

Black History Month Best Practices

Black History Month Background

Celebrating Black History Month is a tradition. It was founded in 1926 by African American historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who dedicated his career to the study and documentation of Black life. It was a scholarly and educational intervention to counter the racist representation and erasure of African Americans in American history that contributed to their disenfranchisement and the miseducation of Black people about their past through the white gaze.

The Ontario Black History Society petitioned the City of Toronto to officially recognize Black History Month in 1979 and in 1993 successfully pushed for the Ontario government to adopt it. In 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black history Month, following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine.

Source: [Teaching African Canadian History](#)

The guideline below seeks to enhance understanding, build capacity, support student achievement, improve support for students within our schools and communities, and promote the well-being of all.

Best Practices:

- Commit to learning and teaching Black history not just in February but year round. For educators this means weaving the historical and contemporary experiences and achievements into the fabric of your curriculum
- Educate yourself on Black history and Black stories, it is important to do your own research using credible sources that also include the voices of Black Canadians. Do not assume or expect guidance from Black educators, staff and students unless they have offered it
- Black history is everyone's history and is the responsibility of all educators
- The responsibility of dismantling systemic racism and teaching Black history must not be placed solely on Black educators
- Be cognizant of the psychological and emotional impact that discussions related to anti-Black racism have on members of the Black community



Black History is Everyone's History:

It is important that we celebrate and incorporate Black history beyond the month of February, the following website offers a list of curriculum connections for grades 1-12 to support Black history throughout the school year and within subject content.



Use the following website for support:

[Teaching African Canadian History](#)

Reflecting on Your Pedagogical Shift

- Have you familiarized yourself with the content and context?
- What historical facts have students learned?
- Have Black student voices and perspectives been centred?
- Has whiteness and white people been decentred?
- Have Black people been dehumanized or humanized?
- Have you disrupted racist, deficit views of Black people?
- Has context been developed for students?
- How does it contribute to the development of a critical consciousness?

Source: Natasha Henry Workshop on Emancipation Day Celebrations December, 2021

As you are aware it is a DPCDSB expectation that no one is to use the N- word in our schools. If you are using a resource that has this word please consult the following resources available on [sharepoint](#).

Best Practices for Selecting Resources and Presenters

Black History Month should not be the first time that students have engaged with content on Black people, please consider the guidelines below:

Do:

- Review and vet all resources before using
- Approach all content with an anti-racist lens
- Have a strong focus on the Canadian context (including local examples)
- Include the political and social context
- Look at both the past and the present
- Acknowledge everyday people, not just famous individuals or stereotypical examples of success
- Engage in fewer and more in depth content with substance
- Make learning meaningful and informative, not performative
- Share stories of joy and celebrate achievements within Black communities by offering counternarratives
- Check to see if the presenter is on DPCDSB approved external presenter list

Do Not:

- Focus solely on food and dance
- Focus solely on athletes and music
- Teach enslavement solely as Black History (for every story of struggle balance it with 2 stories of joy)
- Use the resource [Underground to Canada](#)

Source: Adapted from Natasha Henry Workshop on Emancipation Day Celebrations December, 2021



Suggested Articles and websites:

- <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/dos-and-donts-of-teaching-black-history>
- <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/black-history-month-is-over-now-what>
- <https://blackhistorysociety.ca/history/>
- <https://cbhtable.com/table>
- <https://teachingafricanCanadianhistory.weebly.com/books-articles-other-publications.html>
- <https://parentsfordiversity.com/do-you-know-the-dos-and-donts-of-planning-for-black-history-month/>
- <https://www.catholic.org/saints/black.php>



Photo Source: <https://www.rcinet.ca/bhm-en/2015/02/04/english-23-historical-black-canadians-you-should-know/>