

Music Business Exploration with **ADVANCE: Canada's Black Music Collective**

Research Report

THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR BLACK STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Music Industry Discovery Program with ADVANCE Canada's Black Music
Business Collective

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Executive Summary

This report is an overview of the partnership between the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement and the ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective. The report provides details about students' experiences in the nine-week Music Industry Discovery Program held in 2022. The report details the extent to which the program met its objectives and outcomes.

The study used a survey design consisting of 18 Likert scale (closed-ended) and open-ended questions to collect the data from student participants. Students received an invitation via email to participate in the study. Thirty-three Black students expressed interest in participating in the program. Of this total, thirty students enrolled and 15 completed the program. All 15 students responded to and completed the online survey. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The open-ended data from the survey was coded and analyzed thematically. Furthermore, the literature review was used to support the findings of the study.

Student participants highlighted four areas in their feedback on the Music Industry Discovery Program. These four areas include developing students' knowledge about the music industry, sense of belonging, career mapping, and financial literacy. The report provides a detailed review of the literature, methodology, synopsis of the findings, and recommendations.

Overall, the findings of study revealed that Black students consider the ADVANCE program as adding value to their lives. The students also highlighted the sense of belonging that the program created while motivating them to learn from Black professionals and their peers. Other emerging findings in the study reflect the development of multiple skills such as communication, planning, and presentation skills. The findings also indicated that students' participation in the ADVANCE program enhanced their knowledge of the music industry while influencing their career decisions.

Introduction

Given the importance of music to Black¹ peoples' histories in North America and the diaspora (e.g., Caribbean and Central America), exploring its influence and impact are critical in understanding how integral are the role that music and musicians played from enslavement, civil rights struggles and religious ceremonies to social commentary and community building. People of African descent carried with them their musical culture that mixed African traditions with those of Europe and the Americas (Lewis, 2016). The most distinctive features of Black people's musical traditions can be traced back in some form or other to Africa and many of the expressive performance practices seen as synonymous within the music. These include blue notes and call-and-response (Lewis, 2016), which have their roots in techniques originally developed in western and central Africa before arriving in the United States, the Caribbean and other regions via the Middle Passage. Over the centuries, Black musicians have drawn on the ancestral connection to Africa as a source of pride and inspiration.

The roots and impact of music in Black communities and across generations, go much deeper than catchy songs and popular artists. For Black/African youth, Black music has always been a messenger, an outlet, and a space of freedom.

Black youth have used and continue to use music as a tool that allows them to express themselves authentically, promote cultural pride, and critique the social ramifications of structural inequity (Anyiwo et al., 2022). The influence of music and musical genres provide an alternative or an outlet for many Black youth. It remains part of their culture and identity and is integral for pushing for social and political change from jazz to R&B and hip-hop and several genres in between (e.g., reggae, dancehall, afrobeat amapiano, etc.). As such, music is often the site for the negotiation of cultural self-definition for Black youth. The politics of music remains an important slice of life in re-presenting the Black body by reaffirming everyday Black life, struggles, and always, freedom dreaming (Kelley, 2022) to reimagine a better world.

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Program

The Ontario Ministry of Education's investment in the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program is aimed at improving graduation rates among Grades 11 and 12 high school students. The SHSM program is an alternative path to high school students gaining meaningful employment, experiential experience, and training in their post-secondary field of interest (Akbar, 2019; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; Toronto District School Board [TDSB], 2013). SHSM programs are designed to improve students' knowledge and transferable skills that are similar to their post-secondary field

¹ The term "Black" refers to individuals, peoples or communities of Black /African descent living in Canada. This may include, but are not limited to individuals or peoples from the Black diaspora with varying geographical, historical, cultural, national, ethnic, religious, and ancestral origins and influences (e.g., African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latin, Afro-Indigenous, Afro- European).

of interest (Parekh et al., 2016). This is done across 19 sectors such as arts and culture (music), aviation, and energy, among others (Akbar, 2019; Hamilton, 2021b; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; Parekh et al., 2016; TDSB, 2013). Students' successful completion of the SHSM program is based on them obtaining certification and 8-10 credits towards their graduation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Other key requirements include partnering schools and organizations working together to ensure students' experiences are aligned with their post-secondary plans (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, 2023; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010; TDSB, 2013; Segedin, 2018).

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) offers 14 SHSM² programs that were approved by the Ministry of Education, ranging from Arts and Culture to Transportation, across 126 schools. One of the main goals of the TDSB's SHSM program is ensuring that students complete their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) in their area of passion within a given economic sector. Each program allows students to obtain skills, knowledge, and training that are related to their specific career interest while preparing them for post-secondary education and employment (TDSB, 2021). As identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education, pursuing SHSM programs in high schools will help meet the needs, interests and strengths of all students, engaging them in learning and preparing them for graduation, life beyond high school, and the jobs of the future (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2019). As underscored in TDSB's Student Interest Programs policy (TDSB, 2022), the Board is "committed to supporting strong, accessible and inclusive community schools that provide educational programs, including Student Interest Programs, for the diverse needs of its students" (p. 3). This type of approach yields tangible benefits as it creates pathways to particular careers and provides alternative measures of participation in K-12 learning environments (TDSB, 2022). The matter of how to improve Black students' understanding of what is available in the music industry, however, involves a complex web of motivation, time, educational support, networking, mentorship, and long-held perceptions of success.

Scope of the Report

This report gives an overview of the partnership between the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement and the ADVANCE music program. The report provides details about students' experiences in the nine-week ADVANCE Music Industry Discovery program held in 2022. The report details the extent to which the program met its objectives and outcomes.

² TDSB Specialist High Skills Major Program
<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Going-to-High-School/Specialist-High-Skills-Major-SHSM>

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement and ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective Partnership

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement mandates highlight the need to identify barriers to success and access appropriate resources (e.g., scholarships, networking, mentoring) and engage in strategic community partnerships related to education³. Using the mandates to guide the work of staff requires support from and collaboration with K-12 education partners (i.e., families and communities) committed to addressing educational barriers for Black students. Along with the board-wide Multi-Year Strategic Plan⁴, the Centre of Excellence's work is to provide school staff with effective mechanisms to support Black students. At the Centre of Excellence, we believe that partnerships among schools, families, and communities can provide the enrichment opportunities and programs that Black students need to thrive and be academically successful.

More often than not, Black Canadian K-12 students occupy education and community spaces that normally lack Black representation. At the Centre of Excellence, staff work alongside community partners to reduce the gaps and barriers to specialized programs and to make connections with the Black students' areas of interest. Therefore, in an effort to create pathways and interest of Black students in SHSM arts and culture programs at TDSB, the Centre of Excellence partnered with ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective. The program offered opportunities for Black students to learn about other pathways such as the business and entrepreneurship components in the music industry that are not directly tied to being an artist. This was done as a way to provide valuable learning opportunities through mentorship and engagement with Black professionals in the music industry. The music industry is very diverse and includes careers such as executives, musicians, publicists and managers. Depending on the interest of students and young people, having the relevant skills and education are important to build their knowledge and understanding in the music industry. Another important element is seeking out support and mentorship to foster their growth and development.

Therefore, the after-school ADVANCE music program was co-developed by members of the Centre of Excellence and ADVANCE team to target Black students in Grades 11 and 12 as a means of generating interest in and learning more about different career opportunities in the music sector.

Program Objectives

The four objectives of this nine-week ADVANCE music program were aimed at:

³ The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement is guided by nine mandates <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/CEBSA/About-Us>

⁴ TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Action Plan https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/docs/Multi-Year%20Strategic%20Plan_AODA_Oct%202019_Appendix%20A.pdf

1. connecting Black youth with industry executives and professionals in the music business;
2. providing students with mentorship opportunities through partnerships with professionals in the music industry;
3. supporting the development of students' transferable skills that will facilitate increased access to opportunities (such as communication, planning, etc.); and
4. educating Black youth (Grades 11 & 12) about different career opportunities in the music industry (e.g., marketing manager, content creator, among others).

About ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective

ADVANCE Canada's Black Music Business Collective was launched in 2020, with a team leading the change in developing an infrastructure for the betterment, upliftment, and retention of Black professionals in the music business across the country (ADVANCE, n.d.). ADVANCE is focused on improving the music industry ecosystem by championing diversity and prioritizing inclusion (ADVANCE, n.d.). Their mission is to help foster an environment within the Canadian music industry that improves, promotes, and better retains Black employees and partners (ADVANCE, n.d.). The organization's vision for Black music professionals is to create conditions for long-term success by addressing racial equality and inclusivity through three areas: Advocacy, Mentorship, and Community Outreach (ADVANCE, n.d.).

Literature Review

Black Canadian K-12 Students and SHSM Programs in Ontario

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2010; 2014) policy document on SHSM details the importance of schools providing students the opportunity to enrol in the four pathways of SHSM. These four pathways include apprenticeship training, college, university, and workplace. The policy document also outlines the several key benefits of SHSM for K-12 students. Specifically, students have autonomy to personalize their educational outcome with their area of passion such as music. The SHSM program also enables students to develop and improve their transferable skills and knowledge, as well as use obtained credits, in the industry and post-secondary organization of their choice. Students also have the opportunity to receive specific training and certification in their field of interest, and use the Essential Skills learned that are incorporated in the Ontario Skills Passport. The SHSM program also offers students the flexibility to change their pathways and modify their educational goals.

Limited research exists that focuses primarily on Black students' experience in the K-12 SHSM program in Ontario. To date, only a few authors such as Parekh et al. (2016) and Segedin (2013; 2018) have examined the SHSM program and the inequity in access, opportunity, and outcomes for Black and racialized students. Parekh et al.'s (2016) examination of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) structures, processes, and

outcomes revealed that 53.8% of students who were enrolled in the SHSM programs were also enrolled in the academic stream. Only 46.2% completed their program and graduated on time while 2.2% received confirmation of enrollment to attend university. Parekh et al.'s (2016) study also draws our attention to the ongoing problem of streaming, as the findings indicated that students in the SHSM program were 1.7 times as likely to self-identify as Black. These authors concluded that despite the well-intentioned nature of the SHSM program to increase equitable outcomes in graduation, it unintentionally, "Create[d] a segregated space for already marginalized students" (Parekh et al., p. 75).

Segedin's (2018) study discussed SHSM programs that have been implemented in Ontario as part of the 'Student Success Learning to 18 Strategy'⁵ to increase secondary graduation rates. The author inquired about the consistency of the SHSM across Ontario and which set of students enrolled in SHSM programs have the greatest impact on academic success (Segedin, 2018). Highlighted in the study are the unintended benefits of the SHSM program among students with special needs classification. Many students enrolled in the SHSM program are classified as having special needs but are high achievers with interest in post-secondary education (Segedin, 2018). Moreover, some special needs classified students have shown recorded improvement in their academic achievement when compared to others who are not enrolled in SHSM (Segedin, 2018). Segedin's study further revealed that SHSM program implementation across schools has an impact on students' overall well-being and achievement. In other words, the benefits of the SHSM program are often realized when it is implemented in schools with a greater need for the program and strong leadership (Segedin, 2018). Successful implementation of SHSM in these schools is also dependent on leaders providing ongoing professional development training for staff and equitable resources (Segedin, 2018).

Though there is no disaggregated data based on race, gender and/or other intersectionalities, Segedin's (2018) and other researchers discussions on student disengagement, drop out rates, individual and institutional factors points to ongoing conversations about Black students' schooling experiences in Ontario (George, 2020; James, 2012; James et al., 2017; McPherson, 2020). A large portion of Black youth are impacted by negative school engagement, anti-Black racism, school discipline and streaming, to name a few. These disparities affect the success and achievement of all Black youth in Ontario, including Black girls (McPherson, 2020). Research studies on Black youth often miss opportunities to disaggregate findings to thoroughly account for the specific identities of Black youth, and, therefore, do not adequately account for the nuanced experiences they encounter in specialized programs in schools.

⁵ The Ontario Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 (SS/L18) Strategy <https://www.ontario.ca/page/programs-for-student-success>

Career Opportunities

The music industry offers a wide range of career opportunities that align with Black youth's interests. Career opportunities for Black Ontarian youth refer to internships, training, or job opportunities that move them closer to their professional goal in music. However, inequity in access to employment and overall career development in the creative industry remains a high point of concern (Fitzpatrick, 2013; Jingco, 2017). Moreover, systemic racism and parents'/caregivers' limited understanding of music as a career path have posed barriers to Black students pursuing their interest in music, among others (Burland & Davidson, 2002; CBC, 2020; Hamilton, 2021b; Yates, 2020). Supporting evidence from the 2021 Ontario unemployment report also revealed that youth (14.5%), aged 15-24, exceeded the province's overall rate of unemployment (8%) (Government of Ontario, 2021).

To address this problem, the Ontario government has invested \$1 million in skills development training for Black and racialized youth in music and other professions in the creative industries (Government of Ontario, 2021). Building Black youth's capacity to learn and transfer their skills, such as communication and planning, is equally important to fill different positions in the music industry (Doyle, 2019). These professional careers in music include brand ambassadors, social media managers, and event marketers, among others⁶ (Dwyer et al., 2000; Trade Schools, 2022; Ubaniak & Smith, 2021). Scholars have observed that the Ontario music curriculum does not adequately address or provide direction to improve diversity in students' interests and job opportunities in music (Beynon & Veblen, 2012; Hamilton, 2021b; Veblen & Beynon, 2003).

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills support the enhancement of Black youth's life long learning and employment opportunities. Bridges (1993) and Rocha (2015) suggest that transferable skills in music are a set of learned skills that can be utilized across a wide spectrum of cognitive and professional domains. In addition, transferable skills engender a smoother transition into students' professional interests and serve as a conduit for mapping their career path in music (Ghazali & Bennett, 2017). Established practices among educators have been highlighted in their support of Black students in music programs. In order for Black students to transition successfully after high school, they have to be resourceful, aware, and highly trained personnel as they move into their music career (Barkl, 2008; Bartleet et al., 2012; Countryman, 2009).

Scholars have also drawn our attention to music as a liberatory practice where students learn transferable skills that contribute to positive change. Such positive change is evident in students developing the requisite knowledge, attitude, and behaviours in music (Bonell et al., 2016; Colbert, 2021; Creech et al., 2013; Damon, 2004; Hopkins et al., 2016; Larson, 2000). Music skills that fall within the category of knowledge include:

⁶ Career opportunities for Black youth in the music industry include music producer, music arranger, recording engineer, tour manager, booking agent, and publicist (Doyle, 2019; Dwyer et al., 2000; Trade Schools, 2022). Additional areas of employment include sponsorship or sales manager, designer, event producer, talent booker, financial manager, audio and visual technician, volunteer coordinator, and operations team, among others.

problem-solving and communication. Attitude, on the other hand, allows for increased self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and a sense of responsibility, among others (Bonell et al., 2016; Damon, 2004; Hopkins et al., 2016; Larson, 2000). Students experience improvement in their social competence and behaviours in relation to their capacity to collaboratively work with others, be disciplined in completing tasks, and have autonomy in decision-making processes as leaders (Bonell et al., 2016; Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015; Tsaklagkanou & Creech, 2021; Wilks, 2011).

Collectively, these three categories of transferable skills—knowledge, attitude, and behaviour—help to strengthen students' passion for the field and strengthen relationships (Bonell et al., 2016; Hopkins et al., 2016). Honing these skill sets strengthens Black students' employability and success in their area of expertise, thus, allowing for a qualified workforce where youth are self-sufficient and can contribute to the growth of their community and economy (Bennett, 2016; Toscher, 2020).

Mentorship Opportunities

Mentorship affords Black youth opportunities to connect with and learn from Black music professionals. Mentorship is a mutually beneficial relationship established between a professional with the relevant experience, knowledge, and skills in a specialized area, and the aspiring mentee/student seeking to understand more about the same area of interest (Bingley, 2020; District School Board of Niagara, 2022; Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Farren, 2006; Murphy, 2021). *Mentor Canada* (2021) research revealed that Canadian youth, aged 6-18 years, who identified as Black, developed positive relationships with their mentors. Of the total 2,838 youth surveyed, 2.6% of the 177 (6%), worked with and developed positive relationships with at least one mentor. Eighty percent reported increased confidence in their abilities while 68% had enhanced hope and optimism about their future (Mentor Canada, 2021). The report revealed that 65% of Black youth felt that mentorship enhanced their self-esteem and overall pride.

Other positive effects of mentorship on Black youth include improved mental well-being, educational outcomes, completion of high school, employment opportunities, and resilience when faced with challenges (Mentor Canada, 2021). Consistent with these findings and Black youth's success in music are students' passion for their area of interest, positive relationships with their mentors, and the establishment of a safe and positive environment (Anderson, 2020; Lee et al., 2017; Murphy, 2021; Williams, 2020). Relatedly, systematically established mentorship affords Black students access and opportunity to pursue their area of interest in music (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Whelchel, 2000). Specifically, it was noted that when Black students have Black teachers as mentors at the high school, college, and university levels, they are more apt to enroll and succeed in their music program (Ahebee, 2021; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Palmer, 2011; Whelchel, 2000). There is also a need for schools to value representation and hire diverse Black music teacher mentors along the lines of sexual orientation, age, gender, and expertise in order for students to develop a joy for learning in this field (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Hamilton, 2021b; Palmer, 2011; Whelchel, 2000).

Other studies have also highlighted the benefits of Black youth enrollment in pre-college programs that are aligned with their area of passion, such as music (Clauhs & Pigott, 2021; Goodrich, 2022; Whelchel, 2000). These authors explained that pre-college programs provide youth the opportunity to network with like-minded students, gain experience, and expand their musical talents. Pre-college and community programs also expose students to peer mentoring that serve to build their confidence in being creative, while sharing and learning new knowledge about different genres and opportunities in music (Goodrich, 2022; Clauhs & Pigott, 2021). Research has also suggested that many mentorship programs prioritize Black male students' academic achievement instead of music and other specialized programs (Goings et al., 2017; Williams; 2020). However, contributing to this focus on academics alone does not reflect the totality of all Black students' educational outcomes and engagement with school.

Barriers to Accessing Music Programs

Black students' access to music programs is complex. Systemic and structural racism and discrimination have hindered Black and racialized youth access to opportunities in music when compared to their White counterparts (Burland & Davidson, 2002). Black students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are, however, at a disadvantage in accessing these opportunities because of their parents'/caregivers' inability to offset tuition costs (Briscoe & Oliver, 2006; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Frenette, 2007; Culp & Clauhs, 2020; James & Taylor, 2008). Adding to this complex problem of access to the music industry is that some Black parents view music as an unsuitable career for their children (Rickels et al., 2013; Rickels et al., 2019), thus, contributing to the lack of representation in this field. Vice President of Audiomack, Jason Johnson, further expanded on the lack of representation in the field when he added that, "of the 70 major and independent music companies, only 4.2% of high-level executives are Black" (Eggersten, 2022, para. 4).

Risk factors are listed as major barriers for Black youth accessing music programs. These include homelessness, socioeconomic background, anti-Black racism, discrimination, enrollment policies, among others (Abramo & Bernard, 2020; Salvador & Allegood, 2014). Fifty-four percent of Black Canadian youth have experienced at least two risk factors in their teenage years when compared to 39% of other participants in music programs (Mentor Canada, 2021). At the root of this problem is the lack of mentorship experience among 41% of Black youth between 6-18 years of age and the reported 44% who have experienced barriers to such programs (Mentor Canada, 2021). Given this existing inequity in representation across the field of music, Canadian Black professionals in the music industry have since supported Black youth through mentorship programs to influence their interest and matriculation in this program (CBC, 2021).

It is important to note the efforts of organizations such as Black Mentorship Inc. [BMI] (2020) and Soundstock Academy to provide mentorship support aimed at empowering

and supporting the career path of Black and other racialized youth/people. The BMI is dedicated to addressing these challenges by providing an inclusive mentorship program to foster the growth, empowerment, and career development of Black people (BMI, 2020). Participants in the Soundstock Academy program highlighted the core purpose of creating a community of entrepreneurs where youth can develop different skills in music such as designing their own record label (as cited in CBC, 2021). In addition to these mentorship programs, the ADVANCE music program serves to create a cadre of talented and trained Black youth to fill these roles.

Methodology

Research Design

A survey design consisting of Likert scale and open-ended questions was used to collect the data. The survey allowed for extended reach to Black students across the TDSB who enrolled in the nine-week ADVANCE music program. Eighteen (18) closed- and open-ended questions were used to understand student demographics and experience acquired in the program in areas of academic knowledge, career mapping, transferable skills, and financial literacy.

Study Site and Participants

In March 2022, the TDSB's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement advertised the ADVANCE Music program across all schools. A total of 33 Black identifying students in Grades 11 and 12 submitted their application to participate in the program. Thirty students completed the music program.

Limitation/s of the Study

Only 50% (n=15) of the students enrolled in the ADVANCE music program participated in the online survey. Although students completed the closed-ended questions, the open-ended questions were not completed in detail. Nonetheless, the literature review is used to support existing findings.

Key Findings

The findings of the study are divided into four major themes: 1) Black Students' Engagement with the ADVANCE Music Program, 2) Career Mapping, 3) Skills Development, and 4) Financial Literacy. The study suggests that Black students found value in the ADVANCE program. Participating students identified a sense of belonging, feeling motivated and learning from Black staff and peers. Data suggested that there was benefit in engaging with Black music professionals. Participants also shared the benefits of skill development. These benefits include communication and presentation skills. The majority of students surveyed in this study expressed interest in financial

literacy and learning more about the financial benefits of music. Students' responses to questions about career mapping further revealed the influence of the ADVANCE program on their career decisions, and improving their knowledge of the music industry.

Participant Demographics

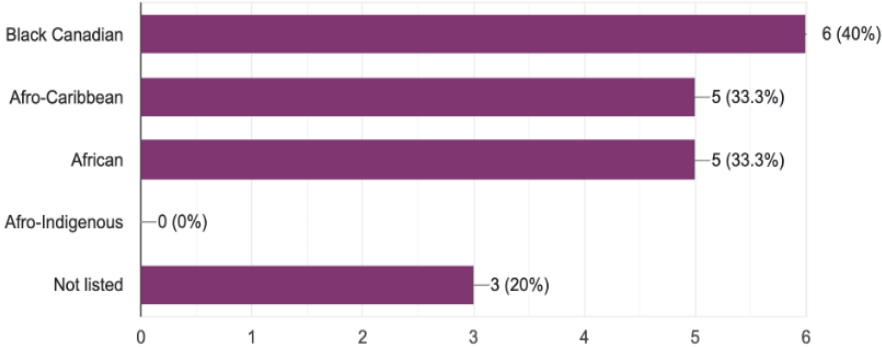
Figure 1 shows the percentage of participating students by grade level. The majority of participating Grades 11 and 12 Black students self-identified as male (53.3%) and female (53.2%). One student (6.7%) preferred not to self-identify.

Figure 1: Students' Grade Level



Of the total number of Black students (n=15), 40% self-identified as Black Canadian, 33.3% as Afro-Caribbean, and 33.3% as African (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Students' Racial Identity



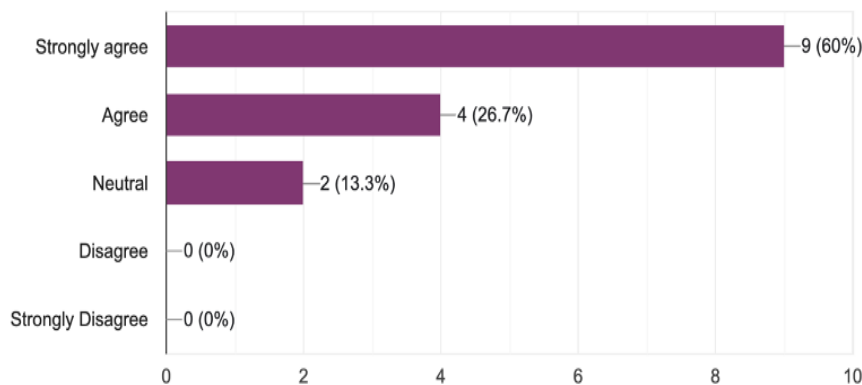
1. Black Students' Engagement with ADVANCE Music Program

Engagement in programming and support provides Black students with connections to academic and career opportunities, wellness, and many other services to foster a sense of belonging and community. An after-school program specifically designed to address racial and economic disparities affecting Black youth and empowering them to be a positive change in their community has long-term effects on behaviour. Given the positive results from data and literature on the importance of engaging youth in mentorship and leadership and career opportunities, it can be particularly effective for Black K-12 students at the individual, interpersonal and community level. This must be done to support their success in schools and help their transition to post-secondary education and/or identify their career pathways.

Value in the ADVANCE Program

The findings revealed that 86.7% of the participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they found value in the ADVANCE program. Only 13.3% remained neutral (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Value in ADVANCE Program

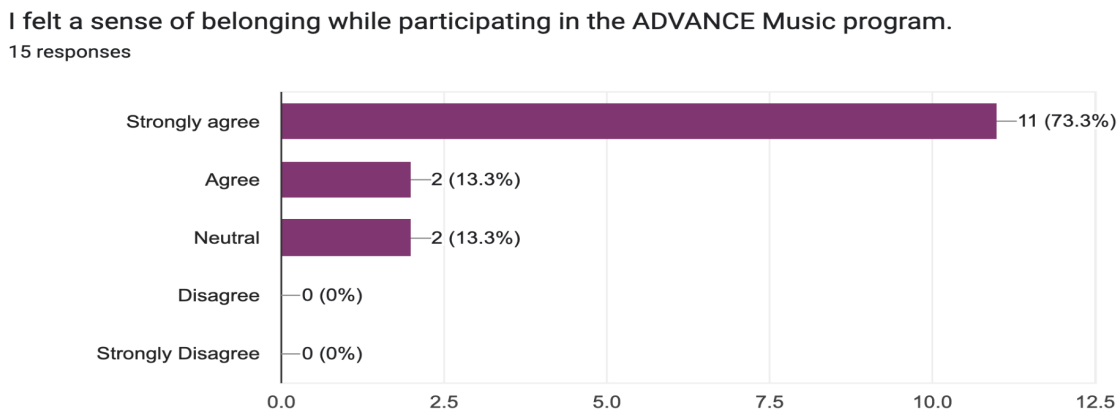


For many Black students, music provides opportunities for learning and builds communities of learners where Black students can share their culture, and grow professionally (Hamilton, 2021b). For example, Catterall (2013), in his interview with Travis Smiley on PBS discussing "*The Consequences of Curtailing Music Education*", mentioned that involvement in music classes increases overall motivation, teamwork, and self-confidence (Hallam, 2010). While these characteristics may not be favorable with academic skills, there are many perceived benefits of music education and/or programs. As identified by Coalition for Music Education in Canada (2010), these include developing creative problem solving skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, effective communication and collaboration skills, self-discipline, and helping students achieve in other academic areas (e.g., math, reading).

Sense of Belonging

Participating students in this study were asked to share if they felt a sense of belonging while participating in the ADVANCE music program. Figure 4 below indicates that almost all students (86.6%) felt a sense of belonging in the nine-week music program, while 13.3% remained neutral.

Figure 4: Students' Sense of Belonging



For most Black students, having a sense of belonging refers to their collective experience in K-12 education in terms of interpersonal, instructional, and institutional opportunity structures (Gray et al., 2018). Socio-cultural perspectives of the educational process posit that students need a sense of community or connection to others in order to maximize student learning, motivation, and engagement (Allen et al., 2021; Booker, 2006; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Associated with Black students' sense of belonging is their access to school services and educational programs that support their interest (Colbert, 2021; Parker, 2010; Wiens, 2015). Research has confirmed that high school students who participate in school activities report higher levels of school connection and membership (Brown & Evans, 2002).

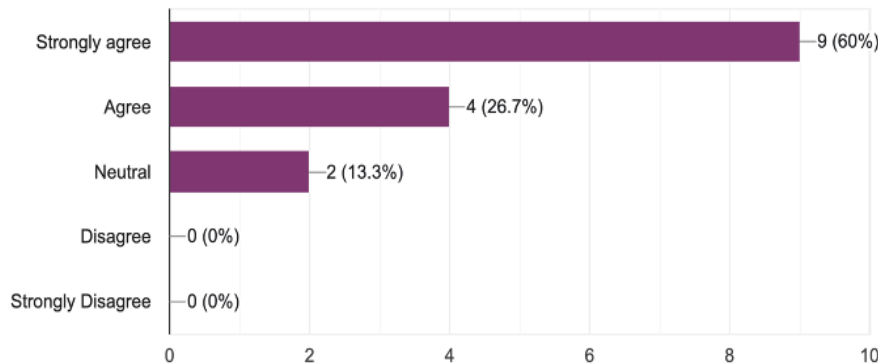
As one participant in the ADVANCE program shared,

“I had a great time learning with everyone and feel like I finally found a community where I belong.”

Learning from Black Staff and Peers

Most of the student participants (86.7%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they enjoyed learning from Black facilitators and their peers, while 13.3% remained neutral (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Learning from Black Staff and Peers



Students' sense of belonging is linked to learning from Black facilitators, their peers, and others in their networks of support in schools and communities. As suggested by Parker (2010) and Wiens (2015), to enhance their resilience, motivation and abilities, Black youth will accept and seek out support and mentorship from people from their own culture and racial group, despite differences in age and contexts.

As identified by one student, "I thought it was a cool program. And Dwight, [Graduation Coach], really motivated me too."

Another stated: "Having staff that look like me, really made me feel good."

Research continues to demonstrate the importance of interpersonal relationships in schools for Black youth to build their social support and to bond with their peers. Listening and sharing amongst each other can help youth express and understand their identity, particularly when the learning is connected to the individual's sense of self (Myrie et al., 2022). Similarly, Black youth's reliance on learning from and engaging with Black adults in education has positive impacts on their experiences in school — and their educational outcomes. During high school, adolescents place a high premium on positive and encouraging interpersonal interactions (Booker, 2006). For Black students, in particular, affirmative interactions with teachers and other students are critical to their success, as illustrated in the following quote from a student participant.

"The teachers [Graduation Coaches] and my peers in the program really vibed with me each week. I just feel like I can do anything after I walked away from the session..."

Motivation to Joining a Music Program

Black students felt motivated to join the ADVANCE music program based on their interest, passion, love for music, and desire to obtain more knowledge about the industry. For example, a student participant noted, “I was motivated to join the ADVANCE music program because of my passion for music.” Associated with students’ passion is their love for music. Another student shared, “I loved to sing; so, I wanted to try out the program.” Having access to music programs can serve as an important means of developing and improving Black students’ collective view of self, agency and identity in music and school (Thomas, 2019). Adolescents generally express enjoying the freedom in singing, choosing what they listen to and how they listen to it on their own time and terms (Thomas, 2019).

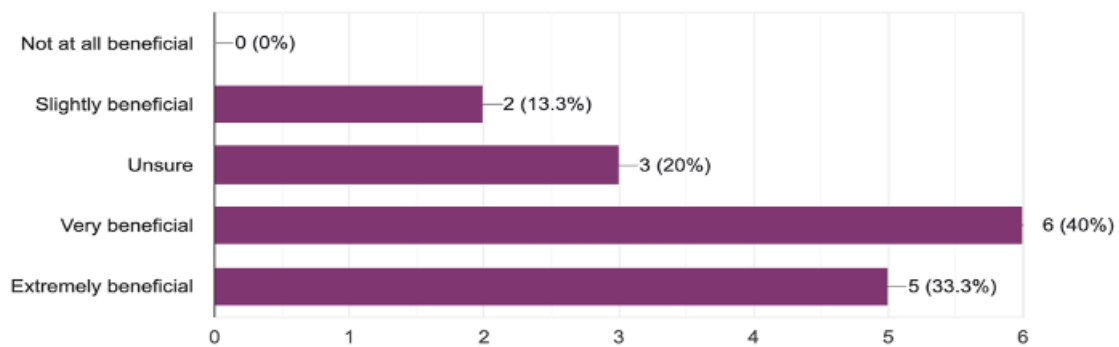
Motivation is understood as a process that guides individuals, including students’ behaviour, goal-directed actions, and positive expectations to succeed (Cherry, 2022; Cook & Artino, 2016). Motivation that is innate or intrinsic is aligned with their passion, love for, and interest in working towards meeting their desired goals (Cook & Artino, 2016). Consistent with literature on music and youth development, music education programs that encourage identity development and cultural awareness offer opportunities Black youth to be creative and benefit musically (Colbert, 2021).

Gaining new knowledge about the music industry was another factor that motivated students to join the ADVANCE program. When Black students acquire new knowledge in music, they are engaged in the practice of absorbing and storing new information about their area of interest (Mapaya, 2016). One participant in the ADVANCE program added, “I’ve always had an interest in music; however, I love learning new things and improving my knowledge about the music industry.”

Benefits of Learning from Black Music Professionals

As illustrated in Figure 6, 73.3% of the students found their interactions with Black professionals to be “extremely” or “very” beneficial, while 13.3% found them to be “slightly” beneficial. Only 20% remained neutral. Only 0% remained neutral.

Figure 6: Benefits of Learning from Black Professionals



Opportunities for Black youth to interact with Black music industry professionals are often limited. As identified in the literature, there are several benefits of Black youth seeing Black representation in careers of interest. In the music industry, it helps to reinforce confidence in different roles and pathways. Engaging with Black music professionals gives Black students a sense of purpose, opportunities for mentorship, role models and social connections (Colbert, 2021; Mentor Canada, 2021). One of the features of interacting with Black music professionals is to learn about their journey and experiences (Hamilton, 2021b). In hindsight, this would help Black students by transmitting knowledge about potential career pathways and advice on how to navigate the music industry.

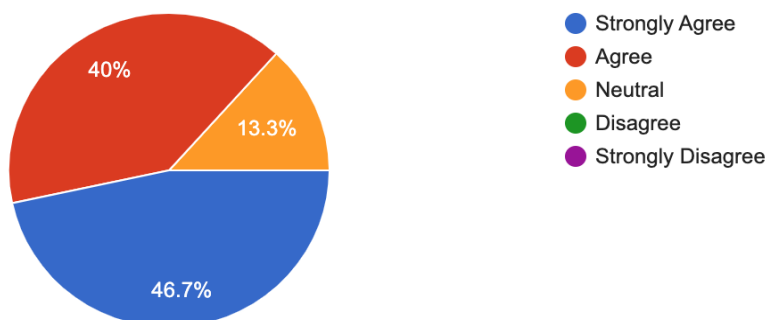
2. Career Mapping

When it comes to readying students for the jobs of the future, research on the Canadian K-12 education system suggests that schools do not sufficiently prepare Black students (Dujay, 2020). Research has shown that this negatively affects these students' life outcomes, specifically in terms of their long-term career prospects and economic security (Meditskos, 2022). To change this dynamic, K-12 schools and districts need to do much better at preparing Black students for careers and jobs they are interested in pursuing. The process of career mapping may begin with staff understanding Black students' interests, experiences, skills, abilities, and knowledge and creating individualized career maps to fit their needs. Important to this process is schools partnering with community organizations to provide opportunities for Black students to learn and acquire new skills, knowledge, and abilities that can be used in other available career opportunities.

Understanding of their Area of Interest in the Music Industry

Participants were asked to share if the ADVANCE program helped them to understand their area of interest in the music industry. As shown in Figure 7, 86.7% of the participating students "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they developed greater understanding of their area of interest in music, while 13.3% remained neutral about this statement.

Figure 7: Students' Understanding of their Area of Interest in the Music Industry



Black students' understanding of their interest in music is necessary to ensure they get the opportunity to make decisions about their career path. Students' lack of understanding of their interest in music is often based on inadequate representation of music careers for Black youth in the curriculum (Hamilton, 2021b).

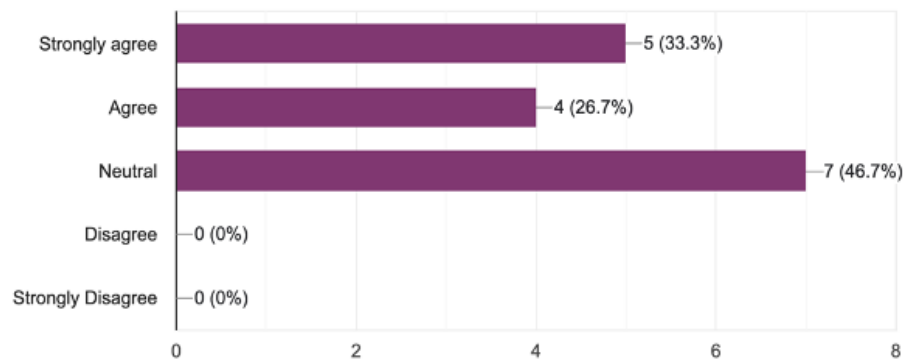
"I feel there's more about the music industry I want to know. I'm not sure of the specifics but I'm still curious." (Student in ADVANCE program)

Addressing these problems through the partnership with the ADVANCE program may serve to increase interest in SHSM programs among Black students at the TDSB, including those who are passionate about music as a career path. Evidence increasingly suggests that pathways may increase Black students' engagement in school and education and improve outcomes, while enhancing the equity and effectiveness of our education system. Moreover, supporting and cultivating the interest of Black students through direct learning from community partners, in their field of interest, will have the potential to enhance academic relevance and student engagement, beyond what would be the case in a more traditional high school approach.

ADVANCE Program Influence on Career Decision

Participating students in this study had mixed views about the ADVANCE program having an influence on their career decision in music. As shown in Figure 8, 60% of the students surveyed in this study "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement that the program helped them decide on a career in music, while 46.7% remained neutral.

Figure 8: ADVANCE Program and Career Decision



Having engagement with Black professionals from a targeted program may yield positive results for Black students' career decisions. Survey responses indicate that interactions with and learning from music professionals can influence students to pursue courses related to their field of interest, and to make informed decisions on their career pathways. However, it is important that opportunities are provided in schools to address the need for mentoring and networking within exclusive spaces to support the productivity, learning and well-being of Black students. Based on responses from students, it has been identified that there needs to be more information and recommendations shared by schools about post-secondary music programs.

As identified by a participant, “Are there any recommendations for post-secondary schooling? What majors/minors should I go into if I want to learn how to create music, while learning how to play new instruments?”

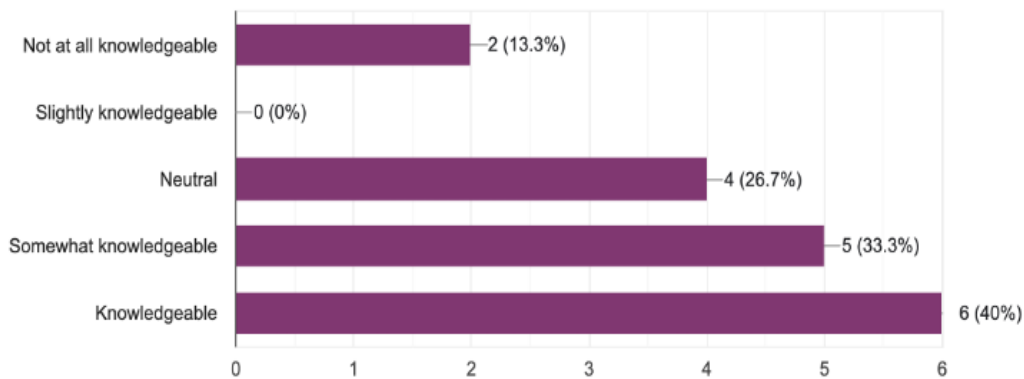
Another stated, “Who do we go to at our schools? If I didn't join this program, I would [not] know I could go to college to develop passion for music into career...”

Examination of students' questions and concerns highlights the need for more information sessions in schools about SHSM programs that support Black students' interest and retention in the music industry. School staff play a critical role in sharing information in accessible ways and being responsive to the needs of Black students so they may be aware of different post-secondary education (PSE) pathways and career choices.

Knowledge of the Music Industry

Student participants in this study shared different views about the ADVANCE program contributing to their knowledge about the music industry. Figure 9 shows that 11 student participants (73.3%) who participated in the ADVANCE program became “somewhat knowledgeable” or “knowledgeable” about the music industry. The remaining 13.3% felt they were “not at all knowledgeable” since enrolling in the ADVANCE program.

Figure 9: Students' Knowledge of the Music Industry

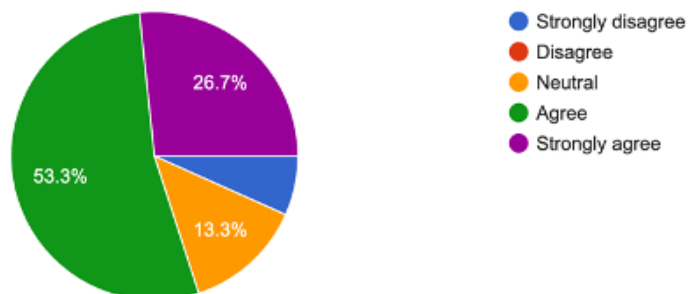


Black students’ knowledge of the music industry is mixed. Inequitable access to music programs has made it difficult for some Black and racialized students to acquire knowledge about the music industry (D’Amico-Cuthbert, 2021). This reality is magnified in the field of music education, where the lack of Black music educators serving as role models for Black students has serious implications (Hamilton, 2021a). When marginalized students fail to see themselves represented in music classrooms, they are less likely to take music once it becomes an optional subject (Fitzpatrick, 2012; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Hamilton, 2021a). The resulting domino effect is that Black students remain underrepresented in undergraduate music programs and music professions and careers, “including becoming music teachers” (Hamilton, 2021a).

Learning about Different Types of Roles in the Music Industry

The majority of students surveyed in this study (80%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they had the opportunity to learn about the different types of roles in the music industry. Some participating students (13.3%) were also neutral about this statement (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Opportunities to Learn about Different Roles in the Music Industry



All the key partners in the education sector must understand that the importance of music education is not only to benefit the students but also the global music industry.

Given the existing barriers to Black students' employment in the music industry, it is important that they become knowledgeable about different types of roles in music (Jingco, 2017; Yates, 2020). These career opportunities include audio engineer, social media marketing, and publicist, among others (Mastrogiacomo, 2018). UNESCO (1998) adds that whilst it is important to provide high-quality, specialist education for aspiring musicians, institutions and policy makers have an ethical responsibility to understand musicians' professional work and to equip students to shape their future lives in music. This includes their development as agents of social change (Grant, 2019) and as agentic learners (Bennett, 2019). This exposure to different roles and options may also inform the curricular shift needed in K-12 education to develop Black learners' engagement in music programs and to help prepare them to address societal demands and cultural challenges in the music industry.

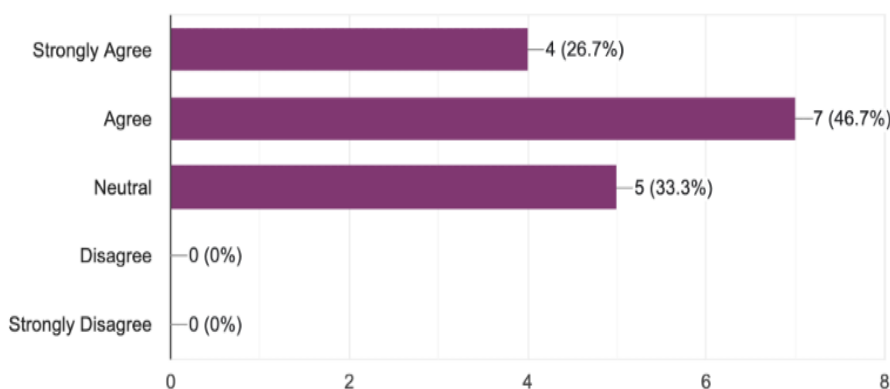
3. Skill Development in The ADVANCE Music Program

There is a need for young people to acquire the skills to cope with disruptions in order to be better prepared for the future of work. Schools, businesses, and local officials must equip youth with the skills to support their career pathways. More importantly, schooling communities are needed that offer equitable access to learning opportunities to meet Black students' needs and produce promising outcomes. Transferable skills provide Black students the opportunity to use their acquired knowledge, attitude, and behaviours in specific skills, such as communication, presentation, and planning (Bartleet et al., 2012; Bonell et al., 2016; Colbert, 2021; Rocha, 2015).

Communication and Presentation Skills

Participants were asked to share if the music program helped enhance their communication and presentation skills. Figure 11 shows that 73.4% of the students in this study "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their communication and presentation skills had improved since joining the music program. Only 33.3% remained neutral about this statement.

Figure 11: Communication and Presentation Skills



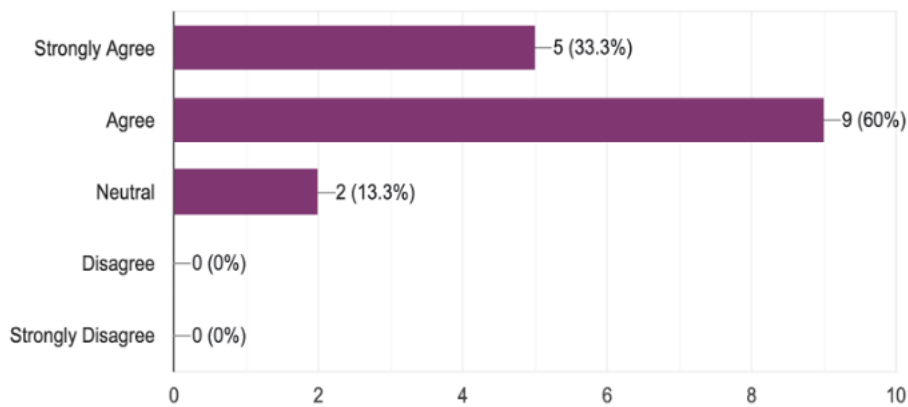
Communication and presentation skills acquired through music benefit students in other areas of their educational interest and career (Doyle, 2019; Lena-Probst, 2020). Black students' enrollment in music programs not only enhances their communication and presentation skills, but can also narrow the unemployment gap (Fields, 2020). Having these transferable skills will allow young people to step into roles, industries or departments that are needed, independent of any job function. These skills are increased through experience, time and access to mentorship opportunities. In order to understand the barriers that Black students encounter both in schools and in transitioning to PSE or the work environment, schools need to actively ensure that students have the relevant skills and experiences in areas that they are passionate about.

Communication skills can serve Black youth in many musical contexts—rehearsals, one-on-one meetings, auditions, and interviews, to name a few. Being able to communicate effectively is perhaps the most important of all life skills. Young people need to be effective at getting their ideas across both in writing and in speaking. Similarly, presentation skills form part of communication skills and are another medium for students to impart their understanding of ideas to others in their professional and personal lives (Fields, 2020; Kaplan, 2022). Communication and public speaking cultivates many skills simultaneously. Also, developing these transferable skills may enhance Black students' confidence in areas such as communication, organization, goal setting, and working with others. Soft skills cannot be taught in a vacuum in schools, nor can they be acquired simply because the goal of a lesson plan indicates it shall be so. Rather, they must be introduced, developed, refined, practiced, and reinforced.

Planning Skills

When asked if they were able to improve their planning skills in their area of interest in music, almost all student participants (93.3%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement. Only 13.3 % remained neutral (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Improvement in Planning Skills



The survey results indicate that Black students participating in the music program developed their planning skills. Across different career paths, planning skills not only give students the ability to manage human and material resources, but they also build their capacity to achieve their particular goals (Leprohon, 2015). Ideally, students who plan to attend college or university need to learn and practice organizational skills in high school (Field et al., 2003). PSE spaces are less structured than high school and this means that students need to impose their own structure to make certain their academic work gets completed (Field et al., 2003).

Additional skill sets include managing time, creating schedules, and prioritizing tasks to meet deadlines, among others (Leprohon, 2015). Acquiring these skill sets is an asset for Black students to attract other job opportunities in the industry (Leprohon, 2015). With mentoring, modelling and technical training support, Black students can successfully master these skills at a high school level, and “arrive at their post-secondary institution well prepared to successfully take on the additional workload in a less structured environment” (Field et al., 2003, p. 7).

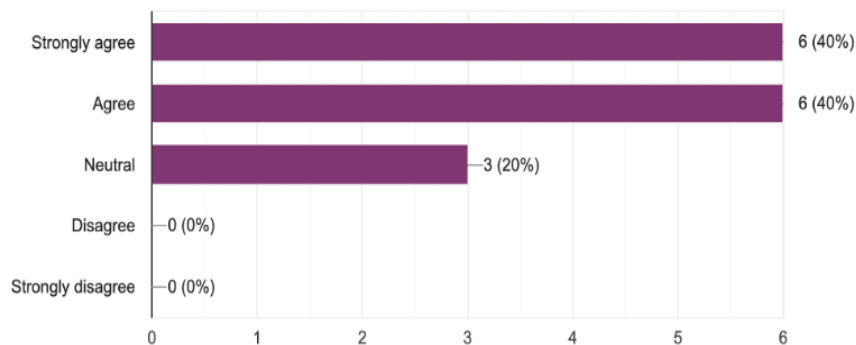
4. Financial Literacy

Financial literacy provides youth with a range of tools to understand how to resolve economic challenges, manage wealth, and enhance personal growth. Education systems need to prioritize financial literacy from an early age, across all disciplines, so that students can acquire and utilize the knowledge and skills learned in their area of interest such as music (Milam, 2019). Integrating financial literacy in curricular programs will help to further narrow and remove the existing gap in understanding financial literacy and its benefits to Canadian youth who are positioned among the most financially literate globally (CBC, 2017). In doing so, students will be better equipped with the resources to secure the financial capital to realize their future ambitions (President Advisory Council for Financial Literacy [PACFL], 2009).

Understanding Financial Literacy

In Figure 13, 80% of the surveyed students in the music program "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they learned about and understood the financial part of their area of interest.

Figure 13: Understanding Finance in Music



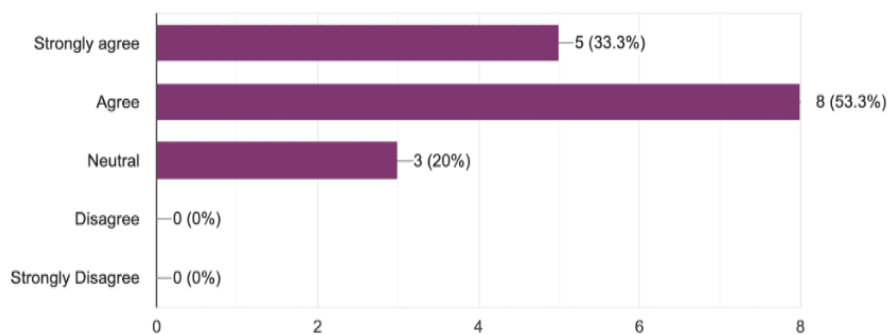
In order for students to understand the financial part in their area of interest in music, they need to grasp the concept of financial literacy. Being financially literate is an acquired skill and awareness that students need to develop to make sound financial decisions (Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, 2020; Milam, 2019). Concerns about financial preparedness are documented in recent studies demonstrating that young people's basic financial knowledge stemmed from socialization without formal education on financial matters (Youth Gov., n.d.). As Black students become increasingly responsible for making important financial decisions that will impact their lives, there is a greater need for them to become financially literate. Financial literacy is, therefore, important to help them make wise financial choices about their present and future economic well-being (Danes et al., 2013; Singh, 2018).

Research that examines the influence of race on financial literacy has generally found that racial minority students had lower rates of financial literacy knowledge and practices (Murphy, 2005). As identified by Murphy (2005), schools should develop classes that effectively raise the financial awareness, knowledge and behaviours of Black students. In doing so, focus must be given to youth's lived experiences and modes of learning that are practical and current to the financial issues (Fontinelle et al., 2022). If this is approached in K-12 education, there would be a greater opportunity to minimize financial crises associated with the transition from high school to PSE and into the work world and maximize students' money management success.

Learning about the Financial Benefits of Music

As presented in Figure 14, 86.6% of participating students in this study "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they are interested in learning more about the financial benefits of their specific area of interest in music.

Figure 14: Learning about Financial Benefits



Black youth learning about the financial benefits of music is important to ensure that they have a full understanding about their career interest. Since different career paths in music do not provide the same financial returns, it is important that students acquire the necessary financial literacy in their area of interest (Milam, 2019). When students capitalize on such knowledge, they are able to reap the benefits of acquiring economic success in the industry (Milam, 2019; PACFL, 2009).

Given the stark disparity in economic capital among racialized families and their White counterparts, attention must be given to Black youth understanding the value of money and the importance of planning to reduce their vulnerability to debt and bankruptcy (Atkinson, 2010). Atkinson (2010) highlighted the need for financial literacy in music before post-secondary education, as financial management from an early age prevents debt and increases financial independence. Education systems, therefore, need to tailor programs that target students' career interest in music and understanding of the financial benefits.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this report highlight Black students' experiences in the ADVANCE music program. Results indicate that Black students found value in participating in the program. Based on Black students' engagement with the ADVANCE music program, it appears that participants' needs were met. Program quality and program practicality were measured in terms of the program's objectives. These included connecting Black youth with professionals in the music industry, providing students with mentorship opportunities through partnerships with professionals, supporting the development of

students' transferable skills, and educating Black youth about different career opportunities in the music industry.

The report identified four key themes to support the findings: Black Students' Engagement with the ADVANCE Music Program, Career Mapping, Skills Development, and Financial Literacy. Among these, Black students highlighted a sense of belonging in the program. Research has consistently found students' sense of belonging at school to be linked with academic outcomes, identity formation, and mental and physical well-being, and is, therefore, considered a fundamental aspect of development for children and youth. This was reinforced by the study results as Black students found value in being among their peers and Black staff and professionals in the community.

By examining the data, results also suggest that having the opportunity to be mentored by Black music professionals created an inclusive, safe and caring environment for Black students. Mentorship is an important part of the career development process for students. It also coincides with identity expression. Mentors who share the same lived experience as the mentee offer perspectives that can help Black students navigate challenges along their PSE and/or career pathways. Therefore, working alongside Black professionals in the music industry demonstrated the importance of Black students having access to mentors to support their individual interests. Students indicated that the music program helped to develop their transferable skills in areas of communication, presentation, and planning.

Results further suggest that the program had a strong influence on mapping Black students' careers in the music industry. Career development in K-12 schools is interconnected with developmental processes and other dimensional identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. The insights garnered from the participants of this study support the need for school counselors and other related school staff to guide Black youth in career exploration. Having adequate access and support or processes to help Black youth map out their careers will help them to think about their self development, including how they will face challenges and barriers. These early and ongoing conversations with school staff can empower Black students and uniquely prepare them for transitioning into PSE and/or the workforce.

As the literature indicates, there is value in SHSM programs being offered in K-12 education. Further, research suggests that while there is value in the SHSM program, there is a greater need to make it more accessible for all students to understand and be aware of the different pathways for every SHSM sector, regardless of their academic interests and socioeconomic status (Parekh et al., 2016). The gradual shift away from streaming students will also pave the path for students to have autonomy in decisions specific to their PSE and/or the workforce. These findings show that having access to programs such as ADVANCE supports the development of Black students' success in schools by helping to provide opportunities that are in line with their career interests.

Equally important to promoting ongoing change in SHSM programs such as ADVANCE is affording Black youth more opportunities to gain access to mentorship programs.

Mentorship programs will enable Black youth to pursue and realize their musical ambitions. In order to strengthen these mentorship programs, there is a greater need for Black music teacher mentors at the high school, college and university levels. Specifically, at the board level, schools must ensure that representation of human resources across school and system levels accounts for differences in sexual orientation, gender identity, among other identities. In doing so, there is a greater potential for equity in access and opportunity for students interested in pursuing post-secondary education in the field of music.

Recommendations

It appears that engagement with the ADVANCE program, with its relatively early stages of development, has benefitted Black students' interest in music and SHSM programs. The partnership with ADVANCE has potential to grow and expand to a significant degree. While there are overall areas in the SHSM program that could benefit from boosting and increasing retention rates, at this time, we know that Black students who are enrolled in the SHSM are performing well academically across the Board. We offer the following recommendations as considerations for school staff and teachers.

<p>Identity Development in SHSM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As institutions of K-12 education move towards improving their equitable practices for serving the diverse student population, teachers and other school staff should be aware of the different stages of Black identity development. ● Efforts to improve Black students' development in SHSM programs must include conversations with an ecosystem of community partners/stakeholders, including policymakers and families at the systems, school and community levels. ● When discussing racial identity development, there is not one model that encompasses the phenomena of identity development. ● Therefore, educators should include multiple models to gather a better understanding of the phenomena of identity, racial identity, and racial identity development. ● Further, there should be ongoing professional learning to understand how multiple identities (i.e., race, gender, etc.) intersect and develop in relation to curricula that supports Black students. ● We see the partnership with the ADVANCE music program as a direct response to what can potentially work in schools, in regards to the practices and conduits that directly influence the
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	<p>preparation and recruitment of Black students into post-secondary pathways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This partnership supports the goal of the TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan which aims to provide all pathways and a wide variety of programs in the majority of our secondary schools based on students' voice.
<p>Mentorship Through Community Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We contend that these aspects of Black students' identity are made salient, even within SHSM contexts, and that these can be developed through their own communities to cultivate success. • Many Black students want to engage in conversations about issues affecting their lives, but oftentimes educators may lack the knowledge or 'the know how' on how to engage them in such conversations. • Having mentors who identify with Black students' racial identity and/or lived experience can provide them the necessary support, validation, and affirmation to succeed. • The implications of community engagement begin with the need to understand that perhaps our experiences with Black-serving and Black-focused community partners speak to the wisdom, if not the practical necessity, of their influence on supporting the success and achievement of Black students in schools. • Such practice of engaging with and working alongside the community reflects the TDSB's (2019) Multi-Year Strategic Plan's goal to engage with the community. • Part of the Board's goal is to strengthen engagement of all stakeholders as we determine and implement systemic and equitable change.
<p>Financial Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study demonstrated the importance of developing the financial literacy of Black high school students. Preparing students for a range of post-secondary educational opportunities and career options upon high school completion includes an understanding of how to manage their finances. • A strong foundation of financial literacy can help Black students reach various life goals, such as

	<p>saving for further education or retirement and using debt responsibly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Placing emphasis on this aspect of their learning is critical because their knowledge in financial literacy will have a domino effect on not only their economic well-being, but will also help to equalize understanding for Black students.
<p>Access to Equal Opportunities to Support Post-Secondary Access and Career Pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Given the diversity of individual lived experiences and needs, schools should offer wraparound support to help address the many layers of socioeconomic challenges that Black students continue to encounter. ● Consideration must be given to improving students' knowledge about specialized skills in fields, including the music industry. ● Schools can take steps to partner with PSE institutions, over time, to provide a range of opportunities in Black music. ● As suggested by Hamilton (2021a), Black students should be exposed to all genres and areas of music and the music industry. For example, York University in Toronto, Ontario is known for having one of the most diverse music programs in Canada, offering a number of Black music performances and courses such as Jazz Orchestra, Gospel Choir, West African Drumming, Rhythm & Blues Ensemble, Caribbean Ensemble, History of Gospel Music, and African-American Popular Music (York University, n.d.) ● The purpose is to ensure that Black students understand the different career opportunities to make more informed decisions. ● School staff will need consistent skills training informed by principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and resources to equitably serve Black students who face multiple barriers. ● Therefore, targeted programming is needed to address Black students' schooling experiences. ● Successful outcomes of targeted programming for Black youth require access to funding that focuses on closing the gap in SHSM programs. ● It also means understanding the replication and scaling of existing programs such as ADVANCE that show promise in supporting Black students' post-secondary education and career choices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● As suggested, there is an ongoing need to provide equity in access to learning opportunities and resources including diversity in human capital to support students' needs (TDSB, 2019). The implications of this limited exposure extend beyond the impacts on Black students' social capital to the development of skills they will need to understand and manage themselves at work.● These 21st century skills—such as ingenuity, initiative, contextualization, negotiation, collaboration, adaptability, problem solving, creativity, self-direction, leadership, work ethic, and accountability (Dede, 2010)—are far-reaching and fundamental to surviving in the world.
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