



# Supporting Black Student Achievement and Dismantling Anti-Black Racism at the TDSB



## Highlights and Summary of Strategies, Actions, Policies, Research and Collaboration

- The TDSB is committed to helping all students succeed by providing learning experiences, opportunities and access that keep students engaged and excited about school. Each and every student is capable of success. Our focus is ensuring that all students can succeed by having access – the same access – to opportunities, learning, resources and tools; with the goal of improving the outcomes of the most under-served students. This is the [TDSB's equity commitment](#).
- As part of this commitment, we are focused in particular on supporting Black student achievement. The TDSB is equally committed to combating anti-Black racism.
- The Board's work in these critical areas are highlighted and summarized below and provides a special emphasis on strategies and actions to support Black student achievement and to dismantle anti-Black racism.
- As highlights as a summary, this is not a complete list of all the strategies, actions, programs and services now in place to improve Black student achievement or to respond to anti-Black racism. For example, TDSB teachers use a number of teaching and learning strategies and resources that are sometimes unique to their classrooms or schools that may not be listed in this document.
- The TDSB does not have all the answers. Underachievement of Black students persists. The Board's own data on student achievement shows this to be true. We collect data on race-based achievement levels and share it with the community and educators across the system. This allows the Board to work in partnership with our communities to gain a better understanding of what is working and what is not working with respect to our equity goals.
- Anti-Black racism, it is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions and our schools. On a monthly basis, the Board is made aware of and has investigated or is investigating acts of anti-Black racism in schools, playgrounds and on social media platforms.
- Some acts are subtle, even unintentional. Others are not. Over the years, and even today, some attempts to address it have worked and some have fallen short of the expectations of staff, students and their families.
- Systemic and individual acts of anti-Black racism have become normalized and are therefore sometimes difficult to identify, address and prevent. The TDSB is committed to reviewing and making improvements to its policies, procedures and practices with respect to identifying, investigating and resolving incidents of anti-Black racism in schools.

## Part 1: Highlights of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan Action Plans

In 2017-18, the Board created the Enhancing Equity Task Force. This work involved extensive community consultation, which surfaced systemic barriers that are experienced by many TDSB students and disproportionately impeded the academic success of Black students. Many of the Task Force's recommendations focussed on specific ways to support Black students. The recommendations – in the form of action plans – were adopted and are now key parts of the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

### Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students: Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-being - Leadership Development

#### Goal

- To integrate professional learning about anti-racism and anti-Black racism into all leadership development opportunities.

#### Actions

- Provide mandatory training for all principals/vice-principals in anti-oppression and anti-Black Racism connected to school improvement (June 2019).
- Mobilize staff within our system who are capable of facilitating learning in all aspects of equity, anti-oppression and anti-Black racism to support our professional learning efforts (ongoing).
- Provide schools with resources to develop a deeper understanding about the significance of engaging with families and community partners to better support Black students (ongoing).
- Provide employees with various tools and resources to understand and respond effectively to various forms of discrimination, e.g., anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and the discrimination faced by those with physical and intellectual disabilities, and monitor the use of the tools and learning in their daily work (ongoing).
- Develop a plan to provide professional learning to all managers/supervisors involved in hiring processes to ensure that competency in equity and human rights is embedded in hiring practices across the system and that barriers to fair hiring are eliminated (Winter 2019 and ongoing).
- Support Superintendents to monitor the development and implementation of equity goals and the achievement of Black students and other vulnerable groups of learners (ongoing).

## TDSB Board Report Shows Positive Results from De-streaming Grades 9 and 10

A recent TDSB report that tracked these new academic pathways showed 85 per cent of the Board's Grade 9 students now study at the Academic level – up from 76 per cent before the pilot project began. It's the same in Grade 10, where 81 per cent of students now take Academic, up from 76 per cent four years ago.

- Students who identify as Black, Latin American or Middle Eastern are making the switch to Academic at a dramatic rate. In the past three years, the percentage of Black TDSB students in Grade 9 choosing Academic has jumped to 78 per cent from just 63 per cent, a leap of 15 percentage points.
- It's a similar story with Grade 9 students of Latin American descent; a solid 81 per cent now choose Academic, up from just 64 per cent three years ago. Among teens from Southeast Asian families, a full 87 per cent now take Academic in Grade 9, up from just 71 per cent three years ago. And 83 per cent of Grade 9 students of Middle Eastern heritage now sign up for Academic, up from 70 per cent.
- Looked at another way, the ranks of Grade 9 students in Applied has dropped since 2014 by almost half – that's 1,400 fewer teens – and in Grade 10 by almost one-third or nearly 800 students. What's more, 1,100 fewer low-income students are enrolled in Applied than before.

Why does all this matter? It's a response to research that shows a troubling proportion of children of colour and low-income families choose, or have been pushed to choose, Applied courses that can close doors to higher learning. The reasons students chose Applied are complex. Some families don't recognize the doors they close when their child takes Applied. Others lack community role models in Academic. But school systems can also play a role by discouraging some students to try Academic because of racial and class bias, and stereotypes.

[Read the full Board Report](#)

## Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students: Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being - Pathways & Transitions

### Goal

- Improve academic and well-being outcomes of Black students in transition to and during high school.
- Increase support for students taking academic programming.
- Increase graduation rates of Black students.
- Improve the sense of belonging, well-being and rates of achievement of Black newcomer/refugee students.
- Initiate a professional learning and student engagement focus with six to eight secondary schools and their elementary feeder schools serving high populations of Black students.

### Actions

- Implement and learn from a pilot program supported by the Anti-Racism Directorate to improve outcomes for Black students (June 2019).
- Create and implement a plan to provide ongoing, sustained, and job-embedded learning for relevant staff (including principals, vice-principals, teachers, support staff, coaches, guidance, Student Success teachers, community support workers) to understand anti-Black racism, anti-oppression and its implications in all aspects of teaching and learning (2018 and ongoing).
- Identify, learn from and share evidenced-based practices that have been successful in improving the outcomes of Black students and highlight, on an ongoing basis, excellence among Black students in TDSB. Undertake this work with other research-based educational organizations (January 2019 and ongoing).
- Identify, curate and co-develop with educators and community partners a repertoire of culturally responsive strategies, resources and curriculum supports, and home/community partnerships to ensure students see themselves reflected, feel their voices are heard and that families feel heard and included in their child's educational outcomes (ongoing).
- Develop a strategy to expand parent engagement and knowledge of important decisions impacting their child's education such as how to access a range of educational programs, e.g., academic pathways, post-secondary options and specialized programs (Fall to March 2019).

## Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students: Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being - Special Education

### Goal

- To create professional learning models that support inclusion and reduce the over-representation of Black students in Special Education programs (specifically Home School Programs, Intensive Support Programs and other congregated programs).

### Actions

- Identify schools where models of inclusion have successfully changed the opportunities and access of Black students to engage in programs in which high expectations for learning contribute to improved well-being. Create opportunities for those schools to coach, document and share the implementation of their models with other schools (Fall 2018).
- Invest in building the capacity of educators to successfully implement inclusion with groups of Black students by deepening their awareness of the principles of anti-racism and culturally relevant pedagogy and with regard to current research in relation to their practice of improving staffs' abilities to use instructional approaches such as Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy to meet the diverse needs of a range of students (ongoing).
- Create professional learning for Professional Support Services and Special Education staff to reflect how their practice is aligned with the principles of anti-Black racism, and other current research (e.g., Critical Disability studies) and that impacts Black students in Special Education programs (Fall 2018 and ongoing).
- Work with the identified groups of staff and community partners to identify the barriers and strategies to remove the systemic processes that often impede the success and/or cause an over-representation of Black students in Special Education programs (Spring 2019 - ongoing).

## Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students: Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-being - Suspensions and Expulsions

### Goal

- To create a system plan to reduce the number of Black and racialized students who are suspended and/or expelled.

### Actions

- Transform learning so that all students' experiences, strengths and needs are met and students are engaged through developing global competencies by working with K-12 coaches (ongoing).
- Review data (including survey, qualitative responses) on suspension/expulsion rates and experiences of Black students to develop alternatives to suspension programs (with an intentional focus on Black males) (ongoing).
- Challenge unconscious bias, engage in joint problem-solving and ensure that Black students are treated equitably when it comes to decisions about suspensions and expulsions in each school through collaboration between principals and superintendents (ongoing).
- Engage in discussions with principals/vice-principals and staff using key data sets such as school climate, to link to school improvement goals in equity and well-being, as a means of measuring progress in improving positive behaviour and reduction in suspensions of all students — especially Black, Indigenous and other groups of students overrepresented in the data (ongoing).
- Work with families and community partners to develop relevant approaches and supports for Black students (Fall 2019).

## Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students: Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being - Early Years

### Goal

- To improve the overall experience of Black students in the Early Years, specifically focusing on entry experiences and academic achievement in literacy and numeracy.

### Actions

- Develop and share strategies to remove and overcome the barriers for Black parents/caregivers to become partners in school entry experiences (Summer 2019 and ongoing).
- Expand Africentric and Culturally Responsive Pre-Kindergarten programming based on a developed research framework (Summer 2019).
- Support the mobilization of Early Years educators who have the expertise to provide ongoing professional development to schools on how to engage Black families and enhance the academic achievement of Black students (ongoing).
- Provide professional learning in designing equitable assessment systems by evaluating what is used, how it is used and whether it accurately identifies the strengths of some students who are struggling to acquire the required skills in early literacy – particularly Black students (Fall 2018).
- Review and revise Early Years documents to ensure that they highlight and address a focus on Black students' well-being, achievement as indicated by current research and best practices for Black students (ongoing).

For us, success means an increase in achievement and well-being of Black students, specifically in:

- Early Years literacy and numeracy
- Black students taking academic level programming in secondary school
- Improved classroom curriculum and learning opportunities that reflect the lived experiences, cultures and histories of Black communities
- Improved graduation rates for Black students, in particular Black boys
- A reduction in the suspension and expulsion of Black students, in particular Black boys
- Improved conditions for learning that support Black students' well-being
- Increased engagement of the parents and families of Black students
- Please [click here](#) to read all of the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan Goals and Action Plans.

## Part 2: TDSB Creates New Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

TDSB will create and fund a new TDSB Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement – the first of its kind in public education in Canada. The Centre is one of TDSB’s responses to dismantle anti-Black racism within the school board and improve both experiences and outcomes for Black students. The Centre will respond to the voices of the Black communities who consistently advocated for deeper systemic change from the TDSB. The Centre will focus proactively on academic success and experiences of belonging of Black students. It will provide a more coordinated and well-resourced approach leading to systemic transformation. There will be enhanced support for impacted individuals and a forum to develop solutions that are authentic and relevant for Black students, families and staff.

### Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement Mandate Highlights

- Provide support to Black students in TDSB schools to combat racism, navigate complaint processes, identify barriers to success and access appropriate resources (e.g., scholarships, networking, mentoring);
- Use evidence to highlight promising practices and engage in meaningful research on topics relevant to Black students that are then integrated across schools and at the system level within the TDSB;
- Create professional learning in anti-Black racism and collaborate with other staff in facilitating learning in decolonization, anti-Racism, anti-Oppression and human rights recognizing the similarities and intersections of various forms of oppression;
- Identify, develop and facilitate culturally responsive and relevant healing practices for groups of students;
- Inform changes to policies and procedures so that all students may benefit from the learning and innovative practices developed by the Centre;
- Establish effective mechanisms for monitoring improvement in the achievement of Black students;
- Support meaningful engagement and advocacy of caregivers for their children in TDSB schools and programs and improve communication to them about Black student success, system navigation and complaint processes; and
- Engage in strategic community partnerships related to education.



## Part 3: Highlights of Central Supports

- Student Equity Program Advisors
- Five Graduation Coaches for Black Students
- Newly Constituted Equity School Improvement Team
- School Improvement: requiring all schools to include in their annual school improvement plans an equity goal that focuses on the adult learning required to examine our own biases and privilege to overcome the barriers to student success
- Anti-Bias Review Toolkit\*
- Online Mini-Modules for Educators (e.g., Math, French) (Ongoing)
- Professional Learning For principals and superintendents in anti-Black Racism (New Teachers and Newly Appointed Ps/VPs)
- [Black Students Success and Excellence \(BSSE\)](#) – see Appendix D
- Parent Workshops – Talking about Race and Navigating the School System for Black Parents/Guardians
- Summer Programs for Black Students' Well-being
- The new Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement will be supported by 20.5 staff positions, including a social worker, child and youth counsellor, and additional graduation coaches, all focused on supports for Black students, improving students' experiences and identifying the ways in which anti-Black racism is operating in the TDSB and offering possible solutions to eradicate it.
- [Anti-Black Racism Strategy: Mobilization Strategy 2018/19](#)
- Expanded Human Rights Office
- Black Youth Mental Health Month – new for the 2020-21 school year

## Part 4: TDSB Data Collection and Research

- The TDSB has 245,000 students, each of whom comes to school with different lived experiences, histories, resources, capabilities and needs. In order to provide the highest quality of education service to all our communities and students, we collect a variety of demographic, participatory, and achievement or outcome data from and with our students and families. The TDSB is one of the few school boards that collect and report on race-based demographic data.
- This information informs the TDSB of where there are challenges and successes for students across Kindergarten to Grade 12 in relation to policies, resources, and practices within classrooms and schools.
- Generally speaking, this data indicates high levels of achievement and engagement for many TDSB students. The data also reveal persistent gaps in achievement and school belonging for our racialized students as well as our students from low socio-economic communities within Toronto.
- Put another way, these gaps are strongly connected to demographic factors, such as family income, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, among others.
- The data we collect informs critical efforts that the TDSB makes in relation to programs and policies targeted to address human rights and equity for more than a third of our schools and students. Also, our demographic data is used to inform our strategic directions relating to Academic Pathways, Early Literacy, Suspensions and Expulsions and Inclusion. Our data is regularly reported to the Board and shared with the community.



## Part 5: New and Updated Related Practices, Policies and Procedures

The TDSB is committed to creating, maintaining and promoting a school system that is free from discrimination and harassment, where our community – students, staff, families and community partners – feel welcome, and are included and respected.

All students, staff, parents, caregivers, and community partners should be able to move through our school system knowing that their rights will be protected. The well-being and academic success of our students and success of our system as a whole depends on this.

### Expected Practices for Understanding, Addressing and Preventing Discrimination

To support these commitments, the TDSB's has implemented [Expected Practices for Understanding, Addressing and Preventing Discrimination](#) for school administrators and staff to help ensure we fulfill our professional, moral and legal obligations to create equitable, safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces for all students, parents, and staff.

This guide was developed to help support TDSB parents and students to know their rights and responsibilities, and how we will uphold these when dealing with incidents of discrimination and harassment in our schools.

The TDSB is continuing to take steps to:

- Raise awareness and understanding about human rights and discrimination
- Address discrimination
- Hold people who discriminate accountable
- Stop discrimination from happening again

The TDSB takes incidents of discrimination very seriously. The TDSB has clearly outlined what school administrators and staff must do to understand, address and prevent discrimination in our schools. All TDSB staff are expected to:

- Stop, interrupt, name and report discrimination
- Address discrimination by:
  - o Providing support for affected individuals to ensure their safety and well-being (through, for example, guidance counsellors, social workers or other relevant school or community counselling services).
  - o Holding people accountable for their discriminatory actions, including by documenting and reporting what happened, and taking appropriate and proportionate disciplinary and/or remedial action.
  - o Examining and, where necessary, restoring the school climate, considering what else needs to be done at the school to prevent discrimination from happening again.

Helping students, parents and staff understand and address discrimination is essential to preventing discrimination. Our goal is to create safe, inclusive and respectful school environments where all students are welcome, treated fairly, and can grow and thrive.

## Related Policies and Procedures

### Policy P037 - Equity (April 2018)

This policy ensures that Fairness, Equity, Diversity, Acceptance, Inclusion, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination are essential principles of our school system and are integrated into all TDSB policies, procedures, programs, operations, and practices.

### Procedure PR728 – Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools (June, 2020)

The Procedure details steps and processes for responding to incidents of racism, hate, bias and or hate crimes involving students in TDSB schools/learning environments. This includes incidents that take place at a school or school-related activity, and incidents involving a TDSB student, parent/guardian, staff person, or TDSB community member that impacts the school/learning environment.

### Policy P051 - Caring and Safe Schools (June, 2019)

This policy ensures that all students feel that they belong, are heard, accepted, safe, supported and cared for through the creation of positive school climates that reflect themselves, value their voices and foster a culture of mutual respect and healthy relationships.

## Part 6: Collaboration with the Community

- The TDSB has many formal and informal relationships with Toronto's Black community to help identify and improve the ways in which TDSB schools meet the needs of Black students.
- These relationships include an opportunity for representatives of the Black community to have direct influence on Board policies, programs and services.
- The TDSB is one of the few Canadian school Boards to have a [Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee \(BSAAC\)](#). Established in 2016, BSAAC's mandate is to examine and make recommendations on strategies to create more equitable outcomes, raise achievement levels and create safe spaces for Black students.
- The BSAAC supports the Board's ongoing commitment to work in partnership with its parents/guardians, communities and students to improve educational outcomes for Black students.

## Part 7: Looking Forward

The TDSB will be:

- Developing a Compliance Training module relating to anti-Black racism and anti-oppression.
- Implementing the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement.
- Further working on strategies to introduce training related to intersectionality or the way in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group, for example, creating additional barriers, opportunities, and/or power imbalances. Our goal is to create a heightened awareness of intersectionality that will better enable educators to understand the impacts of any one particular systemic barrier by considering how that barrier may be interacting with other related factors.