group, but this view is limited and harmful. Asian diasporas include many different histories, cultures, languages, religions, migration experiences, and identities. Experiences of racism are also shaped by class, gender, immigration status, refugee experiences, colonial histories, geopolitical conflict, and relationships to Indigenous peoples and lands in Canada.

This matters because treating Asian communities as a monolith makes it harder to name the specific harms different groups face and to develop adequate public resources. It can also make it harder for Asian communities to work through internal differences in privilege, history, language, religion, migration, and political experience. A Pan-Asian approach to anti-racism must recognize these differences while also building solidarity across shared experiences of exclusion, racialization, displacement, and hate.

Although Canada has made efforts through initiatives such as the multiculturalism era and other racial equity policies, Asian communities in Canada continue to experience racism, stereotypes, exclusion, stigma, and unequal treatment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian racism became more visible as Asian communities were blamed, targeted, and treated as foreign. These events included rising Islamophobia, violence against East Asian communities, and anti-immigrant racism targeting South Asian communities. Together, they exposed how racism continues to shape ideas of belonging in Canada.

Canada's history of colonialism and immigration matters in education because schools shape how students understand race, identity, history, and belonging. When Asian Canadian and Pan-Asian histories are absent or simplified in the curriculum, students receive an incomplete understanding of Canada and current events. This can deepen fear, bias, and misunderstanding while further isolating Asian communities. In schools, Asian students and educators feel targeted, misrepresented, or unsupported, especially in rural parts of Canada where Asian histories and experiences are poorly reflected.



Addressing anti-Asian racism in education requires more than relying on multiculturalism as a framework for celebrating diversity. It requires a curriculum that teaches how colonialism, imperialism, migration, labour, war, exclusion, and community organizing have shaped Asian diasporic communities in Canada. It also requires safer school environments, stronger representation in leadership, meaningful community partnerships, and the inclusion of Asian Canadian and Pan-Asian perspectives in social studies education.

RESPONDING TO RACIAL INEQUITY: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

04 RESPONDING TO RACIAL INEQUITY: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy provides an important framework for addressing racial inequity and strengthening social studies teaching and learning. Building on Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, CRRP emphasizes academic success, cultural identity, and critical consciousness as essential to effective teaching. Scholars such as Geneva Gay (2000, 2018), Django Paris and H. Samy Alim (2017), and Gholdy Muhammad (2020) have expanded this work by centring students' cultural knowledge, lived experiences, linguistic identities, criticality, and joy.

Together, these perspectives position CRRP as more than an instructional strategy. It is a whole-school approach that informs curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, leadership, and school culture. By connecting academic learning with identity affirmation, critical inquiry, and asset-based representations of communities, CRRP supports social studies classrooms where students can build a more accurate understanding of Canada's histories, while developing belonging, agency, and civic responsibility.



Photo: Ryan Rivera, courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ.

THREE CENTRAL PRINCIPLES TO CRRP

High Academic Expectations For all Students

Educators must challenge, support, and expect all students to thrive. This requires recognizing and addressing racial bias, including stereotypes that may shape perceptions of students' abilities, behaviour, and potential. Research on stereotype threat shows that negative assumptions about race can affect student confidence and performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Affirming Students' Identities, Cultures, and Ways Of Knowing

Students learn best when their histories, languages, families, communities, and lived experiences are reflected meaningfully throughout the curriculum. In social studies, this means moving beyond token inclusion and embedding the diverse histories, perspectives, and contributions of Asian communities in Canada as central to understanding the country's past and present. It also means including counter-narratives that highlight resilience, leadership, solidarity, innovation, excellence, and joy alongside histories of exclusion and resistance.

Developing Critical Consciousness

Students should be encouraged to examine multiple perspectives, question dominant historical narratives, and explore how colonialism, racism, migration, citizenship, and identity have shaped individuals, communities, and institutions. This approach helps students understand inequity while also recognizing the agency, contributions, and collective action of communities that have shaped Canada's history.

RACIAL EQUITY POLICIES IN CANADIAN AND ONTARIO EDUCATION

05 RACIAL EQUITY POLICIES IN CANADIAN AND ONTARIO EDUCATION

Racial equity in Ontario education has developed through several policy and legislative efforts. Canada's official multiculturalism policy in 1971, followed by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988, recognized cultural diversity, equality, and inclusion. However, multiculturalism alone did not fully address systemic racism in schools.

In Ontario, the 1993 policy document Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation was an important shift. It asked school boards to move beyond multicultural celebrations and examine how racism appeared in school policies, curriculum, staffing, discipline, and decision-making.

The Accepting Schools Act, 2012, was introduced amid growing concern about bullying, discrimination, and student safety, including advocacy from 2SLGBTQ+ communities and allies. As Ontario classrooms became increasingly diverse, including growing Asian Canadian and other racialized student populations, the Act reinforced the need for safer and more accepting schools. It required schools to promote inclusive learning spaces and respond more clearly to biased or harmful behaviour.

Anti-racism work became more formalized through Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, the federal Anti-Racism Secretariat, Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate, Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, and the Anti-Racism Act, 2017. This work later evolved through the federal plan Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028, which continues to invest in community-led resources, public education, training, and tools to bring anti-racism work into schools, workplaces, and public institutions.

These investments supported Asian-led working groups, reports, reporting tools, and educator resources on anti-Asian racism to advance public understanding of histories that were long overlooked or confined to academic spaces, including the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Continuous Journey Regulation. By bringing these histories into education, community programming, and classroom resources, anti-racism work has helped make hidden histories more visible and connected them to present-day struggles for racial equity.



Image: Robert Yip, Members and supporters of the Chinese Canadian National Council rally on Parliament Hill, October 29, 2002. Courtesy of City of Ottawa Archives.

At the same time, Canada's 2020 Black Lives Matter movement brought renewed attention to anti-Black racism in schools and public institutions. In Ontario, policy discussions increasingly focused on how school boards prevent, manage, and respond to racism. Bill 16, the Racial Equity in the Education System Act, 2022, proposed stronger requirements for school boards, including racial equity plans, anti-racism training for educators, safer systems to report racism, and supports for students affected by racist behavior. Bill 16 received First Reading in 2022 but has not been enacted into law. Its lack of progress raises concerns that the growing scrutiny of equity, diversity, and inclusion work has limited the advancement of racial equity policy in Ontario schools.

Most recently, Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, received Royal Assent on November 20, 2025, and is now law as Statutes of Ontario 2025, chapter 12. The Act gives the Minister of Education stronger authority over school board oversight, including investigations, ministerial directions, financial audits, school naming approvals, and, in some circumstances, control and charge over a school board's powers and duties.

Before Bill 33 Local Decision-Making	**After Bill 33** Centralized Decision-Making
Decision Authority Local School Boards & Elected Trustees	**Decision Authority:** Government Appointed Supervisor
Community Input Familes, Student, and Community involvement	**Community Input** Limited Voice, Closed-Door Decisions
Transparency Open meetings & Public Reporting	**Transparency** Less public oversight
Representation Trustees elected by local communities	**Representation** Less public oversight
Decisions without community **Local knowledge undervalued**	**Public input decreasing across sectors** **Democratic participation narrowing**

These changes raise important questions for the progress of racial equity work. School board trustees have historically served as locally elected representatives and community advocates for public education. Their role has included bringing local issues and concerns into board decision-making and representing the local voices of parents, students, educators, and communities. While trustee systems have had limitations, they have also been among the few democratic mechanisms for local school communities to influence educational decisions. When provincial oversight reduces or overrides local board decision-making, there is a risk that community voices, including racialized and Pan-Asian perspectives, have fewer pathways into curriculum, policy, and school governance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND KEY FINDINGS

06 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine racial equity in Ontario's Grades 1, 2, 4, and 6 social studies curriculum. It combined curriculum content analysis with survey feedback from teachers and educators, primarily in Ontario. Some educators from British Columbia, including Vancouver, and Alberta, including Edmonton, also contributed after hearing about the survey through Ontario teachers.

The curriculum analysis used a deductive coding approach, meaning the research team looked for predefined CRRP-aligned themes rather than creating new themes from the curriculum alone. These themes included Relationship Structures, Ways of Knowing, History, Racial-Equity Plans, Teacher Training, Systems to Report Racism, Power Structures, Real-World Connections, Engagement Outside the Classroom, and Transferable Skills.

Coders applied the shared codebook to the curriculum documents to identify whether equity-related themes were present, absent, or unevenly represented. NVivo was used for qualitative coding, SPSS was used for chi-square analysis, and Python Matplotlib was used to create graphs and visualizations.

Survey feedback was gathered through three Pan-Asian solidarity events hosted by ACENet and CCNC-SJ. These events brought together Asian educators, teachers, and non-profit workers to share experiences, knowledge, and support. Participants were invited to complete a survey with questions based on the report's key themes, including racial equity, anti-Asian racism, curriculum gaps, educator training, community support, and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy.

Together, the curriculum analysis and survey feedback helped identify where racial equity priorities appear in curriculum and where gaps remain in classroom practice, teacher support, and policy implementation.

06 KEY FINDINGS

Curriculum Analysis

University of Toronto social psychology students reviewed Ontario's Grade 1, 2, 4, and 6 social studies curricula to examine how racial equity, identity, culture, community, history, and related themes appear across grade levels. Using a shared codebook and deductive coding approach, the team looked for predetermined CRRP-aligned themes rather than creating new themes from the curriculum alone. NVivo was used to organize and code curriculum text, while SPSS helped compare theme frequencies across grade levels.



Codebook and Themes

How themes were identified and how coders were prepared to apply them

Example of the shared codebook used during coding

Node	Parent	Definition
Individual identities and group belonging	Relationship Structures	How individuals relate to cultural or ethnic groups.
Equal and equitable division of time across different cultures	Relationship Structures	Fair distribution of curricular representation.
Epistemologies and cultural knowledge systems	Ways of Knowing	Cultural methods of knowing.
Lived experience as knowledge	Ways of Knowing	Using lived experience as epistemic content.
Historical context	History	References to past events or histories.
Present context and lived realities	History	Current lived experiences.
Similarities and differences across cultures that share a practice/tradition	History	Cross-cultural comparisons of practices.
Awareness of plans	Racial-equity Plans	Knowledge of the existence of racial-equity plans.
Consultation process	Racial-equity Plans	Community involvement in plan creation.
Goals and outcomes	Racial-equity Plans	Measurable targets and intended results.
Plan accessibility	Racial-equity Plans	How publicly visible or accessible plans are.
Plan accountability	Racial-equity Plans	Mechanisms for tracking and updating plans.
Availability of training	Teacher Training	Whether training is offered.
Quality of training	Teacher Training	Depth and usefulness of training.
Voluntariness of training	Teacher Training	Whether training is mandatory or optional.
Outcome of training	Teacher Training	Changes in teaching practice after training.
Awareness of reporting systems	Systems to Report Racism	Knowledge of reporting systems.
Clarity of reporting racism processes	Systems to Report Racism	How easy or clear the reporting process is.
Safety of reprisal	Systems to Report Racism	Fears of retaliation or confidentiality breaches.
Confidence in system	Systems to Report Racism	Trust that the system works.
Outcome of system	Systems to Report Racism	Actual changes following reports.
Awareness of provincial authority and power	Power Structure Between the Province and School Boards	Understanding the province's authority.
Minister directives	Power Structure Between the Province and School Boards	References to provincial directives.
Local autonomy	Power Structure Between the Province and School Boards	School board independence.
School officers (police presence in schools)	Power Structure Between the Province and School Boards	Police presence in schools.
Trust in provincial authority	Power Structure Between the Province and School Boards	Trust in provincial decision-making.
Power dynamic between school and educators		Authority relationships between school and teachers.
Spaces to share personal insights and experiences	Real-world Connections	Opportunities for sharing stories.
Local, domestic and international trends and events	Real-world Connections	Connections to current events.
Family	Engagement Outside of the Classroom	Family involvement.

Directed approach.
Themes were first discussed as a class from curriculum descriptions, then formalized by the professor into a shared codebook.

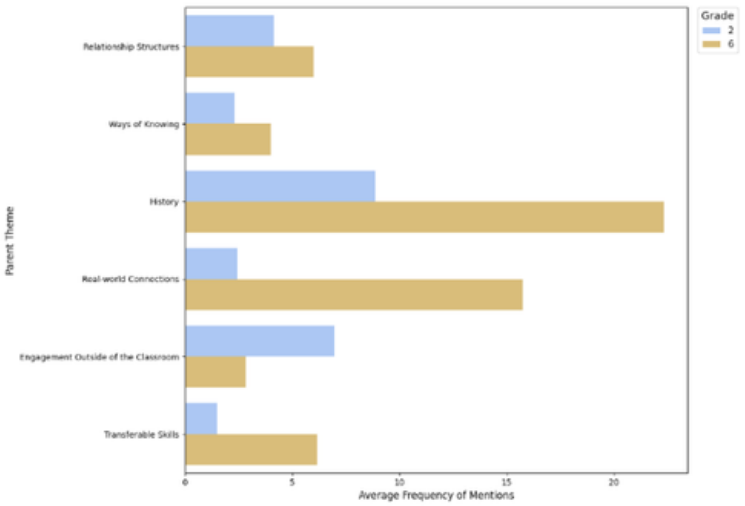
Coder preparation.
Coders reviewed code definitions before coding to ensure the same thematic categories were applied consistently in NVivo.

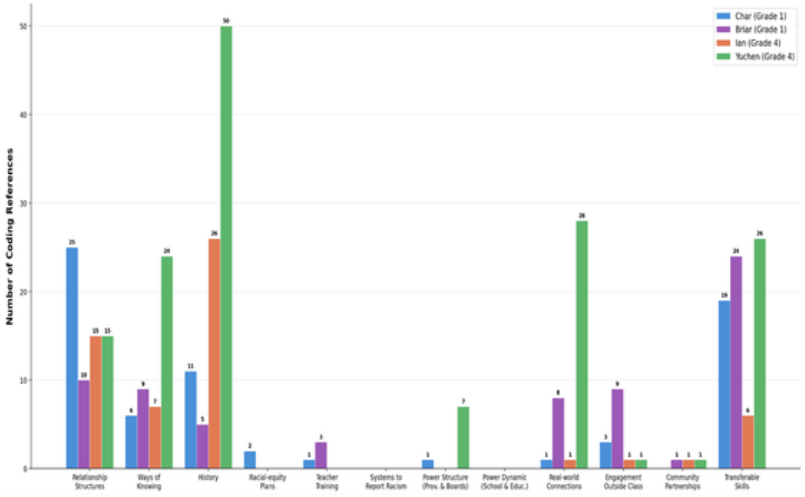
Representative codes

- Appreciation of diversity
- Historical context
- Identity and group belonging
- Respect
- Self-awareness and reflection
- Cultural knowledge systems

A single expectation could receive more than one code when multiple themes were present.

Across the curriculum analyses, the strongest themes were History, Relationship Structures, Ways of Knowing, Engagement Outside the Classroom, Real-World Connections, and Transferable Skills. The early grades placed more emphasis on identity, family, community, belonging, relationships, and respectful social behaviour. The middle grades placed more emphasis on history, cultural knowledge, cross-cultural learning, current events, and global or national contexts.





Figures show frequency of parent-level themes across Grade 1 and Grade 4 social studies curriculum coding. The charts show that Grade 1 places greater emphasis on identity, relationships, and social skills, while Grade 4 places stronger emphasis on history and cross-cultural learning. Overall, “History” was the most frequently applied theme, while “Ways of Knowing” appeared least often.

A major finding was that structural equity themes were missing or rarely present. These included Racial-Equity Plans, Teacher Training, Systems to Report Racism, Power Structures, Power Dynamics between schools and educators, and Community Partnerships.

06 KEY FINDINGS

Community Survey Feedback

Survey feedback from the Pan-Asian solidarity events showed that educators value spaces where Asian educators, teachers, and community workers can gather, share knowledge, and build relationships. Participants described the events as meaningful opportunities to learn about Asian heritage, anti-Asian racism experiences, affirming identities, Pan-Asian solidarity, and strategies for addressing systemic racism. Many expressed interest in future conversations on community care, intergenerational experiences, anti-Asian hate, union advocacy, Indigenous and Black activism, and tools for responding to racist resistance.

“Fair and open dialogue that provided several doors [to] conversations and powerful meaning/learning.”

“Creating solidarity amongst Asian groups is much needed to push against systemic racism and colonialism.”

“[This was a] great opportunity to address real systemic and institutional issues, including the root causes of anti-Asian hate, the importance of historical understanding, connections to Black activism, and the need for more strategic goals and opportunities for action.”

“For baby Asian activists, I'd like to see this conference panel grow every year… [I was] really inspired by the panelists and being in the presence of other strong advocates. Important to leverage our privilege to bring light to different movements. It's important to highlight. There are multiple ways to be an activist.”

Gaps Between Policy and Classroom Realities

Educator responses also showed a clear gap between racial equity policy and classroom practice. Several respondents were aware of school-board equity or anti-racism policies, but many described inconsistent communication, uneven implementation, and limited classroom support. Some educators noted that staff are not always given clear examples of what racial equity looks like in practice, while others described a lack of leadership support, limited training, and uncertainty about how to respond to anti-Asian racism in schools.

“ Support from leadership. Upper management tends to penalize educators who support anti-racism and celebrate educators who do the opposite, or who at least make it seem like they care about anti-racism on the surface through performative allyship. It’s a very corporate environment where capital gain and buy-in from the dominant group are prioritized.”

“Racial equity is an additional expectation on teachers who are struggling to keep up with the existing workload and reduced number of supports in the school and classroom.”

“Social Studies is a field that is often about nation-building, and unless folks are skilled in their own anti-oppression pedagogy, teachers teach what they know and who they are.”

“In Alberta, those policies are getting eroded. Many teachers do not have the training. I have opted to take courses beyond what is provided by the school board... We do occasionally do training on Indigenizing education, but not specifically on racial equity, and nothing addressing the Asian community—ever.”

What is missing from current resources?

A major theme was that Pan-Asian content is often included through individual teacher effort rather than being fully included in the curriculum. Some educators reported integrating Pan-Asian histories, communities, and identities through selected texts, special events, heritage months, or occasional lessons. Others described more meaningful integration through critical discussions of history, race, power, immigration, colonialism, anti-Asian racism, refugee experiences, cultural contributions, and identity. However, this work often depends on the educator's own knowledge, confidence, and available resources.

"... resources on the contributions of communities to avoid the victim narrative. When I created a social-justice options course, I created a unit on the Asian experience, history and celebrations. It took some time to go beyond the surface."

"Students participating in learning about Pan-Asian communities through authentic experiences and community speakers in meaningful ways, and celebrating the joys and contributions of Pan-Asian communities—not necessarily only focusing on the trauma, hardship and racism they experienced and continue to experience."

"A space that is co-created between the teacher, students, parents and members of the community that includes stories, artifacts, books, music and art from the Pan-Asian community that is represented by the students or staff at the school."

"Resources that authentically speak to intersectionalities and also cross over with other affinity-seeking representations. Also, practical starting points to empower all teachers to engage."

“Even a book discussing the term ‘Asian’ and what it means in all its contexts would be useful, as would books about Asian revolutionaries and solidarity movements, such as those in the United Kingdom... Integrated into the Math curriculum. A book that had Pan-Asian contributions integrated into different Math, Science, English or even Art lessons would be spectacular. What a powerful resource that would be for educators.

It’s not just history. It intertwines with all subjects, right down to English, where words in English originate from various Pan-Asian languages.”

Respondents also emphasized the need for practical, accessible, and curriculum-aligned resources. Common requests included ready-to-use lesson plans, primary-source packages, local community case studies, multimedia resources, professional-learning workshops, curriculum-alignment guides, guest-speaker connections, assessment tools, and student-inquiry toolkits. Educators also asked for resources that go beyond “food, folklore, and festivals” and include broader Pan-Asian histories, languages, stories, contemporary issues, and solidarity movements. see Pan-Asian communities as part of Canadian history, present-day society, and future collective action.

“Easy-to-access, updated, teacher-made resources that relate to the British Columbia Ministry of Education’s Big Ideas. Perspectives, voices and connections to the Big Ideas in the curriculum are needed. Asians have a lot of work to do to support intersectionality —understanding Palestine, Indigenous issues in Canada, SOGI, how we work together and how we view migration.”

Overall, the survey findings show that educators are interested in teaching Pan-Asian histories and communities, but need stronger institutional support, clearer policy implementation, and more community-informed resources. Meaningful inclusion requires more than adding occasional lessons or heritage-month content. It requires curriculum, professional learning, leadership support, community partnerships, and resources that help students and educators see Pan-Asian communities as part of Canadian history, present-day society, and future collective action.

"Curriculum programming does not support these conversations, and teachers may not feel like they can talk about these topics. Parental voice is loud."

"There is a large gap between what racial equity actually is and the board's understanding of [what] racial equity is."

"Educators need support in standing up to administrators who do not support this work. Meaningful integration means being able to critically engage with the current impacts of racism, not just teach about it as history."

"Thank you for your stories, skills, thoughtfulness, organization and feeding me delicious food!... I would like to see communication strategies to combat racist resistors. Perhaps a future step, we engage in collaborative goals and actionable/ accessible activities that will build a tool belt within our own communities.
'Oppression is a mask for fear', let's disrupt. ✊🏽*"*

WHEN POLICY DOES NOT REACH THE CLASSROOM

7 WHEN POLICY DOES NOT REACH THE CLASSROOM

The University of Toronto social psychology students' analysis highlights a long-standing gap between racial equity policy and classroom practice. Since Ontario's 1993 anti-racism guidelines, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate, the Anti-Racism Act, 2017, and the federal plan Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028, governments have repeatedly committed to racial equity. However, not enough has changed in how these commitments appear in the curriculum, classroom, educator support, reporting systems, and accountability.

Across the grades, the curriculum includes some useful starting points for racial equity learning, especially through themes of culture, history, identity, community, and respect. However, these themes are unevenly represented and are not consistently connected to anti-racism, Pan-Asian perspectives, educator training, reporting systems, community partnerships, or accountability. This shows that racial equity appears in parts of the curriculum, but is not yet fully embraced as a system-wide commitment.



Photo: Ryan Rivera, courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ.

Survey feedback reinforced this gap. Educators called for more ready-to-use lesson plans, primary sources, local case studies, multimedia resources, professional learning, curriculum guides, guest speakers, assessment tools, and student-inquiry resources. They also identified barriers such as limited curriculum space, lack of reliable resources, fear of controversy, limited content knowledge, administrative constraints, and lack of board support.

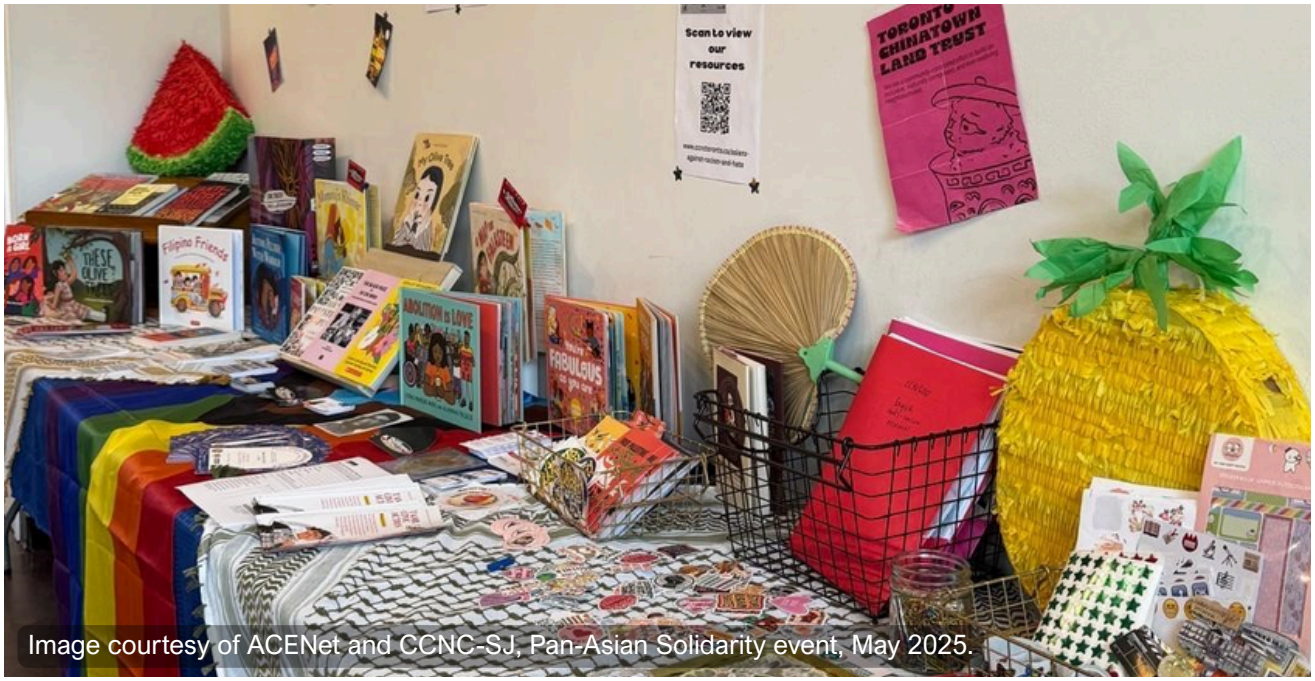


Image courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ, Pan-Asian Solidarity event, May 2025.

This is especially important in the context of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, which gives the Minister of Education stronger authority over school board oversight. If racial equity was already unevenly implemented, stronger centralized oversight raises questions about how community voices, educator autonomy, and local equity priorities will be protected.

Overall, the findings show that curriculum alone cannot carry anti-racism work. To support Pan-Asian perspectives, racial equity must be connected to systemic racism, community knowledge, educator training, reporting systems, accountability, and meaningful implementation.

TOWARD MEANINGFUL CHANGE: COMMUNITY-LED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RACIAL EQUITY

08 TOWARD MEANINGFUL CHANGE: COMMUNITY-LED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RACIAL EQUITY

The findings suggest a gap between Ontario's racial equity policies and what is reflected in the social studies curriculum. While policies aim to support safer and more equitable schools, the curriculum does not consistently show how these goals are implemented in schools. Without clearer connections between policy, curriculum, educator training, community engagement, and accountability measures, racial equity work remains stagnant.

To better align policy with classroom practice, the curriculum should be revised to include deeper learning about the histories, knowledge systems, and lived experiences of racialized communities. For Pan-Asian communities, this means moving beyond surface-level cultural contributions and including Indigenous, Black, and Asian perspectives, migration histories, labour histories, colonialism, anti-Asian racism, Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, and contemporary issues.

Educators also need stronger resources and sustained funding. This includes investment in curriculum-alignment guides, ready-to-use lesson plans, primary-source materials, professional learning, community engagement, grassroots organizing, and union-building. Schools should be supported in building partnerships with families, cultural groups, community organizations, and grassroots collectives so that students, teachers, and educators can learn from lived experience and community knowledge.

This is especially important in the context of Bill 33, the Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025, which is now law as Statutes of Ontario, 2025, chapter 12. The Act expands the Minister of Education's oversight powers over school board finances, governance, and program performance. As decision-making becomes more centralized, racial equity work will require stronger protections for educator autonomy, community voice, local accountability, and community-led implementation.

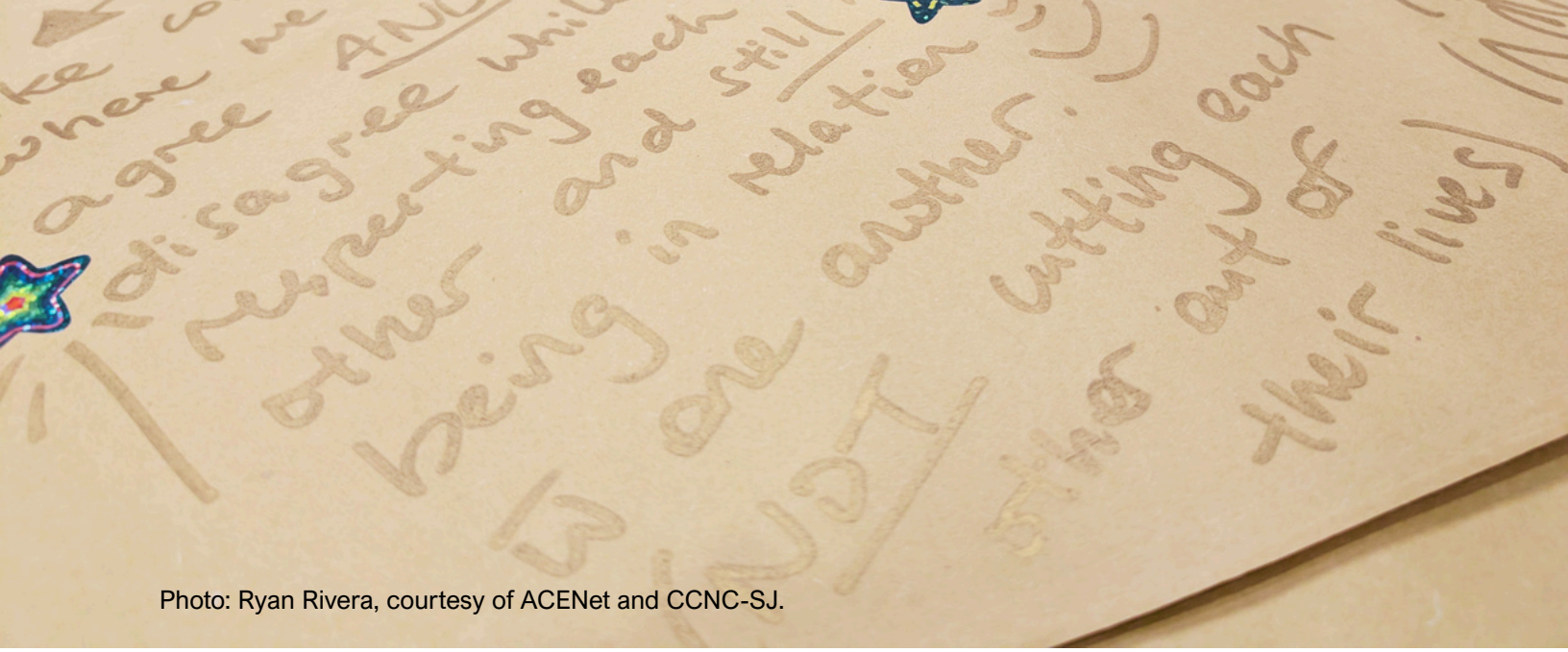


Photo: Ryan Rivera, courtesy of ACENet and CCNC-SJ.

This report also recognizes current limitations. Further research and implementation work are shaped by a lack of sustained funding, resistance to equity work, and political shifts affecting schools and school boards. For future research, we would like to move beyond curriculum documents to include surveys and interviews with educators, administrators, students, parents, and community members. This would help show how anti-racism is taught, what supports are available, how racism is reported, and whether students feel safe and represented in schools.

It should also support school board racial equity plans, reporting systems, and accountability measures. Comparing implementation across school boards, provinces, and other jurisdictions could help identify stronger models for anti-racism education and community-led support.

Overall, the findings show that Ontario's social studies curriculum includes some signs of progress, but racial equity is not yet fully embraced. To better address anti-Asian racism and support Pan-Asian perspectives, anti-racism education must be connected to curriculum change, educator training, community partnerships, organizing, reporting systems, funding, and clear accountability.

09 CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Through this partnership, ACENet, SSENC, and CCNC-SJ remain committed to advancing racial equity in education through community knowledge, research, advocacy, and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. This work shows how far we have come from multiculturalism as a simple celebration toward a deeper understanding of anti-racism, truth and reconciliation, anti-Black racism, Indigenous histories and teachings, and Pan-Asian perspectives.

When education includes Pan-Asian histories, Black histories, Indigenous knowledge, and the lived experiences of racialized communities, students gain a fuller and more honest understanding of Canada, community, belonging, and justice. This kind of learning does more than add representation. It is an investment in decolonial system-building, a future rooted in stronger relationships with Indigenous peoples and lands, building solidarity, and greater capacity for accountability in schools and workplaces.

For Asian communities in Canada, this work supports the rebuilding of identity, belonging, and responsibility. It helps us understand our histories, honour the legacy of our ancestors, and recognize our role in building relationships with Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities. It strengthens our ability to care for one another, challenge racism, and create education systems that are more honest, relational, and accountable.

This commitment is a generational process. Racial equity cannot be achieved through one policy, one curriculum change, or one report. It requires ongoing collaboration, reflection, community care, and accountability. By listening to educators, students, families, and community partners, future research can help move racial equity plans beyond symbolic commitments and toward meaningful change in schools.

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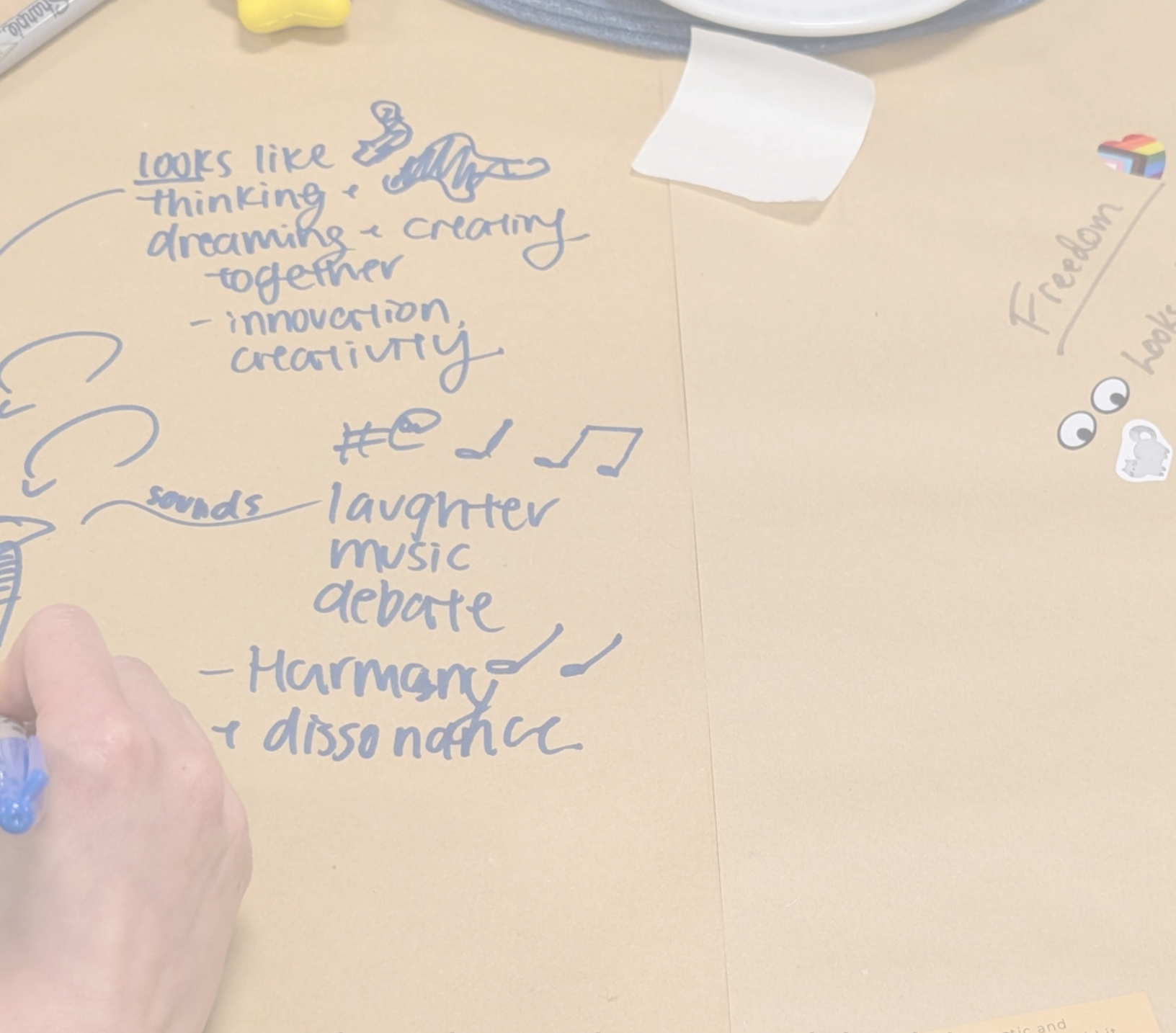
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BUILDING RACIAL EQUITY IN SCHOOLS

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July 2026

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