



Trustee  
**David Smith**

Ward 17, Scarborough Centre



January 29, 2021

Dear Community Member, Parent/Guardian, and Staff,

The African Heritage Month Planning Committee (AHMPC) in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is one of fourteen committees established to celebrate and educate students, staff, parents, and families about the diverse cultures of people within our schools and communities. AHMPC has a history of providing educational opportunities and events that showcase the wonderful diversity of the African Heritage. However, the work of the dedicated committee members encompasses more than events in February. AHMPC has a mandate to support efforts against anti-Black racism, educate students, and educators and champion students.

Black children and youth comprise of 12% (31,800) of the TDSB's student population and are from diverse backgrounds: Caribbean (55%), Eastern Africa (25%) and Western Africa and 5% were born in Canada. Of concern is the fact that the majority of Black students underperform their counterparts and graduate at lower rates. AHMPC wants to be a part of the change for our students and it begins with providing opportunities for students to learn more about their own culture and race (78% of students would find learning more interesting and 56% said it will help them to do better in school).

Hence, to help our students succeed, programs are planned throughout the year. Black Student Alliances (BSAs) are groups that increase student voice, build capacity in student leadership and are supported by a TDSB staff member. The groups have ongoing dialogue in meetings and school assemblies. Students also support each other, challenge anti-Black racism and contribute to ensuring the TDSB meets its commitments to equity, inclusion, and Black student success.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) seeks to help educators in the TDSB through small groups, clubs and conferences. Educators are encouraged to participate in activities that help eradicate anti-Black racism. Reaching out to educators is important as a great number of Black students are "less likely to feel supported or accepted by educators and adults in the school". Therefore, the conversations and education that takes place here will greatly impact student learning.

Speaking of impacting student learning, the flagship event of AHMPC in conjunction with a partnership with Black Law Students Association, Osgoode Hall, York University is the Know Your Worth Conference. This conference takes place in February and has workshops for students and staff. Also, the planning of the KYW Conference is led by many talented students, ensuring that the

conference's theme and workshops will be educational and uplifting for their peers. In the past, the location at York University, Keele Campus was an integral part of the conference. This enabled students to envision themselves at University; which was to counter the low expectation that parents, educators, and even the students had of themselves.

AHMPC is excited to announce the "Know Your Worth Scholarship". The KYW scholarship materialized as a response to students who attended the conference requesting support for post-secondary education. The Scholarship will award three financial awards of \$2,000. The first award, named Kujichagulia; which means "Self-determination", celebrates students who accomplish academic excellence. The second financial award is titled "Kuumba"; which means Creativity. The students use art, in its many forms, including environmental stewardship, to express themselves. The third financial award, Umoja; which means "To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race", is for students who demonstrate their leadership at school or in their community. Supporting our students in a substantial and meaningful way in their first year of life at a post-secondary institution is important to us.

The Committee recognizes that there is much work to be done; however, we are energized and ready to go the distance for our students. We invite you to support them with your encouragement and financial gifts. Donations made online of any amount qualify for a tax receipt. Cheque donations of \$25.00 and greater also qualify for tax receipts. Click on [African Heritage Month](#) to direct your donations to support all clubs, events, and activities. To support the post-secondary education of our students, click on [Know Your Worth Scholarship](#). Should you have any questions regarding African Heritage Month specifically or the TDSB Heritage/History Months we invite you to contact Dani Carnevale, Service Co-Ordinator at [dani.carnevale@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:dani.carnevale@tdsb.on.ca). Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



David Smith, Trustee, Ward 17  
Scarborough Centre and Member, African Heritage Month, TDSB

Source: Black Students, Census Portraits, TDSB, 2011.