



YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DISMANTLING ANTI-BLACK RACISM STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT



2022 - 2023

Introduction

Through the collective dedication of YRDSB's Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee, Turner Consulting Group Inc., and a Working Group consisting of members of the Black community and YRDSB staff, the YRDSB developed a Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy (DABRS) designed for implementation over five school years from 2020-2021 to 2025-2026.

On March 8, 2021, the **Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy: Creating anti-racist and Black-affirming learning and working environments** was officially launched. The overall goal of this strategy is to establish racial equity within YRDSB for both Black students and Black staff, while simultaneously dismantle the attitudes and structures that contribute to and maintain anti-Black racism within the Board.

This comprehensive strategy is outlined in two documents: Part 1 - Background Report and Part 2 - The Strategy. The strategy (see DABR strategy summary on page 3), is framed by 7 priority areas which inform 3 foci areas for the Board along with 35 relevant key actions, an accountability framework, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

YRDSB staff, students, families, community members, and community agencies have consistently communicated their concerns to the Board including:

- How anti-Black racism continues to rob Black children, families and communities of their futures,
- Damaging ways anti-Black racism has impacted the mental health of staff and students, the career paths of staff, and
- The entrenched nature of anti-Black racism in the education system (e.g., practices, policies and curriculum).

Purpose of this Report

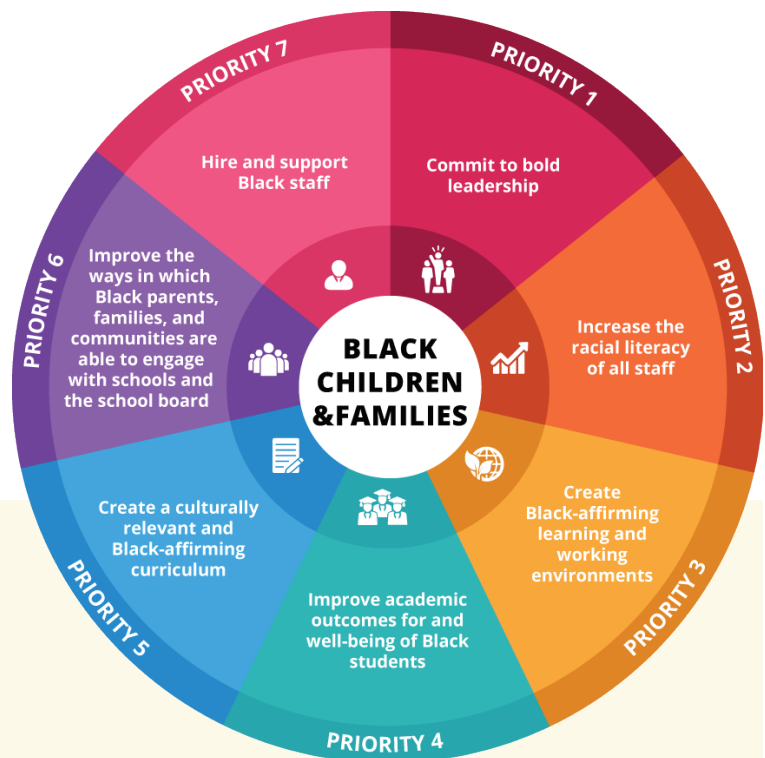
This report is a simplified copy of the DABRS second annual report, designed to be accessible to our community. It highlights the progress achieved in the second year of our ongoing efforts, as highlighted in two detailed reports delivered on [February 8, 2023](#), and [May 16, 2023](#), to the Trustees and the YRDSB Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee. This report not only summarizes the actions taken during the 2022-2023 year to advance our strategy but also builds upon the insights gained from the previous 2021-2022 year and the quarterly reports.

Furthermore, this community-friendly report emphasizes the progress made in evaluating the impact of our initiatives on Black students by tracking the data gathered through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from the Every Student Counts Survey (ESCS) for the years 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, the Resolve Tool, the Centre for Black Student Excellence Programs, and the efforts in Black staff hiring by tracking data from the Apply to Education platform for the years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

DABRS Framework

The DABRS is outlined in two documents: [Part 1 - Background Report](#) and [Part 2 - The Strategy](#). The three foci areas have been created by the DABR implementation team to help to focus the work. These foci areas include 7 priorities, 35 priority actions, the accountability framework, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Priority Actions are the key steps identified to achieve the DABRS plan's objectives. These actions are prioritized based on their significant impact on success and therefore allow for a concentrated allocation of resources and efforts towards strategic goals.





Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy Framework

OUR GOAL



Increase Racial Equity for Black Students, Families and Staff

35

1

2

3

Priority Actions from the **Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy** have been mapped across **3 foci areas**.

Bold Leadership and System Practices

This foci area align a commitment to bold leadership and enforces connection of the work of MYSP-DAP-DABRS-Procedures-Guidelines-School Improvement Plan through the creation of procedures and guidelines that dismantle anti-Black racism in the Board. Leaders inspire and hold high expectations of efficacy for Black Students and Staff by leading Anti-Black Racism. Creating new possibilities for those in leadership positions to effectuate and be enrolled within the organization by boldly leading conversations on anti-Black racism.

Culturally Relevant Teaching, Learning and Equitable Outcomes

This foci establishes the essential cultural relevance in teaching, learning and curriculum to embrace diversity within, and complexities of, the Black experience(s) and the African diaspora.

Black Affirming Environments and Community Engagement

This foci area is cemented with a specified distinction and supports the creation of a Black-affirming environment conducive to pride, empowerment and clear narratives, that enrich and inspire. The importance of including/listening to voices of Black communities; partnering with Black communities; working alongside; building trust.

These actions are the collective responsibility of System, School and Classroom staff.

Summary of Strategy Implementation

The Year 2 Implementation Plan for the DABRS was structured to emphasize the three foci areas.

To evaluate the extent of strategy implementation during the second year, we have outlined the series of implementation actions for 2022-2023 within each focus areas:

Summary of Student Outcomes

This summary highlights both the achievements and challenges encountered by Black students, underscores the positive impacts of Centre for Black Student Excellence programs, and recognizes improvements in staff representation. It underscores the imperative of sustained efforts to create anti-racist and Black-affirming learning and working environments.

Please note, that for several KPI's, rather than only reporting rates, proportions and counts, a discussion of disproportionality is used to identify inequities and barriers experienced by Black students.

Section 1: Graduation Rates, Leaver Rates, and Post-Secondary Pathways

A review of the cohorts 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, show a decline in graduation rates among all students. Black students' graduation rate has also decreased across the three cohorts reviewed. Similar trends observed in early leaver rates and post-secondary access rates.

Section 2: Representation in Program of Study and Specialized Programs and Schools

Since the 2018-2019 academic year, there has been an increase in the participation of Black students in academic courses. However, Black students continue to be overrepresented in applied and locally developed course types..

In the 2022-2023 period, the representation of Black students (single race and multiple race) increased in the Academic program as well as in De-streamed courses. However, they are still overrepresented in the Applied/Locally Developed courses.

Some specialized programs have shown an increase in the participation of Black students (e.g., Art and French Immersion for Elementary; Art, College Delivered Dual Credit (DC) for Secondary. However, Black students remain underrepresented in some specialized programs (e.g., Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) for Secondary).

Section 3: Representation in Special Education Programs

While improvements observed over time, Black students continue to be overrepresented in special education needs programs (excluding Giftedness) when compared to students from all other racial backgrounds. Also, Black students remain underrepresented in the Gifted program when compared to students from all other racial backgrounds.

Section 4: Representation among Suspensions and Expulsions

While the overrepresentation of Grade 4-12 Black students (both single race and multiple races) in out-of-school suspensions has shown a consistent decline over the past five years, they still experience a higher disproportionality in suspension rates compared to students of all other races, particularly those who self-identify as Black (single race).

Section 5 and 6: Equitable Learning & Well-Being

Positive outcomes in certain well-being areas reflect a noticeable decrease in feelings of nervousness and anxiety among Black students (single race) compared to Black students (multiple races) and students of (all other races).

However, both Black (single race and multiple races) students' sense of belonging to their school has been slightly lower when compared to students of (all other races). This difference is more pronounced in 2022-2023 data and remains consistent across grades 7-8 and 9-12.

Section 7: Incidents of Hate Racism and Discrimination

Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, as documented by the Resolve tool, the majority of reported incidents were associated with anti-Black racism, constituting approximately 50%. Additionally, a notable number of incidents included antisemitism (15%), homophobia (12%), and anti-Asian racism (11%).

Section 9: Developing Racial Literacy for all Staff

As part of implementing the DABRS strategy, an assessment of a scaled Racial Literacy program involving Grade 5 educators and students in 80 schools during Year One (May/June 2023) revealed encouraging results.

The data showed that classroom-based co-learning opportunities improved the racial literacy of both educators and students regarding their confidence in addressing racism and anti-Black racism.

Summary of Staff Outcomes

Representation of Black staff among applicants and new hires

In the year 2021-2022, there was a significant increase in the proportion of Black applicants who chose to self-identify their race. This positive trend was also observed in the new hires data for 2021-2022.

There is an increase in the representation of Black employees, especially among Intervention Support Workers.

Moving Forward: The Impact of the DABRS Strategy

The previous findings underscore the importance of the DABRS strategy in addressing anti-Black racism within YRDSB. While there have been notable successes and positive impacts, challenges remain, emphasizing the need for ongoing and sustained efforts to create inclusive and affirming educational environments for Black students and staff. The collaborative approach and commitment to systemic change embodied by the DABRS strategy serve as a foundation for future progress towards racial equity and justice within the educational system.



Recommended Transformational Shifts & Changes

As we embark on the third year, the following transformational shifts and changes are recommended:

Foci 1: Bold Leadership and System Practices

- Continue to provide senior staff and trustees ongoing professional development focused on addressing anti-Black racism from a system level.
- Continue to enhance racial literacy through professional development for school administrators, educators, and staff.
- Increase efficacy of administrators in addressing incidents of Anti-Black Racism through the use of Hate and Discrimination Protocol and review the Resolve Tool process.
- Ensure that School Improvement Plans align with the priorities of the DABRS and are subject to supervision from the Superintendent through the System Improvement Learning Cycle (SILC).

Foci 2: Culturally Relevant Teaching, Learning and Equitable Outcomes

- Encourage teachers to integrate curriculum addressing racism, anti-Black racism and oppression into their daily lessons to foster awareness within the classroom.
- Provide training to increase teachers' confidence and competence in planning, delivering, and assessing culturally relevant practices, including Black affirming curriculum.
- Ensure that Teachers' Annual Learning Plans align with School Improvement Plans.
- Increase the number of staff members implementing Black identity affirming resources, as evidenced in New Teacher Induction Program Teacher Performance Appraisals, Principal Appraisals and Annual Learning Plan, lesson plans, long range plans, admin walkthroughs.

Foci 3: Black Affirming Environments and Community Engagement

- Support meaningful engagement and advocacy, providing various opportunities to deepen relationships with Black families and communities for opportunities to engage and communicate with schools.
- Continue to provide racial literacy professional development for all staff aimed at creating Black Affirming learning environments.
- Provide learning experiences that empower Black students to aim for high academic achievement and create identity-affirming spaces that allow them to maintain a strong and positive sense of self rooted in their racial identity using CRRP.
- Increase the involvement of Black families in school initiatives (e.g., school council).

Centre for Black Student Excellence Programs

In alignment with the objectives outlined in the DABRS, the Centre for Black Excellence offers programs that specifically target Priorities 3 and 4. Designed to affirm Black students, their identity and support student achievement and well-being. There are summer programs (Camp Black Brilliance, The Come Up, and Black Internship Program), school year programs (Ascending Sisters, Black Excellence Program, and Rise Brothers), and pilot initiatives aiming to provide Black Affirming environments for staff. The following provides an overview on each program from students', staff's and parents' perspective.

Camp Black Brilliance

Camp Black Brilliance offers families the opportunity to get to know the kindergarten program and have their children experience their introduction to schooling in a way that is culturally responsive and affirming of their identity, through experiential learning. It is designed for students entering Junior Kindergarten. This year, the program took place at the following locations: Ashton Meadows Public School, Discovery Public School and Walter Scott Public School during the month of July 2023.

The Come Up

The Come Up summer program is an in-person course designed for self-identifying Black students in the YRDSB. This program aims to empower students to pursue excellence in high school and beyond through meaningful discussions, activities, and educational experiences. It was offered at two summer school locations: Tommy Douglas Secondary School and Milliken Mills High School during the month of July 2023.

The Grade 8 transition to Grade 9 Program (CHV 208/GLC 208) focuses on civics, citizenship, and digital literacy, encouraging students to explore the role of social media in civic engagement and politics, and providing insights into the functions of government and the historical roots of Canadian rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, the Grade 9 transition to Grade 10 Program (CHE3O1) delves into the history of Black and/or African peoples in Canada, studying historical developments in their countries of origin and highlighting factors influencing their migration to Canada, all while emphasizing their contributions to Canadian identity and heritage, with the option to fulfill the grade 10 compulsory history credit.

103
Grade 9 & 10 Black students who earned a credit

“The career studies portion taught me more about future possible career interests but also gave me the opportunity to be with students of the same ethnicity.” - A Come Up program student

Black Youth Internship Program

The Black Youth Internship Program (BYIP) is a collaboration between The Come Up and York University Jean Augustine Chair, designed to empower Black students with leadership skills and enhance their educational engagement. The program, primarily targeting Grade 10 students entering Grade 11 within the York Region District School Board (YRDSB), offers a range of benefits, including tailored secondary school education, collaboration opportunities, a safe and supportive learning environment, exploration of academic and career goals, co-op credit acquisition, experiential and community-based learning with compensation, and participation in activities related to Grade 12 planning, post-high school pursuits, financial education, Black history, and personalized learning initiatives. Notably, 42 Black students have achieved the program's objectives by earning a credit, receiving financial compensation, and obtaining a certificate of completion, resulting in a noteworthy celebration of their accomplishments by students, parents, and educators.

"I liked it was fun learning about the African culture; it was great because I have never learned this much about where I come from." - A Black Youth Internship program student

"My child enjoys the class overall as well as the environment of collaborating and engaging with teachers and other peers that identify as Black youths. Having Black role models who comes in to speak really motivates my child. My child enjoys the field trips as well. The food was great which is a taste of the Caribbean culture was enjoyable for my child." - YRDSB parent

Ascending Sisters

The Ascending Sisters Mentorship Program is a pilot project aligned with the DABRS. This initiative aims to connect Black girls and non-binary students in the YRDSB with self-identified Black staff members, including teachers, educational assistants, Child and Youth workers, support professionals, and administrators. The program is open to cisgender girls, transgender girls, and non-binary students in grades 7-10 across selected pilot schools.

For the implementation of the program during 2022-2023, a total of 21 schools actively participated in the program, enrolling 71 registered students. Notably, the Elementary panel accounted for the majority of participants, with 46 students and representation from 16 schools.

"I think we could have more sessions and discuss more about how we feel and how to feel in a safe space." - Ascending Sisters student

Black Excellence Program

This program offers elementary and secondary school students a supportive, identity-affirming space where they can explore their interests, connect with peers and advance their achievement and well-being. In Summer 2023, Parents of participating students in 2022-2023 Black Excellence Program, shared that their children reflected on the positive impact and empowerment of the program through cultural connection, as well as the positive experience and enjoyment.

Parents also expressed their gratitude and appreciation for this initiative.

"It helped my confidence and when I'm in a space where I'm the only Black person, I feel proud and confident." - Black Excellence program student

"They were filled with joy to see many students who also look like them and learn more about their culture. They cannot wait until another BEP event!" - YRDSB parent



Rise Brothers Mentorship Program

Rise Brothers Mentorship Program was founded in 2016. It was designed to confront and address the persistent inequities faced by Black male students within the YRDSB due to systemic anti-Black racism. The program aligns with the goals and strategies of the Centre for Black Student Excellence, particularly the DABRS.

Rise Brothers conducted several sessions starting in November 2022, emphasizing its commitment to supporting Black male students in grades 7 to 12. Subsequent sessions, in February and March 2023, included over 30 students and Black male mentors from YRDSB. These sessions featured visits to educational and financial institutions, such as the University of Toronto and TD Securities, providing students with valuable experiences and insights.

Providing Black affirming environments for staff

The opportunity for Black identifying staff to engage in an affirming space yielded enthusiastic participation primarily from teachers. Their responses to various questions offer insights into the reasons for their engagement, their key takeaways, and suggestions for future programs. The majority of participants cited that the main motivations for registering for this opportunity is the need for a unique space where Black-identifying staff could connect and get to know each other better. This desire stemmed from their sense of belonging within their educational community and the importance of recognizing individuals who share a common racial and cultural journey. They underlined the significance of supporting initiatives like the Centre for Black Student Excellence and advocated for broader community support.

“I believe that it is important for Black identified staff have an opportunity to get to know each other so that we are aware of others who understand our journey. It is important that Black identified staff have a space where we can feel that we actually belong. I fully support the work that is being done by the Centre for Black Student Excellence. It is important that we as a community support the events.” - A YRDSB administrator

In terms of resonating themes from their learning, participants emphasized the impact of trauma on mental health and the importance of coping strategies. They stressed the need for open conversations about race and the importance of accessing emotions to address hurtful racial encounters. They found the strategies provided valuable in regaining control over painful situations and acknowledged the beginning of a collective learning journey in their school system.

“The link between racial literacy and mental health. Having a more mindful approach when dealing with racial situations.” - a YRDSB educator

Looking Ahead to Year Three

As the journey into year three unfolds, it is important to recognize the accomplishments of the past years, and the relative improvements at the different levels. However, this requires a discerning eye to identify areas of improvement, and determine strategic pivots in the years to come. Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy team will continue to work with the system to increase collective responsibility in improving outcomes for Black students.

The intentional initiatives that were well-received, such as: Black-affirming programming for students K-12, family-engagement events, and racial literacy workshops for staff, have proven effective. However, to ensure a comprehensive impact, the Board-wide implementation of these initiatives is still necessary. Creating Black-affirming and anti-racist environments across all spaces within the Board remains a vital objective for fostering inclusivity.

A critical analysis of the data suggests that more efforts are needed to enhance the representation and diversity among the adult staff within the educational environment. This is an important part of the broader strategy to address anti-Black racism and promote inclusivity within the educational system.



What Needs to Be Improved for Student Outcomes

To support positive student outcomes, intentional efforts are needed in the following areas:

Graduation Rates, Leaver Rates, and Post-Secondary Pathways

Ensure that educators engage in self-reflection to identify systemic racism and biases that impact Black Students, while simultaneously increasing opportunities for knowledge and exposure to multiple pathways to increase graduation rates and decrease Early Leaver Rates.

Representation in Special Education Programs

Continue to review processes of Special Education Placement for Black Students with a focus on equitable and inclusive practices.

Students Equitable Learning & Well-Being

Ensure to incorporate a culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy to create inclusive learning environments that affirms Black students' identities and foster Black-affirming environments that supports the well-being of Black students.

Representation among Suspensions and Expulsions

Implement a process to review the suspension and expulsion procedures, in collaborating with administrators, aimed at developing strategies that support staff in preventing conditions that result in an over-representation of Black students facing out-of-school suspensions.

Representation in Program of Study and Specialized Programs and Schools

Continue assessment of Pathways and Specialized Program and Schools (Arts, Gifted, International Baccalaureate) to guarantee equitable inclusion of Black students in these programs. Conduct a review of program promotion, access, and location, as well as ongoing review of application process and curriculum revision to ensure it is culturally relevant and responsive.

What Needs to Be Improved for Staff Outcomes

To foster positive staff outcomes, the following actions are recommended:

Enhance Black representation

YRDSB should continue its initiatives to enhance the presence of Black employees across all staff categories, while also aiding those engaged in the recruitment process to appreciate the contributions Black employees bring to the workplace and to identify and address their own unconscious biases.

Support for Healing

Provide ongoing support for Black staff to address the impact of racial trauma within the school environment.

Address Workplace Discrimination

Assist staff in utilizing available resources within YRDSB to address incidents of hate and discrimination in the workplace.

Increase the Representation of Black Staff in Mentorship Programs

Increase the number of Black teachers in the Indigenous and Racialized Leaders Mentorship Program, which is designed to mentoring racialized educators and support them pursue various career pathways.