

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: Direction Regarding Hate Speech: Including Racial, Homophobic, Transphobic, Sexist, Ableist Slurs, or Epithets and the Use of the N-Word

Trigger Warning: This Administrative Procedure contains examples of a highly sensitive nature including examples and references discriminatory epithets, which for the purpose of this document is a descriptor or adjective meant to do harm to a person. The content herein may be triggering for some individuals. These examples have been used specifically to draw attention to speech that often is not recognized nor treated as hateful. We have a responsibility to illustrate the different ways in which hate speech can present itself.

As outlined in the [Lambton Kent District School Board's Strategic Priorities](#), we champion anti-oppression education. As we strive to create safe and inclusive learning and work environments for all students, staff and community members of the LKDSB, it is crucial that we address the issue of hate speech, racial or other slurs (i.e. an insult, disparaging remark, inuendo meant to shame or degrade, etc.) or epithets and the use of the N-word. Exposure to hate speech is extremely harmful to the well-being of our students, their caretakers and to our staff and it is a direct violation of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). This Administrative Procedure provides both direction and response protocol for dealings pertaining to the abovementioned.

Directive:

The following direction seeks to make it **explicitly clear** that speaking, writing or gesturing of racial or other slurs or epithets (i.e., the N-word, pejorative terms used to describe Indigenous peoples, racial, ethnic, religious, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability attributes etc.) by students, staff or members of the school community are **NOT PERMITTED**. This includes instances such as, but not limited to; reading, gesturing, verbalizing or repeating racial slurs aloud to others. For example; referring to a Black person as a monkey or making monkey noises in reference to a Black person are racial epithets.

There are instances where language may not be explicitly understood as racist, hateful or discriminatory, but is intended to cause identity-based harm. The response to these incidents should align with this directive.

All staff have an obligation to intervene and respond appropriately if they hear racial or other slurs or epithets being used. Please see [Harmful Language Protocol](#) for response expectations.

LKDSB Staff/Volunteers:

Members of Board and school staff/volunteers hold the highest responsibility for ensuring learning environments recognize and honour the right of every child to access a discrimination-free learning experience. On a broader scale, the use of racial and other slurs and epithets are harmful to all identities including those who are not directly targeted. The use and presence of the N-word in the school community has compromised the safety of African-, Caribbean- and Black-identifying staff, students and families.

The LKDSB acknowledges that our staff operate from a place of care and would not intentionally harm students. As a body of caring staff, we must be responsible for the impact of our actions as opposed to our intentions. Although we know that students are subjected to utterances of the N-word, racial and other slurs and hateful epithets in the hallways and common spaces in schools as well as school-related activities, we must also make sure that the teaching of course content doesn't further harm students. While resources may reference these terms, the use of racial or other slurs or epithets by staff cannot ever serve educational purposes. Educators should take great care in preparing students before using a resource (e.g., *The Hate U Give* or *Kim's Convenience*) to engage with any culturally sensitive material and affirm that the utterance of discriminatory language will not be permitted.

Should any staff member violate professional misconduct regulations, administrators should investigate immediately, and the incident should be reported to the Superintendent of Human Resources.

Specifically, teachers and education workers, must follow these points:

- Written materials containing racial slurs or epithets should never be used in class if they are written by authors who do not belong to the group about whom the material is written (ie. John Steinbeck is a white author and the use of his novel, *Of Mice and Men*, is no longer acceptable as he uses the n-word throughout his writing).
- There are times when teachers will use materials, that is connected to appropriately aged curriculum, by authors from racial backgrounds that contain racial slurs and epithets specific to that author's racial group. As said before, great care must be taken in preparing students to encounter such texts. Here is an example of a statement that a teacher would make if teaching the novel, *The Hate You Give*:

"We will be reading a text over the next few weeks by author Angie Thomas called The Hate You Give. You must understand that Angie Thomas is a Black author and that you will encounter the use of racial slurs and epithets. I want to be clear that the author is using these terms to tell a story from her own community. In no way should you ever repeat these terms or use these terms in school. These slurs and racial epithets cause harm to the Black community. The expectation of the Lambton Kent District School Board is that you, as students, do not use these words in a school setting - either verbally or in writing. If you are not Black, you should never use these words in any setting. This author has much to teach us through this novel and one of them is about the harm caused by this language."

Be sure this statement is heard by all students, including those that are absent or when new students come into the class. Teachers are asked to have this discussion about each novel study, including literature novel studies where multiple novels may need to be addressed.

- Again, throughout the reading of a text described in the second bullet, teachers should never allow that word to be used aloud in class nor allow anyone to re-write that word out for anyone to see.

For clarity, the use of books that include the N-word will only be permitted if the author of the book is Black.

This behavioural expectation must be modelled by all adults on LKDSB property or while attending an LKDSB sanctioned event. Whether the use of slurs by adults is due to lack of awareness or other reasons is hereby irrelevant; the harmful impact of the use of slurs on Indigenous, Black, racialized and marginalized students and staff is of the utmost importance.

These behavioural expectations also apply to the staff room and other spaces where students may not be present. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) clearly defines educator's ethical standards of respect and responsibility. The Professional Misconduct regulation ([O. Reg. 437/97](#)) made under the Ontario College of Teachers Act, includes *"making remarks or engaging in behaviours that expose any person or class of persons to hatred on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination under Part I of the Human Rights Code."* This applies to conduct and/or remarks made to anyone inside or outside of the classroom, on duty or off, and via electronic means. The OCT has also released a [Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism](#).

LKDSB Students:

Speaking, writing or gesturing of racial or other slurs or epithets (i.e., the N-word, pejorative terms used to describe Indigenous peoples, racial, ethnic, religious, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability attributes etc.) by students, staff or members of the school community are **NOT PERMITTED**. This includes instances such as, but not limited to; reading, gesturing, verbalizing or repeating racial slurs aloud to others. For example; referring to a Black person as a monkey or making monkey noises in reference to a Black person are racial epithets.

LKDSB students hold a responsibility to respect their peers, school staff and the school community. There are several policies and procedures that support administrators in maintaining a safe, caring and inclusive environment for all students. These include:

- Online Incident Reporting
- Board/School Code of Conduct (Under Review)
- Progressive Discipline
- Bullying
- Exclusion of a Student
- Suspension of a Pupil & Appeal
- Expulsion of a Pupil

A full list of LKDSB Policies and Regulations, as well as their corresponding Administrative Procedures can be found, [here](#).

We are seeing a rise in the use of the N-word and racial and other slurs in LKDSB schools and school-related activities. Infractions should be addressed following the Progressive Discipline Policy and Regulation as outlined by [Safe Schools](#).

Administrators and staff must be clear with students and their families that these rules apply to incidents that take place off of school property and outside of school hours (e.g field trip, athletic events). Any action a school is made aware of that may have an impact on a student's safety and belonging in LKDSB learning environments will be responded to.

The Education Act outlines progressive discipline and school safety expectations and guidelines for response. With specific reference to the following infractions must consider suspensions (for students in grades 4-12) including Section 310 (7.2) [Education Act](#):

- Speaking, writing, signing, gesturing or any clear and identifiable use of the N-word or reasonably recognizable as intending to replicate the N-word
- Speaking, writing, signing, gesturing or use of racial or other slurs or epithets (Eg. the N-word, pejorative terms used to describe Indigenous peoples, racial, ethnic, religious, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability attributes etc.)
- Any activity listed in subsection 306 (1) that is motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other similar factor.

Where administrators have identified multiple infractions and have engaged in all measures of progressive discipline, suspension and alternatives to suspension and restorative response, it is understood that administrators can consider expulsion.

Please Note: We acknowledge that many differing opinions and perspectives on the N-word exist within some African, Caribbean and Black communities. It is the position of the LKDSB that use of the N-word will not be tolerated “on school property, in a virtual learning environment, on school buses, at school-related events or activities, in before- and after-school programs, or in other circumstances that could have an impact on the school climate” regardless of the user's identity. We want to make it very clear that there is no N-word pass. No student has a right to ask or give a pass to any other student to use this word. It is our responsibility to communicate this clearly across all of our sites and spaces across the district. When giving consequences to students, it is necessary for administrators/managers to acknowledge the nuance of the N-word and to make a distinction between in-group conversation and out-group hate speech. We do not want this word used in a school/work setting at any time; however, discipline should not be given to students who use the word in in-group conversation if they are Black.

Implementation Date: August 26, 2024

Reference: Ontario Human Rights Code
Ontario College of Teachers Act, O. Reg. 437/97
Ontario Education Act
LKDSB Policy and Regulations