

2023 A DAY IN AVIATION PROGRAM

Executive Summary



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Introduction

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement was established in 2021 with a key mandate to provide support to Black students, identify barriers to their success, and access appropriate resources through scholarships, networking and mentoring.¹ Building on the success and partnership with the Black Aviation Professionals Network (BAPN)² in 2022, the Centre of Excellence hosted its second iteration of the *A Day in Aviation* program. It was designed to engage Black students in Grades 10 through 12 at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to explore aviation as a career and academic pathway. On February 15, 2023, *A Day in Aviation* took place with Air Canada as the major sponsor. This free, in-person event took place at two Air Canada facilities: the Air Canada System Operations Control Centre in Brampton and the Air Canada Hangar in Mississauga.³

This executive summary highlights key themes from the 2023 *A Day in Aviation* survey completed by students after the program. These themes include students' overall experience, learning outcomes, and impact on career plans and aspirations. Recommendations are suggested for the Centre of Excellence of Black Student Achievement, guidance counsellors, and other school staff.

Methods

Student feedback was collected through an online survey designed to evaluate student engagement and consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions. Students were asked about their experience, what they gained from the program, their favourite activity, the helpfulness of the activities for their learning, and their likelihood of pursuing a career in aviation. There were also questions about student demographics, the presence of a role model in aviation, and courses taken in the Aviation and Aerospace specialization of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program, among other questions. Students were issued the survey through email communication.

Results

¹ [Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement](#)

² [Black Aviation Professionals Network](#)

³ The 2022 *A Day in Aviation* program was delivered virtually with three two-hour sessions. Full report will be available on the Centre of Excellence and the Research and Development website.

Thirty-six students (36) were registered for *A Day in Aviation* and twenty-nine (29) participated in the program. Of the 29 students who attended the event, eighteen (18) completed the survey, resulting in a completion rate of 62%.

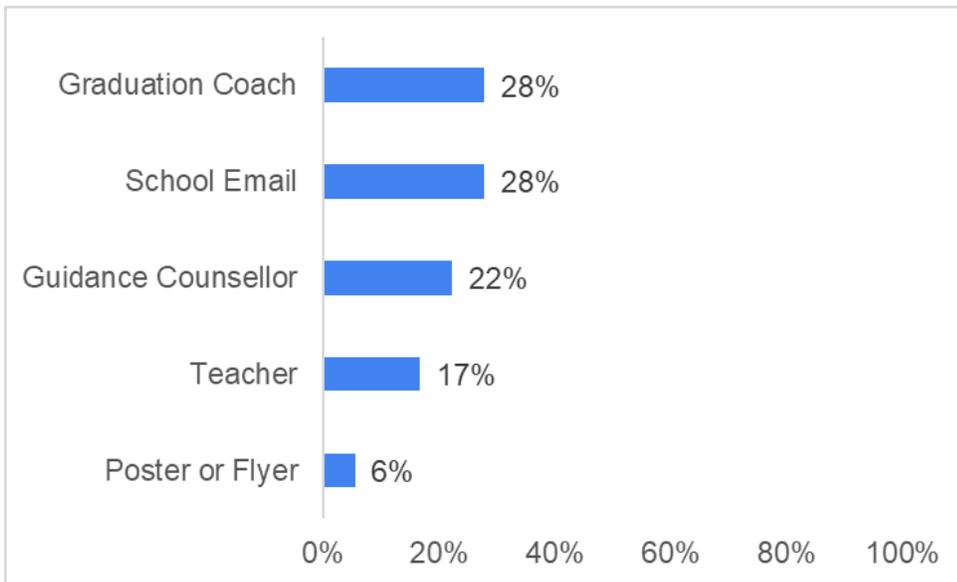
Participant Profile

Over half of the students completing the survey were in Grade 12 (56%) and less than one-quarter each were in Grade 10 (22%) and Grade 11 (22%). All students identified as Black. There were more male-identifying students than females (56% versus 39%, respectively). Most students (83%) identified as heterosexual. Nearly three-quarters of students (72%) indicated that they did not have a role model in an aviation career and no students reported having a parent, caregiver or family member who worked in aviation.

Students heard about the event through a range of sources. Figure 1 shows a visual summary of the information sources.

Figure 1

How Students Heard about A Day in Aviation



When signing up for *A Day in Aviation*, there were many things students hoped to learn. They wanted to gain information about the aviation industry (72%), talk to aviation professionals (61%), learn how to pursue a career in the industry (56%), learn about how to

become a pilot (22%), and other reasons (11%), such as becoming motivated to pursue one's journey to be a pilot.

Black Students' Engagement with Aviation and Aerospace Courses

In terms of courses related to the Aviation and Aerospace SHSM program, few students indicated that they had taken these courses. However, some students stated that they were planning to take these courses. Survey comments revealed a lack of information about SHSM-related courses being offered, with one student adding that their school did not offer most of the courses.

"I have taken physics and the Seneca dual credit course however, since I found out about the other courses just recently, I'm not able to take them since I'm in Grade 12.
(Student 2)

Overall Experience of the Program

The majority of students (89%) described their overall experience at *A Day in Aviation* as "extremely" or "very" enjoyable. In open-ended comments on the survey, students summed up their experience using words such as "fun," "enjoyable," "awesome," "cool," "great," "exciting," and "memorable." Nearly two-thirds of the students (67%) said the Aircraft Hangar Tour was their "favourite part" of the day. When asked to rate different opportunities provided at the event, most students said they had "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of opportunity to meet Black aviation professionals (94%), interact with different aviation professionals (89%), and ask questions (89%).

"Mind shattering. I learned so much amazing stuff and met so much cool people, I'm so happy." (Student 11)

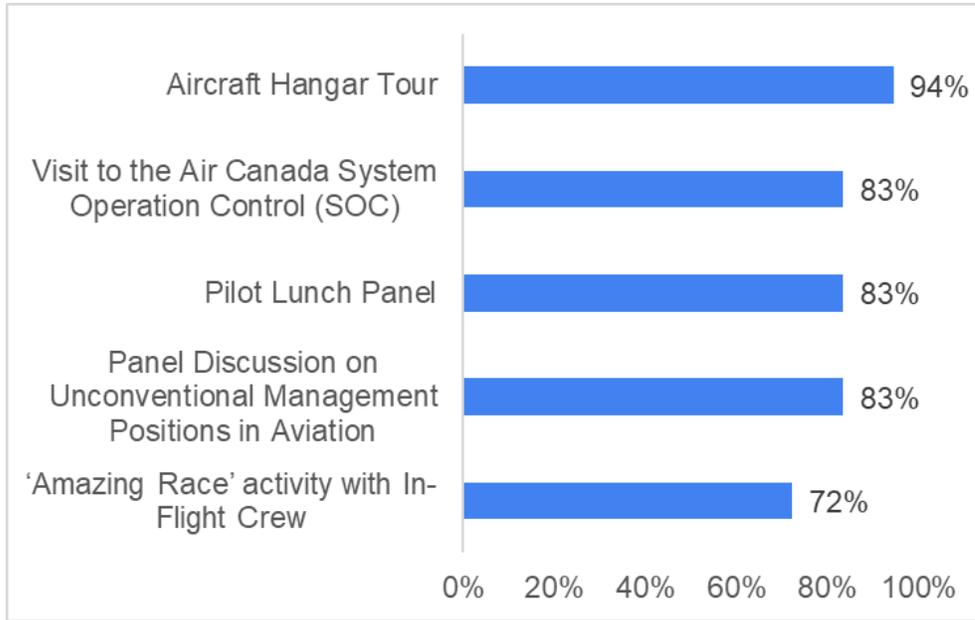
"A fun experience where people who look like me share their stories of aviation..."
(Student 1)

Learning Outcomes

In regards to their learning, the vast majority of students (94%) said they had an opportunity to learn about different roles and careers in the aviation industry. When asked to rate the helpfulness of the day's activities for their learning, most students rated the activities as being "extremely" or "very" helpful. Figure 2 provides a visual summary of the results.

Figure 2

Helpfulness of A Day in Aviation Program Activities for Students' Learning (Percentage Rated as "Extremely" or "Very" Helpful)



Based on students' comments, the program was described as "informative," "educational," and "full of learning."

"I really liked learning about all the various jobs and components aviation entails, as my knowledge on aviation was pretty much only pilots and flight attendants. As I have never been on a plane before, looking at parts of planes and being able to enter the Boeing 777 was a fantastic experience for myself." (Student 14)

"Got to talk with some professionals to have an idea of what courses to choose when you wanna work in the aviation field. It helps you to gain little knowledge about aviation and the other jobs within the industry." (Student 9)

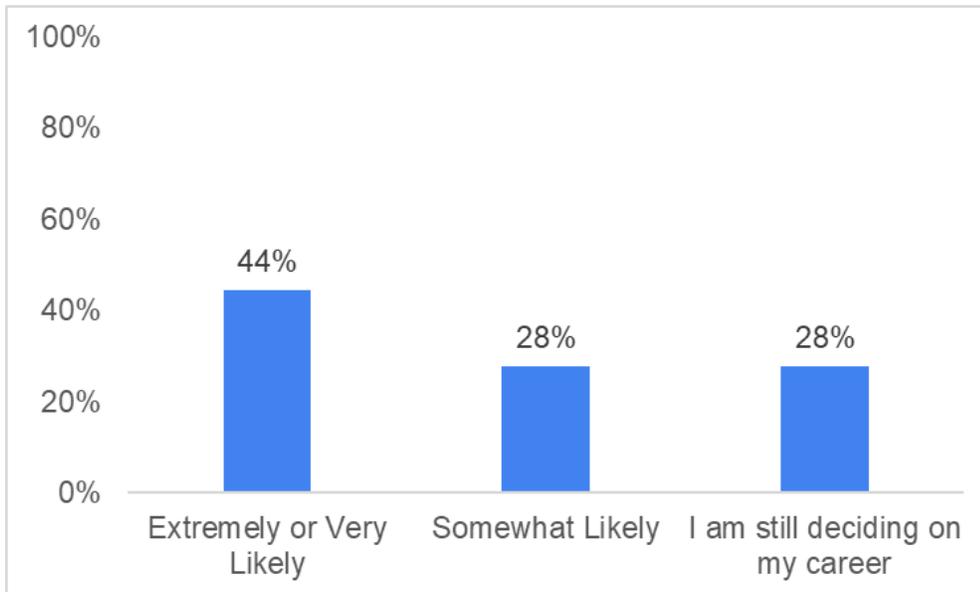
Career Plans and Aspirations

When asked to share what they gained from *A Day in Aviation*, two-thirds of students (67%) said the program helped them to think about their future career, 56% said it made them want to learn more about aviation as a possible career, and 44% said it gave them greater clarity about what they want to do in the future. Furthermore, 61% said the aviation professionals inspired them. In terms of their career plans, 44% of students reported that

they were “extremely” or “very” likely to consider a career in aviation, while 28% were “somewhat likely.” Figure 3 shows the results.

Figure 3

Students’ Likelihood of Considering a Career in Aviation After Participating in A Day in Aviation



It is clear that the event motivated and inspired students to pursue their career goals, as illustrated by the following quotes:

“It is a great opportunity to confirm that your dream is totally possible.”
(Student 5)

“I’ve known for a while now that I want to become a pilot. My experience served as a motivation booster to keep pushing in my last year of high school to reach my goal. The trip allowed me to picture myself in the aviation industry.” (Student 4)

Conclusion

In summary, *A Day in Aviation* was a major success, and it is evident that students were highly engaged in the program and had an amazing, enjoyable, and educational experience. The program sparked students’ interest in aviation, with over 40% indicating an

interest in pursuing an aviation career. However, many students with an interest in aviation did not have a grounding in aerospace and aviation-related SHSM courses and most did not have a role model in an aviation career. These findings suggest opportunities for the Centre of Excellence to continue to support Black students in the field of aviation

“A Day in Aviation was an educational and exciting event that I would recommend to anyone interested in aviation or aviation technology.” (Student 13)

Recommendations

The following are some suggested recommendations for the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement to develop and build on student programs relating to the Aviation and Aerospace industry.

- Provide ongoing information sessions about the Aviation and Aerospace SHSM program in a timely manner for students who are graduating from middle school and those starting high school.
- Share information about the Aviation and Aerospace SHSM program by utilizing the main sources and channels that students get information from, such as school email, newsletters, social media (e.g., Centre of Excellence’s Instagram and Twitter platforms), Graduation Coaches, guidance counsellors, and other school staff.
- Provide information sessions to parents/caregivers of Black students on the Aviation and Aerospace SHSM program.
- Provide ongoing mentorship opportunities for Black students interested in pursuing an aviation career.
- Inspire an interest in the aviation industry from an early age by partnering with the Black Aviation Professionals Network to introduce an aviation program for students in middle school.