

BLACK EXCELLENCE MANIFESTED



BLACK
STUDENT
SUMMER
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

JULY 2023

VOLUME 2

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OFF TO PLACEMENTS !



Junior leaders at TAIBU
Community Health Centre



At Black Creek Community Farm
doing land-based learning

Junior leaders began their placements and were welcomed by the community agencies. Each year of the Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP), we do our best to match students with experiential learning opportunities that align with their career goals and interests. For 2023, we have 20 experiential learning agencies offering placements.

These agencies include: TVO Media Education Group, the University Health Network (UHN), Tropicana Community Services, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Proof Experiences and TAIBU Community Health Centre.

To support junior leaders in transitioning into their placements, BSSLP staff have been coordinating site visits each week. During these site visits, staff meet with experiential learning placement supervisors while supporting students' well-being and skill development.



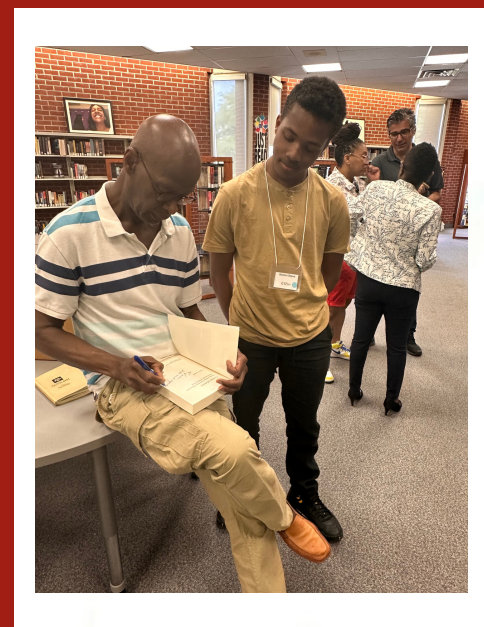
PEER

MENTORSHIP

At the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, we recognize the importance of mentorship opportunities for Black students to foster positive development and create pathways and opportunities after graduating. Through the Ministry of Education's *Learn and Work Grant* we have now incorporated a peer mentorship framework into the design of the BSSLP.

A total of five BSSLP junior leaders are assigned to work alongside the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement staff. These peer mentors are senior high school students or recent graduates from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). To help the mentoring relationship reach its full potential, we are building their capacity and skills guided by the following competencies: 1) Communication, 2) Relationship Building, 3) Initiative, 4) Creativity, 5) Community Development, 6) Leadership, 7) Teamwork, and 8) Time Management.

So far, the peer mentors have engaged in nuanced conversations around Black leadership and community building, the diversity of Black experiences and identities, as well as Black creative expressions. The peer mentors have also been provided with multiple leadership opportunities (e.g. facilitating workshops and learning opportunities with their peers, public speaking opportunities and introducing guest speakers).



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One part of our mandates at the Centre of Excellence focuses on community. The BSSLP recognizes that it is necessary to create opportunities for the junior leaders to network within the Black communities in Toronto while understanding the diversity, and rich history that is situated among us. Within the BSSLP, we seek to embed numerous opportunities for intergenerational knowledge exchanges for junior leaders.

Dr. Carl James , Jean Augustine Chair and Professor at York University came by and spoke with students about his involvement with BSSLP and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) since its inception in 2019. Dr. James highlighted his journey to becoming a professor and discussed other important considerations for life after high school and post-secondary pathways. Students engaged in a vibrant Q&A session with Dr. James and gained important insights about the intersections of race and education.

To be community-led is not just about having a community. It is also about ensuring that community runs through the entire organization and supports our goals and outcomes. Therefore, we invited Centrally Assigned Principal, Norbert Costa, to share a few words on how the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, and the TDSB's Continuing Education Department - Focus on Youth Toronto (FOYT) - work together each year to support Black students' exposure to the various experiential learning opportunities.



System Superintendent, Karen Murray and Centrally Assigned Principal, Norbert Costa posing for a picture with the peer mentors.



BLACK JOY



Black Joy guides the work of the BSSLP. To us, Black Joy is a bold expression of Black agency, Black love, Black pride, and Black resilience. In the BSSLP, we actively build spaces for Black junior leaders and staff to experience and express joy – recognizing that there is no singular expression of Black Joy. Within the BSSLP, the presence of Black Joy is an important reminder that struggle and oppression are not the only narratives that frame the experiences of Black students.

"Black Joy is the heartbeat and pulse of our survival, our resiliency, our perseverance, our health and wellbeing"

~ Anita Dashiell-Sparks

THANK YOU!

We will continue creating BSSLP and YPAR memories over the next few weeks with the junior leaders, staff, experiential learning partners and community members. Creating these positive engagement would not have been possible without community and the collaborative effort between departments at TDSB.

On behalf of the BSSLP team at the Centre of Excellence, we would like to say a special thank you to System Superintendent, Karen Murray for implementing this program in 2019. Your dedication to Black students and families over the last 28 years is boundless.

Finally, we have much gratitude for the ongoing support received from TDSB Continuing Education and the Research and Development Department as they assist each year to empower the lives of Black students.

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) presentations are coming up in August. We hope to see many of the families and experiential learning partners in attendance!

"Youth-centered relationships, a cornerstone of BSSLP, is also a key component of YPAR. It provides a valuable foundation for the junior leaders to work as team while building their skills in leadership, writing, critical thinking, public speaking, and community organizing."

~ Tanitiã Munroe , Senior Research Coordinator at TDSB

**SEE
YOU
SOON !**