



**Reflective Diversity Inventory: A Study of Personal Attitudes and Experiences
Among the Waterloo Region Association of Public Council Chairs (WRAPSC)
and the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)**

July 17, 2024

All schools in Ontario [should] have a school council. They are important advisory bodies to the schools and school board.

The purpose of a school council is, through the active participation of parents, to improve student achievement and increase accountability of the education system to parents.

Ontario Ministry of Education





Benefits of Caregiver Involvement

Parents are their child's first teacher. When they are involved in their child's education positive benefits include:

- Greater academic achievement
- Prosocial behaviors
- Improved efficacy of interventions (academic and behavioural)
- Reduction of referrals to special education

(Latunde, 2018)



“Set clear and specific goals for community involvement, and communicate those goals to employees and leaders.”

(Anderson & Billings-Harris, 2010, p.155)

Research Question

The Reflective Diversity Inventory (Polka-Marwaha, 2023) is being used to explore the attitudes and personal experiences among the Waterloo Region Association of Public School Council Chairs (WRAPSC) and the Parent Involvement Committee members (PIC).

Positive attitudes toward diversity as well as positive experiences with diversity are likely to contribute to having the ability to create safe welcoming environments for all parents and caregivers. Conversely, people with negative attitudes toward diversity or limited experiences with diversity might be challenged to engage with individuals perceived to be different from the prototypical norm. This might create barriers to diversity and inclusion on school councils.

This research investigates the following question:

What are the experiences and attitudes of WRAPSC and PIC members regarding diversity?





Research Approval Process

An important part of the research process is to ensure ethical practices in:

- Issues of harm, consent, privacy and confidentiality of data; must be satisfied.
- Honesty, integrity and responsible reporting of the data (Lune & Berg 2017).

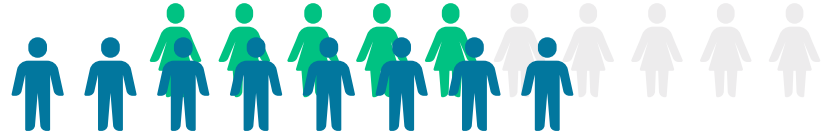
Approval Requirements to use district associations.

1. IRB Approval form Niagara University
2. Application to the Waterloo Region District School Board Research Department.
3. Revision of application to include:
 - a. Letter of Information
 - b. Recruitment Script

Research Methodology

Methodological Approach	The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and experiences of individuals who are members of WRAPSC and PIC. A survey design was selected because it offers a number of advantages including a quick turn-around, anonymity, and a quantitative description of attitudes and opinions (Creswell, 2018). While interviews can provide in depth answers and insights to answers, they require a face-to-face interaction between the informant and the researcher. This can be time consuming for the researcher and uncomfortable for the informant. The anonymous and voluntary nature of a survey is likely to result in candid and honest answers.
Volunteer Convenience Sampling	A single-stage sampling technique was used without stratification. Stratification would ensure that specific characteristics of the individuals of the target population are included (Creswell, 2018). The survey was sent to all WRAPSC and PIC members regardless of the school division (elementary or secondary) and irrespective of the specific geographic region (Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Elmira, Conestogo). This non random convenience sampling, was used to target specific individuals (Robert, 2015), all WRAPSC and PIC members. Participation in the survey was voluntary.
Data Collection	The survey was sent out to WRAPSC on June 25th, 2024 and to PIC on June 28th, 2024, from the chairs of the respective groups. The chairs were asked to distribute the study recruitment email to their respective mailing lists, approximately 130 unique email addresses in total. This recruitment method was selected because of time economy and familiarity. Both PIC and WRAPSC members have routinely been asked to participate in survey research. Receiving an invitation to participate in this study would be a common experience for these groups. The email included: 1. Recruitment Script and 2. A Letter of Information. Embedded in the script was the link to the survey housed on Qualtrics.
Data Analysis	Descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean, median, mode) were used to analyze the data. Where there was missing data in a question from a respondent, the average response was used.

Demographic Findings

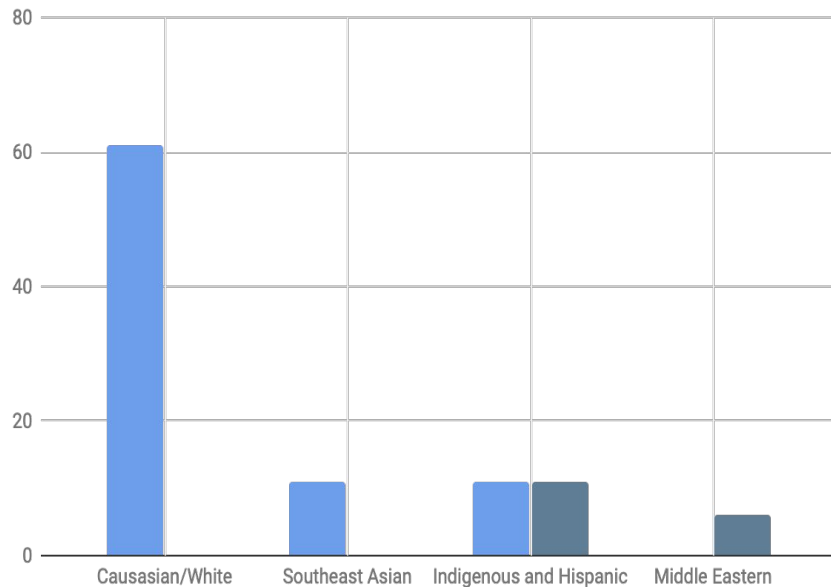


Gender <i>n=21</i>	Female 80%	Male 10%	DNWI 10%
Age <i>n=20</i>	34 - 43 50%	44 - 53 30%	54+ 15%
*Sexual Orientation <i>n=18</i>	Heterosexual 94%	Lesbian, Gay, Pan 0%	Bisexual 6%

*Very low response rate and the question elicited hostile responses.

Ethnicity Data

$n=18$



District Distribution of Race

- Black. 6.0%
- East Asian. 7.0%
- FirstNations/Métis (Michif)/Inuit. 1.2%
- Latina/Latino/Latinx. 2.5%
- Middle Eastern/ North. 7.1%
- South Asian. 12.1%
- White. 66.7%
- Racial identity not otherwise listed. 1.3%
- Total census participants. 27371.

Personal Attitudes



Education

6. My previous education taught me about the injustices that certain groups of people continue to experience.



Experience

15. Learning about other people's cultures enriches an individual's personal and professional life.



Belief

20. I believe I can learn about diversity by interacting with a wide variety of people.

68%

96%

96
%

Agree or Strongly Agree

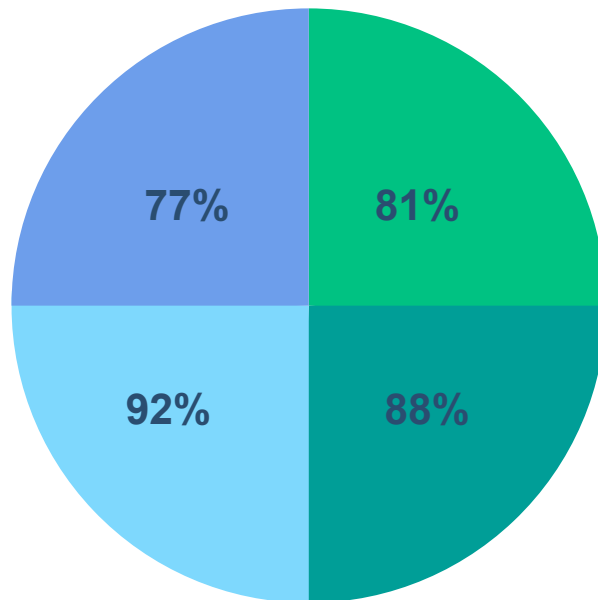
Personal **Experiences** with Diversity Issues

Race Diversity

46. I have personally felt discriminated against or harassed at my organization because of my race, ethnicity or being bi-racial or mixed race.

Sexual Orientation

48. I have personally felt discriminated against or harassed at my organization because of my sexual orientation.



Religious Diversity

47. I have personally felt discriminated against or harassed at my organization because of my religious beliefs.

Language

49. I have personally felt discriminated against or harassed at my organization because English is not my first language.

Personal Experiences Witnessing Diversity Issues

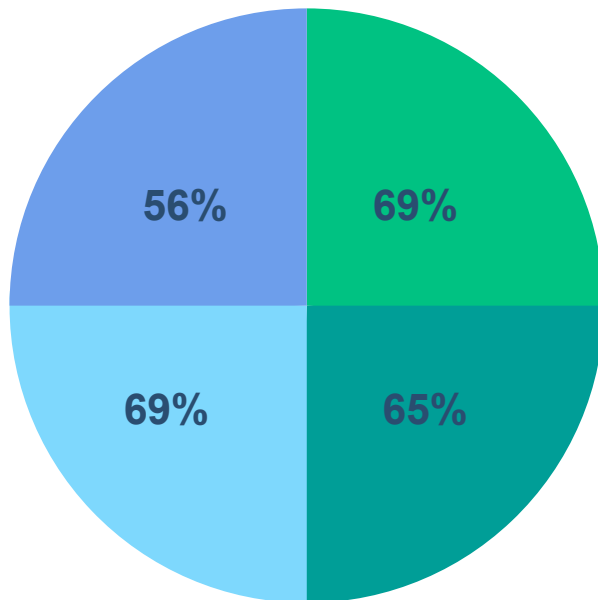
Racial

Discrimination

34. I have witnessed racial discrimination in my organization.

Sexual Harassment

38. I have witnessed sexual harassment in my organization.



NEVER!

Exclusion

39. I have witnessed the exclusion of people of different backgrounds at my organization.

Discrimination

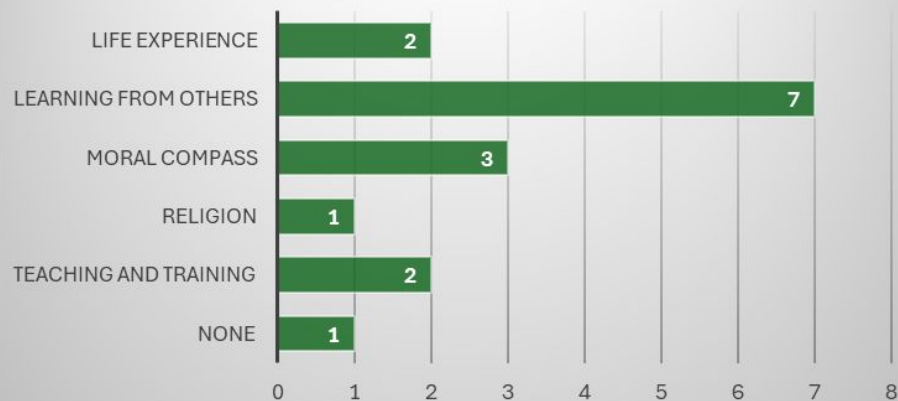
40. I have witnessed racial and ethnic jokes, comments and slurs at my organization.

Results of the Reflective Responses

1. What specific diversity-related activities and events have you attended at your current or previous organization?

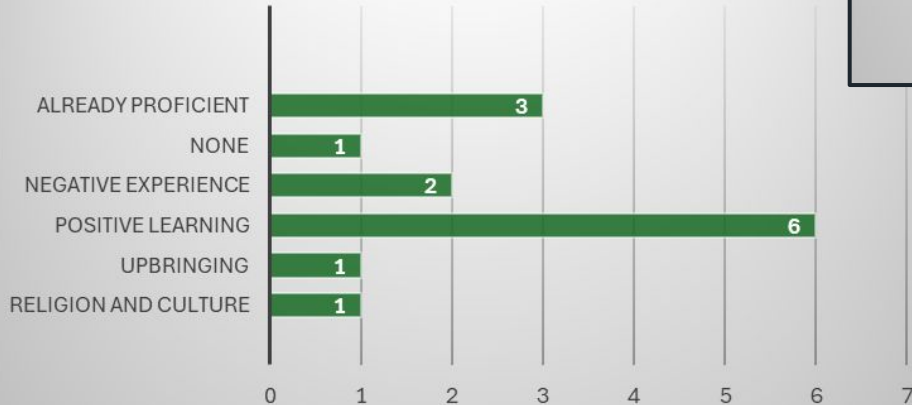


2. Based on your organizational experiences, what skills or methods have you gained to help you work with people from diverse backgrounds?

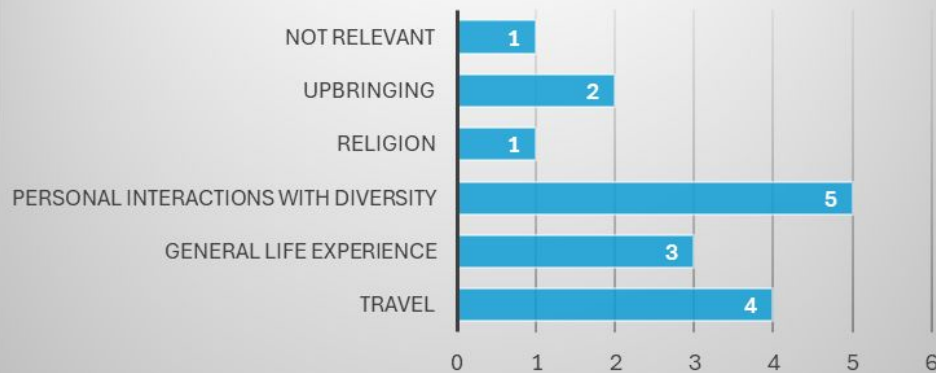


Results of the Reflective Responses

3. What specific knowledge and awareness about yourself and your attitudes about working with people from diverse backgrounds, have you gained from your organizational experiences?



4. How do you feel your contextual experiences (e.g., travel, research, readings, family interactions etc.) have enhanced or limited your experiences working with people of diverse backgrounds?



Reflective Responses

1. What specific diversity-related activities and events have you attended at your current or previous organization?

- Cultural Safety Training
- 2-Day workshop on First Nations History
- Black History Month Speakers
- Gender Inclusiveness
- *I don't attend because they push guilt on those who attend.*

2. Based on your organizational experiences, what skills or methods have you gained to help you work with people from diverse backgrounds?

- *Learning from others lived experiences*
- *Let everyone have a chance to talk and teach you about their experiences.*
- *My organization tried to teach me that I must elevate all other diverse backgrounds...and to put myself down.*

3. What specific knowledge and awareness about yourself and your attitudes working with people from diverse backgrounds have you gained from your organizational experience?

- *As a Manager ...working in customer service, I am learning everyday of please lived experiences which gives me more information when dealing with people.*
- *I have difficulty speaking up in white dominant spaces because quite often I don't feel safe.*
- *Racism can happen in any group against any group.*

4. How do you feel your contextual experiences have enhanced or limited your experiences working with people of diverse backgrounds?

- *I was taught to respect people.*
- *Meeting lots of people through common interests and later finding out your differences after you have established similarities.*
- *I spend a lot of time with people from a wide variety array of diverse spaces. Life is too short to spend it with people who are all the same.*
- *I feel my own experiences have had more of an impact on how I relate to others than anything my organization or media outlet has tried to force me to believe..*

5. Do you wish to add any additional comments about diversity in your organizational experience?

- *I think it is important to recognize and name systems of oppression, colonial harms and how white supremacy is upheld in organizations currently.*
- *The willingness to address everyone as a human being nothing more nothing less has been the key to success in our organization. Avoiding concepts linked to DEI is a priority in our organization and is seen as the destructive force it has shown itself to be....*

Discussion

Limitations

Lack of Stratification:

The surveys were distributed to WRAPSC and PIC members without targeting specific groups which would have allowed for comparisons. For example are there regional differences or divisional differences among WRAPSC and PIC members?

Social Desirability Bias:

The natural tendency to portray ourselves in the best light and conform to societal norms is known as the social desirability bias (Kohler, 2023). This bias might impact responses as the informants seek to select answers that demonstrate they have positive attitudes toward diversity.

Progress Challenges

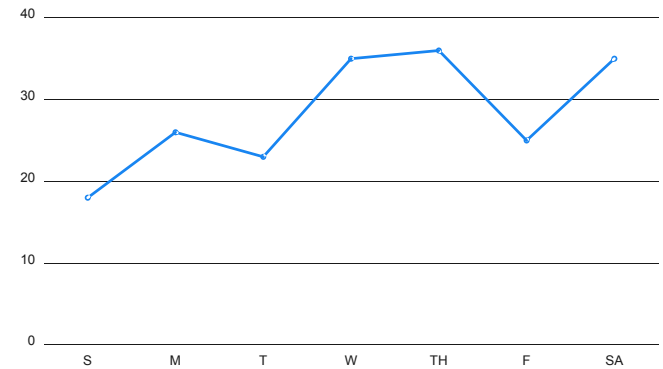
Timing:

The surveys were distributed at the end of June which is the beginning of the summer vacation period. Many of our active and engaged PIC and WRAPSC members turn off their computers and head to cottages.

Participation:

PIC and WRAPSC members attend monthly meetings with AGENDA items. The rate of return on the surveys could have been improved by having a longer window of completion (90 days) with regular email reminders as well as reminders during the monthly meetings.

Future Research



Stratify the participants

Administer the RDI to sub groups of WRAPSC and PIC. Separate regions and divisions.

Widen the Pool of Participants

Distribute the RDI survey to all parents in the WRDSB and add a second survey on school engagement.

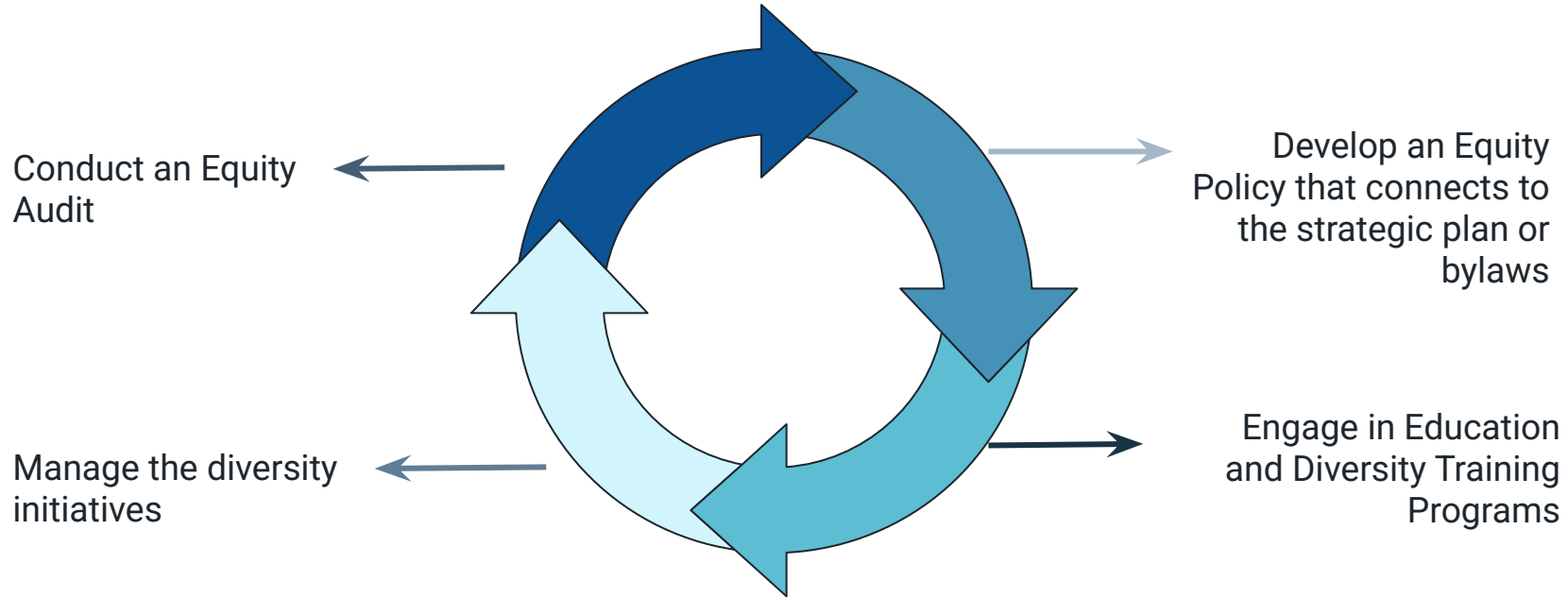
Address the Timing

Repeat the administration of the RDI to WRAPSC and PIC in the fall. This may improve the response rate.

Case Study

Identify a school or schools that will engage in *Trailblazing* practices to improve diversity on school councils.

Trailblazer Formula For Engaging in Diversity and Inclusion



Conclusion



Attitudes and Beliefs

1. WRAPSC and PIC members have positive attitudes about diversity and the benefits of being inclusive.
- 2.

Experiences

70% of the informants indicated that their education prepared them to live in a diverse society.



Thank You!