



Centre of
Excellence for
Black Student
Achievement

JUNE
2026

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CELEBRATING 5 YEARS!

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PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE



Dear families,

This June is a special one as we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement. What began as a dream became a reality. The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement was born from community advocacy and the need for systemic change in the Toronto District School Board and educational institutions. This fifth anniversary represents 5 years of delivering programming that supports the growth and development of Black students and families and communities raising Black children.

This newsletter shares a brief summary of the Centre's offerings from March to June 2026. Our previous newsletter can be found on our [website](#).

In March, we hosted our [Inaugural Building Black Futures in Architecture Scholarship Reception](#). Three exceptional TDSB students were awarded with scholarships to recognize their academic excellence and genuine passion for architecture and design.

This spring, we also engaged staff with professional development sessions alongside parent, caregiver and family engagement experiences. On April 25, we also hosted an in-person Affirming Africentric Early Years Programming Family Event at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement.

So how can we say thank you to our community who advocated to enact our 9 mandates:

On June 20 to express our deep gratitude for your continued support, advocacy and partnership we are having a 5th Year Community Appreciation Event at 10:00 am at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement. Black families, staff, students and community members are welcome to attend. The event will include performances, experiences for Black children, music and community joy.

This summer, we will host another year of the Black Student Summer Leadership Program at George Brown College. Over 200 Grade 10 to 12 Black students will be engaged in a program that combines experiential learning placements, leadership development, and research opportunities to support students as researchers, leaders, and changemakers. Additionally, we are pleased to welcome almost 300 early learners to the *Africentric and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pre-Kindergarten - Kindergarten Inspired to Excel* program.

A DAY OF DISCOVERY WITH SUNNYBROOK

On April 28, 2026, approximately 75 students from Grade 9 - 12 joined the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement for *A Day of Discovery* at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

Students explored Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, connected directly with scientists, explored medical research and technology, and participated in hands-on STEM demonstrations.

"Today, I felt very welcome. I am really happy to have these opportunities open to the Black community. I am happy to expand my horizons. It is very interesting because sometimes I want to be in the medical field. I've learned it is not always about the grades or money but how committed you are to such a career." Aisha, AY Jackson S.S., Gr. 10.

"Today intrigued me. Through all the workshops, I saw how things worked in this field. Very interesting way to grasp the experience." Micah, AY Jackson S.S., Gr. 12.

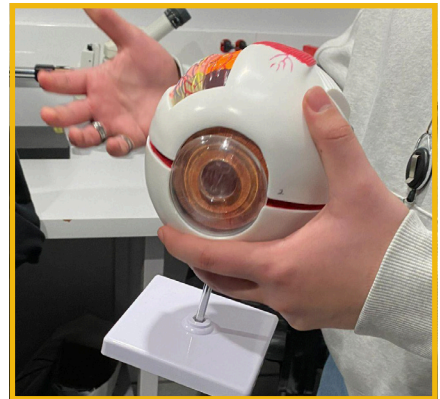
"I saw many cool and interesting things. Saw rodents and organs of rats and stuff. I was able to compare that to the human body and compare the size difference. To be able to see it under the microscope and different slides, it was something that piqued my interest a little bit." Aisha, AY Jackson S.S., Gr. 10.

Senior Scientist Meaghan O'Reilly was pleased to offer a range of experiences for students, especially to those connected to and grounded in research. "I hope students get a chance to see the diversity of research that happens in a research institute. Students often think about what they can do in science, such as doctor, engineer etc. But here are a bunch of other career paths and research is one of them," said Dr. O'Reilly.

Students explored various research laboratories, as the day was divided between visiting 8 tour stops and 18 labs. Students learned about:

- Ultrasound technology and its use for non-invasive treatments in the central nervous system.
- Micro-ultrasound technology - a tool that allows detailed noninvasive investigation of living organisms.
- The immune system and its role in mood disorders and development of immunomodulatory therapies for treating mood disorders.
- Brain imaging and treatments for alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- Research on how tendons, ligaments, and other parts of the musculoskeletal system develop and heal, to understand how they can be used to create new treatments that could help the body heal better.
- Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) and MRI Scanner
- Artificial Intelligence and Big Data to solve problems in medical imaging.

The Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre *A Day of Discovery* program connects Black students with real-world medical research and innovation at one of Canada's leading research hospitals. Designed to foster curiosity, belonging, and engagement, the program offers hands-on experiences in areas



like surgical training with virtual reality, focused ultrasound technology, and advanced medical imaging. By directly interacting with scientists, labs, and devices, students gain exposure to cutting-edge research while exploring pathways that support their academic growth, achievement, and transition into future careers in science and healthcare industries.

This program directly supports the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement's priorities by providing student programming that affirms identity, enhances student leadership, and promotes academic success. Additionally, it supports students with pathways beyond high school.



STUDENTS LEARN FINANCIAL LITERACY THROUGH THE TD MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Finance, Capital Markets, Banking, Money. These are all words we think about when we hear of TD Bank.

On April 14, 2026, we concluded the second iteration of the TD Mentorship Program. Grade 11 and 12 Black students from across Toronto joined us at TD Tower for a final group mentorship meeting, a tour of a trading floor and a capital markets simulation game.



The information session and group meeting was an additional opportunity to learn from TD Bank staff Prem Williams - Managing Director Securitization Desk, TD Securities; Dwight Chambers - Director of Global Markets Business Management Team and Taborah Tyson - Human Resources Professional. There was also an opportunity for students to hear from junior level staff who were part of the Market Securities Group.

Many of the students who attended were interested in finance and business management. "This program helped me plan for the future, accounts I could open and it is a great program for youths," said Taiwo, Martin Grove C.I. student.

Dwight Chambers, integral to the leadership of the program and a representative of the TD Securities Black Experience Committee says, "Ultimately, the program is about giving back. Capital markets is an industry where there is not a lot of representation. A goal is to expose the youth to capital markets and their potential. Exposing them to folks that they can use and leverage and view their next steps. If I am able to help them achieve their goals, then that's a success."

Dwight explains that this is not an industry where Black people are highly represented and the biggest barrier is exposure and the competition to get into the industry is very high. Being able to position yourself academically with a mixture of interpersonal skills will really benefit a person who is interested in capital markets. "The earlier you can position yourself in internships, clubs and those things will really help," says Dwight.

The TD Mentorship Program connects to the Financial Literacy education in the Ontario Curriculum and has students learning the specifics of saving, spending, borrowing, and investing.

THE LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAM AND MLSE LAUNCHPAD

On March 27, 2026, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement took 30 students from two schools to MLSE Launchpad. The students were Grade 6 to 8 Black males from Ellesmere-Statton Public School and Lawrence Heights Middle School. Secondary students from AY Jackson Secondary School were able to attend on May 26, 2026.

Going to MLSE Launchpad was the culminating event to the 2025-2026 Life Education Program. Students did teambuilding activities and built life skills through physical activity, drawing on the connection between mental health and physical health.

“The field trip experience was a memorable one. This is the second time we got to go and being around people that look like me and having the ability to interact with mentors is truly inspiring. In the program we learned that mental health is just as important as physical health in a way that spoke to my interests. Having this as a culminating activity and going downtown with my peers for the Life Education Program felt like we were a family and is something I will always remember,” said B.W., a Grade 11 student.

The students were able to connect with Black male mentors from the MLSE, and many students enjoyed the experience of connecting with people that look like them to learn about careers, community resources and programs. Students also had the opportunity to explore downtown Toronto.

“This experience aligned with my experience in the program so far. I developed healthy coping tools and it also helped with my anxiety and feeling a greater sense of belonging in the community and school. I am so thankful to the Life Education Program and the MLSE for providing us with this opportunity,” said D.I., a Grade 11 student.

The Life Education Program at the Toronto District School Board has been running since the 2022-2023 school year. The purpose of the program is to provide students with culturally relevant and responsive mentorship spaces that help to identify and facilitate Black-affirming healing practices and strategies to address stigma, anti-Black racism and racial trauma within educational institutions.



LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY



On May 14, 2026, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement alongside Model Schools for Inner Cities hosted the *Entrepreneurship through AI* coding event with Owning My. This full-day learning experience provided students in Grades 8 to 10 with the tools, mindset and business fundamentals that define the modern economy.

Claudette Hutchinson, CEO & AI Implementation Architect of Owning My, hopes that students gain, "Inspiration from the facilitators, curiosity, hope and learn that it is easier than ever to start a successful business using AI or their imagination."

The program was built around one key premise that entrepreneurship and AI literacy are not separate skills — they are the same skill set expressed in the same workspace.

During the program, students engaged with a series of facilitators and were able to:

- Develop foundational AI literacy even if they may have had no prior exposure to applied AI tools.
- Build entrepreneurial thinking by walking through the full arc of a business concept - from ideation to pitch.
- Introduction to the roles and responsibilities within a business team structure.
- Demonstrate that coding and technology are accessible, collaborative, and creative disciplines.
- Model ethical AI use and responsible decision-making as non-optional components of working with technology.

Winston Churchill C.I. Gr. 10 student and participant Aniah said, "I learned that you can use AI to benefit you and help Gr. with your business. Our business idea was like Uber Eats for Black owned businesses that offer affordable and healthy food."

The session was beneficial because, "I learned how to use AI responsibly to help activate my ideas." Rashaud, Gr. 10, Winston Churchill C.I. student.

In addition, on May 26, 2026, the RisingVR Collective introduced students Gr. 9 to 12 to the intersection of design thinking, business fundamentals and virtual reality. Students worked to solve community-focused problems and pitched their concepts to the Rising VR facilitator team and their student peers.

OWARE EAST TOURNAMENT

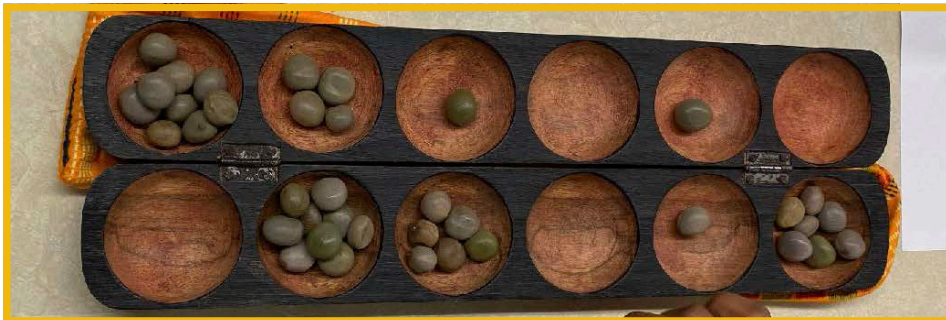
On May 7, 2026, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement alongside Willow Park Junior Public School hosted the Oware East Tournament. Five TDSB schools from Gr. 3 to 8 including Willow Park JPS, Chief Dan George, Dorset Park PS, Cedar Drive and West Hill PS competed for the championship.

Students learned about the rich history of Oware from Parent/Caregiver and Community Support Worker Baba Sankofa and from the Willow Park Student Oware Ambassadors.

After a competitive and hard-fought battle, students from Willow Park JPS won the championship.

“The tournament was a wonderful celebration of strategy, culture, learning, and community,” said Principal Lorraine Bailey Wallace from Willow Park J.P.S.

The game of Oware originates in Africa, it is a fun and social activity that teaches important skills such as strategic thinking, patience, spatial thinking, communication and negotiation.



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