

## Successful Practices in the Education of Black Students

### What are some of the issues identified by members of the Black community?

Although we know that most teachers are committed to the well-being of all their children, we also know that there are groups of students who are struggling. There is ample evidence to document the fact that some Black children face considerable challenges in fulfilling their academic potential in Ontario schools.

In 1992 Stephen Lewis made a report to then-Premier Bob Rae, communicating the distrust and frustration that the Black community felt at that time about their experiences in the community and in the school system.

Lewis states:

“...it’s as if nothing has changed for visible minority kids in the school system over the past ten years. The lack of real progress is shocking. And I believe it signals the most intractable dilemma around race relations, in contemporary education: How do you get the best of policies and programs into individual classrooms? It raises searching questions of communications.” (p. 20)

As well, in 1994 the Royal Commission on Learning shares further concerns that were identified across Ontario: They heard from many Black parents and community members that:

- A disproportionate number of students are dropping out or failing or being streamed into low academic levels or special education classes.
- The curriculum is not inclusive. Students do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum - their literature, history or the achievements of their community - and when mention is made, it is often in a negative or stereotypic manner.
- Some teachers have low expectations for Black students.
- Black students have few role models in the school system
- Stereotyping and racism are “rampant” in the school system
- Police officers are called to deal with Black students for even minor incidents.

In 2002 the Ontario Human Rights Commission's report on racial profiling articulated similar concerns.....

- The greatest number of submissions about (racial) profiling were received from persons who identified as African Canadian.
- The Commission was told of a perception that children from ....African Canadian, Latin, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arab communities .... may be stereotyped as "slow to learn" and aggressive, and are therefore considered to be the instigators of any conflict or problems at school.

In our current context, community members, parents and students continue to articulate the same pattern of concerns.

In a recent community meeting one parent stated:

"Our children are fodder for the correctional system."

Her comments were met by robust applause from the other Black parents and community members who were present.

The Ontario government is committed to restoring public confidence in the education system in our province. Parents and students have been very direct about how they feel about the quality of programming and experiences that are available for Black children. Clearly, there is room for improvement.