



Community-Based Research Canada
Recherche partenariale du Canada

Closing the Opportunity Gap for Racialized and Under-Resourced Communities through the Community School Initiative.



Dr Ardavan Eizadirad



Devon Jones

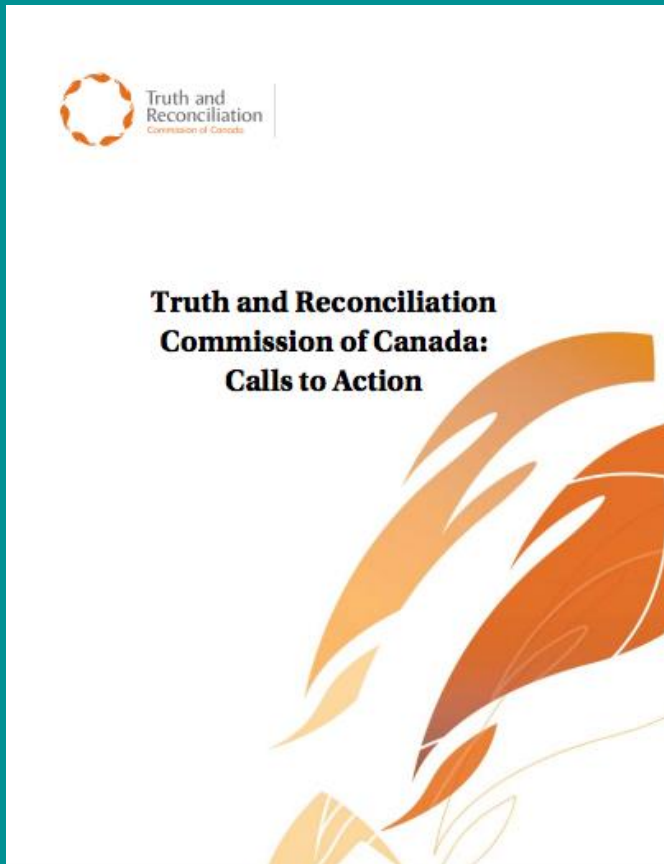


Sally Abudiab



Brice Baartman

Call to Action #10:



We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles: i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation. ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates. iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula. iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses. v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems. vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children. vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.



Community-Based Research Canada
Recherche partenariale du Canada

www.communityresearchcanada.ca



@CbrcResearch



PRESENTERS

- Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, Faculty of Education, Wilfrid Laurier University
- Devon Jones, founder of YAAACE and educator with the Toronto District School Board
- Sally Abudiab, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work University of Toronto
- Brice Baartman, OISE, University of Toronto

Closing the Opportunity Gap for Racialized and Under-Resourced Communities through the Community School Initiative

Presenters: Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, Devon Jones,
Sally Abudiab, Brice Baartman





Agenda

Introduction & Background

**Research Project, Methodology, Findings,
Recommendations & Knowledge
Mobilization**



Meet the Team



Principle Investigator



YAAACE Founder (2007)



Senior Research Assistants



Thank you to Doris Trlin, Michael Baglio, Abbey Seehaver, and Olivia Buongiorno for their help on the literature review of this project.



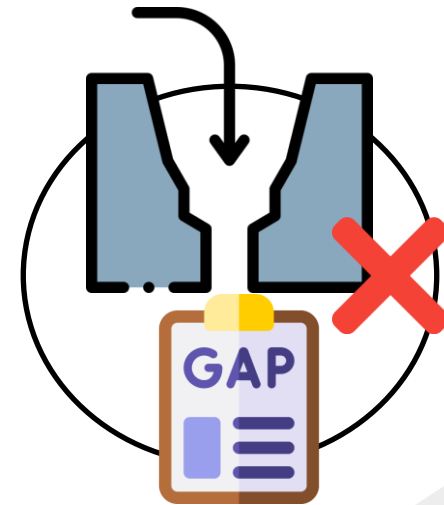
Thank you to the youth, parent advisors from YAAACE and Spirit of Math staff for their help with writing blog posts and for their input and time during our scheduled research meetings and consultations.

Community School Initiative: What is it?

- <https://www.communityschoolinitiative.com/>
- **Partnership** between *Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education* (YAAACE) & *Spirit of Math* (SoM) offering extra-curricular supplementary programs outside of school hours
- Program offers SoM curriculum to students in grades two to eight supported by **parents, coaches, and Ontario Certified Teachers (OCT)**

GOAL

> Close the opportunity gap for under-resourced communities <

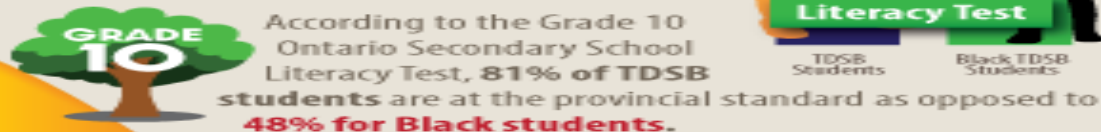
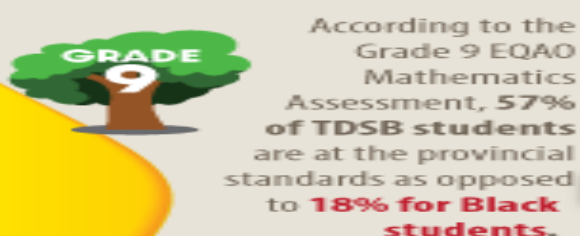
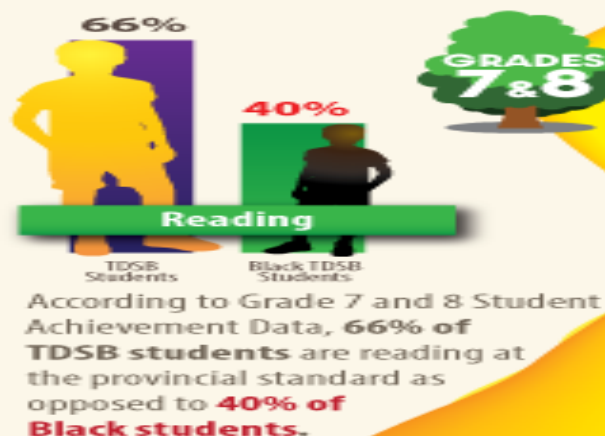
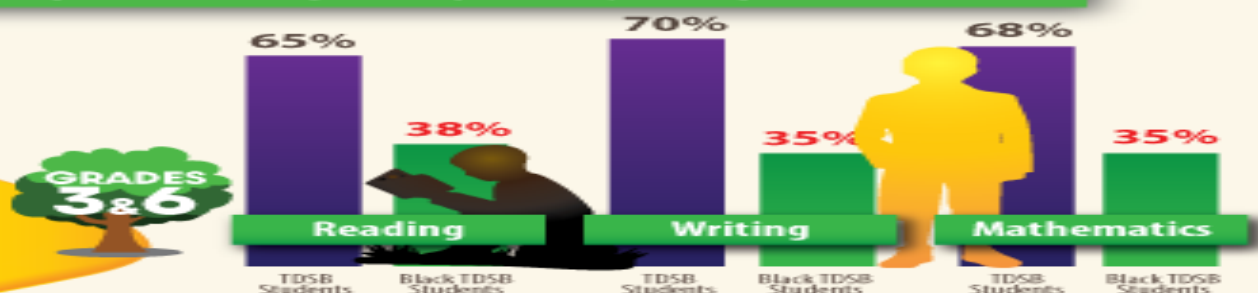
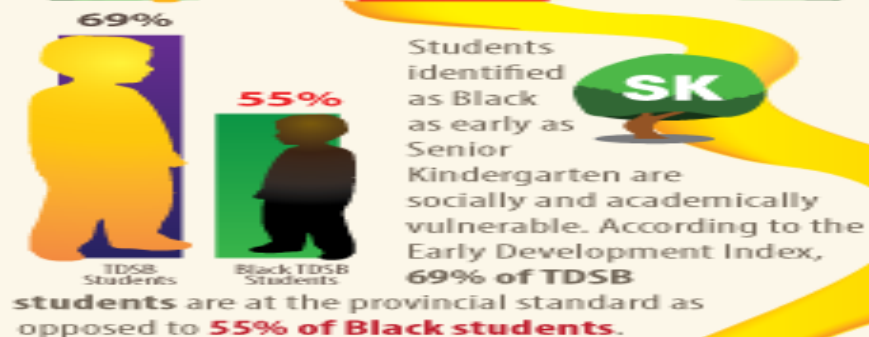


RACE MATTERS

IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The TDSB Research and Information Services Department has provided data that speaks to the attrition rate of African-Canadian boys. In particular, those from poor and racialized communities in the North West Quadrants of the City of Toronto -- Humber Black Creek, York South Weston and Jane and Finch Communities -- have some of the lowest achieving schools in the province of Ontario as per the Fraser Report and the TDSB Learning Opportunity Index.

TDSB AT THE PROVINCIAL STANDARD



HIGH SCHOOL



Y.A.A.A.C.E.
YOUTH ASSOCIATION FOR
ACADEMICS, ATHLETICS
AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

**EDUCATION REFORM
COMMUNITY SCHOOL INITIATIVE**

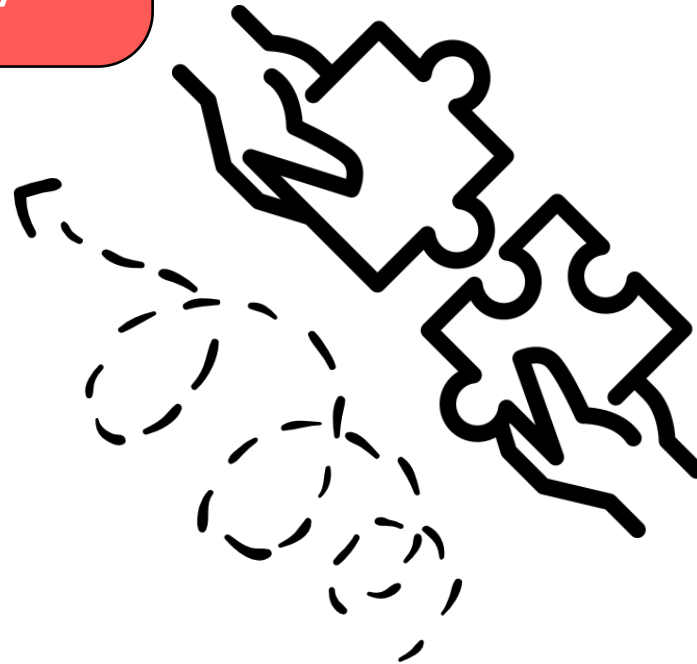
Data Sources:

1. TDSB Learning Opportunity Index (LOI)
2. Early Development Instrument (EDI)
3. TDSB Student Achievement Data
4. EQAO
5. Fraser Report

Community School Initiative

Need supplementary
mathematics programming
in the community

Non-Profit: YAAACE



Proven curriculum to
improve performance in
mathematics



For-Profit Enterprise: Spirit of Math

Research Overview



Objectives

Data Collection (Primary & Secondary)

1. Assess the effectiveness of YAAACE's "Community School Initiative" program as it transitioned from in-person to remote delivery for winter & spring terms of 2020-2021.

- ☐ Focus group with teacher (N=7)
- ☐ Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)

2. Identify barriers preventing access and engagement in YAAACE's remote learning programs.

- ☐ Literature review
- ☐ Focus group with teacher (N=7)
- ☐ Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)

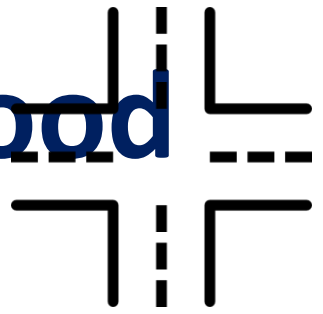
3. Identify effective remote instruction programming and pedagogies that can supplement the education programs currently offered by YAAACE

- ☐ Literature review
- ☐ Focus group with teacher (N=7)
- ☐ Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)

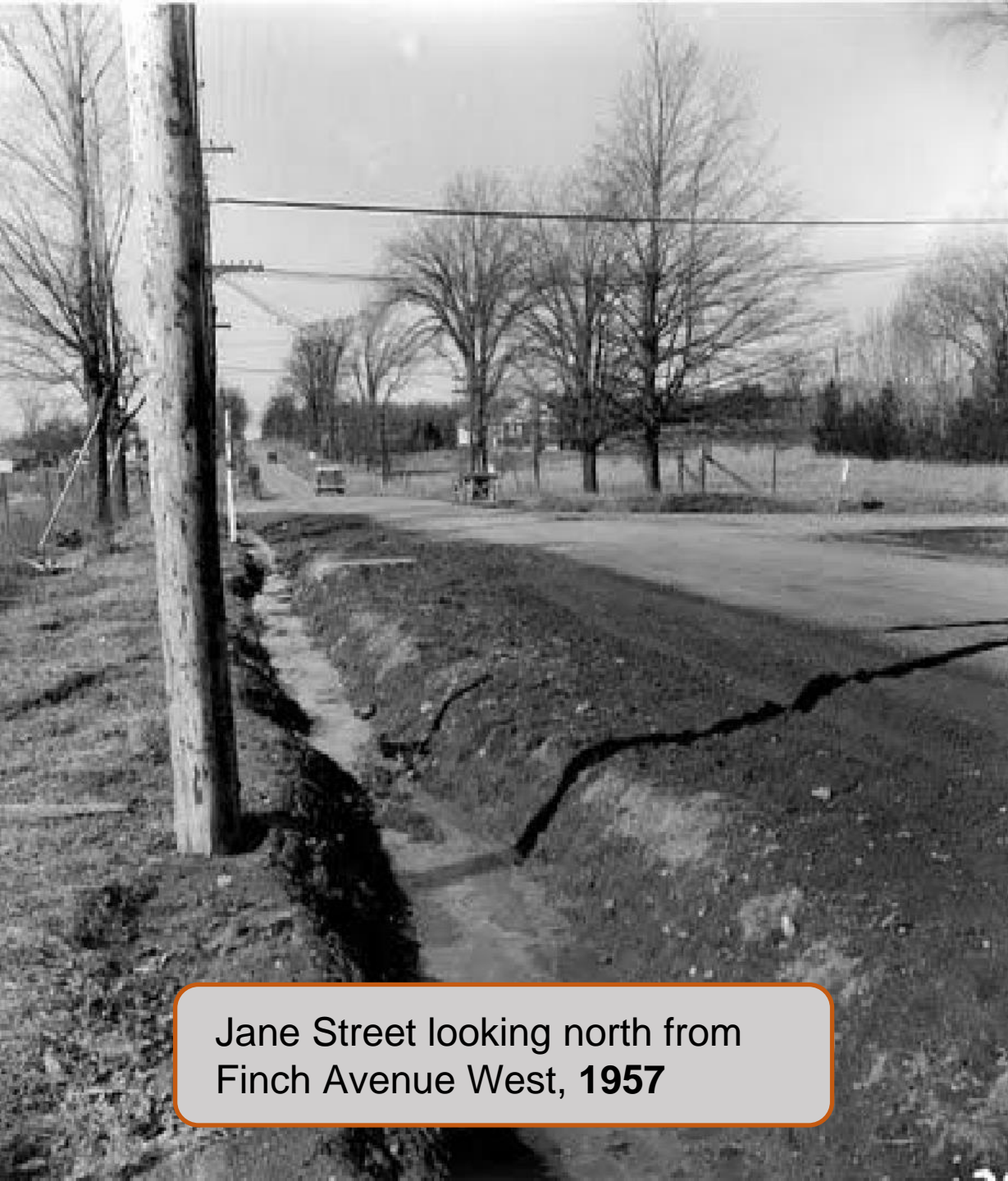


History of Jane-Finch & Neighbourhood

Demographics



- **1954-** Investment in building affordable housing in the suburbs at rapid rate: extensive building of high-rise apartments & townhouses. High-rise apartments & townhouses were built at a rapid rate.
- **2005-** the City of Toronto identified 13 “Priority Neighbourhoods”
- **2014-** 31 identified neighbourhoods & re-named the program to “Neighbourhood Improvement Areas”
- Linear style of hollow urban planning, without much thought to the internal infrastructure of the neighbourhood [?] Jane-Finch expanding “from 1,301 in **1961** to 33,030 in **1971**” + establishment of 21 high-rise apartment buildings in the neighbourhood (Downsview Weston Action Community, 1986; Rigakos et al., 2004).
- *Jane-Finch: Priority Area Profile* (2008), the neighbourhood has “an approximate population of 80,150 living within an area span of 21 kilometre squared with an average population density of 3,817 persons per kilometre squared”



Jane Street looking north from
Finch Avenue West, **1957**



Finch Avenue West looking west
from Jane Street, **1957**



Jane-Finch 1962 & 2021

Priority Neighbourhood: Jane-Finch	
Incarceration Costs (2008)	\$36,856,603 (Postal Code M3N)
Police Expenditures (2011)	\$30,576,947 (31 Division)
Data for Census Tract 0312.04 (2005)	Percentage of families with one parent: 39% (+22%)
	Total population 15 years and over with no certificate, diploma or degree: 47% (+27%)
	Unemployment: 12.1% (+5.4%)
	Median income (All private households): \$37,056 (-\$27,072)
TDSB Learning Opportunities Index School Rankings (2011)	Westview Centennial Secondary School (1/109) Brookview Middle School (15/479) Shoreham Public School (3/479) Driftwood Public School (9/479)
Fraser Report Rankings (Secondary Schools 2011-12)	Westview Centennial Secondary School (696/725)

Chart 1, Williams, C., and Jones, D, 2013

About YAAACE

- Non-profit organization offering affordable and accessible programs & services to Jane-Finch community
- Founder Devon Jones (2007), an elementary school teacher in the community
- Purple logo was intentional to mitigate the turf war north & south of Finch
- Focus on mitigating the opportunity gap
www.yaaace.com
- Social Inclusion Strategy framework & holistic services
- Eizadirad book chapter (2020): “[Closing the Achievement Gap Via Reducing the Opportunity Gap: YAAACE’s Social Inclusion Framework Within the Jane and Finch Community](#)”



YAAACE's Social Inclusion Strategy



About Spirit of Math

- For profit organization: <https://spiritofmath.com/>
 - 11,000 students across 40 campuses in more than 20 cities
- 35 years operating
- Offer structured math curriculum for students in Kindergarten to Grade 11 with a focus on high-performing students





Data Analysis



- Guided by the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016)
- Regular team meetings with YAAACE (including youth and parent advisors) and Spirit of Math; e.g., co-constructing survey questions
- June and July 2021: student and parent surveys administered via Qualtrics- collected demographical data and information about their experiences in CSI
- June 2021: focus group with 7 teachers- examined the strengths and challenges of the CSI and how they adapted their pedagogies.
- Responses were analyzed via coding and thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017)



Research Overview



Objectives	Data Collection (Primary & Secondary)
1. Assess the effectiveness of YAAACE's "Community School Initiative" program as it transitioned from in-person to remote delivery for winter & spring terms of 2020-2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Focus group with teacher (N=7)<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)
2. Identify barriers preventing access and engagement in YAAACE's remote learning programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Literature review<input type="checkbox"/> Focus group with teacher (N=7)<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)
3. Identify effective remote instruction programming and pedagogies that can supplement the education programs currently offered by YAAACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Literature review<input type="checkbox"/> Focus group with teacher (N=7)<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys from teachers (N=4), & parents (N=33) + student (N=33)



Findings

1. CSI supported the Jane-Finch community by addressing gaps caused by systemic barriers and circumstances created by COVID-19.
2. Reciprocal non-profit/community organizations and private enterprise partnerships with schools can increase access to social support programs and services re: importance of school-community interface being aligned
3. Achievement gap was minimized through mitigating the opportunity gap by focusing on accessibility and affordability.
4. A team of caring adults, including teachers, coaches, parents, & SoM staff, working collaboratively optimized student achievement through identifying student/family needs and timely supports and interventions.
5. Trust, mentorship, and diverse representation that reflects cultural identities of students leads to higher student engagement re: importance of socio-culturally relevant and sustaining curriculum and pedagogies.

Key Themes & Findings

1

Holistic and Culturally Relevant Programming

2

Structured Programming

3

Communication and Parental Engagement

4

Digital Divide and Inequality

5

Effective Pedagogies



Key Themes & Findings

1

Holistic and Culturally Relevant Programming

- Teachers expressed the partnership between YAAACE and Spirit of Math gave students who were struggling in the school system an opportunity to improve socially, emotionally, and academically.
- Parents benefited from the family-centred/community hub approach to holistic programming and student development (e.g., having the support of coaches, extra tutoring and academic support, and teachers that reflected the cultural identities of students).
- **Take-Away:** Opportunities for structured programming must be affordable and accessible re: potential of private and public partnerships).

Key Themes & Findings

1

Holistic and Culturally Relevant Programming

“[YAAACE] supports in the development of creating lasting relationships while building social skills and demonstrating the importance of respect... The public school system often does not provide this, especially in lower income/predominantly Black communities.” [Parent](#)

“I like that they are supportive and help with everything (sports, school and character).”

[Student](#)



Key Themes & Findings

2

Structured Programming

- Structured curriculum of math program and scaffolding of lessons build off each other.
 - E.g., each student get binder with lesson and is used to track their progress
- Differences in expectations and processes from pedagogies to assessment created some conflict between some YAAACE teachers and SoM staff.
 - E.g., teachers frustrated from not being able to give partial marks or more time to complete tasks
- Supporting students was more challenging in a remote context for teachers and parents.
 - E.g., cameras off, Wi-Fi issues, navigating Brightspace and submitting assignments, and homework help
- Students reported improved confidence and attitudes towards mathematics and STEM.

Key Themes & Findings

2

Structured Programming

“YAAACE offers programs not only enrich the community but the families living within it.”

Parent

“It’s has really helped me in school I’m getting all A’s in math now and I’m more organized and I was never as confident at school before.”

Student

“Classes are too big for students who need more individual attention.”

Parent



Key Themes & Findings

3

Communication and Parental Engagement

- Opposing viewpoints between teachers and parents: whereas parents felt they were consistently available for communication purposes, teachers felt their communication was sporadic and inconsistent.
- Medium for communication must be accessible and user-friendly e.g., Brightspace VS email VS phone calls VS WhatsApp groups
 - How-to video for submitting assignments on Brightspace created in response to recognizing this barrier.
 - Giving timely feedback was more difficult in a remote context due to delays in receiving student work and lack of observations in emotions & through body-language.

Key Themes & Findings

3

Communication and Parental Engagement

“Not a frequent user of some of the virtual platforms.”

Parent

“There's not a lot of parental engagement involvement at the older grades simply because the curriculum is a little bit difficult.”

Teacher

Key Themes & Findings

4

Digital Divide and Inequality

- Inequitable access to technology was a barrier to student learning and achievement re: opportunity gap.
- Teachers had difficulty supporting students who did not have adequate access to technologies and internet.
- Some parents didn't have adequate space, devices, and/or resources to support their children with remote learning.
- Majority of parents (63%) and students (72%) expressed in-person learning better supports their needs.

Key Themes & Findings

4

Digital Divide and Inequality

“Suitable environment without distractions is hard to identify at home.”

Parent

“If I was able to attend in person I don't get distracted with my surroundings at home.”

Student

“The online aspect of teaching is very challenging as students can often have low bandwidths making it difficult for them to participate.”

Teacher



Key Themes & Findings

5

Effective Pedagogies

- Teachers felt the presence of coaches, due to their trust and mentorship, increased student engagement and accountability in virtual platforms.
 - E.g., student cameras were turned on more often and greater engagement in online activities
- 90% of parent respondents felt that having coaches involved in delivery of programs increased student engagement particularly in a remote context.
- Combination of intrinsic and external motivation used to engage students.
 - E.g., additional drop-in support available and prizes for timely completion of work
- Combination of individual work and friendly cooperative academic competitions led to greater student participation.
 - E.g., socio-emotional and academic support

Key Themes & Findings

5

Effective Pedagogies

“Remembering my goal to becoming an NBA player. I won’t make it without good grades.”

Student

“The coaches helped huge in that aspect and getting them there and to help us monitor whose cameras are on/off.”

Teacher



Key Themes & Findings

5

Effective Pedagogies

“The academic portion is just as (if not more) important for obvious reasons. It reinforces that they are more than just athletes and regular public school students. It teaches them that they are able to accomplish difficult things if they try hard. And it shows them that they are valued which encourages them to try harder.”

Parent



Knowledge & Resource Mobilization

1. Launched a research blog to mobilize knowledge and share findings and resources: communityschoolinitiative.com
2. January 29 2022: will be hosting a one-day culminating symposium with community leaders, scholars, educators, youth, parents, students, and other people from the community.





Recommendations

1. Greater investments to facilitate access to opportunities and programs that are affordable and accessible to the community and the demographics of people who live in it; potential of collaborative partnerships between nonprofits and the private sector.



Recommendations



2. Invest in holistic and culturally relevant and sustaining programming that rewards diverse identities and lived experiences; prioritize relationships and have people with trusted connections to the community involved (e.g., BIPOC teachers and coaches working together with students and families).



Recommendations



3. Provide multiple avenues and mediums to help parents navigate educational platforms and support their children remotely and at home with consideration for digital literacy (e.g., information letters, how-to videos, and administrative support).



Recommendations



4. Develop and distribute an information package on curriculum and parental expectations with practical tools, examples, and resources to enhance family involvement in supporting student learning.





Recommendations



5. Ongoing support of teachers and their self-care through flexibility in pedagogy, assessments, and delivery of curriculum. Create opportunities for team teaching and hiring additional staff to support high-needs students with their exceptionalities.

Selective References

Adedoyin, O., & Soykan, E. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and online learning: The challenges and opportunities. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1–13

Ahmadi, D. (2018). Diversity and social cohesion: The case of Jane-Finch, a highly diverse lower-income Toronto neighbourhood. *Urban Research & Practice*, 11(2), 139-158.

Eizadirad, A. (2019). Inequality of opportunity: Experiences of racialized and minoritized students. In *Decolonizing Educational Assessment*, (pp. 41-63). Palgrave Macmillan.

Eizadirad, A. (2020). Closing the achievement gap via reducing the opportunity gap; YAAACE's social inclusion framework within the Jane and Finch community. In Trifonas, P. (Eds.) *Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education* (pp. 275-297). Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham.

Gallagher-Mackay, K., Srivastava, P., Underwood, K., Dhuey, E., McCready, L., Born, K., & Sander, B. (2021). COVID-19 and education disruption in Ontario: emerging evidence on impacts. *Science Briefs of the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table*. 2(34), 1-36.

Royal Society of Canada. (2021). *Children and schools during COVID-19 and beyond: Engagement and connection through opportunity*. https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/C%26S%20PB_EN_0.pdf

Toronto District School Board. (2021a). *COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan*. <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/docs/Pandemic-Recovery-Plan-June-23.pdf>

Toronto District School Board. (2021b). *Preliminary findings on the impact to learning due to the pandemic*. <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/research/docs/School%20During%20the%20Pandemic/PreliminaryFindingsImpactLearningPandemic.pdf>

Toronto Foundation. (2021). *Toronto's vital signs: 2021 report*. <https://torontofoundation.ca/vitalsigns2021/>

**Learn more and access the literature
reviews and resources at:**

Communityschoolinitiative.com

**Thanks to YAAACE Funders who are helping minimize
the opportunity gap leading to greater
achievement outcomes for racialized students!**



Q&A



UPCOMING LIVE DISCUSSION: DEC 16, 12:00-1:15PM ET

Upcoming Live Discussion

Closing the Opportunity Gap for
Racialized and Under-Resourced
Communities through the Community
School Initiative

Register:

[www.communityresearchcanada.ca/
events](http://www.communityresearchcanada.ca/events)

Webinar Recordings



Community-Based Research Canada
Recherche partenariale du Canada

[Become a Member](#)

[Home](#)

[Who We Are](#)

[Network](#)

[News and Events](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[Resources](#)

Webinars & Discussions

CBR Canada hosts webinars and live online discussions to bridge research excellence. Below are webinar recordings and event summaries, organized from the most recent to earlier. Upcoming webinars and discussions are posted on the [Events](#) page.

[C2UExpo](#)

[Awards](#)

[Webinars & Discussions](#)

[Community of Practice](#)

[2021](#)

[2020](#)

[2019](#)

[2018](#)

[Earlier](#)

www.communityresearchcanada.ca/webinars-and-discussions

**"Tell us what
you think!"**



Feedback Form:
CBRCanada Webinars and Discussions

Start

press **Enter** ↵



THANK YOU!

www.communityresearchcanada.ca



@CbrcResearch