



Canadian
Children's
Literacy
Foundation

Fondation pour
l'alphabétisation
des enfants
canadiens

The Reading Partnership and the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation announce *Teaching our Kids to Read: Exploring the Reading Journey of Black Children in Canada*

Project aims to understand and share the needs and experiences of Black families living in urban areas of Canada who want to help their children's reading journeys.

August 9, 2023 – TORONTO – The Reading Partnership (TRP) and the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation (CCLF) have undertaken a research project to understand the experiences of Black families in Canada who want to support their children's reading journey.

Entitled *Teaching our Kids to Read: Exploring the Reading Journey of Black Children in Canada*, the project seeks to learn about the assets that families bring to helping their children become readers, the challenges they experience, and the solutions being proposed by families and their community support networks. Particular attention will be paid to the experiences of urban, particularly Black, families, with the ultimate goal of bringing their needs to light and ensuring they are addressed.

This research project is being completed in partnership with the Black Health Alliance and is funded by TD Bank Group.

The project is looking to partner with local community partners to host focus groups with Black parents and/or caregivers (grandparents, older siblings, relatives, etc.) to a Black child/children. In addition, the project is also searching for input from people who work in roles that support Black families, including teachers, early childhood educators, administrators, librarians, community service workers, doctors, nurses, social workers, resident leaders, tenant leaders, parent leaders, faith-based leaders, volunteer leaders, community animators, and more. Participants will receive a \$50 gift card for participation in an in-person or online focus group that is up to 90 minutes long.

Service provider and community leader focus groups would be conducted virtually. Parent/caregiver focus groups would be conducted in-person in the following cities from August to September 2023:

- Calgary, Alberta
- Vancouver, British Columbia
- Montreal, Quebec
- Halifax, Nova Scotia
- Preston Township, Nova Scotia
- Durham, Ontario
- Hamilton, Ontario
- Ottawa, Ontario
- Toronto, Ontario
- Peel, Ontario
- Windsor, Ontario

Partners that are interested in hosting in-person parent/caregiver focus groups in the listed cities are encouraged to connect with the project through lead researcher Evelyn Amponsah, Ph.D.



Canadian
Children's
Literacy
Foundation

Fondation pour
l'alphabétisation
des enfants
canadiens

Main Contact

Evelyn Amponsah, Lead Researcher

Email: research@readingpartnership.com

An Inquiry Advisory Group (IAG) has been established to provide guidance on the project's process, methods, and data collection and analysis approaches. The IAG provides advice to ensure that the research findings influence policy, and most importantly, lead to better outcomes for Black children and families in Canada.

Members of the IAG bring diverse perspectives and many years' of relevant experience from a range of backgrounds:

- Camesha Cox - Executive Director, The Reading Partnership
- Uzo Anucha - Associate Professor and York Research Chair in Youth and Contexts of Inequity; Academic Director, Youth Research & Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX), York University
- Julia O'Sullivan - Professor, University of Toronto
- Funke Aladejebi - Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
- Tana Turner - President, Turner Consulting Group
- Chantel Smith - System Principal Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE), Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Mélanie Valcin - President and CEO, United for Literacy
- Coralie D'Souza - Vice President, Programs, Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation
- Nina Jobanputra Shukla - Director, Early Words Program, Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation
- Paul Bailey - Executive Director, Black Health Alliance

Quotes:

"This project is not research for research's sake; we're looking to get to the bottom of the issues that Black families face when it comes to their children's literacy success. Learning to read is not a privilege - it's a basic and essential human right that must be upheld for all children. Black children have historically been overrepresented in the number of those who struggle to learn to read in Canada - this is unjustifiable and preventable.

Too often, solutions are proposed without engaging the stakeholders who are most impacted by the issues - we make solutions around them, instead of with them. This project seeks to better understand how Black families have successfully supported their children despite the odds, learn about the barriers and challenges they face, and identify viable solutions that address their specific needs."

- Camesha Cox,
Executive Director, The Reading Partnership



Canadian
Children's
Literacy
Foundation

Fondation pour
l'alphabétisation
des enfants
canadiens

“At the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation, we believe reading is a right denied to far too many children. Without strong reading skills, children struggle to reach their full potential. We also know that children in some communities face disproportionate barriers to becoming readers. Core to our work is listening directly to communities experiencing disproportionate barriers to reading, understanding their experiences, and ensuring we help them to dismantle those barriers they face.

This critical project does just that. By working towards innovative solutions that reflect and are responsive to the needs of Black communities, this project seeks to enable equitable access to educational opportunities for all. We are immensely proud to be collaborating with The Reading Partnership and Black Health Alliance on such a significant initiative.”

**- Ariel Siller
CEO, Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation**

“At the Black Health Alliance we believe that positive early childhood development is critical to our health and well-being across our lifetime, and that learning to read is an important foundation for early childhood development. We are proud to collaborate with The Reading Partnership and the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation on *Teaching our Kids to Read: Exploring the Reading Journey of Black Children in Canada* which aims to engage Black children and families to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers and facilitators to literacy success. It is our hope that our collective commitment to amplifying the voices of Black children and families, and acting on what we learn, will strengthen the foundations for literacy and the health and well-being of Black children and families across Canada.”

**- Paul Bailey,
Executive Director, Black Health Alliance**

"At TD, we believe that a love of reading can help set the foundation for today's youth and help them prepare for their futures. We recognize reading plays a key role in helping create opportunities for children to succeed in a changing world, but in order for this to be truly realized, access to reading programs and supports must be equitable. By supporting initiatives such as this one, alongside The Reading Partnership (TRP) and the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation, we strive to help dismantle barriers toward developing readers that still exist in some communities and strengthen early literacy needs of Black families in Canada ."

**- Robyn Small,
Senior Manager, Philanthropy (Canada), TD Bank Group**



Canadian
Children's
Literacy
Foundation

Fondation pour
l'alphabétisation
des enfants
canadiens

About The Reading Partnership

The Reading Partnership's mission is to create and deliver literacy-focused programs and resources that empower children and their families to reach their full potential. We believe that communities are responsible for their children's success, which is why we partner with key stakeholders like schools, educators, community groups, organizations, businesses and parents/caregivers to work towards sustainable literacy rates in Toronto and across Canada. Our vision is that every child in every community will have the skills and confidence they need to make positive choices for their lives and their futures.

About The Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation

Founded in 2017, the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation (CCLF)'s mission is to ensure that all children in Canada are equipped with the literacy skills they need to achieve their full potential in school and in life. We raise awareness about the importance of early literacy, develop and promote evidence-based children's literacy initiatives, champion literacy partners and empower people to build literacy skills in young children in their homes and communities, with a particular focus on vulnerable and hard to reach families. We do this by leveraging existing systems and resources as conduits for the crucial early literacy support that gives kids a strong start.

About The Black Health Alliance

Black Health Alliance centres Black communities in defining the challenges and barriers affecting our health and well-being. We provide a platform for Black people to establish a common voice around systemic problems, and we work to co-design and mobilize the tools, skills, partnerships and investment needed to implement solutions that improve health outcomes across Canada.