

The Afrocentric Alternative school is the only public school in Canada to centre the perspectives, experiences and histories of people of African descent. In June of 2007, a community request was put forward for the Toronto District School Board to address the systemic barriers that contribute to the high rate of dropout and gaps in achievement of students of African descent. As a result of this request, a report titled *Improving Success for Black Students*, was presented to the Board with recommendations. In September of 2009, as a result of these recommendations, the Afrocentric Alternative School began its operation.

Did you know? Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard is a highly regarded Nova Scotian educator, social worker, researcher and community activist. As a professor in the School of Social work at Dalhousie University, she was the first Canadian of African descent to hold a tenure-track position and to be promoted to full professor. In November 2016, she was appointed to the Senate as an independent Senator representing Nova Scotia. Additionally, Senator Thomas Bernard was a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers and was the past Chair of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. She has served as an expert witness on human rights [cases? Legislation?] and has received many honours for her work, including the Order of Canada in 2004 and the Order of Nova Scotia in 2014.

The phrase “Together we build, succeed and lead” is the school’s motto. The Nguzo Saba principles (listed below) serve as a base for the curriculum which embodies African-centred knowledge and practices. This curriculum cultivates positive Black identity and a strong sense of belonging in all aspects of learning, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to the core Ontario curriculum, students at the Africentric School learn about African contributions to science and math, and the history of Black people in Canada.

Did you know? George Elliot Clarke is a seventh generation Canadian of African and Mi’kmaq heritage. Clarke is an Africadian poet and playwright, and served as the Canadian parliamentary Poet Laureate. He coined the term Africadia to describe the Black populations of the Maritimes, specifically Nova Scotia. Clarke’s work explores themes of racism, segregation, loss of identity, and sense of belonging. He earned an Honours Bachelor’s degree in English from the University of Waterloo, a Master’s degree in English from Dalhousie University and a doctorate in English from Queen’s University. Clarke’s many bestowed honours include the Portia White Prize for Artistic Achievement (1998), Governor-General’s Award for Poetry (2001), the National Magazine Gold Medal for Poetry (2001), the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Achievement Award (2004), the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Fellowship Prize (2005), the Dartmouth Book Award for Fiction (2006), the Eric Hoffer Book Award for Poetry (2009), appointment to the Order of Nova Scotia (2006), appointment to the Order of Canada at the rank of Officer (2008), and eight honorary doctorates. Clarke currently teaches Canadian and African diasporic literature at the University of Toronto.

The creation of the Africentric School is an important starting point in addressing systemic barriers that exist in the Canadian education system for students who are of African descent. Proponents of the Africentric School would like to see their progressive curriculum adopted and implemented in schools across the province and country in order to promote inclusivity, equity and representation. This shift would benefit students from all backgrounds develop their ability to thrive in a racially diverse society.

Nguzo Saba

The Seven Principles



Umoja



Kujichagulia



Ujima



Ujamaa



Nia



Kuumba



Imani

Umoja ▲ Unity

To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

Kujichagulia ▲ Self-Determination

To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima ▲ Collective Work and Responsibility

To build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa ▲ Cooperative Economics

To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia ▲ Purpose

To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba ▲ Creativity

To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani ▲ Faith

To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Dr. Maulana Karenga

Creator of Kwanzaa
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