Reflections on Our Book Study of *How to Be an AntiRacist* by Ibram X. Kendi
Thanks to Noa Daniel and Moses Velasco for their leadership!

Co-facilitating the inaugural Learning Forward Ontario book study with Moses Velasco on *How to Be an AntiRacist* by Ibram X Kendi was a good struggle and a very powerful experience. We spent 6 weeks and 4 virtual meetings as a group deliberating questions that we had planned, sharing resources and learning with and from each other.

A beacon of our book study sessions was that there would be an equity panel to whom we could direct our lingering questions and think through the ramifications of this text in an educational context. We were privileged to gather Dr. Kim Tavares, Cecil Roach, Dr. Vidya Shah, Colinda Clyne and Dr. Debbie Donsky on the OnEdMentors show on voicEd Radio for this powerful culminating conversation. Here is the audio if you missed it:

[https://voiced.ca/podcast_episode_post/an-equity-panel-how-to-be-an-antiracist/](https://voiced.ca/podcast_episode_post/an-equity-panel-how-to-be-an-antiracist/)
Some participants shared their reflections on this learning experience:

Melanie White wrote: Participating in this online book study with people who do not know me, pushed me to levels of discomfort that I did not anticipate. I knew that I needed to be vulnerable and share my views openly. The content of Kendi's book shifts the paradigm of racism in a profound way and sharing this book with others helped me internalize the concepts. The reading material, the questions, and the conversations have helped me begin the foundation for calling my White colleagues into learning about antiracist practices alongside me, and for identifying further actions that I need to take. I had already begun the disrupting of White dominant texts in my school, but now, I had a richer ability to articulate the "why". Despite the heightened vigilance that I felt was during discussions, Noa and Moses created a safe space for these hard conversations; they opened themselves as vulnerable learners. Knowing that I could make mistakes, that I will make mistakes, has helped me to embrace the essential pain of learning, this uncomfortable process that requires my acclimation.

Tania Sterling shared that she, “really enjoyed it” when asked to reflect on her experience of the book study. Some of the reasons were that the discussions were “organic and went in the direction of what curiosities the participants had as they read-which was great.” At first, she was attracted to the book study because of Dr. Debbie Donsky’s tweet thinking, "If she's involved, I'm in!” Debbie was a catalyst for piquing many people’s interest, and it was unfortunate that we could include everyone. We really wanted to keep this intimate. Tania added an additional reason for her joining writing, “I acknowledge that I have lots to learn on how to be an antiracist, so the choice of topic and text also drew me in. The facilitators created safety immediately and this was a prerequisite for tackling this important topic. Sincere thanks to Noa and Moses for being gracious hosts who created an incredible community in such a short time!”
Kelly Maggirias wrote: Joining the Learning Forward Book Club was exciting and made me a little nervous! I questioned, “how could a group of educators come together to discuss difficult topics such as equity and racism who had never met before?” What pleasantly surprised me was that a group of Ontario educators were able to work through our thoughts, questions and fears, where we delved into discussions through open critical discourse. A group of strangers became a network of respected colleagues that challenged, questioned and reflected on equity, education and systemic racism. We learned from each other and were able to discuss and learn through different perspectives.

Exploring and digging deep into equity and racism is not easy or comfortable. It is uncomfortable work that can be messy, difficult and yet allows us the opportunities to shift our mindset and navigate our own learning. Through the understanding and lived experiences of Kendi, I found myself constantly questioning and examining different experiences throughout my life and how I could be an ally throughout the grand landscape of our world. The book club allowed me to work through my own identity, privilege and lived experiences. It also pushed me to question and reflect on our system and how collectively we can be part of systemic change in education.

Kendi talks about being an Anti-racist and that it requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism and regular self-examination. The book club allowed for self-awareness, self-criticism and self-examination to be explored. I was able to examine, reflect and question my own lived experiences. This would lead to shifting my thinking and developing strategies and next steps to push forward as an Anti-racist. We must recognize that we are all on different learning journeys and we must move forward through an equity lens. Through an equity lens, we can begin to gather knowledge and tools to be anti-racists and actively begin the shift to systemic change.

My conclusions:
We cannot be complicit and it is important to keep interrogating and challenging everything from our texts, to our policies, to our sense of school cultures, and even what “public” education means. When we look at how this plays out in our schools, we have to ask questions about achievement and opportunity gaps. We have to question who is being elevated, and which narratives or ideologies are being perpetuated. This is a system wide issue, but we also have to examine our unique communities. There are many disruptions, broken down thoughtfully in each chapter of this text that are so well expressed and worth engaging with, especially through the safe space of this book study group. Our biggest responsibilities, beyond our personal growth, is to start the conversation. It has been my unique honour and challenge to co facilitate this book study book study, and I have been forever changed through it. ~ Noa Daniel

Thanks to Noa Daniel for organizing these reflections!
How to be An Anti-Racist Book Study Resources

Missed our virtual book study on How to be an Anti-Racist by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi? Check out our curated resource collection. Click on the image to access the site or visit http://www.learningforwardontario.ca and click on Professional Participation/Book Study to access.

Learning Forward Ontario Leaders are Readers!
For your consideration - three popular articles from Learning Forward’s journal, “The Learning Professional”.

Students on the Margins by Jim Knight
(Click on the title to access article)

When we consider how we coach students and support our colleagues, it is important to think about student engagement as a key component as well as student achievement.

5 Questions PLC's should ask to promote Equity

How might the work of PLC’s focus on making sure all students are engaged, inspired and successful.

How Teachers Learn to Lead

Helping teachers grow in their leadership remains vital to school improvement.
Learning Forward Ontario Newsbrief  February 2020

Learning Forward Ontario – Virtual Book Study Coming Soon!

Our second virtual book study will be facilitated by Learning Forward Directors - Deborah McCallum and Brian Weishar.

Our conversations, over four virtual sessions, will explore *Belonging through a Culture of Dignity: The Keys to Successful Equity Implementation* by Floyd Cobb & John Krownapple.

**Sign up now to reserve your spot! Space is limited to 25 participants!**

LFO – Ignite Evening & Networking Dinner!

How are you **BREAKING BARRIERS** and **BUILDING BONDS**?

That is the focus of our Learning Forward Ontario 2020 Spring Event!

**Date & Time:** Tuesday, April 21st, 2020
6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

**Location:** MindShare Space
Erin Mills Town Centre
Mississauga, Ontario.

**Cost:** $40.00 (includes dinner & refreshments)

**Registration:** [Click here to register]
Space is limited to 50 participants

Interested in Professional Learning & Leadership in Ontario?
Join the Learning Forward Ontario Network of educators for an evening of dinner and networking conversation!

Our evening of discussion and collaboration is centred around the stories of six Ontario Educators who will share **IGNITE** Presentations to spark our conversations and provoke reflection on our own practice with respect to **BREAKING BARRIERS** and **BUILDING BOND**s.

**What is IGNITE?**
IGNITE is a series of speedy presentations. Presenters get 20 slides, which automatically advance every 15 seconds. The result is a fast and fun presentation which lasts just 5 minutes. Ignite Talks began in 2006 and are based on the philosophy that everyone has a voice and a story to tell! This will be a fun and energetic evening of networking and conversation and we hope you will join us! **Space is limited so don’t wait!**

**Ignite Speakers:**
- Jen Giffen
- Noa Daniel
- Maggie Fay
- Jeewan Chanicka
- Ruthie Sloan
- Leslie Boerkamp
Sharing Professional Learning Resources

Learning Forward Ontario will be posting resources of interest monthly. Below are this month’s selections.

Whose Land App

**Whose Land App:** Are you and your students looking to deepen your understanding about why and how we make acknowledgements of Indigenous lands and treaties? This free app is the product of a shared vision between BOLD Realities, TakingITGlobal, and Canadian Roots Exchange, who identified the need to create a platform to increase knowledge and awareness of Indigenous territories, communities and Treaties and to help create dialogue around Indigenous territory recognition and acknowledgement. It is a starting point for conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens across this country about land, territorial recognition and land acknowledgement [https://www.whose.land/en/](https://www.whose.land/en/)

LFO- Monthly Twitter Chats

@LearningFwdON #LearnfwdON

We invite you to join our monthly #LearnfwdON twitter chats. They are held on the second Monday of each month. Be sure to check the website for more details, and follow @LearningFwdON on Twitter where we will post topics and questions prior to the chat.

Learning Forward Ontario – Website

We invite you to visit our Learning Forward Ontario Website for all the latest information and updates. Be sure to check it out at [www.learningforwardontario.ca](http://www.learningforwardontario.ca)

Contact Us

If you have thoughts to share, please email us at:

**General Inquiries** @learningforwardontario.ca

**Membership Questions** membership@learningforwardontario.ca

**Newsletter Submissions** editor@learningforwardontario.ca
LEARNING FORWARD ONTARIO PRESENTS

Ignite Sessions:
Breaking Barriers & Building Bonds

Burning Issues - Sparking Conversations
join us for a evening of conversation that will spark your thinking & ignite your learning.

Learning Forward Ontario Ignite Speakers

Leslie Boerkamp  
@lboerkamp

Jeewan Chanicka  
@jeewanc

Noa Daniel  
@noasbobs

Maggie Fay  
@maggiefay_

Jen Giffen  
@VirtualGiff

Ruthie Sloan  
@roosloans

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