



## June 2022

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## 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.*

## Grand Opening

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement hosted its Grand Opening event on June 13, 2022, at Winston Churchill CI.

The event featured remarks from TDSB Director Colleen Russell-Rawlins, Board Chair Alexander Brown, Dr. George Dei, Ontario's 1<sup>st</sup> Poet Laureate Randell Adjei and System Superintendent Karen Murray. Itah Sadu moderated and hosted the event. Students from the Africentric Alternative School provided a wonderful steelpan performance.

The audience was serenaded by the talents of Principal Thando Hyman who sang the Black National Anthem and Coco Collective who gave an earth-shattering performance with African drumming and dancing.

The in-person audience participated in a variety of workshops and received a tour of the completed Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement which featured community lounges, professional development rooms and student programming space.

The rooms and hallways of the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement are adorned with art and murals created by artist Danilo Deluxo.

If you missed the event, you can view the recording on our [website](#). There is also a [compendium](#) document available that features the voices of community, staff and students.

## Grand Opening Photographs



*Group picture of staff from the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement*



*Performance from Coco Collective*



*Office at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement*

## Black Student Summer Leadership Program

The Black Student Summer Leadership Program is back! Over 100 students registered this year to explore career fields in community development, information technology, public health, skilled trades, business, media and creative industries.

Enrolled students are offered paid experiential learning opportunities in the summer, in addition to mentorship and training sessions.

Students will meet with Graduation Coaches for Black Students and the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement staff at the newly opened Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement offices on July 4 to kickoff the start to the summer program.

In March, students engaged in pre-employment workshops facilitated in partnership with Tropicana Community Services and the YMCA of Greater Toronto.

In addition, students began their training in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in April and the second phase will continue from July to August.

The Black Student Summer Leadership Program is made possible through collaborations with a variety of organizations. TDSB students are placed with post-secondary institutions, community educators and for-profit and not-for-profit establishments.



## Black Girls' Book Club

This year, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement successfully launched three cohorts of the Black Girls' Book Club and serviced both high school and middle school students.

Middle school students in Gr. 6 to 8 read, *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ranée.

The secondary school cohort in the spring semester read *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi.

Launched by Graduation Coaches for Black Students, the Black Girls' Book Club is a space to build community, explore new stories and ways of creative expression. The club meets with self-identifying Black girls in the TDSB to celebrate the voices of Black women authors.

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

## Student Testimonial

My experience in the Black Girls' Book Club (BGBC) was a very positive one. Not only was I blessed with the opportunity to read a great book that had a Black girl as the main character, but I was able to travel this journey with other Black girls who brought about meaningful conversations and with leaders who were Black women. This experience made me feel very happy.

It was also great having people who could relate to the challenges that I encountered as a Black girl as well as discuss common issues Black girls experience. I often felt uncomfortable when the topic of racism is brought up because the people who partake in these conversations cannot relate to my experiences.

Being a part of the BGBC has empowered me to recognize and speak out against racism when it arises. The space the BGBC provided gave me freedom and a sense of security that does not exist in other settings. In conclusion, the BGBC had a positive impact on me, and I would encourage all Black girls to join this club. - *Donielle, Grade 9, Delphi Secondary Alternative School.*



## Pathways to Public Relations

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement in collaboration with Code Black Communicator Network and Humber College conducted three sessions this spring to introduce students to the field of public relations and communications.

Enrolled students explored different jobs and career pathways within the public relations and communications industry, learned about transferable skills and scholarship opportunities.

Students also connected directly with professionals working within public relations, communications and content creation.

For more information about this program and scholarship opportunities, contact [kai.gordon@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:kai.gordon@tdsb.on.ca).

### Follow us on social media

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## ADVANCE Music Discovery Program

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement in collaboration with ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective hosted a 9-week program this spring for Grade 11 and 12 students.

The program connected Black youth with industry executives, professionals in the music business and Graduation Coaches for Black Students.

Throughout the program, students received mentorship and support in the development of transferable skills and obtained increased access to industry professionals and academic opportunities.

Enrolled students explored career pathways in the music industry.

At the end of the program, students were taken to the Juno Awards and were able to watch a phenomenal lineup of top Canadian musical talent perform during the live show.

For more information on this program, contact [dwright.bleary@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:dwright.bleary@tdsb.on.ca)

**ADVANCE**  
CANADA'S BLACK MUSIC BUSINESS COLLECTIVE





## Mailing List

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

## Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

[www.tdsb.on.ca/cebsa](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/cebsa)

[cebsa@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:cebsa@tdsb.on.ca)

## In the News:

[Centre of Excellence plays 'vital leadership role in creating new opportunities' for students – Colleen Russell-Rawlins](#)

Caribbean Camera (June 18)

[Toronto school board celebrates opening of centre for Black excellence](#)

National Observer (June 15)

[TDSB's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement opens its doors](#)

Toronto.com (June 14)

[First of its kind centre opens for black TDSB students](#)

City News (June 13)

[Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement](#)

CTV News (June 13)

['It just feels blessed': TDSB finally gets to unveil Centre of Excellence for Black students](#)

CBC News (June 13)

[Official opening of Centre of Excellence to be held on June 13](#)

Caribbean Camera (June 5)

[TDSB Students Score Second Place in Intuit "Lead with a Cause" Social Innovation Challenge](#)

Toronto District School Board (June)