

## July/August 2021:

- Summer Learning
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- Black Girls' Book Club
- Black Students' Adventures in Engineering
- Black Student Summer Leadership Program

## About Us

*The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement is the first of its kind in public education in Canada. The Centre is dedicated to improving the experiences and outcomes for Black students and aims to be responsive to the voices of Black communities who continue to advocate for systemic change within educational institutions and for dismantling anti-Black racism at the TDSB.*



## Summer Learning

This summer, students and families engaged in rich and culturally relevant learning experiences with community-based arts educators. Students registered in Model Schools for Inner Cities K-8, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Continuing Education summer learning programs participated in virtual African Drumming, Storytelling, Spoken Word, Visual Arts and/or Reggaecise activities. Through these sessions, students learned about Africentricity and were able to extend their understanding of self by exploring methods of creative expression. There were 51 schools offering summer learning programs this year.

In preparation for summer learning, educators were offered various forms of capacity-building sessions to deepen their understanding of Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), the principles of Africentricity, teaching and learning using online platforms, and establishing responsive relationships through remote learning environments.

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## Inspired to Excel Summer Learning Program

The Inspired to Excel summer learning program cultivates a sense of self-awareness, positive identity development and belonging in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students. For an additional year the program was offered through remote learning as part of the TDSB's summer learning experiences.

Available in 13 locations, this summer learning opportunity promotes self-love while honouring the lived experiences and identities of early learners. The program connects play and learning to a child's identity and interests while engaging families as partners in their child's education.

The Inspired to Excel program focuses on embedding strong literacy and numeracy practices for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten student development alongside Africentric and Culturally Relevant and Responsive frameworks.

A special component of this program is that families receive a resource package of texts and learning materials centred around children's unique lived experiences, background, history and culture. Students and families also engage in rich and relevant learning with community-based arts educators to extend the curriculum.



## Grades 7 & 8 Math Action Research

This summer, the Grades 7 & 8 Math Action Research project was launched at the TDSB to support numeracy programming. The project engages summer school educators as they continue to explore high impact instructional strategies that support building positive racial mathematics identity in conjunction with the system's de-streaming math plan.

Throughout the month of July, a summer math action research coach worked with teachers during the numeracy component of their lessons.

The role of the summer math action research coaches are to:

- Work collaboratively with students and summer school educators in math classrooms.
- Through co-learning and co-teaching experiences, the math action research coach documents educator and student experiences in mathematics during summer learning.
- Engage in practices and conditions that advance effective practices in equity and human rights.

This program intends to increase student confidence, promote positive identity mathematics, ensure space for student voice, and embed students' lived experiences in summer learning.

## Youth Participatory Action Research

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement in collaboration with the TDSB's Research and Development Department, the Jean Augustine Chair, Dr. Carl James, and researchers at York University, engaged in a Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR) focusing on Black Student Leadership and positive racial identity development.

In the year-long YPAR initiative, self-identified Black students developed their competencies as leaders in community-based research projects and become agents of social change. In this space students are honoured as they share their experiences navigating the school system and their community.

The 13 students enrolled in this year's program applied the YPAR framework to identify, conceive, design and implement research projects that target school-based policy change focused on anti-Black racism. Students also explored topics of Black identity, culture, history and Black solidarity.

Students expanded their critical thinking, research, leadership and advocacy skills throughout their involvement in YPAR. In addition, students engaged in reflection and conversations to develop their capacity and critical consciousness to recognize systemic barriers and forms of oppression.



## Renaming Schools Reference Group

The Toronto District School Board is coordinating the establishment of the Renaming Schools Reference Group. This volunteer group will be engaging in establishing a framework to lead the renaming of TDSB locations and schools.

Engaging in a process to rename a school is an acknowledgement of the need to reimagine the relationship between the school and the community. It considers both the historical and present-day significance of both the people and the space where the school resides.

This process is occurring at a time when there is a broader societal shift towards honouring the importance of “naming” spaces that represent Indigenous, Black or other racialized leaders, and its association to the land and Indigenous histories. Please read the approved motion for [Renaming Schools Celebrating the Diversity of Toronto](#).

The purpose of the group will be to:

- Inform the consultation process.
- Propose amendments to TDSB policy on the naming of Schools and Special Purpose Areas; and
- Provide a proposal for a city-wide review of all school names, so that TDSB schools reflect the diversity of Toronto's success.

To learn more about the Renaming Schools Reference Group and how to join, visit the [TDSB website](#).



## Black Girls' Book Club Student Testimonial

The Black Girls' Book Club has been created as a space to build community, explore new stories and ways of creative expression. The club celebrates the voices of Black women authors.

The following is a testimonial from recent TDSB graduate, Janiah Coley, a former student at Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute:

*Personally, I love to read. It started off with Archie comics and short stories, but as I got older, I started to read bigger books. Books with twists and turns at every corner. Books that had me at the edge of my seat. Books that were so good, I couldn't put them down. But unfortunately, barely any of these books had Black female leads, and if they did, the Black character would be the loud ghetto friend, or the student from a bad neighbourhood struggling to make ends meet. I hated seeing Black people being portrayed this way, but at times it felt like I was the only one who felt this way. I would watch my white friends being able to enjoy and see themselves in books representing all types of genres. The princess, the hero, the smart one, the courageous one. You name it, they played that type of character. The mean, cold and heartless characters were only reserved for Black women. It was annoying.*

*When I found out about Black Girls' Book Club, it was like a breath of fresh air. We read books with positive female Black leads in a variety of genres. Our most recent book was called Legend Born, which is about a young Black girl who travels to boarding school and then discovers she has powers.*

*It was such a great read. It is uncommon for me to see Black characters in the fantasy genre, so it was great that we got to read it. Yes, books like The Hate You Give are amazing and have important messages, but seeing Black trauma within literature is extremely heartbreaking, because I can directly link my own life to the lives of the characters. It's sad.*

*Black fiction that isn't trauma-based gives me an escape, but also it is fun to read. I'm so thankful for clubs like the Black Girls' Book Club, that offer me a safe space, but also positive Black representation within literature. I think schools should make more of an effort to include books with Black female leads. One of the best feelings in the world is seeing yourself in a positive light, and I truly believe that every Black student should be able to experience that.*

To learn more about the Black Girls' Book Club contact [keisha.evans@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:keisha.evans@tdsb.on.ca)

### In the News:

[Making Plans: TDSB supporting Black student success and excellence](#)

Ontario Summer Learning (July 27)

[TVO Collaborates with TDSB's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement for the Black Student Summer Leadership Program](#)

TVO (July 13)

[Toronto public school board Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement launched](#)

Ron Fanfair (June 29)

## Black Students' Adventures in Engineering

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement in collaboration with the University of Ottawa Faculty of Engineering hosted 14 students from June 28 to July 23 as part of the Black Students' Adventures in Engineering program.

During this four-week program, self-identified Black TDSB students from Grades 8 to 12 studied with University of Ottawa educators while earning credits toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Students could choose to enroll in two courses: Exploring Technological Design (TDJ10) or Creative Computing: Introduction to Computer Studies (ICS20).

By completion of the program, students were able to identify careers in various technological fields and computer studies. In addition, students were able to become familiar with 3D modeling software, develop and create prototypes and have a better understanding of computers, hardware and programming.

Students enrolled in the Black Students' Adventures in Engineering program received an introduction to university and engineering pathways.

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## Black Student Summer Leadership Program

This summer, over 95 students representing 30 schools participated in the five-week Black Student Summer Leadership Program which ended on August 6.

Students were placed with organizations representing various career fields including business, community development, information technology, entrepreneurship, media, public health, and skilled trades and technology.

The program matched self-identified Black TDSB students with experiential learning opportunities. Students were provided with skills and employment experiences to introduce them to a wide variety of professional pathways.

The Graduation Coaches for Black Students collaborated with over 15 partner organizations including: Teams Management, BE YU, Impact 'n Communities, APEX Public Relations, indever films and entertainment, Argyle, LEGACY Enterprises, Proof Experiences and more to provide experiential summer learning opportunities to students.

Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

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