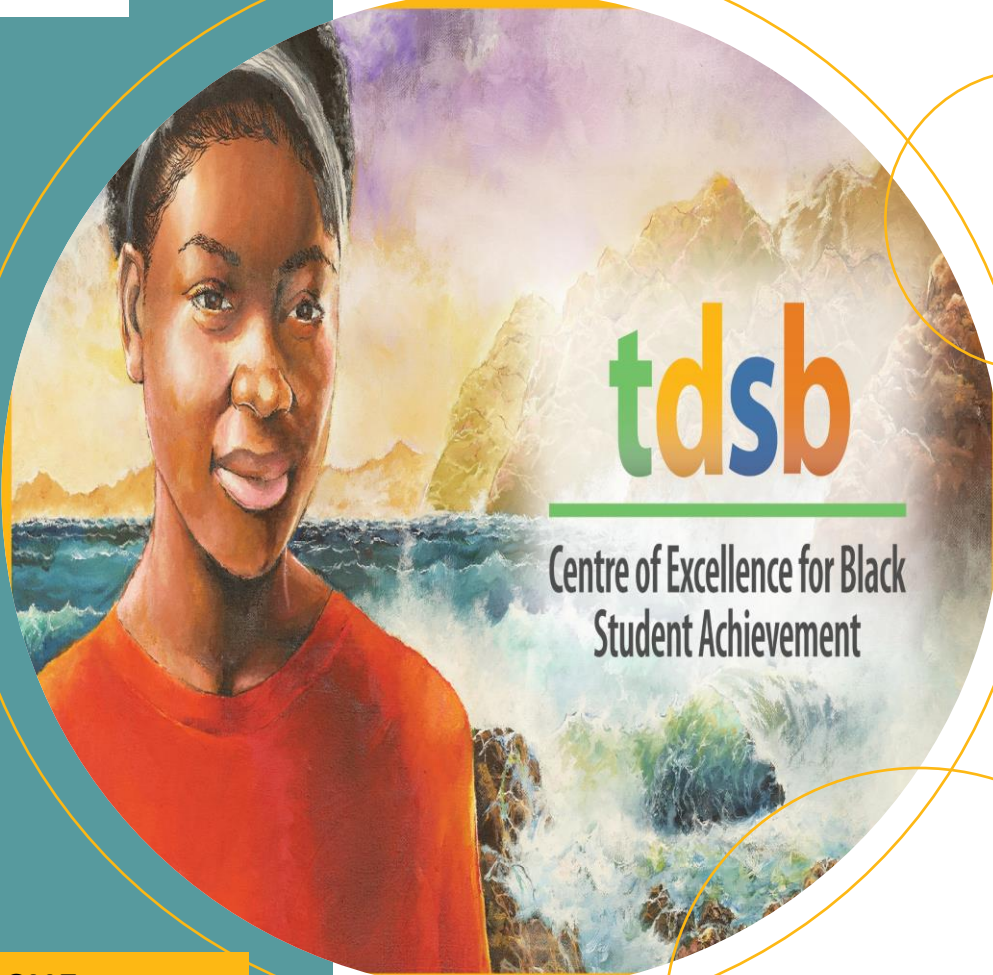


SUMMER 2023



IN THIS ISSUE

Principal's Message

Black Mentorship Conversations

Inspired to Excel Summer Learning Program

Black Student Summer Leadership Program

Youth Participatory Action Research

Parent and Caregiver Engagement

School Programming



PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

On June 13, 2023, we marked the first anniversary of the grand opening of student, community and professional learning spaces at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, located at Winston Churchill Cl. It has been a joy being able to connect with students, staff and families during the 2022 - 2023 school year.

This year, we ran a series of exciting programs for students including the Black Girls' Book Club, the Black Student Summer Leadership Program, and the Life Education Program. We partnered with several organizations to bring students the Pathways to Veterinary Medicine, the Interac Experiential Learning Program, Pathways to Public Relations, the Pathways to Public Health programs and many more.

We are proud to have offered various professional learning sessions for staff and community on topics connected to affirming Black student identity and creating healing spaces. We collaborated with community partners such as NCCM, Periphery and No Silence on Race, to better serve students, families and staff, and to broaden awareness of diverse Muslim and Jewish identities. In addition, we provided the International Decade for People of African Descent learning series to celebrate the rich history of Black identities and Africentricity.

For parents and caregivers, we hope you continue to join us for our Webinar Wednesday sessions and our Healing Engagement Series. Thank you for connecting with us this year.

This newsletter features an overview of our spring programming and summer offerings.

PRIDE

June was Pride Month, Indigenous Heritage Month, Italian Heritage Month and Portuguese Speaking Heritage Month.

The stories of the 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous communities require us year-round to understand that both are interconnected. We must recognize how they continue to engage in activism and their ongoing struggle to dismantle systems of oppression (homophobia, transphobia etc.) and varying forms of discrimination and racism (anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism) that impact their daily lives and communities.

It is a time to celebrate the moments in queer history that sparked activism and progress toward equality. In addition, many of these defining moments were only made possible by Black 2SLGBTQIA+ activists fighting for their liberation. The 2SLGBTQ+ movement – the Pride movement – has always exhibited a certain level of intersectionality and remains political.

Indigenous Heritage Month, like Pride Month, is a time of reflection and learning. We continue to honour the rich and diverse cultures, history, contributions, traditions, and outstanding achievements of Indigenous peoples across Canada, while also acknowledging the colonial history their communities have faced. This month is also about learning and understanding why truth and reconciliation are so important. We at the Centre would like to affirm our continued support and solidarity for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous communities. Especially the Black students and families that we work alongside and that sit with both identities.

We recognize there is ongoing work to be done. Our hearts mourn for the transgender and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the University of Waterloo school community for the violent attack which took place in June on the school campus. We must all work to dismantle hate and all forms of oppression. For additional resources, please contact cebsa@tdsb.on.ca.



BLACK MENTORSHIP CONVERSATIONS

This May, we hosted the Black Mentorship Conversations event. This event provided a space for mentorship to support Black staff who identify as an Aspiring Leader, Principal, Vice-Principal or Manager.

This event was made possible in collaboration with AHEN-TBEN and provided an evening of mentorship in an affinity space. The experience is aligned with the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement's mandate to highlight promising practices relevant to Black leadership.

At the event, remarks were shared by Director Colleen Russell-Rawlins and Karen Murray, System Superintendent, Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression, and AHEN-TBEN. In addition, leaders representing each Learning Centre had an opportunity to gather and connect with a variety of mentors from the Senior Leadership team.

Staff left feeling inspired and gained important knowledge to support their career development.



INSPIRED TO EXCEL SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM



Back for the 10-year anniversary is the Inspired to Excel Summer Learning Program. The program has two pathways: Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pre-Kindergarten Summer Learning Program and the Africentric Pre-Kindergarten Summer Learning Program.

Both pathways run from July 4 to July 28, 9 a.m. to noon. In the program, children will:

- Develop self-identity, self-confidence and self-awareness through meaningful engagement learning experiences.
- Develop foundational skills in literacy and mathematics.
- Be provided opportunities to learn in a classroom environment that reflects their identity, interests and their community.
- Infuse oral traditions, literature and reading through the use of Africentric and Culturally Relevant principles and resources.
- The Pre-Kindergarten programs are unique, exciting and are tailored to support pre-school children to build their self-confidence and to develop a foundation for academic success. Learners will be **Inspired to Excel** as they prepare to enter school!

The Summer Learning Programs are held at various TDSB schools.

BLACK STUDENT SUMMER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP) is back for another year! The program provides mentorship, skill development, and seven weeks of paid full-time experiential learning placements to Black students enrolled in Grades 10 to 12. In addition, there is an option to gain two co-operative education credits.

A key highlight of this program is that over the summer, students are paired with experiential learning opportunities that represent one of their identified passions. Often, the student placements are in career fields where Black people have been historically excluded or underrepresented.

This year's deadline for enrollment was in January, and since then enrolled students participated in job interviews, skills training workshops and Youth Participatory Action Research training.

Beginning July 4, over 100 students have joined us at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement at Winston Churchill CI to commence the full-time summer component of the program.



YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

This April to August, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement research team hosted its fourth Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) program with approximately 114 Black students registered. During the spring training session, students learned the fundamentals of research design, ethics, and developing research questions.

During the summer, students will continue their engagement with YPAR using an Afrocentric research approach. While students enjoy their placement opportunities, they will also be conducting research to investigate a social or political issue that impacts them or their community. During the last week of the summer program, students will present their findings to their peers, placement partners, families, and community members.

The research team centres Black students' voices and lived experiences through participatory and power-sharing relationships, and transformative actions. Stay tuned for information on the annual YPAR conference happening in October!

PARENT AND CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT

This year, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement offered a plethora of initiatives to support Black parents and caregivers of Black children. These initiatives included the Healing Engagement Series for Black Caregivers, the Webinar Wednesday series, and the Centre also hired two Community Support Workers – Sam Jama Mahmoud and Neville Worrell.

The Healing Engagement Series – Navigating the System: Mental Health and Wellness for Black Parents/Caregivers explored the impact of systemic anti-Black racism on mental health, shared tools and strategies for joy and wellness, and how to support a child's well being. In addition, Black-affirming mental health programs and services were communicated. The event consisted of a panel discussion with representatives from Central Toronto Youth Services, MPower Excellence, Taibu Community Health Centre and the Fatherhood Initiative.

The Webinar Wednesday series, consisted of monthly sessions which sought to support Black caregivers and caregivers raising Black children with meaningful engagement and advocacy. In addition, the series aimed to support system navigation processes for Black families and caregivers, alongside communication about Black student success.



SCHOOL PROGRAMMING



This year, staff from the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, consisting of Graduation Coaches for Black Students, Social Workers and Child and Youth Counselors initiated, led, or supported the development of student programming in various schools alongside school staff. Programming was affirming and responsive to the needs of Black students.

The Life Education Program was offered at AY Jackson SS, Shoreham Public Sports and Wellness Academy, Winston Churchill CI, and Westview Centennial SS. The purpose of the program was to provide students with culturally relevant and responsive mentorship spaces that help to identify and facilitate Black-affirming healing practices. The program also provided strategies to address stigma, anti-Black racism and racial trauma within educational institutions.

The Manifesting Amazing Dreams program was offered at AY Jackson SS and is a life skills and development program, for Black students, that helps youth navigate adolescence, and promote positive development through engagement in a variety of workshops, presentations and activities.

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement staff supported Central Technical School with Freedom Fest on June 9. Freedom Fest celebrated Black students, Black Joy, Black Resilience, and Black Brilliance. The event brought together Black students from Central Technical School, Victoria Park CI, Harbord CI and Central Toronto Academy.

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement staff also co-led the Black Ethics Excellence program at Central Technical School. The Black Ethics Excellence program had 42 boys participating in workshops, conversations, sports activities, mindfulness, career planning, emotional regulation, and financial literacy. Students also created a final proposal at the end of the program for changes they would like to see in the school system.



NEWS AND FEATURED STORIES

[TDSB Centre of Excellence 'a beacon of hope' for Black students](#) – Share News

[Introduction to the Life Education Program](#) – Toronto District School Board

[International Day of the African Child](#) – CP24

Mailing List

Sign-up for our [mailing list](#) so you can receive future updates directly from the Centre of Excellence for Black Student

Follow us on social media

Twitter: [@tdsb_cebsa](#)

Instagram: [@tdsb_cebsa](#)

Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

www.tdsb.on.ca/cebsa

cebsa@tdsb.on.ca

DAYS OF SIGNIFICANCE

June - Pride Month

June - National Indigenous History Month

June - Italian Heritage Month

June - Portuguese History and Heritage Month

June 19 – Juneteenth

June 21 – National Indigenous Peoples Day

June 28 – Anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Riots

July 2 - Eid al-Adha

July 18 – Nelson Mandela International Day

July 23 – Birthday of Emperor Haile Selassie I

August 1 - Emancipation Day

August 9 – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

August 12 – International Youth Day

August 17 – Marcus Garvey's Birthday

August 23 -International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition