

SUPPORTING BLACK STUDENTS AT SCHOOL



**A GUIDE INTENDED FOR ONTARIO
FAMILIES OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

by Delta Family
Resource Centre's Student & Family
Advocacy Program

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction
3	What are Black students facing in school?
5	Protecting Ontario's Black students
6	Challenging unfair discipline in Ontario
8	The call for change
12	Understanding your rights
14	Navigating high school
16	What are your rights?
16	Connect with Delta Family's Student & Family Advocacy Program (SFAs)
18	Preparing for post-secondary
19	Paying for your Education
19	Finding your Support Circle
20	Understanding Ontario human rights in post-secondary institutions
21	Glossary

A child's education is the foundation of a successful career, but for many Black students, their parents and trusted adults, school can be a stressful place where young people face barriers. The weight of blatant anti-Black racism, systemic racism and oppression is heavy, making it difficult for students to show up and learn each day.

It may feel at times like there is nowhere to turn for help, but despite those feelings, remember there is help available that you might not be aware of. Delta Family Resource Centre's Supporting Black students at school is a roadmap for Black students of all ages and their trusted adults to navigate the school system, ensuring that you or your children get the education experience they deserve.

Who needs this guide?

Any elementary, middle school, high school or post-secondary students of Black, Caribbean and African descent, their parents, families and trusted adults can use this guide as a roadmap to help navigate the ins and outs of the Ontario school system.

Who are we?

Any elementary, middle school, high school or post-secondary students of Black, Caribbean and African descent, their parents, families and trusted adults can use this guide as a roadmap to help navigate the ins and outs of the Ontario school system.

Since 1981, Delta Family Resource Centre (Delta Family) has delivered services to priority neighbourhoods in northwest Toronto. Delta Family is a non-profit and community-based agency with seven satellite locations and a staff of 60 qualified professionals.

Our catchment area stretches from Steeles Ave. south to the Humber River, and Highway 27 east to Keele St. We work in areas including Humber Summit, Humbermede, Jamestown, Mount Olive, Beaumont Heights and all Neighbourhood Improvement Areas communities in Toronto's northwest that are experiencing high levels of poverty (according to St. Michael's Hospital and the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool).

Our mission is to acknowledge the consequences of intersecting forms of oppression on the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Delta Family offers programs, services and supports for Black and other priority populations in northwest Toronto, amplifying their resilience and strengths.

Delta Family provides support to parents, children, youth, seniors and Black communities, and has introduced several innovative programs and activities that meet the ever-evolving needs of the diverse communities it engages and serves, including immigrants and newcomers from South Asia, West Asia, Latin America, Vietnam, the Caribbean and Africa. We are committed to building communities where all people thrive, equipping residents with the tools they need, modelling effective collaboration, and developing programs that respond to community needs.

Delta Family's Student and Family Advocates

The Student and Family Advocate (SFA) Program, also known as 'systems navigation,' is designed to support Black families and students ages 6 to 25 along their journey through the education system. There are 17 Black-led organizations with SFAs across Ontario, and Delta Family is one of them. As SFAs, we also acknowledge, understand and address anti-Black racism and its impacts on Black families and students through advocacy, accountability and action for transformational change.

Delta Family currently has three advocates that work with Black students, their families and trusted adults to promote equity for students within the educational system. This initiative is made possible by Ontario's Black Youth Action Plan (OBYAP) and our agency has also partnered with Dixon Youth Rise and Firgrove Learning & Innovation Community Centre to increase the program's impact.

You can contact us for any reason or support you need for yourself or your child. There are no silly questions or concerns. ***Our goal is to support Black students during their educational journey.***



We are home to Delta Family's SFAs, but we also offer other programs and services:

- **Mental health and wellness programs:**

Delta Family offers culturally responsive mental health services, including counselling and wellness programs tailored to the unique needs of Black and racialized communities. These programs provide safe spaces for individuals and families to discuss mental health challenges, access support and build resilience.

- **Youth programs and skill-building workshops:**

We have youth programs focused on leadership development, academic support and skill-building. Programs often include mentorship, career guidance, and activities to foster. Workshops cover various topics, such as financial literacy, employment skills, and self-empowerment, helping youth prepare for future success.

- **Family and community support:**

Find resources and support for families facing challenges in parenting, housing, and social services. Our programs are designed to help families build stability and strengthen relationships within the community.

- **Cultural programs and celebrations:**

We celebrate our African and Caribbean roots through cultural programs and events, promoting a sense of identity, pride and belonging.

- **Employment and career development support:**

Delta Family assists community members with career planning, job searches and professional networking opportunities through activities such as resume building, interview preparation and connections to internships or apprenticeships.

- **Legal and human rights resources:**

We offer information and referrals related to legal rights, especially concerning anti-Black racism and discrimination in education and other institutions. Delta Family can connect you with resources like the Ontario Human Rights Commission and other advocacy organizations that protect your rights.

For more information, visit us online at www.dfrc.ca

What are Black students facing in school?

There are many barriers that Black, Caribbean and African students are facing in Ontario's education system. These barriers can negatively affect Black students' academic experiences and their mental health. Historically, the education system was created without Black students in mind and often fails to offer them proper support. Unfortunately, Black students and their families deal with the emotional weight of systemic bias, harmful stereotypes and neglect.

A snapshot of anti-Black racism in Ontario's schools

Anti-Black racism remains a deeply rooted issue within Ontario's educational institutions, shaping outcomes for Black students. Towards Race Equity in Education, a report published by York University's Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community & Diaspora and the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators in 2017, focuses on the striking differences in how Black students are treated in school. According to the report, Black students are suspended and expelled at higher rates than their white and non-Black peers, often for similar or less severe violations. This difference in disciplinary action is rooted in racial biases that lead some educators to see Black students as more disruptive or threatening, even when their behaviour is comparable to that of other students. The interactions between our SFAs and Black students show this as well.

Research has shown that suspensions and expulsions, especially when given for minor incidents, disrupt schooling and leave Black students more vulnerable to dropping out. It also sends a damaging message to Black kids about how their teachers, peers and school administrators feel about them. Research has shown that suspensions and expulsions, especially when given for minor incidents, disrupt schooling and leave Black students more vulnerable to dropping out. It also sends a damaging message to Black kids about how their teachers, peers and school administrators feel about them



A SCHOOL SUSPENSION

is a temporary punishment that removes a student from school for a set period of time

SCHOOL EXPULSION

is a disciplinary action that permanently or temporarily removes a student from school. It's a serious matter that can occur for violating school rules or engaging in unacceptable behaviour.

The Ontario education curriculum doesn't highlight Black Canadian history, culture and contributions.

When Black history is included, it focuses on enslavement or the American Civil Rights Movement

and not the achievements of Black Canadians. This tells Black students that their backgrounds, experiences and heritage don't matter — and that affects their sense of identity and belonging in the classroom.

Many Black students frequently deal with bullying at school, including derogatory remarks, racial slurs and both subtle and overt exclusion, creating an environment that is both physically and psychologically unsafe.



Too few caring Black teachers in the classroom

The lack of Black teachers in schools is a big issue with a great impact on students. For Black students, seeing few, if any, educators who look like them can reinforce their sense of isolation. More Black teachers give students role models who share similar cultural backgrounds and experiences. Those similarities lead to greater understanding, engagement and encouragement in schools where Black children and youth may feel overlooked or misunderstood.

Studies show that when Black students have Black teachers, they're more likely to achieve academic success, have higher expectations set for them, and avoid unnecessarily harsh discipline. Black teachers can bring their cultural awareness, understand students' unique challenges, and often play a role in helping Black students navigate biases they may face. It makes the school environment more welcoming for Black kids and, for non-Black students, having Black teachers also broadens their perspectives and promotes diversity in the classroom.

Microaggressions

Students hear things like, "Oh, you're so articulate," or, "You should stick with athletics! You're so good at sports." These are 'microaggressions' and they are often based on stereotypes. Microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and hurtful messages sent to Black and racialized people. Microaggressions wear down students' self-esteem, mental health and well-being, and can make school life uncomfortable.

Academic streaming

The stereotyping of Black students has led to streaming — funnelling them into lower-level classes. Despite their potential, Black students are often placed in non-academic or applied streams, limiting their future educational and career options. Academic streaming occurs because of an underlying bias within an overall system that unfairly undervalues Black people, ultimately impacting their long-term success. We'll cover this in more detail further in the resource guide.

Bias is a barrier.

How does all this affect our children's mental health?

The effects of these barriers can significantly impact the mental health and well-being of Black students and their families. When people consistently experience racism and bias, it contributes to heightened stress, anxiety and feelings of isolation. For children and young people, this can show up as not being interested in school, behavioural issues or declining academic performance.

Students, parents and trusted adults, when advocating for themselves or their kids, can often feel frustrated, angry or helpless because of a system that minimizes or disregards their concerns, leaving them without support or solutions that understand the unique experiences of Black students.

Protecting Ontario's Black students

There are supports and protections for Black students through Ontario's Education Act and the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Ontario's Education Act

The first thing to know about is the Ontario Education Act. The Act guides the province's educational framework by outlining the rights and responsibilities of students, schools and educators. Its purpose is to ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all students, regardless of their background. The Act states that schools create safe and inclusive environments for students and provide students with the resources they need to succeed.

Although the Act is supposed to ensure an equitable and safe learning environment, Black students often face challenges that the Act doesn't fully address, particularly when it comes to addressing anti-Black racism, biases and discriminatory practices — this is a gap between the goal of Ontario's Education Act and the lived reality of Black students.

Ontario Human Rights Commission

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) plays an important role in safeguarding the rights of students by prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity and other personal characteristics. Through its Policy on Eliminating Racial Discrimination in Ontario's Education System, the OHRC works to identify, challenge and rid schools of systemic discrimination. This policy highlights that racial discrimination in education doesn't only harm individual students, but all students in Ontario schools.

The policy calls on schools to acknowledge and confront systemic discrimination impacting Black students. OHRC recommendations include:

- Urging educators and institutions to introduce anti-racist training
- Ensuring unbiased discipline practices
- Enhancing reporting on racial disparities in student treatment and academic opportunities
- Creating procedures to address racial bias



TIPS TO REMEMBER

Always write down what happened. What happened? Who was involved? When did it happen? What was the reason the school gave for this happening? Include dates, times, locations and descriptions, as well as witnesses who can confirm the account. Be as detailed as possible. Stand up for yourself or your child. You can file complaints with school administrators, trustees or the school board itself. If the matter isn't resolved at this level, you can contact the OHRC or the Ontario Ombudsman to do further investigations. Education is a right for all children and young people in the province.

Students and families — you have rights

Knowing your rights in situations involving discrimination is crucial. Both the Ontario Education Act and the OHRC's policies insist that students, regardless of their backgrounds, shouldn't experience racial discrimination in school. **If you believe you or your child has been treated unfairly, you have the right to file complaints at the school level or to the OHRC, which investigates cases of racial discrimination and can help initiate systemic changes within schools — our SFA team can help you with that.**

By understanding these protections and how to advocate for their rights, you are already better equipped to navigate Ontario's education system and get the education you or your child deserve.

Challenging unfair discipline in Ontario

Research has consistently shown that Black students are disciplined more harshly than their peers for similar behaviours, a pattern seen in Ontario as well as in other parts of Canada. These students often face suspensions, expulsions and other disciplinary actions at higher rates, which can lead to long-term negative impacts on their academic success and mental health.

So, what's happening in schools?

- Black kids are suspended and expelled more. Studies have highlighted that Black students in Ontario are more likely to be suspended or expelled than their non-Black peers — even when their behaviour is the same as their peers.
- The consequences of “zero tolerance” policies. Ontario has shifted away from “zero tolerance” policies, but the legacy still affects how Black students are disciplined. These policies originally mandated suspensions or expulsions for certain behaviours, often without considering the circumstances or the intent behind the actions.
- School-to-prison pipeline: The overuse of suspensions and expulsions among Black students has been linked to what is known as the “school-to-prison pipeline.” When Black students are excluded from the classroom, they miss valuable learning time, resulting in academic struggles and school disengagement. Excessive punishment increases the likelihood of students dropping out and, in the long-term, limits their educational and career opportunities, and leads to higher unemployment rates and increased interactions with the criminal justice system.

What are your rights?

As a parent or student, it’s crucial to understand your rights when it comes to disciplinary actions. If you believe that your child has been unfairly disciplined, you have options to challenge these decisions.

MENTAL HEALTH AND UNFAIR DISCIPLINE

Discipline that feels heavy-handed can have a severe impact on a student's mental health, leading to stress, anxiety and lowered self-esteem. Connect with trusted mentors or community resources to navigate the emotional toll of disciplinary actions. Delta Family has mental health resources to support you or your student. See Community support and resources for more. [LINK TO RESOURCES BELOW](#)



WHO DO YOU CALL?

Delta Family's SFAs: We work with Black students and families to address instances of unfair discipline, offering support in communicating with schools, providing resources, and ensuring that students receive equitable treatment. We can help you connect with the OHRC and Black-focused community organizations for legal support and guidance on navigating disciplinary issues in schools.

Legal Aid and educational advocacy: Ontario offers various Legal Aid services, and there are organizations like Justice for Children & Youth and Parents of Black Children to provide assistance as you fight unjust school discipline. See the Community support and resources for more. [LINK TO RESOURCES BELOW](#)

In my work with suspension appeals, I've helped students and their families reduce or even overturn suspensions. This process can be complex, especially when gathering everyone involved and getting the full story about what led to the suspension. I make it a priority to ensure parents understand their right to all relevant information and that everything is laid out clearly in meetings. I also bring attention to the larger issues within our school system, where Black students often face harsher punishments than their peers for similar actions. This bias leads to more frequent suspensions and expulsions that can create barriers to education, fuelling a cycle that can even lead to involvement in the criminal justice system. Breaking this cycle is essential for a fair educational environment, and I advocate for this every step of the way.

In one case, I supported a student in appealing their suspension by drafting a detailed letter to the appeals committee. I highlighted gaps in the school's handling of the suspension, helping to present the student's side and push for a more balanced, fair outcome.

– Delta Family Resource Centre SFA

What can you do?

- **Document everything:**
Document all relevant details, including dates, times and a summary of the incident as described by your child. Gather any communication with teachers or administrators, as well as statements from any witnesses, if possible.
- **Request clear justification and review the discipline policy:**
Schools are required to provide a written explanation of disciplinary decisions. If the reasoning seems biased or excessive, request a meeting with the school's principal or administrators to discuss the incident further. Many students and parents don't know they can also request a review of the school's discipline policy to ensure it aligns with principles of equity and fairness.
- **Appealing suspensions and expulsions:**
In Ontario, parents have the right to appeal suspensions and expulsions where they can present evidence that challenges the decision and highlights any excessive disciplinary measures. An appeal can be filed through the school board's appeals process, and you may also involve advocates like Delta Family's SFAs to help.

Find more information about OSRs at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-student-record-osr-guideline>.

Did you know you can access your Ontario Student Record?

An Ontario Student Record (OSR) is the record of a student's educational progress through schools in Ontario. OSRs include:

- Form 1A or 1, which includes the student's full name and date of birth, as well as a student number assigned by the school or the school board, a Ministry Identification Number (MIN) or Ontario Education Number (OEN) assigned by the ministry, where applicable
- Provincial report cards
- Ontario Student Transcript, where applicable
- A documentation file, which can include information like an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for a student receiving special education programs and services, and educational, psychological and health assessments, where applicable
- An office index card
- Any additional information identified as being conducive to the improvement of the instruction of the student

Students and parents of students under 18 can access all the information in their OSR. If the record contains incorrect or unfair information, students have the right to request revisions.

The call for change

Advocates and researchers want systemic changes to how Ontario schools handle the discipline of Black students. There is a call for:

Anti-Black racism training for educators and administrators:

School boards across Ontario have implemented anti-Black racism and equity training programs to address unconscious biases among teachers and staff.

Data collection and transparency:

Advocates can't say there is a problem without data and transparency in school boards. Collecting and publicly sharing data on suspensions and expulsions by race and other demographics can help hold schools accountable.

- Download the TRACIE app (<https://tracieapp.com/>) — TRACIE stands for Tracking Racism and Collecting Information in Education. The tool is designed to capture and document racist incidents, whether it's photos, emails, audio or video. It's useful to help students inform their principal, school, parent, guardian or trusted adult if they experience physical or verbal harm.

Promoting restorative justice practices:

Rather than punitive discipline that leads to the 'school-to-prison' pipeline, some schools have adopted restorative justice practices, emphasizing dialogue, accountability and repair, rather than punishment. This approach helps students reflect on their actions, understand the impact of their behaviour and learn from their mistakes.

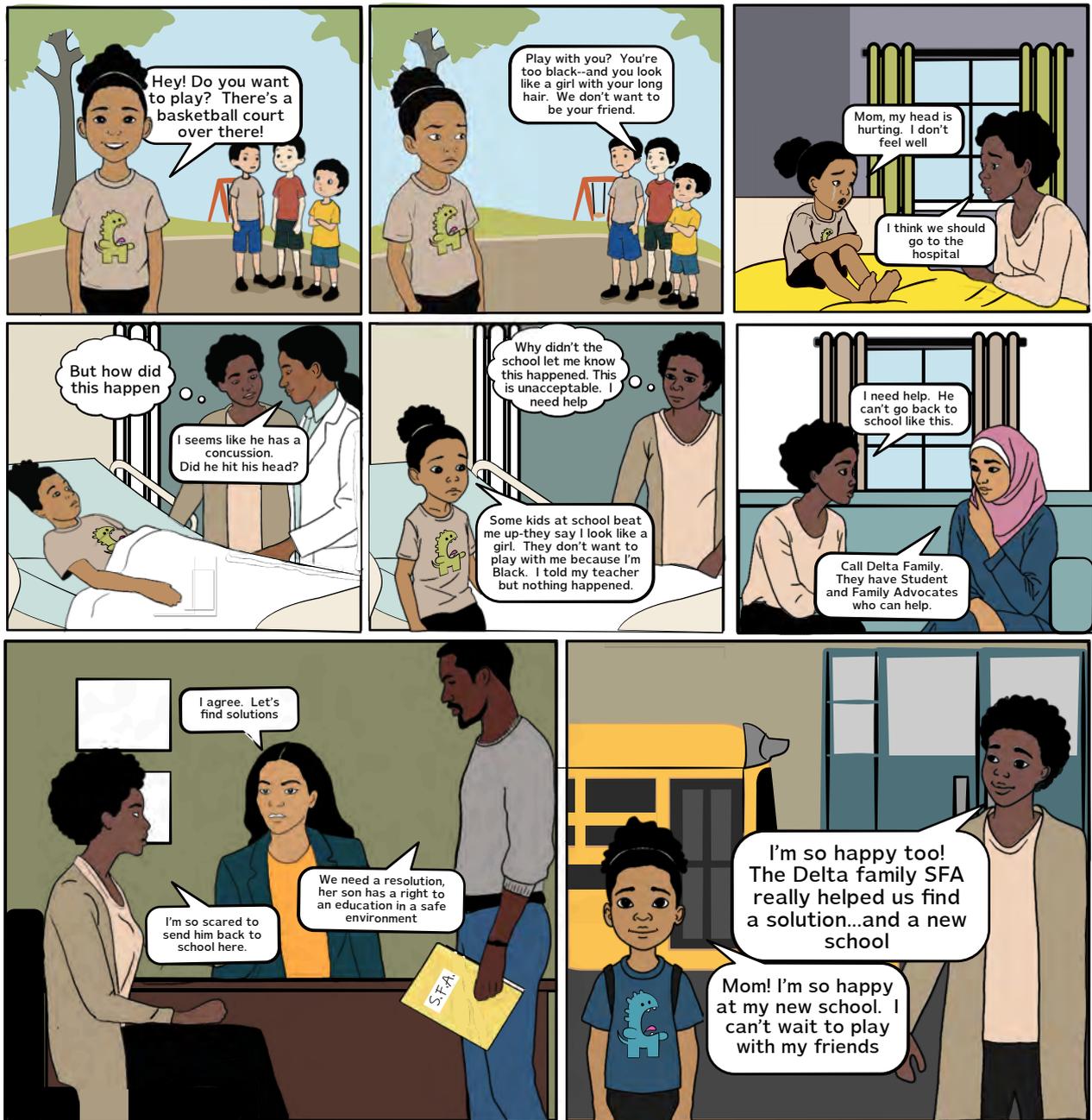


What you need to know: Elementary and middle school

A six-year-old, biracial first-grader was being bullied on the playground during recess. Many of his classmates, mostly from newcomer families from Afghanistan, would tell him he looked like a girl because of his long hair, call him ugly because of his darker skin, and exclude him from their games because he didn't speak their language.

One day, after school, he complained of head pain, so his mom took him to the hospital. The doctors discovered he had a concussion, and he later revealed that some boys had punched and kicked him in the head during recess. The school didn't inform his mother about the incident, so she reached out to the SFA program for support. With our help, she attended a meeting with school officials — including the principal, a social worker and the advocate — to discuss the situation. Together, we arranged for her son to transfer to a smaller school with more staff supervision, where he would feel safer.

- Delta Family Resource Centre SFA



Navigating Ontario's education system can be difficult for Black kids who often walk into unfriendly, unwelcoming classrooms. Supporting your student begins with understanding the academic and social challenges they may come across and knowing how you can help them.

What should you look for at the school?

The classroom space is extremely important, so how your child feels and is treated in the classroom is also important. When you attend the school for a curriculum night, parent-teacher interview, or if you request to observe your child's classroom, look for:

- **Classroom dynamics:**
How does the classroom feel, and is your child comfortable, supported and included in their classroom? Are they encouraged to participate? Do they receive positive reinforcement?
- **Teacher interaction:**
Teachers play a significant role in a child's school experience and make a huge difference in how your child feels and learns. How does the teacher speak to your child?
- **Overall school culture:**
The school's culture significantly impacts your child's sense of belonging. How many racialized and Black kids are at the school? Do they embrace diversity and have culturally relevant programming, such as Black History Month projects or a Black student association?
- **Teacher representation:**
Are there Black teachers or staff at the school? Representation matters, and schools with Black or racialized staff are often a more inclusive, culturally aware environment.



TIPS TO REMEMBER

If you need to talk to your child's teacher, you don't have to wait until parent-teacher interviews. You can request a meeting with your child's teacher or have a phone call with them at any time during the school year.

You can also request to observe your child in the classroom. Check with your school board to see what their rules are.



Talk to your child regularly

It's after school, and your child comes home. They drop their backpack on the ground and head into the kitchen for a snack. "How was school today?," you ask.

"Fine," they respond.

Sometimes parents just accept that answer and move on, but for Black students, it's important that parents truly understand what is happening at school. You need to encourage your child to talk. How often are you talking to your child about school? Ask questions like:

Do you like your teachers? Why or why not?

- How are your friends?
- Do you feel included or treated fairly by classmates and teachers?
- What subjects do you like? Are you finding anything hard?
- Is there anything that happened today that made you feel uncomfortable?
Are you interested in any extracurricular activities?

Encourage your child to speak openly about their feelings and what's happening in their classroom —

what other children are doing and saying, and how those children are being treated. Let them know they can share everything, especially if they feel they've been treated unfairly or misunderstood.

A Black 14-year-old, diagnosed with ADHD, was attacked at school by two students who shouted racial slurs during the assault. Other students recorded the incident and shared it on social media. The boy was taken to the hospital for his injuries, and his caregiver reported the attack to the police. The two students who attacked him were suspended and later faced assault charges. After a police and school investigation, they were expelled and transferred to

Despite these actions, the boy continued to receive online threats from friends of his attackers, making him feel unsafe at school and in the community. With support from an SFA, the family worked with the school to develop an updated safety plan. This included increased supervision for the student both on and off school property, and a commitment from the school to ensure he would attend a different school than his attackers the following year.



TIPS TO REMEMBER

Children often don't want to get others in trouble. Sometimes, they are embarrassed or think they've done something to make their teacher or the other kids in the class treat them badly, so they don't want to tell the full story. For instance, if someone in their class is using the n-word or if their teacher is embarrassing them in the classroom, they may not want to share this. If you feel like something is wrong, keep asking. Do what you can to create a safe space where your child can be sure you won't be angry with them.

– Delta Family Resource Centre SFA



TIPS TO REMEMBER

Middle school students are choosing their high schools and courses in Grade 8. Many schools have information nights to help parents and trusted advisors make these decisions with your student.

Delta Family's SFA can also give you insight to help your student make the right choice.

Understanding your rights

Ontario parents have a right to advocate for their child's fair and equitable treatment in education. Here are specific areas where you need to understand your rights:

Academics

Black children are just as capable of success in academics as any other group of children. Anti-Black racism disproportionately misplaces Black and racialized students in special education because they are seen through a deficit model and are not expected to achieve. Black students are funnelled into special education by educators because of the "soft bigotry" of low expectations.

"In the Toronto District School Board, the country's largest school board, Black youth are disproportionately placed in special education programs, compared to other students. In the Peel District School Board, Black students are three times more likely to be identified with a "behavioural exceptionality" and streamed into special education."

If your child is identified as needing academic accommodations, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be developed. Parents must understand the IEP process and participate actively in its creation.

You know your child and what they are capable of — make sure your voice is heard and that the plan reflects your child's capabilities and needs.

The IEP process for Ontario students includes:

- Reviewing the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR)
- Consulting with the student, parents, school staff and other professionals
- Observing the student
- Conducting additional assessments if necessary

Excessive discipline at school

If your child has been unfairly disciplined, you need to know your child's rights to challenge the decision. Disciplinary actions can affect a child's OSR and their learning. Black students in Ontario are often more harshly disciplined than their non-Black peers.

Schools are required to follow a clear process and, as a parent, you have the right to request a formal review if you feel the decision was unjust. See *Challenging unfair discipline in Ontario schools*.

Empower your student

Understanding your rights and available support is essential. Parents and trusted adults should empower their child to advocate for themselves and to feel connected to their school experience.



Self-advocacy:

Teach your child to speak up respectfully about their needs, whether it's asking for extra help in a subject, clarifying an assignment or addressing unfair treatment.



Get involved:

School isn't just about books. Being a part of your school community is important. Extracurricular activities can help them find their circle of friends.



Find mentors:

Every parent needs a village to help their child succeed. Connect your student with mentors - people who share cultural background or anyone who can help guide them.



Connect with Delta Family's SFAs

We can help with:

- ✓ **Advocacy and mediation:**
If your child is struggling with a teacher or experiencing unfair treatment, we can offer advocacy support and mediate discussions with the school and school board.
- ✓ **Academic support:**
If you have concerns about your child's academic progress or access to resources like IEPs, we can assist with ensuring they receive appropriate support.
- ✓ **Disciplinary issues:**
SFA can support families in understanding the disciplinary process, reviewing incidents and ensuring your child's side of the story is heard.
- ✓ **Resources and referrals:**
We offer resources for mentorship, tutoring, extracurricular activities and culturally relevant mental health services for Black students.

Navigating high school

Your high school years can be a fun, yet challenging experience for some Black students, especially in an environment where systemic biases and inequities may exist. As you get older, it's important that you understand your rights, know how to advocate for yourself, and find the resources and tools you need to graduate.

A 15-year-old Black student, who is autistic, was suspended three times over a few months due to behaviour-related issues triggered by interactions with school staff and other students. Some staff members even exchanged inappropriate jokes about the student's behaviour over email. With the support of an SFA, the family advocated to have these suspensions removed from the student's Ontario Student Record.

In several meetings with school administrators, it became clear that not all staff working with the student were certified in (Non-violent) Crisis Prevention Intervention(CPI), and his safety plan was not consistently followed. After reviewing what the school could and couldn't provide, it was evident that the school wasn't fully equipped to meet the student's academic and social-emotional needs.

The SFA helped the caregiver successfully transfer the student to an alternative school with a specialized program. In this new environment, the student now has a modified schedule, a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, and CPI-certified staff, providing a supportive setting for their continued learning and growth.

-Delta Family Resource Centre SFA

Dealing with anti-Black racism and bias in high school can be a lot. You're already trying to figure out your next steps — are you going into post-secondary education? Which school? What classes do you need to take? How do you pay for everything?

On top of that, you could be dealing with anti-Black racism from teachers and school administrators, or maybe students who are in class with you. You must recognize this and know how you can address it with the help of trusted adults or Delta Family's SFAs. Often, we see anti-Black racism as people being violent or using slurs, but it can be more subtle.

Microaggressions and bias

Microaggressions are daily comments and slurs that make you feel small and uncomfortable. For example, "You are so articulate — you're not like the others" or, "Maybe you should concentrate on athletics." These comments may not be overtly racist, but they are based in racism and make you feel uncomfortable. Racial biases can influence how teachers and administrators interact with you. It can sometimes result in unfair treatment, stereotyping or limited opportunities.

Streaming and course placement

Some Black students are "streamed" into applied or lower-level courses, often without schools considering their potential or goals. The long-term data shows that students who are streamed tend to be from lower socio-economic groups, and that this practice has negatively affected both Black and Indigenous students.



What does streaming mean?

Academic streaming is the practice of separating students into different educational paths or "streams" based on perceived ability. This usually begins in middle or high school. In Ontario, this means sorting students into either applied or academic streams.

Applied courses focus more on hands-on, practical skills while academic courses emphasize theory and are generally intended for students pursuing university. Once students are placed into these streams, it can be challenging to switch paths, effectively setting them on fixed academic and career tracks.

Students in the applied stream miss out on the same career and life options that academic stream students have. While academic students can keep all doors open if you're in applied courses, you have limited choices — and you're more likely to drop out.

Your child has always wanted to be an engineer. They've struggled in math in middle school, so when choosing their Grade 9 classes, the school guidance counsellor encouraged them to choose applied math — it would be easier. The math courses offer practical, step-by-step approaches, which helps them grasp concepts more easily, but it's too basic for engineering.

When it's time to apply to post-secondary, they're locked into a path that limits their eligibility for certain post-secondary programs, including university engineering degrees.

A student's abilities aren't set in stone. Students grow and develop at different times — some need more time to catch up or gain confidence, but streaming can cut off their chances or make it harder to reach their goals. In a way, streaming creates a hierarchy within schools, making certain students feel less intelligent or valuable.

So, you're at school and in applied courses and you want to move into academic, what can you do?

- 1 Talk to your guidance counsellor:**
Meet with your guidance counsellor and ask for a clear explanation of why you were placed in applied courses. Share any concerns you have about your placement and ask about what options are available for switching streams. *Delta Family SFAs can help you prepare or attend the meeting with you.*
- 2 Discuss with your teacher:**
Speak with your teachers about moving to academic courses. Teachers may be able to recommend additional resources or offer extra support if you're trying to make the transition.
- 3 Involve your parents, guardians or trusted adults:**
Sometimes it can be difficult to manage this by yourself. If you have parents, guardians or trusted adults in your life, ask them to request a meeting with school administrators to discuss your academic goals and any barriers you're facing. *Delta Family SFAs can help if you don't have any trusted adults in your life that you can ask for support.*
- 4 Document everything:**
Keep a record of conversations and emails with teachers, counsellors and administrators, along with any progress you've made in your current courses. This documentation can be useful if you need to make a case for transferring to academic courses later.
- 5 Find tutors to improve your grades:**
Find tutors who can help you boost your grades and build confidence in your classes. Whether it's prepping for exams or tackling tough assignments, the right tutor can make a huge difference in your marks.
- 6 Connect with Delta Family SFAs:**
We can offer guidance, mentorship and resources, and advocate on your behalf.

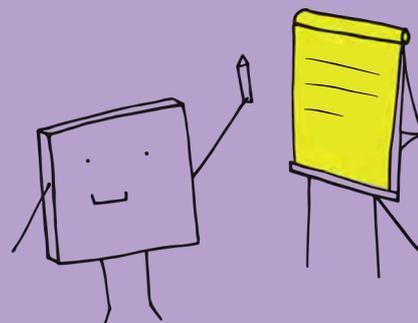
What are your rights?

As a student in Ontario, you have rights, both academically and in disciplinary matters. Understanding these rights will help you get the education you deserve. (See *Protecting Ontario's Black Students*.)

"I'm experiencing anti-Black racism at school." If you're facing anti-Black racism, whether from other students or teachers, you have a right to report it. Schools in Ontario have anti-discrimination policies and are legally obligated to create a safe and inclusive environment. Document, document, document! Documenting the event and details will help if you need to file a formal complaint.

"I'm being streamed into Applied courses." Every student has the right to access courses that align with their academic goals and capabilities. If you want to take Academic courses, you may need to access your IEP (if you have one) and your OSR to find out what is being included and if they accurately reflect your capabilities.

Don't forget, you have a right to access your OSR and request revisions if there is incorrect or unfair information included.



Connect with Delta Family's SFAs



TIPS TO REMEMBER

High school can be a stressful time, and facing systemic challenges or discrimination can take a toll on your mental well-being. Mental health support is critical to helping Black students thrive academically and personally.

Delta Family and community-based resources specifically for Black youth and families offer culturally relevant care, including counseling, workshops and peer support that may feel more comfortable than traditional school-based resources.

We can help you with:

- **Advocacy and support:**
If you're dealing with anything from academic streaming to anti-Black racism, our SFAs can offer guidance and, if you need us to, act as advocates. We can also provide information on your rights and connect you with resources to ensure you get the education you are entitled to.
- **Mentorship and community programs:**
Delta Family can connect you with mentors and community resources to empower you and connect you to a wider community that shares your lived experiences and wants to see you win.

A 16-year-old girl reached out to me through my SFA Instagram account for support. She was struggling with the emotional impact of rumours being spread about her at school. She felt isolated and hurt because her teachers and principal seemed to ignore her concerns, which made her dread going to class.

After she shared the details of the rumours and the hurtful notes being left on her locker, I spoke to her aunt to discuss the next steps and then contacted her school principal. Although it initially took a few days to reach him, once the possibility of involving the superintendent was mentioned, he became responsive. We scheduled a meeting to address her concerns.

During the meeting, I described the extent of the rumours and who was allegedly spreading them, which led the staff to take her situation more seriously. Together, we created an action plan to help her feel safe at school and to ensure she had trusted adults she could turn to if needed. The school also spoke to the students involved in spreading the rumours, letting them know the consequences of their actions.

With this support in place, she began attending school regularly again and felt that her voice was finally being heard. Over time, she gained confidence, moved up a grade, and learned to advocate for herself. She was discharged from SFA with the reassurance that she could always reach out for support if needed in the future.

This is what I consider a successful SFA experience — helping a student not only get through a tough time, but also learn how to stand up for herself moving forward.

- Delta Family Resource Centre SFA

Preparing for post-secondary

Entering post-secondary education is an exciting new chapter that opens a world of opportunities.

Whether you're heading to trade school, college or university, the transition from high school can be challenging but rewarding.

I've worked hard to support Black students and their families as they navigate the college admissions process, which can feel intimidating and complex. Many Black students hesitate to ask questions about higher education, partly due to experiences with micro-aggressions and a sense of exclusion in environments where they often feel underrepresented. This hesitation sometimes stems from a worry about being judged or seen as less capable.

To help ease these concerns, I guided students through important steps like understanding deadlines, gathering transcripts, securing recommendation letters and preparing application essays. I also collaborated with schools to create safe spaces where students feel comfortable asking questions and expressing themselves. By introducing school staff to culturally relevant teaching practices and advocating for cultural competency training, we worked together to build a more welcoming and inclusive environment. I also kept regular check-ins with students to encourage them to engage actively in their learning. These efforts have helped Black students feel more confident and supported, making a positive difference in their educational journeys.

- Delta Family Resource Centre

Transitioning from high school to trade school, college or university

You've graduated from high school and now you're getting ready to start your first year of post-secondary.

There's more freedom — no one is telling you that you must show up for class — but also more responsibility. You need to change how you approach your education to be successful in post-secondary.



Stay organized:

Time management is crucial in post-secondary education. Use a planner or app to keep track of deadlines, exams and important dates. Breaking tasks into smaller steps can help you avoid last-minute stress.



Stay studying:

Unlike high school, post-secondary courses often require more independent study. Find a study method that works for you, whether it's joining a study group, using flashcards or setting aside dedicated study times each day.



Seek academic support:

Many institutions offer tutoring services, writing centres and academic advisors. Don't hesitate to use these resources if you need help with coursework or adjusting to academic expectations.

Paying for your education

Figuring out how to pay for post-secondary education can feel overwhelming, but there are lots of options out there to help. The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is a great starting point, providing a mix of grants and loans based on factors like family income and the program you're studying. For some students, the grants alone cover a large part of your tuition, especially if you come from a lower-income family. OSAP can be a solid base, giving you a little breathing room as you tackle the costs of tuition, books and everyday expenses.

In addition to OSAP, there are scholarships, bursaries and awards that can help with those costs. Visit your school's Financial Aid office for more information. Some organizations offer money for academic and athletic achievements, financial needs and community involvement. Start researching early — see *Scholarship and financial aid resources*. Scholarships, bursaries, grants, and loans are all forms of financial aid, but they are different. **Scholarships** are awarded based on merit, such as academic achievement, leadership, or extracurricular involvement. **Bursaries** are needs-based and help students who are struggling financially. **Grants**, are similar to bursaries because they don't need to be repaid. They are often provided by governments or organizations to support education costs. **Loans** must be repaid, with interest, after graduation. Awards can be **internal or external**—**internal awards** come directly from a student's school, while **external awards** are offered by outside organizations, businesses, or government programs.

Delta Family, as well as your school's Career Centre, can help you find part-time jobs, co-op programs or internships. Many schools have work-study programs that let you work on campus while you study, which is a win-win for balancing academics and finances. Co-ops and internships can also give you real-world experience, which can make all the difference when it's time to start your career.

Finding your support circle

Having a support circle can make post-secondary life easier. Your community of support can include study buddies, friends who share similar backgrounds and mentors who can help guide you. Many campuses have organizations and groups specifically for Black students that provide a sense of belonging and a network of support.

- **Join Black student organizations:** Look for African, Caribbean and Black student organizations on campus. These groups often host events, provide resources and offer mentorship, which can be invaluable as you adjust to your new environment.
- **Engage with cultural communities:** If your campus doesn't have an organization that meets your needs, check out local Black cultural centres or community groups. These spaces offer a chance to connect with others who share your background and can provide support and encouragement.
- **Create a student group or club based on your interests.** You can find your support system by creating a student group or club with people who share similar interests. Many schools will provide resources to your group if it's not a duplicate of another school-subsized organization.

Understanding Ontario human rights in post-secondary institutions

Like in your younger years, Ontario post-secondary institutions are required to uphold human rights protections, which means they must provide a safe, respectful environment for all students. If you experience anti-Black racism from faculty, peers or other administrators, you have rights and options — and Delta Family's SFAs can assist you.

- **Human rights protections:** The Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) extends to universities and colleges, meaning they must prevent and address discrimination, and ensure fair treatment in academics, housing and campus facilities.
- **Filing a complaint:** If you feel that your rights have been violated, most post-secondary institutions have an Office of Human Rights or Equity that can guide you through the complaint process. You can also file a complaint with the OHRC. Document any incidents, keep records and get the support you need to get through the process.

(See *Challenging unfair discipline in Ontario schools* for more details.)

Preparing for life after school

Getting work experience while in school is a great way to prepare for life after graduation. Black students don't always have the same connections as some other students — but that doesn't mean that you can't be successful with some assistance.

- **Help! I need to find an internship!** Many competitive internships have early deadlines, so start researching opportunities as soon as possible. Your school's career centre may have listings, and SFAs can help you identify programs that prioritize Black and underrepresented students.
- **Help! I need a job!** Building a strong resume, practicing interview techniques, and networking can give you an advantage. Attend workshops, ask for feedback on your resume and use mock interviews to prepare. Connect Delta Family or your school's career development office.
- **Help! Where can I find job opportunities?** Networking within your community can lead to job opportunities and mentorship. Attend community events, get involved in organizations and let people know about your career interests. Community members can often connect you to hidden job opportunities or help you make valuable connections.



Connect with Delta Family's SFAs

We can help with:

- **Advocacy and support:** If you're facing challenges, whether academic, social or personal, SFAs can help advocate on your behalf, connect you with resources and offer guidance.
- **Mentorship and networking:** We can connect you with mentors who understand your experiences and can provide advice on navigating post-secondary education and future career paths.
- **Community programming:** Through Delta Family and other local organizations, we offer programs to help you build practical skills, develop confidence and create a strong support network.
- **Career development support:** From preparing for internships to developing job search strategies, we can help you navigate the job market and leverage community connections to secure opportunities.

Succeeding in post-secondary education takes preparation, resilience and a strong support system. By understanding your rights, building your community and looking out for job opportunities, you can create a fulfilling post-secondary experience that sets you up for future success. Remember, you're not alone —

Delta Family is your village to support you every step of the way.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Academic streaming	Academic streaming is the practice of separating students into different educational paths or "streams" based on perceived ability. At the middle school or high school level, this means sorting students into either applied or academic streams.
Anti-Black racism	<p>Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that it is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society.</p> <p>Anti-Black racism is manifest in the current social, economic and political marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Government of Ontario, 2022</p>
Behavioural exceptionality	<p>The Education Act identifies five categories of exceptionalities for exceptional students: behavioural, communication, intellectual, physical, and multiple. These categories are designed to address the wide range of conditions that may affect a student's ability to learn, and are meant to be inclusive of all medical conditions, whether diagnosed or not, that can lead to particular types of learning difficulties.</p> <p>- Toronto District School Board</p>
Bias	Bias is a tendency to favour or discriminate against certain individuals or groups based on stereotypes. It can be conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit), influencing decisions, behaviours and interactions that can reinforce inequality.
Crisis prevention	Crisis prevention is the process of taking action and using strategies, such as planning and communication, to prevent potential crises and to help people recover after a crisis. Other crisis prevention steps include trauma-informed care and identifying triggers.
Discipline policy	Discipline policy would include verbal warning, written warning, suspension and termination. For more details, please review your child's school board policy.
Discrimination	When a person is treated unfairly or less favourably than others based on a protected characteristic, such as age, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.
Equity/equitable	To identify, remove and prevent systemic barriers and discriminatory practices to help students reach their full potential and improve student achievement.
Expulsion	In Ontario, expelled students are removed from school for an indefinite time. An expulsion does not have a time limit. Students who are expelled from school must be provided with opportunities to continue their education or offered non-academic support, such as counselling, to help promote

positive behaviour. Students are suspended first while expulsion is being considered.

Individual Education Plan	An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan that outlines the special education services, accommodations and programs a school will provide for a student with an educational disability.
Inequities	Things that are unfair, such as children being treated differently at school based on their skin colour.
Mediate	To talk to two separate people or groups involved in a disagreement to try to help them to agree or find a solution to their problems.
Microaggressions	Microaggressions are subtle, unintentional actions or comments that reinforce stereotypes or biases directed at marginalized groups. Although they can be minor, they can harm someone's mental health and well-being over time.
Ontario Education Act	The Ontario Education Act (the Act) is the primary legislation governing education in the province, outlining the roles and responsibilities of school boards, educators and the Ministry of Education. It ensures that every child has access to publicly funded education and establishes regulations for curriculum, attendance and student welfare. The Act also addresses equity and inclusion, promoting a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.
Ontario Human Rights Commission	The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) was established as an arm's length agency of government in 1961 to prevent discrimination and to promote and advance human rights in Ontario.
Ontario Ombudsman	The Office of the Ontario Ombudsman was established in 1975 and takes complaints about the administrative decisions and actions of more than 1,000 public sector and government bodies in Ontario, as well as French language services and services provided in the child protection sector.
Ontario Student Assistance Program	The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is a financial aid program that can help you pay for college or university. OSAP offers funding through grants (money you don't have to pay back) and student loans (money you need to repay once you finish school).
Ontario Student Record	Ontario Student Record (OSR) is the record of a student's educational progress through schools in Ontario.
Punitive	Inflicting, involving or aiming at punishment.
Restorative justice	To educate youth about the impact of their actions on others, to hold them accountable for their actions in a constructive and meaningful way, and to provide an opportunity for them to make amends.
School-to-prison pipeline	The overuse of suspensions and expulsions among Black students has been linked to what is known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Excessive punishment increases the likelihood of students dropping out and, in the long term, limits their educational and career opportunities while leading to higher

unemployment rates and increased interactions with the criminal justice system.

SFA

Student and Family Advocate

Soft racism

The assumption that certain people are capable of less because of their race or background.

Suspension

In Ontario, a suspension means a student is removed from school temporarily for up to 20 school days. During this time, the student cannot attend or take part in regular school activities or events. However, the student has other opportunities to continue learning to help them stay on track with their education. Only a principal can suspend a student.



Community support and resources

Mental health resources

Contact	Description
Black Youth Helpline blackyouth.ca 1-833-294-8650	Offers culturally responsive support for Black youth in need of mental health assistance.
TAIBU Community Health Centre taibuchc.ca	Provides health and social services to Black communities in the Greater Toronto Area, including mental health support.
Across Boundaries acrossboundaries.ca	Specializes in mental health services for racialized communities in Ontario.
Therapy for Black Girls (Canada) therapyforblackgirls.com	Directory to find Black mental health professionals across Canada.
BounceBack Ontario bouncebackontario.ca	A free, skill-building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to help youth and adults manage low mood, stress and anxiety.
Nia Centre for the Arts – Mental Health Supports niacentre.org	A Toronto-based organization offering mental health programs specifically for Black youth.
Kids Help Phone kidshelpphone.ca	Offers 24/7 mental health support, including specific resources for Black youth.
Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program ontariohealth.ca/getting-health-care/mental-health-addictions/depression-anxiety-ontario-structured-psychotherapy	Adults with these concerns can access free, publicly funded cognitive-behavioural therapy and related services through the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) Program.
What's Up Walk-In (WUWI) whatsupwalkin.ca	This network is a free, six-day-a-week mental health counselling walk-in service for infants, children, youth, young adults and families.
SNAP® (Stop Now and Plan Program) Email snap@dfrc.ca	An evidence-based cognitive behavioural model that provides a framework for teaching children (ages 6–11) struggling with behaviour issues, and their parents, effective emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving skills.

Legal and human rights resources

Contact	Description
Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) ohrc.on.ca	Provides resources and support for individuals facing discrimination, including racial discrimination in educational institutions.
Justice for Children and Youth (JFCY) jfcy.org	Legal aid service for Ontario youth dealing with issues in education, housing, and other areas.
Education Equity Secretariat (Ontario Ministry of Education) ontario.ca/page/education-equity	Works on policies to promote equitable and inclusive education in Ontario schools.
Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) blacklegalactioncentre.ca	Provides free legal services for low-income Black Ontarians facing anti-Black racism in areas such as housing, employment and education.
Human Rights Legal Support Centre (HRLSC) hrlsc.on.ca	Offers legal assistance to individuals in Ontario facing human rights violations.
Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) ccla.org	Works on issues related to civil liberties, including student rights and discrimination in schools.
Ontario Ombudsman ombudsman.on.ca/what-we-do/topics/education	Oversees all aspects of public education in the province, from daycare and early childhood education, through the primary and secondary school systems (including school boards and school authorities) to post-secondary education and training (including colleges and universities, and OSAP).
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) Human Rights and Equity Advisor tcdsb.org/page/equity-action-plan	Promotes and upholds principles of human rights and equity across the board.
Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Human Rights Office tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Human-Rights Email humanrightsoffice@tdsb.on.ca 416-397-3622	Enables, supports and inspires the creation and preservation of a proactive, inclusive and transformational culture of human rights at the board.

Scholarship and financial aid resources

Contact	Description
Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) National Scholarships Program bbpa.org/scholarships	Provides scholarships to Black Canadian students across various fields of study.
ScholarshipsCanada scholarshipscanada.com	A comprehensive database of scholarships, bursaries and financial aid opportunities across Canada.
Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program	Financial aid program for Ontario residents pursuing post-secondary education.
Indspire indspire.ca/programs/students/bursaries-scholarships	Supports Indigenous students in Canada, including those of African and Caribbean heritage who identify as Indigenous.
Parents of Black Children (PoBC) parentsofblackchildren.org/young-gifted-and-black-scholarship	This scholarship is awarded to Black university/college students across Canada.

Ontario school board scholarships for Black students

Know Your Worth Scholarship--Kujichagulia Award <i>Toronto District School Board (TDSB)</i> https://www.tdsb.on.ca/	The Kujichagulia Academic Award honours students of African heritage who will be graduating from a TDSB secondary school to assist with the expenses of a post-secondary education. This award has a total value of \$2,000.
The Smith Black Business Association Scholarship (SBBA) <i>Peel District School Board (PDSB)</i> https://www.peelschools.org/scholarships-and-financial-aid	The SBBA Scholarship supports talented Black Ontario high school students pursuing a post-secondary degree in business. Eligible applicants are Grade 12 students with strong academics and community involvement. This one-time \$1,000 award is exclusively for post-secondary education expenses.
Alliance of Educators for Black Students (AEBS) <i>York Region District School Board (YRDSB)</i> http://www.yrdsb.ca/	Scholarships provided by the Alliance of Educators for Black Students are specifically for graduating Black students from York Region schools.
Scholarships for Black-identifying students <i>Durham District School Board (DDSB)</i> www.ddsb.ca/en/programs-and-learning/scholarships-bursaries-and-awards.aspx	The DDSB offers a number of scholarships for Black-identifying students who are pursuing post-secondary education.

To find out more about available scholarships:

- **Contact your school guidance counselor:**
They can provide information about specific scholarship opportunities within your school board.
 - **Check the school board website:**
Most school boards list available scholarships and application details.
 - **Check your college/university's website:**
Most schools list available scholarships (including entrance scholarships) and application details on their official website.
-

What's next?

Parents: Five keys to supporting your kids

To support Black students effectively, parents and trusted adults can play an active role in helping them navigate the challenges they may encounter in school and beyond. Here's how they can make a meaningful difference and how Delta Family can support you.

- 1 Encourage open communication:**
Find out what's happening at school. Validate your children's experiences and encourage positive identity development.
- 2 Understand and advocate for your children's rights:**
Know school policies and address incidents of discrimination.
- 3 Be an active supporter of their academic and career goals:**
Ask lots of questions to your student, their teachers and their administrators. Know what their goals are and work with them to achieve them. You have a right to be involved in your child's education.
- 4 Encourage your children to be active participants in their education:**
Academic or extracurricular clubs, student government and sports can help them find their sense of belonging and become leaders in their school community.
- 5 Help find them mentors in their community:**
Look for opportunities to connect with mentors through school programs, community organizations or Delta Family's network. Mentors can offer valuable insights, guidance and encouragement as students prepare for life after high school.

Students: Four tips for navigating through the school system

Navigating the education system as a Black student comes with unique challenges, including anti-Black racism, unfair punishment and limited access to resources. By being proactive, knowing your rights and building a support network, you can overcome these challenges and find success... and Delta Family's SFAs can provide support along the way:

- 1 Know your rights, advocate for yourself and address issues early:**
Schools are required to provide a safe, inclusive and equitable environment for all students. The sooner you address any problems — and get an SFA involved — the better chance of resolving them.
- 2 Build a strong support system and find mentors:**
From Black student associations to just having a good circle of friends, these people will provide emotional support and practical advice. Look for people in your community who can offer you guidance and help you navigate tough situations.
- 3 Start researching scholarships and financial aid early:**
Research scholarships, bursaries and grants that are available specifically for Black students. Financial support can help make post-secondary education more accessible and relieve financial stress.
- 4 Prioritize your mental health and well-being:**
Find safe spaces, whether at school, like Black student unions or cultural clubs, or in your community. If you feel comfortable, connect with school counselling services and get the help you need. Access community mental health resources like Delta Family's programs and services that prioritize the mental health of Black students and families.

Getting through school as a Black student requires resilience, self-advocacy and a strong support network. By knowing your rights, building connections, prioritizing your mental health, and actively engaging with resources and opportunities, you can set yourself up for success.

SFAs are here to help you navigate challenges, stand up for your rights and connect you with a supportive community that champions your journey. Whether you need help with academic planning, mental health resources or simply a safe place to talk, Delta Family is committed to

This report was written by Shellene Drakes-Tull in collaboration with DAYO Media & Communications Inc. Founded in 1999, DAYO Media & Communications Inc. (DM&C) is an award-winning, Black women-owned and led agency based in Toronto. Our team of seasoned media and communications professionals has consistently delivered impactful multimedia campaigns, communications strategies, and media literacy initiatives across Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. Guided by a strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion— DM&C is passionate about driving conversations that inspire action and change. We are committed to causes that challenge us to talk, think and act.

We gratefully acknowledge the valuable contributions of our collaborator, Delta Family Resource Centre, a non-profit and B3+ community-based agency. Since 1981, Delta Family has consistently delivered a range of targeted, culturally appropriate services to marginalized communities in Northwest Toronto, that meet the ever-evolving needs of the diverse communities it engages. The Student and Family Advocates, whose insights helped shape the direction and content of this guide, provided essential context and grounding, ensuring the guide reflects the realities and needs of those it is intended to support.

The Student & Family Advocate team collaborators:

- Farai Gore
- Hamza Said
- Shanece Dawson
- Venesha Thomas

Student & Family Advocate Focus Group collaborators:

- Kofi Sankofa (Sankofaincipher)
- Carolee Douglas
- Dallila Johnie
- Jimmenile Edmunds
- Jullianna Douglas
- Carel Lawrence
- Shannon Shaw
- Shanel Shaw
- Shaniqua Shaw
- Jessamy Koranteng
- Noni Koranteng
- Olasunkami Famutim

Graphic Design

- Romaine Robinson