

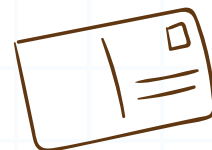
Parents of  
Black Children

# Navigating the Education System

EDUCATION IS A  
HUMAN RIGHT!



# Table of Contents:



An Introduction 4

Terms You Need to Know 6

School Board Terms You Need to Know 8

Education Organizations You Need to Know in Ontario 11

**Pre-K 14**

School Readiness 16

Early Literacy 17

**Elementary School 18**

The Research 19

Black Families and the Child Welfare System 20

Black Families and the Education System 22

Selecting a School System 24

Systems Abuse 26

What is Gaslighting? 28

What is the Process for Escalating Concerns? 30

Do's and Don'ts 32

School Records and Notes 33

Black Students and IEPs 34

Developmental Delays or Learning Exceptionalities? 37

Supporting Students with Learning Exceptionalities 38

Assessments in School 40

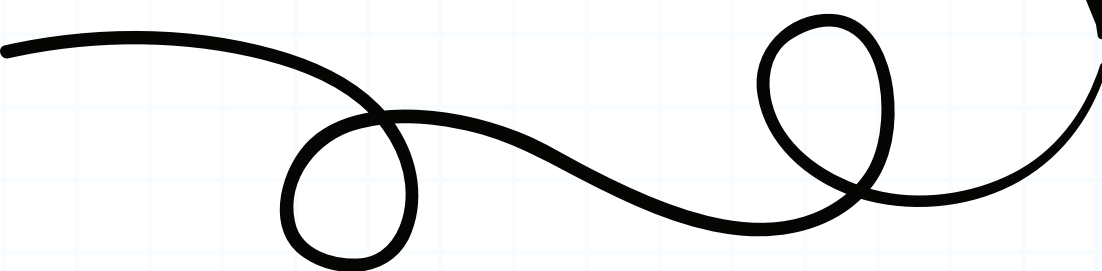
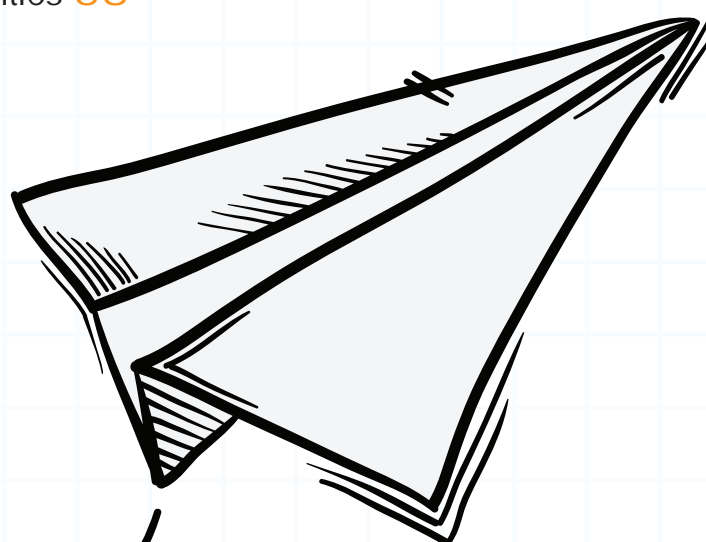
**Black Students in High School 47**

High School Certificate vs. Diploma 48

Reading High School Course Codes 50

Engaging with Schools 51

Suspensions 52



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# About Parents of Black Children

Parents of Black Children (PoBC) is an advocacy group that supports and addresses the systemic barriers impacting the experience of Black students and their families within our education system. Based in Ontario, PoBC provides support to parents of Black children across Canada and the United States. We advocate and work towards change and concrete action in our education and adjacent systems, such as child welfare, and the justice system.

## Our approach... Understanding racism

We operate from the following core principles:



### **Racialization:**

Racism is inherent and embedded in daily life, institutions, and policies and practices developed by and upheld within those institutions.



### **Racism is about power:**

Acknowledges the power imbalances, which racialized hierarchies present in society.

Critical Race theory asserts that policies and practices are developed by and upheld within those institutions.



### **Critical Race Theory (CRT):**

Race is socially constructed and intersects with other social constructs such as gender, and class. It highlights the unique experiences based on societal barriers that maintain dominant power structures.



### **Our stories matter:**

According to CRT, storytelling is a valid and relevant source of evidence. We understand the importance of counter-storytelling in addressing barriers and power imbalance.



### **Racism is founded in white supremacy:**

There is a relationship between white supremacy, rule of law, and the myth of equality amongst racialized populations. We refute the myth of meritocracy--that if you JUST work hard, you will achieve the level of success you desire. There are barriers erected to prevent success for racialized people, in particular Black people.



Parents of Black Children (PoBC) serves families in Canada and the United States. This navigation guide is geared towards families in Ontario, but the information and principles can be applied in any jurisdiction where there are Black children and families.



# The system is NOT neutral!

For decades, Black advocates and families have fought for a more inclusive and equitable education system for Black children. The system of education was founded on colonial principles that did not include Black people; in fact, the education system was created to educate Black families towards an understanding of their own inferiority. We see this in curricula that do not reflect the lived experiences or wealth of contributions of Black Canadians, nor does it adequately represent the diversity of the Black experience in Canada. We also see this in the lack of Black educators. According to the 2016 census, only 1.8% of the teaching population was Black. We see this in the fact that Black students are overrepresented in: suspension data reports, special and alternative education programs, with exception to gifted programs.



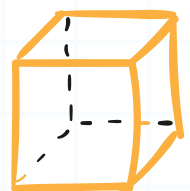
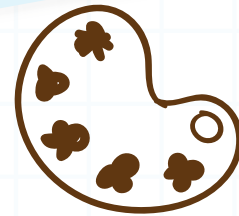
The system is not neutral. These systems were designed as part of a colonial framework that must be dismantled.

This document serves as a means to demystify the pitfalls within the education system, and light a path towards a decolonized education system.

This document is designed for all parents of Black children. It is a navigation tool that you can keep and use to support your children's education.



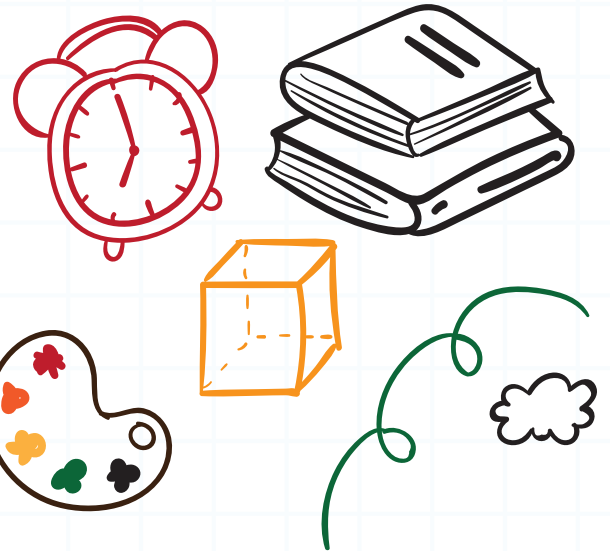
Black learners are less likely to graduate than their white counterparts, and less likely to move onto post secondary education.



**REMEMBER...**  
All children have a right to peaceful education!

# Before we begin...

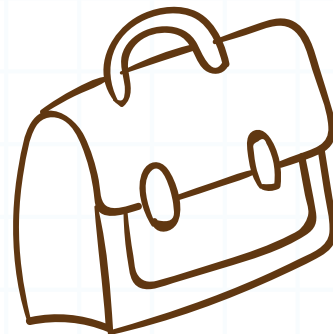
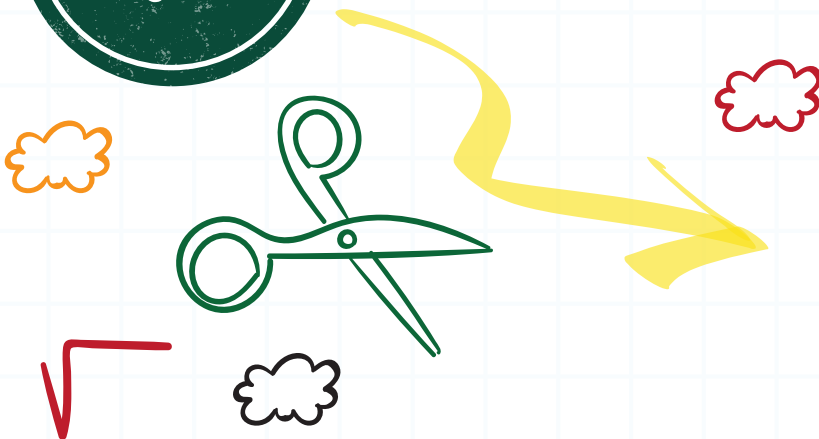
## Terms you need to know



1.

### CRITICAL RACE THEORY

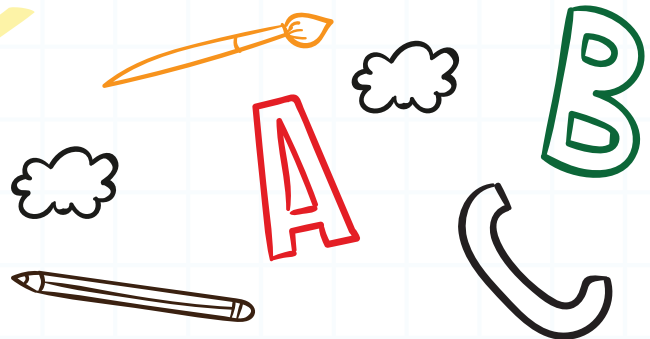
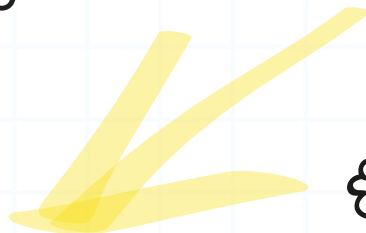
An approach to addressing racism that acknowledges that systems are not neutral and that institutions are inherently racist.



### PEDAGOGY

Refers to the process, and or methods of: teaching, learning and understanding. Essentially, teachers use evidence-based practices to decide how information is: gathered, developed, expressed, and retained with particular consideration for the learner's well-being.

2.



3.

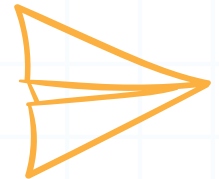
### CURRICULUM

A curriculum is the combination of instructional practices, learning experiences, and students' performance assessments that are designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of a particular course of study. This set of skills-based learning expectations are referred to as the explicit curriculum.



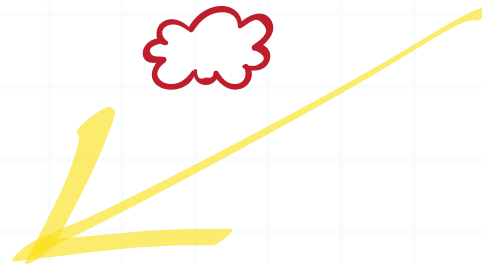
## SYSTEMIC RACISM

Systemic racism is the prevalence of racist ideology, which is woven into our institutions and involves the application of policies that advantage whiteness, but disadvantage marginalized people who are racialized.



## ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Anti-Black Racism is a form of prejudice bias and discrimination that selectively targets people of African descent. Anti-Black racism draws distinct correlations to the institutional remnants of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and the way racism is experienced by people of African descent.

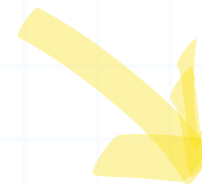
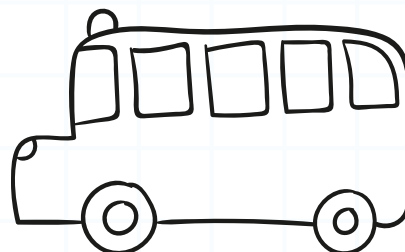


## ANTI-OPPRESSION FRAMEWORK

An anti-oppressive framework is based within the assumption that there are power dynamics, which marginalize and disadvantage persons who have particular social identities.



2+2=4



This way for school specific terms you need to know!

# School board terms you need to know!



## SCHOOL COUNCILS

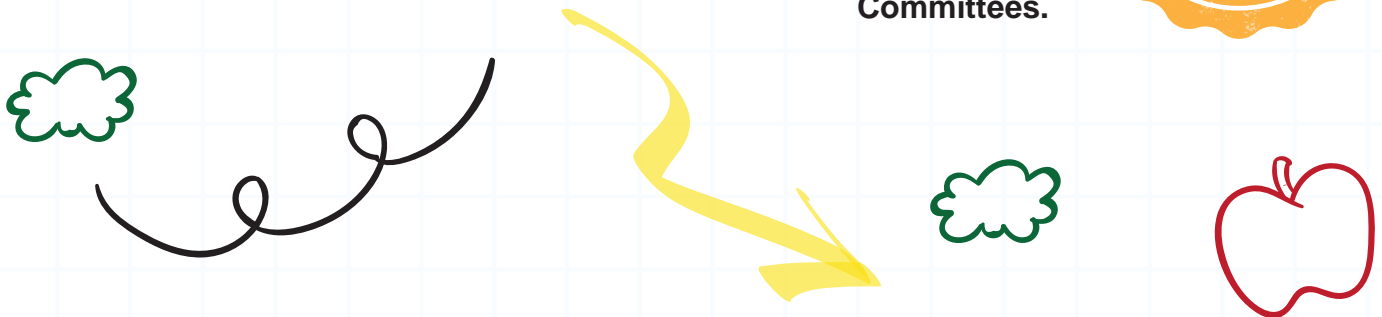
School councils consist of parents/guardians who are elected from their peer group to guide the decisions of school administrators and act as a voice to represent the school parent community. The school council may also have staff and student representation. School board chairs may be invited to host events or represent the school regionally. Parents can also provide input and suggestions for the development of school improvement plans or create surveys to assess the effectiveness of the plan for their children.



## REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEES

School staff and parents may also apply to sit on local district school board special committees. They are involved in key decision making with trustees and school board senior leadership. Examples of these committees include:

**Special Education Advisory Committee, and Parent Engagement Committees.**



## SCHOOL STUDENT SUCCESS TEAMS

Each school student success team is composed of: the principal, vice-principal, guidance counsellor, student success teacher, and special education instructor. This specialized team works together to support students who need additional support and assistance. The student success team works together to develop a learning plan, or connect with external service providers if necessary.





## ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) is a governing and disciplinary body that regulates the teaching profession for the purpose of maintaining public trust and confidence. The college has instituted ethical and professional standards of practice, and tribunals to oversee the: certification of qualifications, professional development, accreditations, as well as discipline for educators across the province.



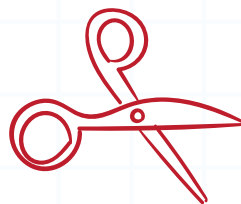
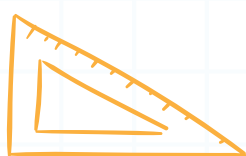
## ONTARIO COLLEGE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

The College of Early Childhood Educators (College) regulates and governs Ontario's Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). The College is the only professional self-regulatory body for early childhood education in Canada. The College regulates the profession of early childhood education by establishing and enforcing requirements for: registration, ethical standards of practice, professional learning and discipline for professional misconduct.



## THE EDUCATION ACT

The Education Act is the legislation that governs public education in the province of Ontario. This legislation sets provisions for and guides all of the main features of our education system.

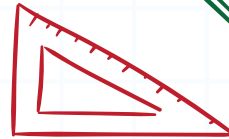






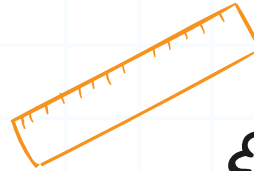
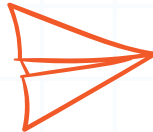
## EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (EQAO)

The Education Quality and Accountability Office is an arm's length agency providing accurate and reliable information about student achievement. The EQAO offers standardized tests which students take in grades 3, 6, and 9,10. These regulatory assessments serve as a provincial snapshot of student comprehension in core math and literacy skills. The results are used to assess if students are meeting or exceeding the ministry achievement standards. It gives necessary insight into system level learning gaps.



## ONTARIO TEACHERS FEDERATIONS AND TEACHERS UNIONS

The role of the teacher's unions is to protect the interests of teachers in all publicly funded schools. The Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF) manages the Teacher Pension Fund and acts as the unifying entity for educators. There are four affiliated teacher unions.



### The four affiliated teacher unions



- 1 The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) oversees elementary school teachers (K-8).
- 2 The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) oversees Ontario's high school teachers (9-12).
- 3 The Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA) specifically oversees the needs and advocates for educators teaching in English-speaking schools in Catholic school boards.
- 4 The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) is the union for teachers in French language schools in Ontario.

# KEY PLAYERS:

## Education Organizations

### You NEED to Know in Ontario.



**Ministry of Education**  
The Ministry of Education is responsible for childcare and for administering the system of publicly-funded elementary and secondary school education in Ontario, including the development of: curriculum, policies, and regulations for delivery and execution of learning across the province.

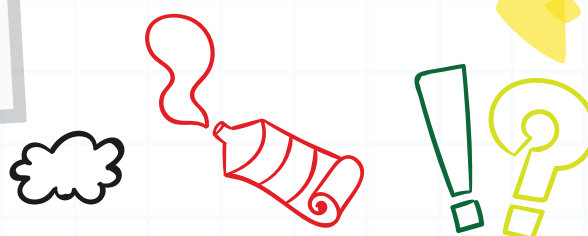


### Trustee and School Board Chairs

A school board trustee is voted into office by local constituents and is tasked with the responsibility of representing the public interests and ensuring accountability of the school board. Trustees are supposed to act as advocates for the community. The trustees form a Board of Trustees, and one trustee is elected as chair of the board. Trustees are in charge of hiring the Director of Education. Trustees must comply with the Code of Conduct, which is devised within each school district. There is often a third-party ombudsman who provides oversight over complaints and enforcement.

### TIP:

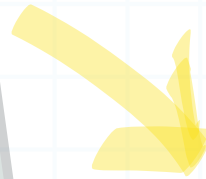
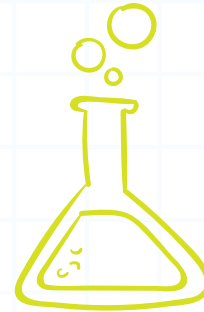
Anyone can become a school board trustee. Make sure you know who is running to be trustee in your area. Better yet, if you are interested, run yourself.





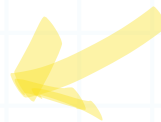
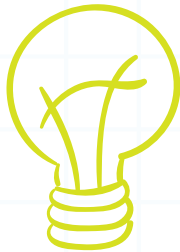
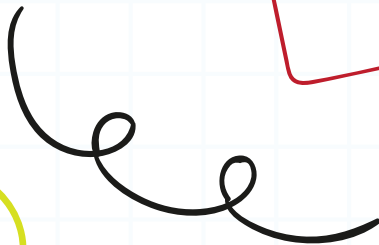
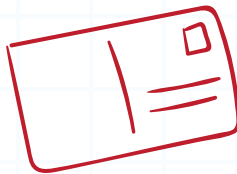
## Director of Education

Directors of Education serve as the Chief Education and Chief Executive Officer for their school boards. They are governed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, which represents the 72 school boards across Ontario. Directors have managing authority over the: superintendents, the education workers, and staff working within and beyond the classrooms and schools.



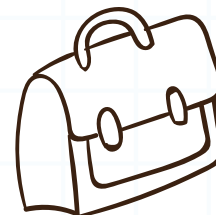
## Superintendents

Superintendents are board staff responsible for specific areas of running the school, for example, curriculum or school discipline. They are also responsible for groups of schools in each school board. Superintendents may be involved in suspension appeals or special education meetings.



## Vice-Principals

The principals and supporting vice-principal are responsible for supervising: courses of students, course instruction, and performance evaluations of employed members. Principals and vice-principals belong to their own professional association, the Ontario Principals Council, and report to the supervisory officer.



## Educators

Educators are more commonly referred to as teachers. They are governed by the Education Act and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Professional Standards of Practice. They are qualified to teach in designated grade levels (primary, junior, intermediate/senior).



## Teacher Responsibilities:

- Teachers are required to plan and prepare lessons based on curriculum, as well as provide encouragement and support for student achievement and overall well-being.
- Teachers complete an Annual Learning Plan, which outlines specific goals for their own professional development.
- Every four years, all certified teachers undergo a rigorous performance appraisal process, which evaluates the professional practice.



# Pre-K

*Foundational information  
about schools every  
parent of a Black child  
should know.*





Anti-Black racism does not only exist within elementary and high school, Black children can feel the impact as early as pre-school or day-care.

In fact, studies have shown that children as young as three months old can recognize differences in races, and even begin to form “in-group” racial bias.

By age three, kids begin to conform to societal norms and even begin excluding their peers of different races from play and other activities. Beyond racism and bias between kids, there is also racism from teachers directed towards Black pre-schoolers within day-care settings.

## What does anti-Black racism look like in day-care?

- Threatening to call Children’s Aid Society if a Black parent is late picking up their child
- Accusing Black children of being overly aggressive
- Separating Black children from others

*Did you know?*  
In 2013/14 school year, reports indicated that Black children attending public preschools were 3.6 times more likely to receive a suspension compared to white children.

## What can you do to recognize anti-Black racism in pre-school and advocate for your child?

1.

### Description of Behaviour:

Notice how some students are “easily frustrated” and others are “destructive”. Some students, “Struggle with following instructions,” and others are “Disrespectful and refuse to listen.” Be mindful of words being used to describe your child and their behaviour. Watch for language that focuses on who your child is rather than their behaviour.

2.

### Early or aggressive pushes for special education:

Early childhood educators (ECEs) are highly knowledgeable about children and often have a lot of experience with early signs of special education needs. It is important to keep in mind that many students do have real special education needs, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, you also have the right to ask questions and seek a second opinion about your child and their learning needs. Inclusion should be the goal of any special education programming, so be wary of any early efforts to completely segregate your child due to supposed special education needs.

3.

### Overly harsh or frequent punishment:

Young children will occasionally misbehave and it is appropriate for consequences to be applied as part of their learning experience. However harsh or overly frequent punishment should not be considered acceptable. Similarly, if you are noticing a lot of discipline, speak up.

# School readiness

School readiness is a term used to indicate whether a child will make an easy and successful transition into school. Parents sometimes confuse school readiness with academics, but this is not the case.

Here are some top ways your pre-schooler can be school ready:



Coping with routines



Ability to dress and toilet independently



Ability to follow instructions



Communicate their needs with ease



Has a good attention span, and is able to sit and focus on activities



Able to regulate emotions according to age



Has good language skills

To help increase your child's school readiness and support their development, there are many steps you can take including:



## ***Increase Expectations:***

Young children can clean up after themselves, learn to dress themselves, adhere to time limits, and more. Increasing your expectations of your child and supporting them in meeting them is an important step in preparing for school.



## ***Encourage relationships with other children:***

When students enter school, they will meet many unfamiliar children with different personalities and play styles. You can arrange play dates with new children and take your child to places like parks where they are likely to interact with other children.



## ***Socio-emotional skills:***

Teach your child the language they need to communicate their emotions and needs, and encourage them to use this language frequently. When your child becomes upset or frustrated, support them in exploring problem solving strategies rather than just trying to "fix" the problem yourself.

# Early literacy

**NOTE:** At this age, reading to your child and working to ensure they develop a love of books is very important.

make sure your pre-schooler is familiar with their letters and early phonics.

Reading is a critical part of success throughout school, whether in kindergarten or high school. When your child starts school, they will be assessed and placed into groups according to their literacy level. While schools will tell you that children do not need to be reading prior to the start of school, remember that with larger class sizes, teachers may not be able to spend the time your child needs to ensure they are achieving at the level they can. Working with your child at home is very important.

## Tips to help your child with literacy:

1. Read to your child every night.
2. If your child is ready, have them read to you as well.
3. Develop fun phonics games.
4. Label appliances and furniture around the house to familiarize your child with spelling.
5. Make frequent visits to your local library and sign up for free activities and reading programs.



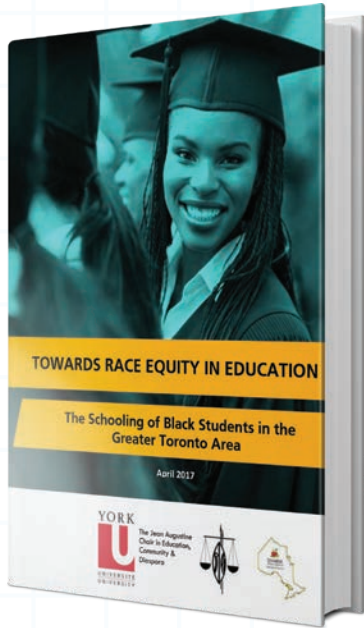
# Elementary School

*Things you need to know  
before your child  
starts school*





# The research: The Black student experience



There is no doubt that Black children do not have the same educational experience as other children. Multiple reports have shown the impact of what it means to be Black at school. The Stephen Lewis report, *Roots of Youth Violence*, Ontario Human Rights Commission 2007 and even the United Nations People of African Descent 2017, have identified irrefutable disparities for Black students in education over the last 40 years.

## *Towards Race Equity Report*

In 2017, Dr. Carl James and his team at York University published, *"Towards Race Equity in Education."* This report was one of the most comprehensive reports to research the anti-Black racism that our children experience. The report used data and statistics from schools around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), but primarily from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). This data showed that 20% of Black students dropout of high school, double the rate of white (11%) and other racialized students (9%).

It also showed that despite making up only 12% of the student population, 42% of all Black students had been suspended at least once. The report also illustrated the streaming of Black students.

## What to look out for:

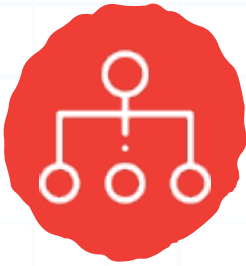


### STREAMING:

Streaming is the process of categorizing students into classes based on perceived learning abilities and aptitudes. There is a misconception that streaming starts in high school, but it doesn't. For Black students, streaming starts as soon as your child walks into a classroom in kindergarten.

In elementary school, students are often placed in reading groups or arranged in seating plans and homeroom classes based on teacher perceptions. Your child might also be forced out of a specialized program like French Immersion. It can also occur, by teachers claiming your child needs special support when you feel that this is not the case.

Streaming students from: low-income families, with special education needs, English language learners, as well as Black and Indigenous students are disproportionately encouraged into lower stream courses due to unchecked biases and systemic oppression.



## INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS

If you send your child to any school, whether private, public or Catholic, there is a chance that at some point that education system will refer you to another system. Most commonly, this is the child welfare system. The criminal justice system is also connected to schools.



## POLICE IN SCHOOLS

**Parents of Black Children believe that schools should be police free.**

Police in schools historically come out of the idea that having police interact locally with the community will lead to better relationships. We now have years of data and research to show that police in schools leads to the criminalization and over surveillance of Black children. The school to prison pipeline is a multi-systems issue that requires system-level responses.

# What you need to know about Black families and the child welfare system

Reporting to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) can be done by anyone who believes that a child might be harmed. This can include: relatives, friends, and neighbours. It also includes people who work with children. These people are called **mandated referrers**. They include: teachers, doctors, nurses, day-care workers, family counsellors, social workers, and religious leaders. They **MUST** tell CAS when they think a child is not safe. If they do not, the police can charge them with a crime.

### What will a teacher do before calling a CAS?

- Teachers are to inform their principal; they may not.
- Working with their supervisor/principal permission will be granted to inform CAS and/or the police.
- A document needs to be completed and filed in the student Ontario Student Record (OSR) along with any supplemental documents.

In Ontario, Black children are overrepresented in the child welfare system. In many foster homes and group homes, there are more Black children than non-black children.

In Toronto, 41% of the children in foster care are Black, even though the Black population of Toronto is only 8%. This means that Black children are nearly five times overrepresented in foster care.

This happens because Black families are reported to CAS more often than white families even though the Black community is **NOT** more likely to need CAS involvement.

**NOTE:** If you are speaking to someone who is considered a mandated referrer, (teachers, doctors, nurses, daycare workers, family counsellors, social workers, and religious leaders) remember that whatever you tell them may be reported to CAS if they think your child is in danger.

*Be sure to get help and ask for support if you need it.*

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If Children's Aid is called by a school on you, contact an advocacy group right away. You can reach out to

[parentsofblackchildren.org](http://parentsofblackchildren.org) and fill out our child welfare intake form for support.

## What are some examples of situations that can be concerning for Children's Aid Societies?

I don't have any food in the house

I don't have heat

I don't have any money to buy new shoes

I can't control my child's/ teenager's behavior

I'm depressed and don't feel like I can cope

Sometimes I'll have a few drinks at night after the kids are asleep

Sometimes the thought crosses my mind of just ending it all

I feel like I want to leave and never come back

My partner and I fight and argue sometimes

# Where do you go for help, if your child is experiencing anti-Black racism in a private school?

Unlike public and Catholic schools, accountability in private schools is with the school owner and administration. HOWEVER, private schools must follow the same Ontario curriculum, Education Act and directives from the Ministry of Education.

## Did you know?

Parents wishing to seek an alternative education for their children can petition their child's school board? If you have enough interested parents, you can build a case to get the school of your choice.

## Did you know?

You also have the right to home school your child. Home schooling is teaching your child at home. Visit the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents for more information about home-schooling and related resources. There are community agencies that can help you find information about schools for your children. To find help, go to Services Near Me and search for "settlement services" in your area.

## Good to know...

School doesn't have to be one size fits all. If you are able, you can design the educational experience to best suit your child's needs. If that means part-time home schooling and part-time school, you can work with your child's school and school board to make this happen.

## TOP TIP!

Even if your child is not at a private school, you are still paying for their education through your tax dollars. Your taxes pay for teachers, administration, school board staff and trustee salaries. Your taxes also pay for maintenance, upkeep of the school building and the resources provided to your children.

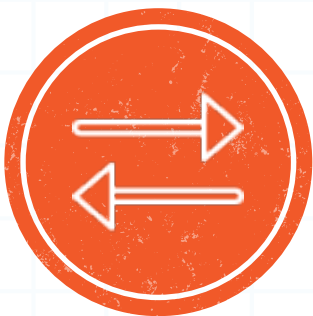
School boards receive \$12,246 per student from the Ontario Government (2020-2021). That means the cost of your child attending a publicly funded school is \$12,246 as of 2020/2021.

\*Per student Ontario Education Spending According to the Government of Ontario Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy.



# What you need to know about Black families and the schools

For many Black families, school is the first place concerns about parenting, or problems with a child's behaviour are raised. In many instances, teachers and school administration work with families to address concerns. However, sometimes teachers may call CAS about a concern with a Black child, instead of talking to the family.



## TEACHER BIASES:

Many teachers do not understand the culture of African Canadian students. Some may be scared of African Canadian parents. All of this leads to an over reporting of African Canadian students to CAS.



## TRITE REPORTING:

Trite reports are silly situations that may cause a teacher to call CAS. For example, if a child brings a lunch to school that the teacher is not familiar with (like a roti). Teachers are quicker to call CAS when there is a concern about an African Canadian student, while similar concerns about non-Black students would be directed to parents. Other trite reasons teachers may call CAS are: a parent is late to pick up their child, or a child uses dramatic language like saying *"My mom is going to kill me."*



## PARENTING STYLES:

Many teachers think that Black parents are too strict with their children, or they may think that Black parents speak harshly to their kids. For some, they don't understand why Black parents need to be strict to keep their kids safe in a society that views them as threatening.



## BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL:

It is not easy to be one of a few, or the only Black child in school. Even when Black children are in schools with other Black kids, they are often taught by teachers who are not Black. This can be stressful for children, because they feel different or unsafe in their schools. As a result, Black children may sometimes act out in schools and teachers sometimes see this as a result of issues in the home, and will call CAS.



## OVERREPORTING:

Teachers often over report Black children to CAS, because they are worried if they don't, they will get in trouble.

### NOTE:

Check in with your child everyday. If they are feeling sad, scared or isolated, contact the school first with a plan to help your child. Do not wait for the school to contact you.

## A BIT OF HISTORY: did you know?



### Slavery in Canada:

Contrary to popular belief, Canada has a history of slavery and engaged in the slave trade for over 200 years. The legacies of slavery and the residential schools in Canada are examples of cultural genocides, which had severe repercussions for Black and indigenous families. Many of the policies and practices, which govern our institutions today, are based in and founded upon those legacies.



### Segregated Schools:

Ontario was one of only two provinces to legislate Black segregated schools in Canada. The last segregated school in Canada closed in Nova Scotia in 1985.

For more information about your rights and child welfare  
please visit:

<https://bit.ly/navigatingchildwelfare>



# Selecting a school system

In Ontario, there are four main PUBLICLY funded school systems. This means that your tax dollars pay for these types of schools.



English Public Schools



French-language  
Public Schools



English Catholic Schools



French-language  
Catholic Schools

## What's the difference?

### School open to ALL students

- English Public Elementary Schools
- English Public Secondary Schools
- English Catholic Secondary Schools
- French language schools are typically open to all students seeking a French language education. For information on French language education, contact your local school board.

### Open to Catholic students/parents only

- Catholic elementary schools are usually open to students who are baptized as Roman Catholic and to children who have 1 or 2 Roman Catholic parents. Some English Catholic school boards might admit non-Catholic students into their schools. For more information about admission to a Catholic elementary school, contact your local school board.

**SOURCE:** <https://bit.ly/ontschoolsystms>

**NOTE!** Private schools do not have to hire Ontario Certified Teachers. This means your child could be taught by someone who is in fact not a qualified educator. Be sure to ask this question, when looking for private schools.

## Private schools

Private or independent schools also offer elementary and secondary education. These schools do not receive government funding, and usually students must pay to attend them. These schools may focus on: religion, culture, language, or specific approaches to teaching. Private schools must also follow the Ontario curriculum.

The Ministry of Education maintains an up-to-date list of private schools in Ontario.



# Systems abuse

Starting elementary school is an exciting time for you and your child. Always instil positivity and positive energy about school in your child. Why? It is because you are aware of the pitfalls.

Just like teachers and the education system can call the Children's Aid Service on you, you can report teachers, administration and anyone working for a system that is emotionally or physically harming your child. These instances will appear as a pattern. This is 'systems abuse' and you can report it. **If your child is the target of teacher bias, this is abuse.**

**RACIAL ABUSE IS VIOLENCE.**

## Examples of teacher bias are:

1.

### **Neglect:**

Your child raises their hand in class and is never chosen, or a teacher does not respond or get involved if your child is targeted.

2.

### **Over-policing and targeting:**

Teachers are sending your child to the principal's office regularly.

3.

### **Physical Abuse:**

A teacher flips a table in front of your child, drags your child to timeout, or punishes your child with no correction on the first offence.

4.

### **Intimidation:**

Teachers use their authority to physically impose on the personal space of a student, or reinforce the idea that the child has no power.

5.

### **Pattern of 'spotlighting' Black children:**

This is: pointing out negative behaviours, traits, situations your child is involved in, sending written notes or emails that are consistently negative, and public shaming of Black students who may not instantly grasp a concept in class.

6.

### **Criminalization/Isolation of Black students:**

Over-suspensions, uniform infractions, being told to stay in for recess, put on a separate mat, isolated from the rest of the class.

7.

### **If your child says any of these comments based on their experience in school**

- Why do I have Black skin?
- My teacher never smiles at me.
- My teacher is always angry when they look at me.

## **What do you need to do if this is happening?**

1.

### **Document:**

Take notes (timelines, etc.), so that you can demonstrate the pattern of abuse.

2.

### **Contact:**

Contact the principal (Administration team) to explain the situation:

- Follow up with an email, and then a phone call.
- Always keep a record of all: emails, written communication, phone calls and meetings. (Remember, you also have the right to record phone calls).

3.

### **Advocate:**

Contact an advocate (trusted family member, community organization, Parents of Black Children etc. for support): [www.parentsofblackchildren.org](http://www.parentsofblackchildren.org)

**NOTE:** If you do not want school administrators speaking to your child without permission, simply write a letter to the school principal telling them this. Make sure you keep a copy of the letter for your records.

## **Can the school speak to my child without my permission?**

- You can tell your child that they do not have to speak to anyone without you present
- This includes the principal, vice principal or any school board staff
- Empower child to ask for a parent/guardian to be present in any situation where they are called to the office

# Gaslighting: What is gaslighting?

In the context of anti-Black racism, gaslighting is when the experience of Black people is questioned, belittled, undermined or compared to another experience. Gaslighting can make you question your own experience and make you feel unsure of yourself. For example, if you make a complaint against an educator and the vice-principal says, “I’ve known this educator for 20 years, and they are a good person.”

## What do you do if you are experiencing anti-Black racism in the schools?

### Did you know?

Racism and discrimination is now a professional misconduct with the OCT. If your child is experiencing this from an educator in their school, file a complaint immediately.

<https://bit.ly/octcomplaints>

Report it to the school (principal, superintendent, or Director of Education, etc.).

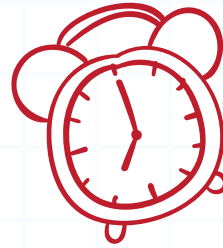
File a complaint with the Ontario College of Teachers.

Report it to your local Children's Aid Society.

# Know your rights...

## Know your child's rights

What do schools do?



- Promote student achievement and well-being
- Promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all students, including students of any: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability
- Promote the prevention of bullying
- Ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources
- Deliver effective and appropriate education program to pupils
- Develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that:
  - (i) Promote the goals referred to in clauses above, and
  - (ii) Encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board, the achievements of board's goals, and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies

- Achieve board's goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies
- Develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the goals mentioned above
- Annually review the plan referred to in the sixth clause with the board's director of education or the supervisory officer acting as the board's director of education
- Monitor and evaluate the performance of the board's director of education

## What is the process for escalating concerns?

Firstly, never feel guilty for complaining about your child's experience, or escalating a concern. Your child deserves access to an equitable and peaceful education. Typically, the process for managing a concern at a school starts with the teacher.





1.

### Step One: The Teacher

Book some time to talk to the teacher and bring someone with you, so you aren't alone. Do this face-to-face, if possible. They can also pick up on the subtleties of nuances in the conversation that you may not. **NOTE:** Always follow up in writing (via email) summarizing the outcome of your conversation. Note who was in the room, responses, what was said, date and time of the meeting.

2.

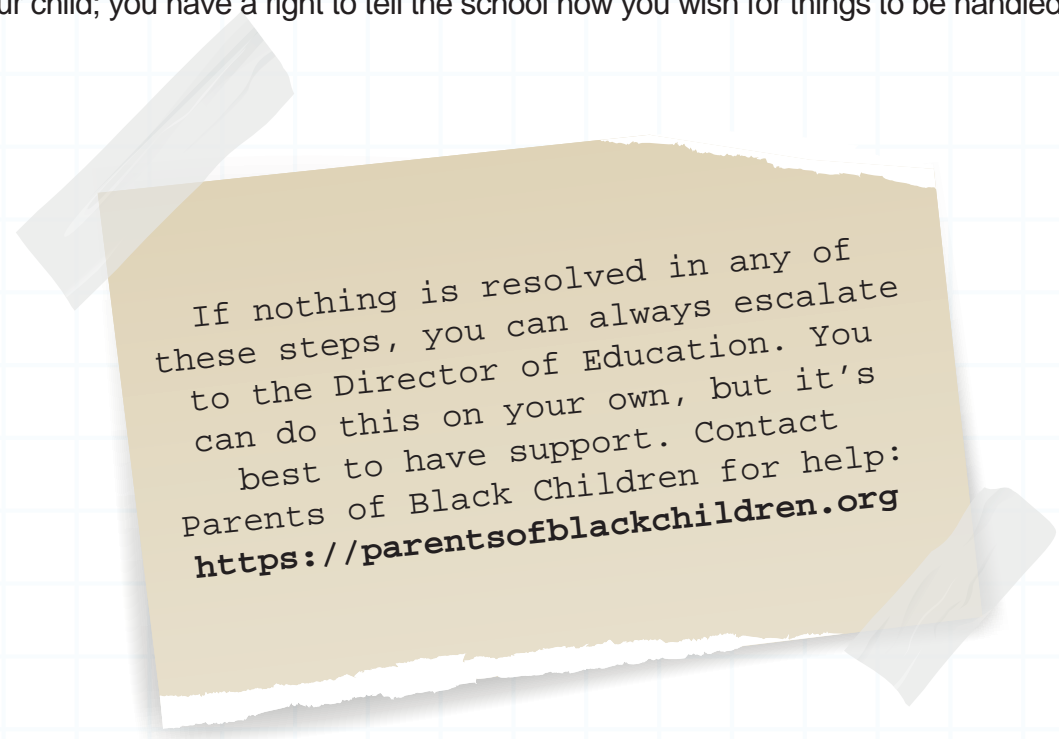
### Step Two: The Principal/Vice-Principal

If the teacher cannot or will not resolve the issue to YOUR satisfaction, escalate the concern to the principal. Depending on the issue, the principal may delegate it to the vice-principal. Raise your concerns and bring your notes. If you need support, Parents of Black Children can help. Visit <https://parentsofblackchildren.org> and complete the System Navigation intake form. The principal may engage the teacher in this conversation. Don't feel intimidated or pressured into meeting with anyone that you do not want to meet with. This is your child, you can dictate who will be in attendance at the meeting with you.

3.

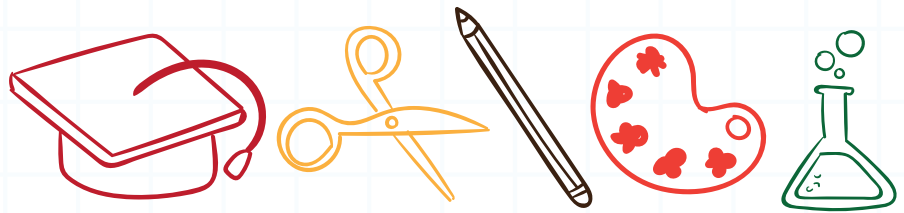
### Step Three: The Superintendent

If the issue is not resolved with the teacher and the principal, you can also escalate to the superintendent for the school. Email addresses for superintendents are listed on most board websites. The superintendent may have a separate conversation with the teacher and administration, and you can meet with the superintendent first. You can share your notes with the superintendent prior to this conversation. **REMEMBER:** this is your child; you have a right to tell the school how you wish for things to be handled.



If nothing is resolved in any of these steps, you can always escalate to the Director of Education. You can do this on your own, but it's best to have support. Contact Parents of Black Children for help: <https://parentsofblackchildren.org>

# Do's and Don'ts



**Don't** highlight your child's negative qualities. Remember, the school will do that for you. Your job is to be your child's strongest advocate.



**Do** keep a record of all of their positive characteristics and accomplishments and share these with the school. Put them on your child's Ontario Student Record.



**Do** write a letter to the teacher at the beginning of the year, highlighting all the great things about your child.



**Don't** confuse teachers or administration being 'nice' and 'helpful' with a change in overall attitude of behaviour. Remember, often the 'niceness' comes AFTER complaints were made.



# School records and notes

Do you know that your child's student record is kept on file for 55 years in Ontario?

There are a few things you can do to make sure their records are accurate.

1.

As the end of the year approaches, parents should make an appointment with their child's school Principal to review their child's Ontario Student Record (OSR). This is your right.

2.

You are entitled to remove anything you feel is not relevant or is detrimental to your child's success as they progress through school.

3.

You can also **add to your child's student record**. When you meet with the principal, bring any: awards, extra curricular achievement certificates, notes from coaches, piano teachers, teachers within your child's school that you want to keep on record. **BUILD THE NARRATIVE ABOUT YOUR CHILD. DON'T LET THE SCHOOL DO IT.**

4.

All children in Ontario have an Ontario Student Record, whether they are at public, Catholic, independent, or private school.

## Private Records

### Facts:

- Most notes kept on your child must be kept in the Ontario Student Record. As public institutions, School Boards must comply with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).
- Under this act, board staff may keep records for the shorter of 1 year, depending on the requirements of the subject of those notes.

### Did you know...

Teachers and administrative staff sometimes keep separate notes on your child and even on you. These could be separate and apart from the OSR, or transition record notes!

- Knowing whether notes are retained on YOU as a parent or your child is important, because this is how information is shared and narratives are built about your children and about you. This can impact your child's educational experience.

**How do you find out what kind of information your school is keeping on your child ... and on you?**

You can file a **Freedom of Information Request**.

## Freedom of Information Request

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request is to access information under MFIPPA. This information can be: emails sent by teachers, or any school board employee about you or your child, documents received or kept at the school, electronic information such as video's, recordings etc. A FOI gives you access to any files kept by a public institution.

You can file an FOI by contacting your school board. Visit the school board website or Google search the name of your school board and "Freedom of Information request." Follow the information provided on your school board's website.

**It will cost you \$5.00 to file an FOI.**

**NOTE:** If the school board has many files on you or your child, they may charge you a fee to access them. **THIS FEE CAN BE WAIVED.** You can request it be waived directly by speaking to the Privacy Officer at your school board, OR you can file a complaint with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC).

Learn more: <https://bit.ly/ipcontario>

## Navigating your child's learning

### Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Individual Education Plans are specific written plans that describe any special accommodations, requirements or needs your child may require to succeed in school. IEPs are legal documents and teachers are required to follow them.

**A few notes about IEPs:**

- IEPs should grow with your child. Your child's needs will change and so should the IEP.
- IEPs should be reviewed each year.
- IEPs do not need to be in place throughout the child's education. If the need is no longer there an IEP can be removed.

# Black students and IEPs

We know that many Black students are placed on IEPs even if they don't need them. This doesn't mean that if your child needs an IEP that they shouldn't get one.

It's important to carefully assess the situation and it can help to speak to advocates about what is happening, so that you can make an informed choice about support for your child.

**THIS DECISION IS YOURS and YOUR CHILD'S. SCHOOLS OR TEACHERS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE THIS DECISION FOR YOU.**

Sometimes children may not need an IEP, but may instead require *learning supports*.

## DID YOU KNOW?

It is a teachers job to meet the needs of each individual student....without a specialized learning plan. This is enshrined in a document called Growing Success, created by Ontario's Ministry of Education.

The Growing Success document provides a guideline for educators from grades K – 12 pertaining to policies that provide the frameworks for student assessment, evaluation, and reporting all across Ontario schools.

## TOP TIP:

According to Growing Success, teachers must find different ways of assessing a students. So, if your child gets nervous and performs poorly on a math test, teachers should look to find another way of assessing your child's knowledge.

## Frequently asked question

“How do I know if my child needs learning support vs. an Independent Education Plan?”

Every child has different learning styles and strengths, and each child develops differently, even though there are standard developmental milestones.

If you have concerns, or questions about your child's learning and development, you can document your concerns and questions, and share with someone you trust.

If you think your child is having trouble at school that is impacting their progress and well-being, you can contact your paediatrician or family doctor to discuss those learning gaps.

If your child's teacher(s) has shared or expressed those concerns be sure to do the following:

1.

Contact an advocate who can navigate this process with you. Having a third-party with you is important because it is hard to remain objective when we are supporting our own children: [www.parentsofblackchildren.org](http://www.parentsofblackchildren.org)

2.

Ask for evidence and examples of the learning gaps or behaviour issues.

3.

Ask for other teachers or education staff who know, or teach your child for their anecdotal notes, or feedback for comparison.

4.

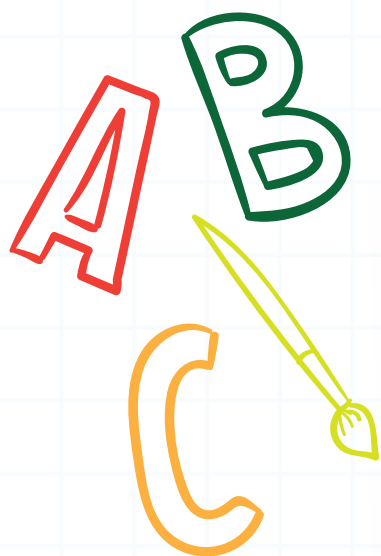
Share your own evidence from those who know your child outside of school, such as a soccer coach or dance instructor.

5.

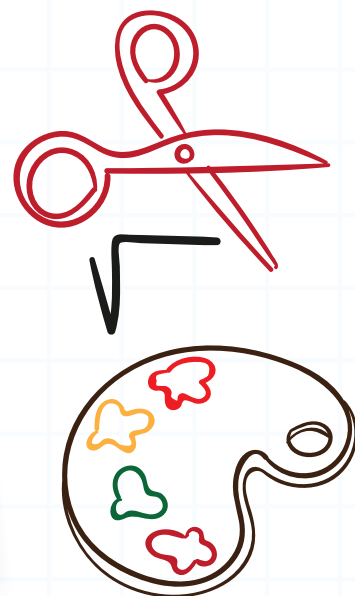
It is advised to use the course curriculum expectations to help determine the correct learning skills and expectations for your child's grade level.

6.

If you feel that your child does need support, you can work with educators who can generate a growth plan, which will detail progressive steps and strategies that should be used in the classroom, and at home to close individual learning gaps. **REMEMBER**, you are in control; you are part of the process and can inform the process.



**Note:** The goal is to map your child's growth and progress across a timeline. You can ask the school student success team to help with the planning and tracking of success criteria.



# What if I want to have my child assess for developmental delays or learning exceptionalities?

1.

The first thing to do is to make a list of the learning, or behavioural challenges that you believe are impeding your child's educational progress.

2.

You may request a referral to do psycho-educational testing or find your own clinic.

3.

An educational assessment is a structured evaluation, which provides a thorough assessment of your child's: intellectual, social, and emotional development. It may show if your child would benefit from an individual education plan.

4.

There are many educational assessment tools, which a registered psychologist and their team of experts can use to assess your child's abilities, strengths and needs. While teachers have a vast amount of knowledge about student learning capabilities and needs, only a psycho educational expert can assess and diagnose a learning disability.

## What is a learning disability?

Having a learning exceptionality means that the way that one: gathers, processes, retains and/or expresses information might vary from another.

Those living with learning exceptionalities demonstrate their intelligence in many ways. Their style of learning requires adaptation of the teaching and learning environment. People with learning disabilities can succeed when solid coping skills and management strategies are developed.

Learning disabilities can be: behavioural, communicational, intellectual, or physical. Multiple exceptionalities could be such that they are considered to need placement in a special education program.



# Learning strategies to support students with learning exceptionalities

If you would like to move forward with an educational assessment, you may request an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting. An educator may also recommend an IPRC, but a principal must make the referral (Education Act Regulation 181/98).

## What happens next?

Within 15 school days of making the referral, the principal must send written notification, including an approximate date of the IPRC meeting, and a parent's guide containing information about the IPRC.

Remember, you must be notified regarding any psychological assessment. Your permission is not required to perform an educational assessment.

## Who is a part of the IPRC?

Identification, Placement and Review Committee [IPRC] refers to a team of educators, and student success team members (including a principal or supervisory officer) who meet to discuss and create a plan for a student.

## Your rights as a parent:

1.

Parents/guardians should be notified 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting and should be invited to attend. **BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU. NEVER** attend an IPRC meeting alone.

2.

You can indicate your availability on the invitation itself, request it be rescheduled, and ask for an advocate or representative to attend as well.

## What to bring:

1.

You can bring documents, prior medical assessments and other relevant information to the IPRC meeting. You can make notes, or bring someone to make notes for you.

2.

A copy of all documents will be sent to you for your approval. If you do not agree with the outcome and recommendations, you may request another meeting within 15 days.

3.

A meeting should be scheduled annually (at minimum) to review and make possible amendments and revisions to the IEP document. You will need to sign off on the IEP every year, even if there are no changes. You may choose to set up a meeting to schedule your child's IEP at any point during the school year. You do not need to wait until the annual check in appointment.

4.

There are a number of professionals at school which can be called upon to support you and your child throughout their specialized education experience, such as:

- Guidance Counsellor
- Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)
- Education Assistant (EA)
- Child and Youth Worker (CYW)

### Note:

Take notes (who is in the room, who said what).

Record the meetings. Let committee members know that you will be recording the meeting. You can also record the meeting without their consent providing you are aware that the meeting is being recorded.  
<https://bit.ly/legalrecordings>

### Showcase your Child's Strengths:

In addition to the Individual Education Plan, parents are encouraged to create an ADVOCACY STRENGTHS AND ASSETS CARD. This is an opportunity for you and your child to share the: talents, interests and abilities that help them to learn best. Any extra curricular activities and hobbies, which a teacher can tap into to engage your child in a classroom setting will be helpful.

### Remember:

Parents have a right to make recommendations and provide input into the contents of the IEP. It is also a good idea to ask your child if there is anything they would like to see on their IEP.

## Top Tip:

Be sure to ask what types of school-based supports are available, and the contact information for each individual.

## Modified IEPs

If a student is on a “Modified IEP”... be aware. The modified IEP means that the student is not meeting curriculum expectations at the appropriate grade level. A modified IEP can affect a student’s learning trajectory from elementary to high school (and may affect his/her ability to access post-secondary schooling). Be sure to ask the following questions:

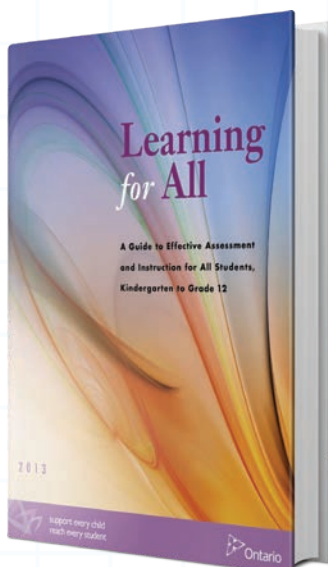
- What is the timeline for the modified IEP?
- What is the plan to bring my child up to the appropriate grade level, and remove plans that are outdated from the IEP?

## Assessments in school



**Learning For All** and **Growing Success** are two comprehensive documents, which provide detailed guidelines for assessment and evaluation of students in JK-12 across Ontario. Educators are required to accept and align their pedagogy and practice with the guidelines mandated by these Ministry documents.

Assessment is intended to measure the extent to which the overall expectations of a course are met. There is an achievement chart, which gives students a clear understanding of how the work will be graded. These specific expectations guide the learning and specific skills and information that the students will perform or execute. All learners should have a clear sense of what their learning goals are, the purpose and intended outcomes, and how to achieve a level 4 on their rubric or marking scheme.



**Assessment** is the process of gathering information from a variety of sources including: assignments, day-to-day observations, conversations or conferences, demonstrations, projects, performances, and tests that accurately reflect how well a student is achieving in a subject or course. As part of the assessment, teachers provide students with descriptive feedback that guides their efforts towards improvement.



## Important terms



### EVALUATION

Evaluation refers to the process of judging the quality of student work after learning on the basis of established criteria, and assigning a value to represent that quality.



### LEARNING GOAL/TARGET

**Learning goal/ target:** what students are supposed to learn at the completion of a lesson or unit.



### SUCCESS CRITERIA

The indicators for success: the tasks which need to be completed and the degree to which those tasks or abilities need to be demonstrated.

## Types of Assessments

Teacher's use any and all of the assessments listed below to determine your child's abilities.



### DIAGNOSTIC (ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING)

Information gathering around prior knowledge, which may be required for the student to move forward in the learning process.



### FORMATIVE (ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING)

These are tasks or activities, which will help students practice skills and learning expectations during learning. These tasks are assessed and graded, but may not appear as part of the overall mark calculation, or grade. Formative assessments give teachers a chance to see evidence of student progress and provide feedback to guide the student towards improved skill development.



## SUMMATIVE (ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING)

These are assignments or tasks that are to be submitted at the end of the learning cycle, unit, or lesson, which are intended to be a demonstration of knowledge, and skills acquired. These are marked and will typically be added as part of the final overall mark.

### Did you know?

Students can submit work early and prior to the due date of their assignment to get feedback from their teacher in advance of the final evaluation. This is a great way to get clarification on details and to fix errors before a final mark is assigned.

### Your child has rights...

**Teachers are required to provide varied, responsive and flexible learning opportunities to all children.**

Your child should have the chance to showcase their unique skills and abilities in different ways. The use of DIFFERENTIATED instruction asks teachers to know the individual learning strengths and needs of their students to plan and

introduce diverse learning opportunities, which will allow each learner to thrive and flourish. You can be sure your child's strengths and weaknesses are being accounted for in their learning environment.

## How else do teacher's assess?

Teachers don't have to give your child a pen and paper or online 'test' to determine their grade. They can also utilize other methods, including: conversation observations and products.



### CONVERSATIONS

Students can communicate their learning through whole class or small group discussion, and storytelling. Often students may be able to explain what they know through an informal presentation, or by just talking to a peer or teacher, especially if they are not able to articulate it in writing.



### OBSERVATIONS

Teachers can present opportunities for students to show what they know through a lab or demonstration. Through the building or manipulation of materials, or even the ways that a student interacts with classmates, can be evidence of learning. Teachers may observe the learning, even if a student has not shared the evidence on paper or through a conversation in class.





## PRODUCTS

A student's abilities and achievements can be demonstrated in many different ways. Products are more tangible examples of learning i.e. tests, assignments, posters board, art/science projects etc.

### *Try, try, try again!*

For learning to be optimal, there should be multiple opportunities to attempt tasks, which will fortify the learning, help students to absorb and eventually master the skills. Through teacher feedback and feedback from peers, students will be able to self assess their work to be more independent. Students may also ask for EXEMPLARS or samples of the product or assignment that must be completed.

## Notes for parents: **Important** **assessment questions**



What are the specific performance indicators for success that my child is meeting/not meeting?



What are some strategies that can be used in the classroom to help my child to be more successful?



What school based supports are available to my child to help them meet their potential?



What are some activities or skills we can practice at home which might enhance my child's learning?

It is a good idea to remain aware of your child's course of study and class calendar. It is important to know what the learning goals and success criteria your children are working to achieve in the classroom.

It is best practice to review the rubric, marking scheme and expectations of any assigned work beforehand to ensure your child has a clear understanding of objectives. Encourage your child to ask questions. As parent/guardian, you can also ask questions for clarification if you are unclear about how your child should complete assigned work.

For each grade and subject discipline, all students are required to achieve overall and specific learning expectations. Detailed descriptions of required learning in each grade and course can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>.

## Did you know?

Parents can review curriculum documents for the grade and subject their children are in and make suggestions about learning content and materials. It is also a good idea to read assigned work given to your child to assess for bias. Bring any concerns to the attention of the teacher. You have the right to ask questions about how reading texts and other content will be taught and to inquire about viewpoints expressed in textbooks, documentaries or even assignments provided to your child to complete.

## Progress reports

- Progress reports do not give letter grades, but are based on teacher assessments and observations.
- Parents should know where their child stands in the class. Is your child progressing well or progressing with difficulty and what is their grade level.
- Progress reports are typically accompanied with an invitation to meet with your child's teacher.

# Parent teacher interviews

Parent and teacher meetings generally happen twice a year within each school. This is an opportunity for parents to meet with each of your child's teachers to see how your child is progressing. Parent teacher meetings are usually 15 minutes. It is important that you attend these meetings, even if your child is doing well.

**Note:** Although it should not be this way, the reality is that Black parents are being judged constantly on their parenting and their perceived 'involvement' in their child's education. WE know Black parents are committed and involved, but this isn't always the perception. Always try to attend your child's Parent/teacher meeting. You also have the right to take someone with you, this can be a trusted friend, family member, religious figure, or even your lawyer.

If you aren't able to attend, call the teacher and request for an alternate meeting time to be set. This is your right as a parent.

Not sure what to ask during Parent Teacher Meetings? Here are a few questions and tips:



YOU CAN SAY: "Can you tell me if my child is progressing well, progressing very well or progressing with difficulty?"



YOU CAN THEN DO: Let the teacher answer this question for language, math, science and social studies. Take notes.

TIP: Take out your pen and paper and write it down.

If the teacher says your child is 'progressing well', you really have to lean in. Ask them how 'progressing well' translates to a letter grade. Is that a B? C-?

Ask the teacher to break down each grade according to the following categories: reading, writing, oral and media. We advise you focus on the reading and writing in the K-6 grades. Be sure to take notes.



#### WHAT NEXT?

Once you get the letter grade, ask the teacher what strategies they will be using to help your child.

YOU CAN SAY: *"What strategies will you use to move my child up to the next level?"* Take out a pencil and paper and record their response.

## Important information about how your child learns

Ask the teacher to break down each grade according to the following categories: reading, writing, oral and media. We advise you focus on the reading and writing in the K-6 grades. Be sure to take notes.

### What you can say to the teacher:

"The strategies that my child uses to demonstrate their learning should not impact their grade."

### Why is this important:

- We want to raise children who ask questions and advocate for themselves.
- In the elementary panel, under 'self-regulation,' children are praised for asking questions if they don't know something. It is a sign of strong inquiry skills and critical thinking.
- A child should not be penalized for routinely seeking clarification.
- A child does not have to be independent to produce Level 4 work (A grade).
- Teachers are assessing the child's **WORK**, not the child's **HABITS**.
- Teachers should be assessing what children demonstrate.

**QUICK TIP:** In the elementary panel, teachers write their report cards during the winter holidays. So if a progress report is being sent out in November, and your child is not where they should be, you have to intervene and disrupt NOW, knowing that there's not much time between winter holidays and the first term report cards that go home in February. Remember, education is a right! Parents have a right to ask questions! Don't ever feel bad about speaking up for your child!





# Black students in high school



# Black students in high school

**TOP TIP:** Sometimes parents think that their high schooler is working towards a diploma (which will allow them to go on to post-secondary education), but they may be working on a high school certificate. You cannot move on to post-secondary education with a high school certificate.

When students are in Grade 8, course selection for high school typically begins in January/February. Make sure to walk through the course offerings with your child. You can contact the school of your choice to obtain the course lists. Remember to double check the courses selected before signing.

If you feel you are not being given guidance appropriate to your child's needs (e.g. being told to register for the applied stream over academic), we encourage you to contact the Parents of Black Children's Systems Navigators.

Secondary school determines whether your child is working towards a high school certificate or Ontario Secondary School Diploma (30 credits).

## High School Certificate vs. Diploma

Ontario Secondary School Curriculum (2018) includes courses which fall under 17 different subject areas. To graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), students must earn 30 credits. Alternatively, there is an Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) for students who leave the system prior to earning an OSSD, and have completed 14 credits (seven compulsory and seven optional credits). Finally, students can earn a Certificate of Appreciation if leaving at the age of 18 without having earned an OSSD or OSSC.

To earn a high school diploma in Ontario, students must:

- Earn 18 compulsory credits
- Earn 12 optional credits
- Pass the literacy requirement OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test)
- Complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement activities
- Compulsory credits

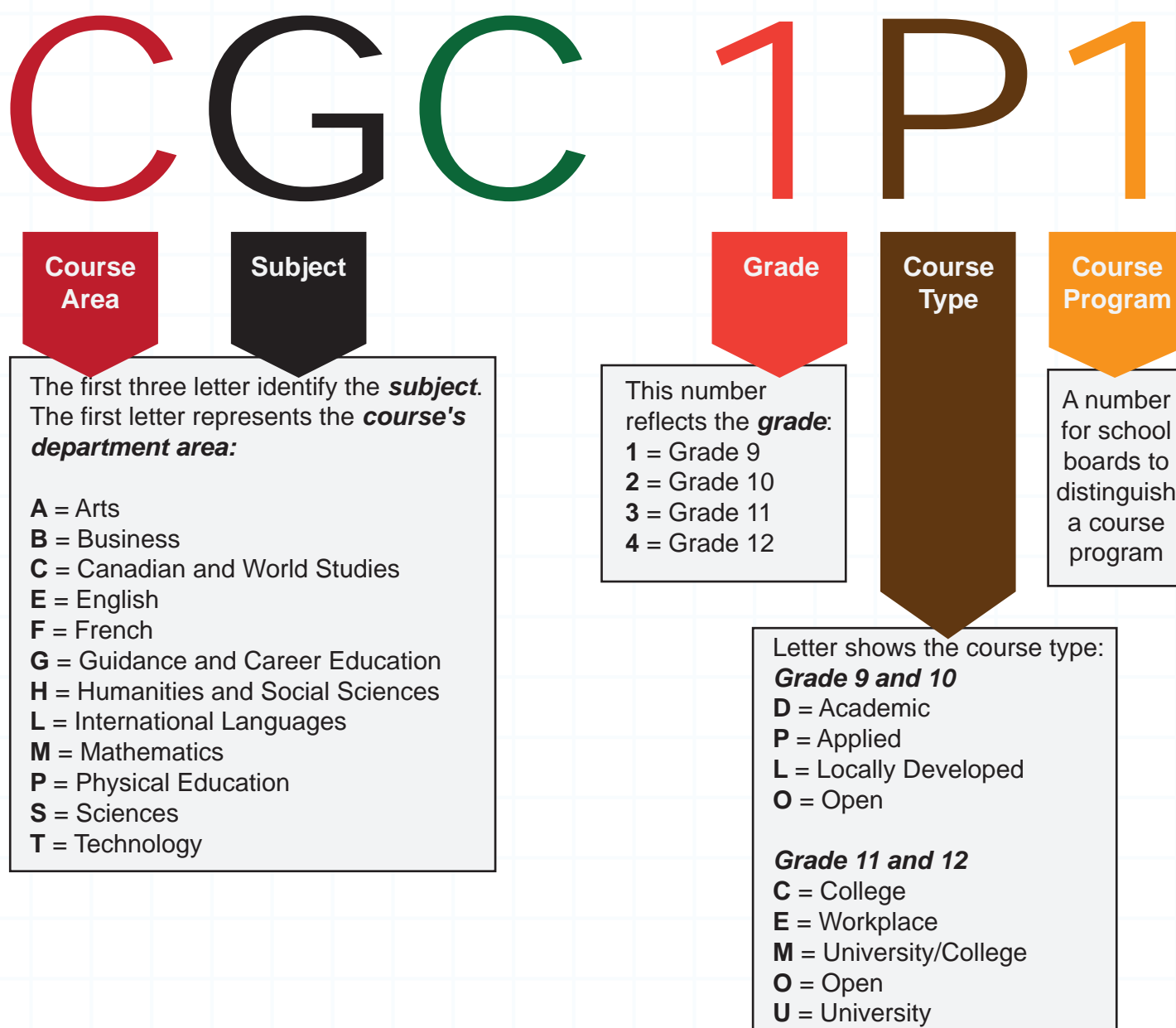
**TOP TIP:** Pay attention to course codes. The Ontario government may have started destreaming Grade 9 math, but streaming still exists in all other subjects and grades. Pay attention to the course codes your child is signing up for. A change or typo in a letter or a number could mean the difference between an academic credit or an applied credit.

# Don't feel pressured

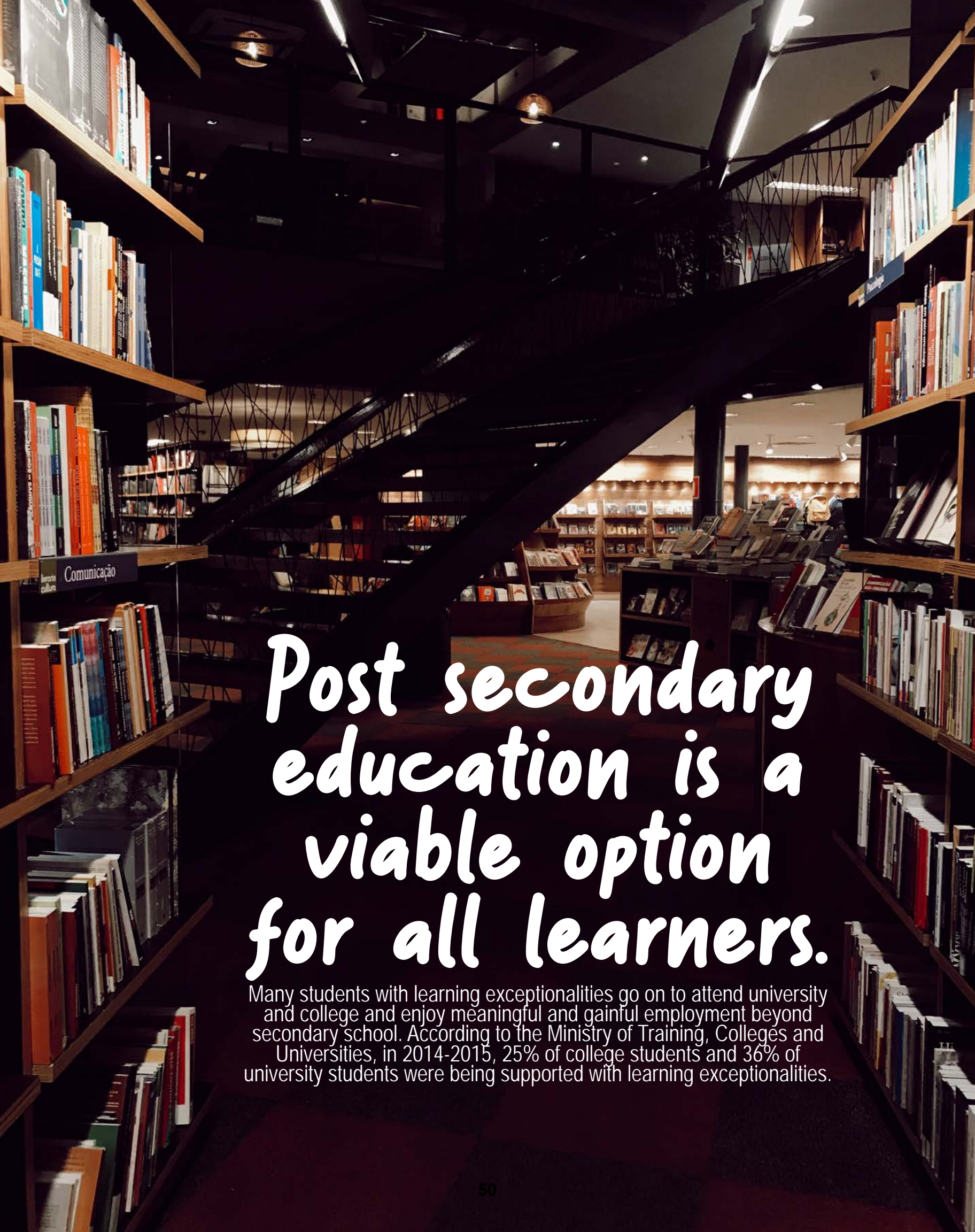
Don't feel pressured to put your child into applied courses if they are not doing well in school. Instead, ask the school how they plan to support your child in the academic stream. Sometimes guidance counsellors have been known to change course codes without the consent of parents, or pressure children to take particular courses. Starting in Grade 6 and continuing in Grades 7 and 8, have conversations with your child about high school. Let them know your expectations and their capabilities.

Make sure your child knows that decisions about courses or course selections should happen with parents/guardians present. Make sure your child feels empowered to speak up, and let guidance counsellors know that the decision will be made with their parents/guardians.

# Reading high school course codes







# Post secondary education is a viable option for all learners.

Many students with learning exceptionalities go on to attend university and college and enjoy meaningful and gainful employment beyond secondary school. According to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, in 2014-2015, 25% of college students and 36% of university students were being supported with learning exceptionalities.



# Setting high expectations

The culture and crises of low expectations and biases against Black children's intellectual capacity are based in racist ideologies and skewed science. Black children are perceived as being less capable, having lower intellectual or academic skills and limited potential for success and academic advancement. This impoverished mindset has derailed the education futures of Black students. We must refute this deficit-laden narrative, which plagues Black students. We must necessitate an unwavering and unyielding belief in the inherent intelligence and scholastic excellence of Black students. Educators must be champions in cultivating and encouraging the academic prowess, strengths and assets of Black people. After all, Indigenous Africans were architects of language, literacies and number systems!

## Engaging with schools

Parents/guardians can reach out to teachers and school principals by email at the beginning of each school year to become acquainted, and share relevant information about goals for your child.

You do not need to wait until parent/guardian interview night to speak with your child's teacher about their progress. You may call or email your child(s) teacher(s) to request an appointment throughout the school year.



### KEEP NOTES:

Make it a habit to keep records of conversations, and also any agreements, or action items that need to be taken. This will make it easier to track progress and follow up when necessary. Remember that electronic communication threads saved on digital platforms may become inaccessible. It is advised to backup or save that communication elsewhere.



### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

Keep in mind when meeting in person with school staff:

- You may also ask for a translator
- You can bring a trusted advocate with you
- You can ask for a follow up meeting if necessary ask for names and contact information for all participants



### WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Make a list of objectives, and questions prior to the meeting and check them off as you go along.

# Suspensions

The principal must consider suspension if a student from Grade 4 to Grade 12 has engaged in any of the activities listed below, which are outlined in subsection 306(1) of the Education Act. As of September 1st, 2020, students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 can no longer be suspended for these activities:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- Possessing alcohol, cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol or cannabis (unless the student is authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes)
- Swearing at a teacher, or at any person in a position of authority
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the student's school or to property on school premises
- Bullying, including cyber-bullying
- Any other activities identified in school board policy.

It is important to note that the final category is based on individual school policies, which are instituted by principals and school councils.

Suspension will be considered whether the activity took place: at school, at a school-related activity (e.g., a field trip), or in any other circumstances where the student's behaviour has an impact on the school climate (like cyber-bullying).

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