

Black Excellence Day

For the first time ever, Nova Scotia's public schools will be celebrating Black Excellence Day on June 17, 2022.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development through the African Canadian Services Branch, along with Regional Centres for Education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, invite students and staff in Nova Scotia's public schools, and all supporters, to wear black T-shirts to celebrate and stand in unity in support of the success of Black students. Black Excellence Day celebrates Black Achievements, Black stories, Black art, Black innovations, and Black people and their communities.

This is also an opportunity to commemorate the ongoing struggle by Black Canadians for civil and human rights and to remember that small actions can make BIG differences.

Nova Scotia's Inclusive Education Policy is a commitment to ensuring a high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive and equitable education to support the well-being and achievement of every student. Black Excellence Day is an opportunity for students to see themselves represented, acknowledged, and celebrated and to grow understandings that create an inclusive education for all students.

Black Excellence Day recognizes the commitment to focus on equity by supporting the success of Black students and establishing safe and caring schools where all students feel they belong.

Black Excellence Day acknowledges the authentic and diverse intersectionality of the African diaspora as beautiful with many diverse cultures, ethnicities, faiths and lived experiences, and the 400-year legacy of people of African ancestry within the province of Nova Scotia.

As such, we welcome school community support in celebrating Black Excellence Day in meaningful ways that resonate with individuals. Black Excellence is a day for every student to both acknowledge and celebrate Black Excellence.

You can show your support of Black Excellence Day by:

- wearing a black T-shirt to reinforce your commitment to care and support the success of Black students
- appreciating and showcasing the innovative and strategic leadership of Black staff in your schools, offices, and building
- contacting your Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services, to learn how these educational leaders and their teams of Students Support Workers, facilitators, and/or consultants are inspiring systemic change and your role as a collaborative partner
- supporting cultural leadership and mentorship initiatives in your region
- learning about and supporting Black organizations and businesses

- familiarizing yourself with African Nova Scotian history and heritage (links available within Inclusive Education: The Call to Value Black Students Lives <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/acs/files-accs/docs/inclusiveeducation-calltovalueblackstudentslivesen.pdf>)
- registering for the National Black Canadian Summit being held in Halifax from July 29–30, sponsored by the Michele Jean Foundation (register here: <https://www.blackcanadiansummit.ca>)
- posting your June 17, 2022, Black Excellence Day photos via social media using #NSBLACKEXCELLENCE DAY

You can grow understandings of Black Excellence by viewing the numerous videos, webinars, and feature stories available, such as:

- “Canada’s Outstanding Principal 2019”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1vXZhkZpQ>
- Auburn High School—“First Cohort of Africentric Students Graduate from N.S. High School”: <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1913280067826>
- “Auburn High School Africentric Math Cohort”: <https://abn.hrce.ca/abn/general-information/africentric-math-cohort>
- “AVRCE SSW Film”: [AVRCE–SSW FILM–FINAL DRAFT.mrup4–Google Drive](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mru4p4/view)
- “November–The History & Legacy of Black Excellence”: https://rise.articulate.com/share/IHcU#/lessons/hxee_Taww28lwb8RYHKchNzEZsbXEACW

Did You Know

Diverse Library Collection Distribution

As a part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s commitment to inclusive education, the African Canadian Services Branch is pleased to provide schools grades primary–3 with one copy of the Diversity Library Collection and a set of related bookmarks. The collection celebrates people of Black African ancestry and grows authentic understandings of their lives and experiences. These resources are great for building more diverse libraries while also allowing students to see themselves and others reflected in empowering ways throughout their school and within their learning experiences. Bilingual posters featuring books from the Diversity Library Collection are also included as part of the delivery to promote reading.

Each library collection includes the books listed below, which are available in English and French:

- *Hair Love (Nos boucles au naturel)* by Matthew A. Cherry
- *The Word Collector (Le Collectionneur de mots)* by Peter H. Reynolds
- *The King of Kindergarten (Roi de la maternelle)* by Derrick Barnes
- *Meet Willie O’Ree (Voici Willie O’Ree)* by Elizabeth MacLeod

Notable African Nova Scotians Posters

EECD, through the African Canadian Services Branch, has partnered with the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute (DBDLI) to provide a direct link to “Notable African Nova Scotians” posters, which are available at <https://ourcloud.nspes.ca/index.php/s/Nb9DP7GzgxHdH3A>.

Highlights From Across the Province

Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education

Krishinda McBride, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services

Africentric Cohort Horton High

The Africentric cohort had the opportunity to work with students from Student Support Worker programs across the region. Thirty-eight students and nine SSWs met at AVRCE’s regional office for a one-day Black anti-racism education session. The Africentric cohort presented on their program at Horton High School, what it is, how it is, and why it is. The cohort highlighted leadership initiatives (A+ Squash program, after-school Gym Buddies) they have developed and participated in. Students enrolled in the cohort shared information about their Ujima Project (Collective Work and Responsibility). The Ujima Project is an eight-part module that students in the Africentric cohort developed to address issues of racism, discrimination, equity, and human rights. Individuals who have violated the PSP code of conduct can volunteer to participate the Ujima Project as part of an educational component. The Ujima Project is a positive, inclusive, social-justice initiative that has contributed to the school’s culture in creating a space for all. The Ujima Project, and the various leadership initiatives students in the Africentric cohort have developed and participated in, provide student voice through the celebration and promotion of Black Excellence.

Black Hockey–West Hants County

For 12 weeks (December to April 2022) on Sundays from 9:00 am to 10:00 am 18 students and 10 community members of West Hants County came together at the Windsor Sports Complex for Black Hockey. Black Hockey was an initiative designed to raise the visibility of African descent people on the ice. The aim of the initiative is to increase physical activity and provide an empowerment opportunity while increasing one’s knowledge and racial pride of Africentricity in hockey. The group had an opportunity to travel to Halifax via a coach bus to attend the Coloured Hockey League (CHL) Memorial Hockey Game. West Hants County, Windsor, is home to Long Pond, hockey history, and two historical African descent communities (Three Miles Plains and Newport Station). Students and guardians had an opportunity to learn about the origin of Black hockey, learn about the contributions of Black hockey players (historical and contemporary) while having an opportunity to increase their physical activity and learn a new skill. Black Excellence was seen through student and community leadership, mentorship, and the phrase, “Representation Matters.” Staff and community members look forward to our continued work with our students and guardians in West Hants through the Black Hockey initiative. Staff and community members look forward to continuing to increase the physical and mental well-being of our African descent community while increasing knowledge and representation of African descent on the ice.

Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education

Lynn Crawford-Carter, Director of Programs and Student Services

Tanya Estwick, African Nova Scotian Consultant

Reann Arsenault, Jalise Campbell, and Vanessa Parris, African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers

On Thursday, June 2, grade 12 African Nova Scotian graduating students from the CBVRCE were celebrated during the Annual Honouring Grade 12 Celebration. This year, 29 graduates were honoured and presented with personalized Kente scarfs in recognition of their hard work and educational achievement. The ceremony was held at Menelik Hall Community Center in Whitney Pier, a historical site which serves as a recreational community centre for cultural events. Mr. Joseph Parris delivered the keynote address to graduates in the presence of community elders, leaders, and family members.

Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education

Shelley MacLean, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services

“Ubuntu” Aspiring African Nova Scotian Leaders and Youth Conference

On June 10th CCRCE is hosting the “Ubuntu” Aspiring African Nova Scotian Leaders Youth Conference. The Regional Coordinator is organizing this event in partnership with NSCC Truro Campus. Approximately 250 African Nova Scotian youth from across the region will attend a full day of empowerment and celebration of identity highlighting Black Excellence. Speakers and performers of African descent from across our province will participate in this day-long celebration.

Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

Karim Amedjkouh, Coordonnateur de la diversité culturelle et des droits de la personne

During African Heritage Month, all CSAP’s schools were invited to walk outside to show support and friendship for African Nova Scotian communities. From February 22nd–25th schools held the march with flags and positive signs in support of African Nova Scotian students. Schools shared photos of the walk in their community via social media.

On May 27th CSAP’s African-Nova Scotian students’ academic, cultural, and artistic talents were highlighted in a celebration at École du Carrefour’s amphitheater. The students had the opportunity to shine in front of an audience of 350 people. The students were proud to be part of the event, which was a great success.

Halifax Regional Centre for Education

Shawn Grouse, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services

Rachel Ross, Facilitator, African Canadian Education Services

Darcel Williams-Hart, Facilitator, African Canadian Education Services

Frances Waterman-O'Connell, Facilitator, African Canadian Education Services

Otis Daye, Equity Consultant

Kim Sparks, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist

Greg White, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist

Introduction of the Role of African Canadian Education Services Facilitator HRCE and EECD

The three tenants of this position are:

- disrupt the historical overrepresentation of students who are of African ancestry who follow an Individual Program Plan
- disrupt the underrepresentation of African Nova Scotian/Black students enrolled in higher level courses and programs, with a focus on increasing students enrolled and successful at Math 10
- provide leadership and supervision of the Student Support Worker Program

African NS Literacy and Math Grant

This year HRCE was able to provide intentional and targeted culturally relevant literacy and numeracy instruction to more than 350 learners of African ancestry within 15 schools. The region's lead team and grant teachers focused instructional design with an intention to learners' affective and cognitive ways of learning. A framework was implemented that included three phases, allotting the grant teachers time to get to know their students and identify their cultural ways of knowing. The planning of instruction was encouraged to tap into the learners' cultural ways of knowing to attain new learning. The final phase of the framework was the evaluation phase gathering data on student growth and achievement as well feedback on the grant from students' voices.

Inclusive and Equitable Mathematics Course Selection Process

Facilitators, African Canadian Education Services, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist, Greg White, lead HRCE to actively analyze and deconstruct practices that have led to inequitable educational opportunities for learners of African ancestry. A collaborative working group was created to develop the Inclusive and Equitable Mathematics Course Selection Process.

The following Educator Declarations were produced:

(a) Mathematics courses are critically important for a student during their high school years. A student's mathematics pathway is a critical crossroad for future opportunities. Purposeful and informed course selection can positively impact post-secondary and career opportunities for students.

(b) Student achievement in mathematics is important to prepare students and their future careers, especially given a global rise of those careers in the fields of skilled trades, science, technology, engineering, business, commerce, and mathematics.

(c) Mathematics selection has far-reaching impacts on a student's confidence, identity, general knowledge of mathematical concepts, and high school experience.

(d) Data from the HRCE shows that students of African Nova Scotian, African, and Indigenous ancestry are overrepresented in graduation level mathematics courses, and under-represented in academic and advanced mathematics courses in high school.

Student Cultural and Leadership Grant

HRCE African Canadian Education Services Team (Diversity Team) will use the funding allotted through the Student Cultural and Leadership Grant in support of the Guiding Principles of the *Inclusive Education Policy*.

Programming implemented through the funding provided by the grant:

- **Black Youth Aspire Symposium (BYAS):** connect students in junior high / middle school through a virtual one-day presentation that will unite Black professionals from a variety of occupational fields with students to share their journeys, words of encouragement, and to demonstrate to the students that a path has already been laid and that there are others waiting to greet and assist students in following their dreams. Approximately 160 students participated.
- **Cultural Mentors:** Coordinators and facilitators, in partnership with schools, have identified that some students are not having academic success because they do not feel connected to the school or learning. HRCE will recruit four community mentors and coordinate with them to support students who are experiencing the effects of systemic racism in schools and work with students within schools to promote students' cultural safety.
- **Engagement Mentors:** Coordinators and facilitators have coordinated with university students, including B.Ed. students, as well as graduates and community educators, who will support an individual or small group of students whose cultural, linguistic, and knowledge systems are not being accessed and seen as strengths within their learning. Students whose strengths and challenges have yet to be determined were provided with effective support within the school to build school connectiveness so that the students are able to work towards their promise and potential.
- **Cultural Griots:** HRCE worked with two community members to deliver workshops and programming that inform, inspire, and build upon students' cultural knowledge, deepening students "Knowledge of Self" so that they can feel more cultural safety at school. Building upon student's cultural knowledge at school will allow them to establish a connectiveness to their educational journey. Workshops and presentations will further equip students with the cultural knowledge, identity, and empowerment for their academic, professional, and work and life goals.

- **Africentric Math Cohort:** 2021 marked the graduation of the first Africentric Math Cohort from Auburn Drive High School. The Auburn Drive team have been supporting the implementation of the cohort from the start and will continue to support the cohort's growth within HRCE. In September 2022–23 two additional high schools, Citadel High and Prince Andrew High, will be enrolling their first cohorts. With leadership and support from Karen Hudson, Principal of Auburn High and creator of the Africentric Cohort, and Dr. Tanya Hudson, Associate Professor/Chair of Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle Grades, Reading, and Special Education at Fayetteville Faith University, these two schools have participated in many hours and days of professional development throughout this year, with PD continuing into summer 2022:
 - July 2021: 35 hours / 5 days of PD on Africentric Instruction, Understanding Personal Bias, African Nova Scotian Culture and History, creating a school culture where Black students thrive
 - October–December 2021: PD and conversation with Karen Hudson setting school and classroom environments for the cohort students and their families
 - January–March 2022: Follow-up visits with Karen Hudson working with school leadership/cohort lead teams selecting students
 - February 2022: PD for instructional staff with Dr. Hudson on Africentric Math instruction
 - May 2022: Four-day observation and PD with Dr. Hudson on Africentric Math Instruction
 - July 2022: 35 hours / 5 days continuation of the previous summer PD

South Shore Regional Centre for Education

Tracey Mulder, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services

The Power to Read Equity Project

Led by Regional Coordinator of African Canadian Education Services and the Literacy Coordinator, the Power to Read Equity Project was launched in January 2022 in the SSRCE. The project is an academic and wellness program for African Nova Scotian/Black students in pre-primary to grade 3 and is designed to nurture and inspire students. The goal of the program is to reduce and/or eliminate the reading opportunity gap for African Nova Scotian/Black students, which has been aggravated by the amount of face-to-face class time missed due to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years. Through the hard work and family outreach of the SSRCE's Student Support Workers, backpacks of culturally responsive books and other resource materials have been placed in the homes of 29 families in the region. The program is not school based and connecting reading to the home and families is an integral component of the program. Students will continue to receive books to take home or that will be sent directly to their home—and the books are theirs to keep.

African Drumming

Started initially as a cultural activity for African Nova Scotian/Black students who are part of Park View Education Centre's culture youth group, Nia Cultural Collective, the African drumming program has evolved to become inclusive of any student at PVEC, and surrounding schools in the region. PVEC provides a space for the students to gather, along with several Student Support Workers and the Coordinator of African Canadian Education Services. A trained drummer instructs and leads the group in learning how to play the African djembe drum. The students, ranging in age from 5 to 17 years old, love to meet weekly to have the opportunity to learn and to share their culture with others in the region in a safe and welcoming space.

Strait Regional Centre for Education

Kathy Rhodes-Langille, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services Academic Achievement, Wellness, and Cultural Inspiration

Racialized Incident Response

Regional directors and staff, school administrators, parent and guardians, youth and Community Education Committee members collaborate annually to "know and do better" about racialized incident responses in the SRCE.

Community partners collaborate with the SRCE on local and global issues affecting their children, youth, and community.

The SRCE Racialized Incident Response Team has been established to create and improve on the response to act, with clear and concise procedures when incidents occur. The development of this protocol has been a collaborative approach with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Equitable restorative education is provided for student incidents, in race, culture, human rights, and equity.

Programs / Programming

Grades 9–12 Anti-Black, Anti-Racism Education sessions have been rolled out across the region and will be fully implemented by 2024. Commencing discussion on the Power to Read Project in partnership with the African Canadian Services Branch.

The African Nova Scotian Math and Literacy Program Grades P-12, in partnership with the African Canadian Services Branch, has been implemented across the SRCE.

Student Activities

The kickoff for Black Excellence Day will include T-shirts, posters, activities, and draws for classroom resources.

An invitation has been extended to SRCE African Nova Scotian/Black students in middle and high school to attend the Black Youth Aspire Symposium at HRCE.



Staffing

Casual SSWs have been hired to support African Nova Scotian students.

A special thanks from the SRCE to African Student Support Workers, Student Success Teachers, Program Leader, and Psychotherapist Equity Team for the continued support of students.

Tri-County Regional Centre for Education

Misty Morrison, Regional Coordinator, African Canadian Education Services

This year the TCRCE is leveraging pre-existing supports to highlight and focus on Black Excellence. The TCRCE has launched the Equity Reading Project through its pre-established Reading Mentor Program. The Equity Reading Project supports P–2 African Nova Scotian/Black students with the aim of furthering reading comprehension and love of reading. Also, through the Student Support Worker Program, ACSB Student Cultural and Leadership Grant funds have provided cultural and team-building exercises to foster wellness and cultural pride. These initiatives will be expanded moving forward.