

BSSLP. Magazine

Black Youth in Motion:
Two Pathways. One Purpose.

Afrocentric YPAR & ElevatEd Leadership

Leading. | Researching. | Building. | Becoming.



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Welcome to the 2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program

Written By: Dr. Tanitiã Munroe



Welcome to the **2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP) Magazine**, a celebration of the people, learning, and experiences that shaped this summer.

Whether you are a **student, family member, staff mentor, community partner, educator, or supporter** of this work, thank you for being part of the BSSLP community!

Now in its seventh year, **BSSLP** continues to create transformative experiences for Black secondary students to discover their strengths, explore future pathways, and develop the confidence to lead with purpose. What began as a summer employment initiative has grown into a vibrant learning community rooted in mentorship, curiosity, connection, and care.

This year's theme, **Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways, One Purpose**, reflects the journeys our students will take throughout the summer. Through the **ElevatEd Leadership** and **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** pathways, they will engage in workplace placements, research, professional learning, and mentorship while discovering new possibilities for themselves and their communities. Although each pathway offers a different experience, both are **united by a shared purpose**: creating spaces where Black youth can lead, ask important questions, amplify their voices, and imagine what is possible.



Our tagline, **Leading. Researching. Building. Becoming.**, captures the spirit of this summer. Leadership does not happen all at once. It is shaped through everyday experiences, reflection, courage, relationships, and a willingness to keep showing up, even when the path forward is unfamiliar.

Within these pages, you will find the people and moments that make **BSSLP** what it is. You will meet young people embracing new challenges, building lasting friendships, and growing into confident leaders. You will also meet the **educators, mentors, researchers, and community partners** whose commitment helps create spaces where Black youth feel seen, supported, and valued.

We are grateful to the **Toronto District School Board, the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, George Brown Polytechnic, our placement organizations, community partners, families, and everyone** who continues to invest their time, care, and belief in this program. **BSSLP** exists because of a collective commitment to the success, well-being, and limitless potential of Black students.

As you read this magazine, I hope you feel the energy, brilliance, and possibility that fill every page. The stories shared here remind us that when Black youth are trusted, encouraged, and given opportunities to thrive, **they do far more than participate**. They lead, create, question, innovate, and inspire.



Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways, One Purpose

Written By:
Dr. Tanitiã Munroe

Each year, the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program** is shaped by a theme that reflects the experiences, aspirations, and growth of our students. The 2026 theme, **Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways, One Purpose**, celebrates the many ways Black youth are moving forward, creating change, and making their voices heard in their schools, communities, and beyond.

Motion is about more than physical movement. It represents curiosity, courage, growth, and a willingness to step into something new. It reminds us that leadership is not a destination. It develops through every conversation, challenge, relationship, and lesson along the way.

This summer, students participated in one of two pathways: **ElevatEd Leadership** or **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)**. Each offered a different experience, but both were grounded in the belief that Black youth deserve spaces to explore their interests, strengthen their voices, and contribute to the communities around them.

For **ElevatEd** students, the journey unfolded through experiential learning placements, professional development, and workplace mentorship. In the **YPAR** pathway, students asked questions about issues that mattered to them, conducted community-based research, explored creative forms of storytelling, and used their findings to advocate for change.

Together, the two pathways showed that there is no single way to lead.

The 2026 tagline, **Leading. Researching. Building. Becoming.**, captures the spirit of the **BSSLP** experience.

Leading means stepping forward with confidence and purpose while making room for others to do the same.

Researching begins with curiosity, critical thinking, and a commitment to listening closely to the experiences of our communities.

Building reflects the relationships, knowledge, skills, and networks students developed throughout the summer.

Becoming recognizes that growth is ongoing. Every success, setback, and new experience contributes to the person each student is becoming.



Throughout the program, students learned from mentors, collaborated with peers, engaged with community partners, strengthened workplace and research skills, and earned professional micro-credentials.

Along the way, they discovered new possibilities for their education, careers, and futures.

Their journeys may have looked different, but they were connected by one purpose: to grow as **confident leaders, engaged community members, and changemakers** prepared to help shape a more equitable future.

Different journeys. Shared purpose. One community of Black students building the future together.

Starting The Journey: Orientation 2026

Written By:
Sydney McGowan

On **Thursday, July 2**, **Junior Leaders from across the Toronto District School Board** gathered at **George Brown Polytechnic** for the first day of orientation, marking the official start of the **2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program**.

Orientation Week began with interactive icebreakers, engaging presentations, and activities designed to help students get to know one another while preparing for the summer ahead. Junior Leaders and BSSLP staff explored the program's community and professional expectations, learned about experiential learning placements, and discussed what it means to be part of the BSSLP community. Together, they created community agreements centred on respect, kindness, accountability, and showing up for one another.



One activity that helped break the ice was **Stand Up, Sit Down**, where students responded to fun questions based on their likes, dislikes, and personal experiences. Whether it was discovering who had the most siblings or finding classmates with similar interests, the activity sparked plenty of conversations and laughter while helping everyone make new connections.

The morning also included a nutritious breakfast, giving students and staff another opportunity to connect before the day's programming began. The yogurt quickly became a crowd favourite and was definitely one of the highlights of the morning.

Throughout the day, Junior Leaders met the **BSSLP staff**, learned about their roles, and explored this year's theme, **Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways, One Purpose**. Students shared what the theme meant to them and how they hoped it would shape their summer.

*"It means Black students moving forward and changing the narrative."
— Emmanuel Adusi, YPAR Pathway*



Hearing students share their own interpretations of the theme reminded us that **everyone brings a different perspective and a unique story to the BSSLP.**

By the end of the day, many Junior Leaders described feeling excited and grateful to be part of the program. While the early mornings may take some getting used to, everyone is ready to put their best foot forward. As Orientation Week came to a close, students were looking ahead to developing new skills, strengthening their creativity, and beginning the research, leadership, and workplace experiences that will shape the rest of the summer.

*"Black Youth in Motion means that we can get it done no matter the obstacles."
— Rebekah Venair-Ford, ElevatEd Pathway*

Returning to Inspire: Nebiyou Timotewos Comes Full Circle

Written By: Daniel Awodumila

One of the highlights of Orientation Week was welcoming **Nebiyou Timotewos** back to **BSSLP**. A former student leader and a 2026 McCall MacBain Scholar, **Nebiyou** returned to share the journey that began in the same program many students were just starting.

He spoke openly about his path from **BSSLP** to post-secondary education and earning one of Canada's most prestigious graduate scholarships. His story showed students that success is not always a straight line. It is shaped by perseverance, curiosity, strong relationships, and the courage to step into unfamiliar opportunities.



Nebiyou encouraged students to remain open to learning, build connections with people who support their growth, and make the most of every experience throughout the summer. Even the moments that feel small now, he reminded them, can help prepare them for what comes next.

"Your journey doesn't have to look like anyone else's. Stay curious, remain committed to your goals, and continue creating opportunities for yourself and others."

- Nebiyou Timotewos



From Learning to Recognition: George Brown Polytechnic Micro-Credentials at BSSLP

Written By: Donielle Francis

**Building Skills. Earning Recognition.
Creating Pathways.**

At the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program**, **learning extends far beyond the classroom**. Every workshop, leadership session, workplace placement, and research experience is intentionally designed to help student leaders develop transferable skills that prepare them for future success in post-secondary education, employment, and community leadership.

This year, student leaders have the opportunity to earn competency-based micro-credentials issued by **George Brown Polytechnic**. These digital credentials recognize the knowledge, skills, and leadership competencies students demonstrate throughout the program. They celebrate learning that happens through authentic experiences and provide students with meaningful evidence of achievement that can be included in resumes, portfolios, scholarship applications, and professional networking platforms.

The **micro-credentials** recognize competencies in:

- Leadership Development
- Professional Communication
- Public Speaking
- Research and Critical Inquiry
- Professionalism
- Collaboration
- Workplace Readiness
- Community Engagement

This initiative has been made possible through our partnership with **George Brown Polytechnic**, whose expertise has helped strengthen the competency framework and assessment process that supports each micro-credential.

We extend our sincere appreciation to **Theresa Steger** for her leadership, collaboration, and support in making this initiative possible. Her guidance has been instrumental in ensuring that the micro-credentials reflect relevant, industry-informed competencies while creating a meaningful way for Black youth to document and celebrate the skills they develop throughout their BSSLP journey.



We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the broader **George Brown Polytechnic team** for their continued partnership and commitment to the Black Student Summer Leadership Program.



As we celebrate our **second year** on the **George Brown** campus, their collaboration has helped create a welcoming learning environment where Black student leaders can explore new possibilities, strengthen their skills, and prepare for future educational and career pathways.

At **BSSLP**, every workshop, placement, research project, and leadership experience **is more than a moment of learning**. It is an opportunity for students to build recognized skills, make their growth visible, and open doors to future possibilities.

Student Voices: What We're Looking Forward To

Written By: Ugo Njoku

Walking into your first day as either a new or returning Junior Leader can be daunting, exciting, or even confusing. The **Black Student Summer Leadership Program** serves as a **catalyst** in Black student professional development, providing students from across the **Toronto District School Board** with the opportunity to thrive with fellow Black students and dedicated Black staff who come from diverse professions. Through the **YPAR** or **ElevatEd** pathway, these Junior Leaders gain many new skills. We wanted to gather some first-week perspectives from our 2026 cohorts on the program and their experiences so far. We have an array of Junior Leaders entering their third year of the program, while for others, it's their very first time.

With four **ElevatEd** Junior Leaders and a **YPAR** junior leader, we dived in to see what they felt coming into the program and certain goals they hoped to achieve.



"I'm excited to learn about the digital creation process and what it takes to televise people. I hope to gain more leadership experience, more confidence, more connections in the workforce that help me with my future goals."

— Nadia Saidou, ElevatEd Pathway



"I am in the ElevaTed Pathway. I hope to gain networking experience and network connections. To get to know new people, such as friends in the program, as well as people in positions that I want to be in one day."

— Jada Saunders, ElevatEd Pathway

"Adaptability is an important skill, as you might have to try a lot of new things that you haven't tried before. It's a nice skill to have because you're adaptable enough to try those new things and succeed with them."

— Sabrin Mohamed, YPAR Pathway



"I really started thinking about it, and it's nice to hang around people who look like me, who went through the same thing- like the Black experience is almost universal. Being able to have people who get my point of view and that stuff is amazing."

— Hamza Hahim, ElevatEd Pathway

Pathway Spotlight: ElevatEd Leadership

Written By: Sahra Mohamud

Each experiential opportunity is a step towards confidence, leadership, and the development of skills that align with their interests. Through the **ElevatEd Pathway**, our Junior Leaders explore their interests, strengths, and future career pathways.

The **ElevatEd Pathway** supports student leaders in building workplace readiness, leadership identity, communication skills, and confidence. Students spend most of the week in experiential learning placements and come together weekly for leadership development, professional learning, and community-building.



For Foday Saidykhan, a recent graduate of North Toronto Collegiate Institute, the journey to post-secondary success has been defined by a deep commitment to community and a passion for human connection. This fall, **Foday** will take his next big step at York University, where he will study Kinesiology, a path inspired by his own resilience following a serious basketball injury. As a participant in the **ElevatEd Pathway**, **Foday** has spent his summer immersed in a professional placement at **Skills for Change**.

"I feel like for a professional environment, communication is really important," Foday notes, highlighting how effective communication prevents "mess ups" and ensures quality work.

Through the program's weekly leadership development sessions, **Foday** has sharpened his leadership identity and communication skills. Despite not considering himself a natural public speaker, he credits the program's workshops with giving him the confidence to prepare for upcoming presentations.

Foday's placement at **Skills for Change** holds a special significance. Having moved to Canada from Gambia, he feels a deep alignment with the organization's mission to help immigrants settle and find mentors.

"I really liked their goal," he shares. "It could help a lot of people like my family".

Even while working in an office environment, **Foday finds ways to connect his current work to his future goals in physiotherapy**, focusing on the "human" side of professional life, the ability to connect with people on a deeper level and understand their unique journey.

"Through my pathway, I hope to help people become the best versions of themselves and make as many friends and connections as possible."



Leadership Lab: Building Confidence Through Leadership

Written By: Ugo Njoku

The **Leadership Lab** offered students an intensive week of learning focused on strengthening confidence, communication, professionalism, and community. **Through interactive workshops, collaborative activities, and guided reflection**, students explored their leadership strengths while developing practical skills they could carry into their placements, education, and future careers.

Throughout the week, students engaged in:

- Public speaking and professional communication
- Leadership styles and identity
- Teamwork and relationship-building
- Goal-setting and personal development
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Workplace readiness and professionalism

Leadership Lab reflected the spirit of **Black Youth in Motion** by creating space for students to recognize their strengths, learn alongside one another, and grow into more confident and purposeful leaders.



Youth Research Fellows: Researching Community, Inspiring Change

Written By: Enewan Effiom

This summer marked the launch of the **inaugural Youth Research Fellows**, a new research initiative developed through a partnership between the **Toronto District School Board's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement** and the **Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA)**. As part of the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program**, three student researchers embarked on a **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** project exploring how Black youth experience belonging, community engagement, and well-being in the Mount Dennis community.

Throughout the summer, the Fellows moved through every stage of the research process. They conducted a critical literature review, developed research questions, designed and administered a community survey, participated in community mapping, and used Photovoice to document community strengths, opportunities, and barriers through photography and reflection. By combining research with lived experience, they developed a deeper understanding of how community spaces influence the lives of Black youth.



From left to right: Dr. Cyril Cromwell, Nadia Hersi, Alisha Forbes, Halima Hassan, Caffi Gardner, Donielle Francis

Working alongside educators, researchers, and community partners, the Fellows gained practical experience in ethical research, data collection, analysis, critical thinking, and knowledge mobilization. More importantly, they learned that research is not only about gathering evidence—it is about listening to communities, amplifying youth voices, and creating knowledge that can inform meaningful change.



The project culminated in a Community Research Report, a Photovoice exhibition, and a presentation at the **2026 BSSLP Summer Symposium**, where the Fellows shared their findings and youth-informed recommendations with educators, community partners, and system leaders. Their work demonstrates the power of youth-led research to strengthen communities, inform future programming, and ensure that Black youth are recognized not only as participants in research, but as researchers themselves.

When Black youth are trusted to lead research, they don't just study their communities—they help shape their future.



Learning Beyond the Classroom

Written By: Adura Adeyemi

One of the defining features of the **2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program** was the opportunity for students to learn directly from educators, researchers, professionals, community leaders, and industry partners. Throughout the summer, weekly workshops challenged students to think critically, explore future possibilities, strengthen their leadership skills, and discover new pathways in research, education, STEM, and community engagement.

Each workshop reflected this year's theme, **Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways. One Purpose.** Whether students were learning how research informs educational change, discovering university pathways, exploring STEM careers, or reflecting on their own identities as Black learners, every experience reinforced that leadership grows through curiosity, collaboration, and meaningful relationships.

Photo: **Financial Literacy Workshop with Checks Over Strikes**

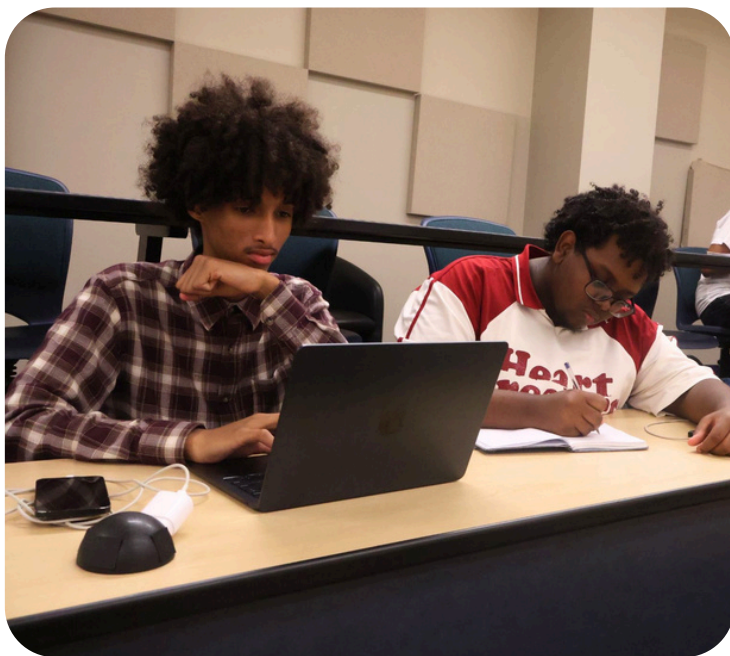
Facilitated by Dean Chambers and Craig Brown



On the first day of the **Black Student Summer Leadership program**, Junior Leaders participated in a financial literacy workshop led by the co-founders of *Checks Over Strikes*, **Dean Chambers and Craig Brown**.

The workshop focused on developing essential money management skills and understanding how financial decisions can impact one's future. **The session introduced students to important concepts** such as compound interest and stock ownership. Students learned how investing early allows money to grow over time by earning interest on both the initial investment and the accumulated interest.





"I learned that starting to invest early can make a huge difference because compound interest helps your money grow much faster over time."

— Taha Ade

"I learned that when you buy stocks, you're actually becoming a part-owner of a company, and your investment can grow as the company becomes more successful."

— Elisha Bizuneh

Photo: **Research 101: The Idea Factory Workshop**

(Toronto District School Board Research & Development Department)

Facilitated by Research Coordinators Amie Presley and Janet O'Reilly

Research often feels like something that only happens at universities, but during **Research 101: The Idea Factory**, students discovered that research is all around them—and that young people can be researchers too.

Amie Presley and Janet O'Reilly from the **Toronto District School Board's Research and Development Department** introduced students to the foundations of educational research and demonstrated how evidence is used to improve schools, amplify student voice, and support system-wide change.

Throughout the day students explored:

- What research is
- Why research matters
- How research questions are developed
- Different ways data is collected
- How research informs educational decision-making



The afternoon challenged students to become researchers themselves. Working in small groups, students identified issues affecting young people, developed research questions, discussed methods of collecting data, and presented their own research proposals.

The workshop demonstrated that research is not simply about gathering information—it is about asking meaningful questions and creating knowledge that can improve schools and communities.



"Research begins with curiosity and grows through asking questions that matter."

Photo: **Public Speaking Workshop**
Facilitated by Canute Lawrence



Junior Leaders participated in a public speaking workshop led by **Canute Lawrence**, who taught students strategies for becoming more confident and effective communicators. He emphasized the importance of starting with breathing exercises, explaining that they can help reduce stress hormones, lower feelings of anxiety, and help speakers remain calm before presenting.

He also highlighted that **public speaking is an inevitable part of communication** in school, the workplace, and everyday life, making it an important skill for everyone to develop.

Salma Danane, a Jr. Leader, reflected on her experience by sharing;

"I learned to let go of my nerves and remember that public speaking isn't about people watching me; it's about clearly conveying information. I also learned to avoid using too many filler words because they can make a speaker seem less confident and make the message harder to follow."



Photos: **Unapologetically Gifted Workshop**

Dr. Beverly-Jean Daniel & Toronto Metropolitan University

Students were challenged to rethink traditional definitions of success during an empowering workshop led by **Dr. Beverly-Jean Daniel and members of the Toronto Metropolitan University Bridge Program.**



Rather than encouraging students to simply overcome barriers, the session celebrated Black brilliance as an existing source of strength.

Students explored:

- Black excellence and identity
- Educational advocacy
- Self-advocacy tools
- Creating affirming learning environments
- Building confidence as Black learners

Through discussion, reflection, and practical scenarios, **students developed strategies for advocating for themselves** while recognizing the importance of educational spaces that affirm Black identity.



The workshop reminded students that their brilliance does not require permission—it already exists.

"Our brilliance is not something to prove. It is something to protect, celebrate, and nurture."

Photo: **Post Secondary 101 Workshop**
(Queen's University)

Facilitated by Benjamin Abebe & Richard Mitchell

Preparing for life after high school can feel overwhelming, but the **Queen's University team** helped students better understand the many opportunities available beyond graduation.

Students explored:

- University
- College
- Skilled Trades
- Financial planning
- Campus life
- Choosing programs aligned with personal interests

Rather than presenting one "right" pathway, the workshop encouraged students to think critically about their own goals and recognize that success can take many forms.

Students left with practical information about post-secondary planning while also gaining confidence to begin making informed decisions about their futures.



Photo: **STEM Without Limits Workshop**
Facilitated by Visions of Science

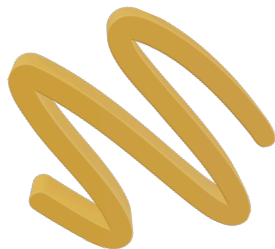
Visions of Science introduced students to exciting careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through two highly interactive workshops.



Students participated in coding challenges, spectroscopy activities, STEM career exploration, pathway planning, and discussions about representation within STEM fields.

Activities included:

- Behind the Feed
- Guess the Profession
- Hands-on Coding
- AstroAgents
- Spectroscopy Investigation
- STEM Pathway Planning



Hands-on learning allowed students to experience STEM beyond the classroom while connecting with professionals who reflected the diversity of the communities they serve.

By the end of the workshops, many students began to see themselves as future scientists, engineers, innovators, and technology leaders.

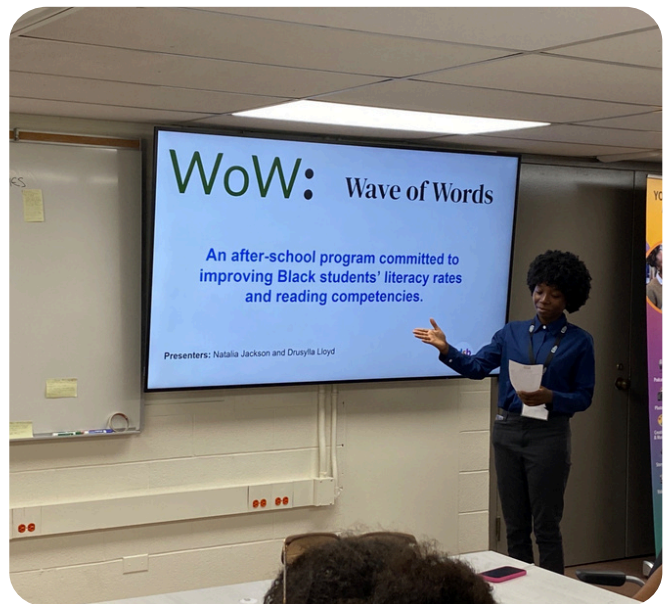


Youth AI Research Network (YARN) Delegation

Written By: Meron Bayu

On July 23rd & July 24th, the **Youth AI Research Network (YAIRN)** hosted educators from Alberta for discussions around AI Education and Youth Participatory Action Research. The **Youth AI Research Network** is an international research network based in Canada made up of high schools exploring how to navigate the world in the age of AI. The action research network is funded by **Canadian Heritage** through the Canadian government's **Digital Citizen Contribution Program (DCCP)**. It is coordinated by **Research & Development at the Toronto District School Board**.

The first day included a panel discussion with the 2025 **BSSLP** Peer Mentors, who provided insights from their YPAR project, **“Coded In Culture: What Students Really Think About AI in Education.”** The second day included reflections from the 2026 BSSLP Peer Mentors, Research Associates and Junior Leaders on the Black Student Summer Leadership Program and the importance of **Youth Participatory Action Research in amplifying student voice and creating meaningful change**. Youth researchers connected with visiting scholars and practitioners, sharing ideas and learning how youth-led research contributes to broader conversations about educational equity.



From left to right: Sophia Barnett, Donielle Francis, Akaiah Carter-Sam, Sachiel Andre

American Educational Research Association: Student Research on an International Stage

Written By: Daniel Awodumila

One of the most memorable moments of the **2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program** was welcoming **Dr. Jerome Morris**, President of the **American Educational Research Association (AERA)**, to the **Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement**. Joining him were **Dr. Ayanna F. Brown**, **Jeff Obafemi Carr**, and **Jennifer Keys Adair**, who visited the **BSSLP** to learn about the innovative research being led by Black youth.

The visit provided students with a unique opportunity to present their work to leading voices in educational research. Throughout the morning, students confidently shared projects they had spent weeks designing, conducting, analyzing, and interpreting.

The **Peer Mentor Research Team** presented findings from their study exploring data governance, data stewardship, and the educational experiences of Black students, highlighting how student voice can inform more equitable, transparent, and accountable educational practices.



The **Youth Research Fellows** shared their community-based research examining Black youth belonging, community engagement, and well-being in Mount Dennis. Through community mapping, Photovoice, surveys, and **Youth Participatory Action Research**, the **Fellows** demonstrated how youth-led research can generate meaningful recommendations that strengthen communities and inform future programming.



Following each presentation, students engaged in thoughtful conversations with the delegation, responding to questions about their research process, emerging findings, and recommendations.

Their confidence, critical thinking, and ability to speak about their work reflected the depth of learning that had taken place throughout the summer.

The visit was a powerful reminder that **Black youth are not simply participants in research.** They are researchers, knowledge creators, and emerging educational leaders whose voices can help shape important conversations about education, equity, and policy.

The day also opened the door to exciting conversations about future collaboration, including the possibility of showcasing the students' work during the **2027 AERA Annual Meeting** in Toronto. While those discussions are still developing, they reflect the significance of what the students accomplished and the growing recognition of youth-led research.

At BSSLP, Black youth are not simply learning about research—they are producing knowledge, shaping conversations, and contributing to the future of educational research.



A Village of Leaders

Written by Christian Monye

It takes a village to bring the **BSSLP** to life.

Behind the placements, research projects, workshops, morning check-ins, presentations, celebrations, and everything in between **is a team of people committed to creating an unforgettable summer for Black students.**

Our 2026 team brought together Educators, Researchers, Graduation Coaches, Social Workers, Child and Youth Care Practitioners, Program Leaders, and Mentors from across the **Toronto District School Board**.

Each person brought something different to the program, but we shared one purpose: creating a space where Black youth could learn, take risks, ask questions, build relationships, discover new possibilities, and simply be themselves.

Some of the work happened at the front of the room. Much of it happened quietly, through conversations in the hallway, visits to placements, research support, encouragement before a presentation, problem-solving on difficult days, or simply checking in to ask, “Are you okay?”

Meet the people who helped make BSSLP 2026 possible.



Administrative Leadership

The **Administrative Leadership Team** provides the strategic vision and leadership that guides the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program**. **Their commitment ensures the program continues to grow** while creating meaningful educational and leadership opportunities for Black students across the **Toronto District School Board**.



Jamaal Fyffe
Summer Principal



Karen Murray
System Superintendent

Program Leads

The Program Leads oversee the planning, coordination, and implementation of the BSSLP.

Working closely with staff, community partners, and students, they ensure every aspect of the program—from recruitment and placements to research and daily operations—supports a meaningful and transformative student experience.

**Dr. Tanitiã Munroe (left)
Kai Gordon (right)**

"BSSLP allows young people to take risks and explore fields they never thought they could be in—and that, to me, is awesome."

— Kai Gordon, Program Lead



Graduation Coaches



From Left to Right: Jason Brissett, Cameisha Wynter, Sheldon Dixon, Veronica Montague

Throughout the school year, **Graduation Coaches** support Black students through mentorship, pathway planning, and academic success. During the **BSSLP**, they extend that work by serving as Staff Mentors, supporting students in their placements while fostering leadership, confidence, and belonging.

Educator Leads

The **Educator Leads** bring classroom expertise to the summer program, guiding student learning while supporting the implementation of research, leadership development, and experiential learning. Their mentorship helps students connect theory with practice and discover the power of their own ideas.



From left to right: Sahra Mohamud, Khadija Jabari, Nadia Hersi

Child and Youth Care Team



Kush Bakht (Left) and Gladstone Stamp (Right)

Creating a safe and welcoming learning environment is central to the **BSSLP**. The **Child and Youth Care Counsellors and Hall Monitors** build positive relationships with students, promote well-being, and help ensure the day-to-day success of the program.

Social Work Team



From left to right: Anne-Marie Thomas, Monique Webley, Tesfa Mattis, Keisha Evans

The **Social Work Team** supports students by promoting mental health, emotional well-being, and holistic care. Their presence reminds students that asking for support is a strength and that community care is an essential part of leadership.

Research Team



Top row left to right: Dr. Annette Walker, Dr. Cynthia Kwakyewah, Fisseha Gebremedhin, Dr. Shawnee Hardware, Patrick Abure, Dr. Cyril Cromwell | **Seated left to right:** Willis Opondo, Ransford Tei, Avey Macintosh, Desire Sylvestre | **Not pictured:** Cecil Chikezie, Nordiah Newell

The **Research Team** leads the **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** pathway, mentoring students as they become researchers, storytellers, and change-makers. Grounded in Afrocentric and community-based research approaches, they support students through every stage of the research process—from developing questions and collecting data to sharing evidence-informed recommendations that contribute to educational and community change.

Working alongside the **Research Team**, the **Junior Research Associates** mentor students while developing their own research practice. They support workshops, facilitate inquiry, assist with data collection and analysis, and help cultivate the next generation of Black researchers.



Left to right: Meron Bayu, Noah Van Vliet, Donielle Francis

The success of the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program** is not the work of one person or one team. It is the result of a collective commitment to investing in Black youth through mentorship, research, education, wellness, and community.

Together, the **2026 BSSLP staff** created spaces where students could discover their strengths, amplify their voices, and recognize their capacity to shape the future.

Their dedication reflects the very heart of this year's theme: **Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways. One Purpose. One Community.**

Peer Mentor Team



Top row left to right: Christian Monye, Adura Adeyemi, Enewan Effiom, Daniel Awodumila
Bottom row left to right: Sydney McGowan, Ugo Njoku

The **Peer Mentors** are senior high school students or recent TDSB graduates who serve as youth leaders within the **Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement** while supporting students participating in the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program (BSSLP)**. **Peer Mentors** act as mentors, facilitators, and emerging youth researchers who support Junior Leaders across program pathways while contributing to the day-to-day operations of **the Centre**. In this role, **Peer Mentors** collaborate closely with the **Research & Development Department**, the **Research Coordinator**, and **Centre staff** to support student learning, leadership development, and program delivery. They also contribute to knowledge mobilization activities, community engagement opportunities, and system research initiatives that inform policy and practice within the **Toronto District School Board**.



Partnerships That Power

Written By: Enewan Effiom

This year's Black Student Summer Leadership Program would not be possible without the generous efforts of our supporting partners:

George Brown Polytechnic is in its second year of partnership with the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program** and hosts the program at its St. James Campus. A special thank you to **Dr. Gervan Fearon and Ms. Andrea Bryan** for coordinating this partnership and providing a space for our Junior Leaders to thrive.

The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) is working in partnership with the program's **Youth Research Fellows**, a research stream pilot designed to explore research-based solutions to issues within our communities. Thank you for supporting our students as they develop their research, leadership, and critical thinking skills.

The **TDSB Research Department** continues to play an integral role in supporting the **Black Student Summer Leadership Program** through mentorship, guidance, and opportunities for students to engage in meaningful systems-based research. Thank you for your continued support in creating the next generation of researchers.

Finally, a huge thank you to the **community agencies supporting placements** for this year's **Black Student Summer Leadership Program**. Your partnership helps us fulfill our commitment to creating meaningful mentorship opportunities that build professional growth and leadership skills.

From Orientation To Action: *A Summer In Motion*

Written By: Dr. Tanitiã Munroe

Orientation marked the beginning of a summer filled with leadership, research, professional learning, and discovery. From those first days together, student leaders began building the relationships, confidence, and sense of community that would shape their experiences across the **ElevatEd Leadership** and **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)** pathways.



Students in the **ElevatEd Leadership** pathway brought their skills and perspectives into experiential learning placements across the Greater Toronto Area. Working alongside professionals in education, healthcare, engineering, media, government, research, business, community organizations, and the skilled trades, they developed workplace competencies, explored career possibilities, strengthened professional networks, **and gained a deeper understanding of themselves as emerging leaders.**

Through the **YPAR pathway**, students investigated **issues that matter to Black youth** using research, storytelling, digital media, spoken word, podcasting, Photovoice, and video production. Supported by educators, researchers, and community mentors, they learned that research is not only an academic exercise—it can also be a powerful tool for amplifying youth voice, challenging inequities, and supporting meaningful change.



Our **Peer Mentors** extended this work through their research on **data governance, data stewardship, equity, and the educational experiences of Black students**. By designing a survey, conducting interviews, analyzing findings, and developing recommendations, they contributed youth perspectives to broader conversations about educational policy, accountability, and the responsible use of student data.



The summer also marked the launch of the **inaugural Youth Research Fellows pilot**. Working in partnership with the **Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, OPHEA**, and the **BSSLP** research team, the **Fellows** explored **Black youth belonging, community engagement, and well-being in Mount Dennis**. Their work included a critical literature review, community mapping, Photovoice, survey research, data analysis, and the development of youth-informed recommendations.



Across both pathways, student leaders participated in professional learning workshops, engaged with community and post-secondary partners, earned competency-based micro-credentials, and learned from guest speakers whose experiences opened new possibilities for their futures. They strengthened their communication, research, collaboration, advocacy, and workplace-readiness skills while building lasting relationships with peers and mentors.

The **2026 BSSLP Summer Symposium** brings these experiences together. Across **three days**, students presented their research, creative projects, workplace learning, and leadership journeys to families, educators, community partners, placement organizations, and supporters.

More than a final presentation, the Symposium represents an opportunity for Black youth to be recognized as researchers, professionals, storytellers, advocates, and leaders.

The **2026 BSSLP journey** reflects what becomes possible when Black youth are provided with meaningful opportunities, trusted with important work, and surrounded by a community that believes in their brilliance.

Leading. Researching. Building. Becoming.
Black Youth in Motion: Two Pathways. One Purpose.

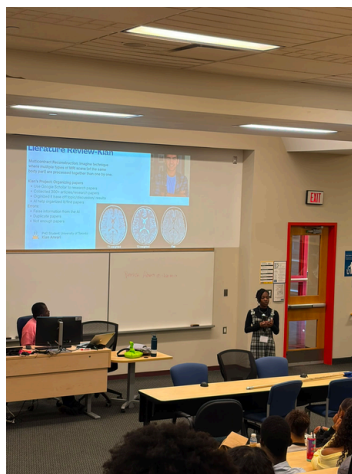
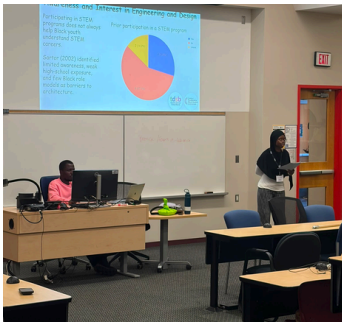
2026 Symposium Photo Gallery



2026 Symposium Photo Gallery



2026 Symposium Photo Gallery



Editors

Dr. Tanitiä “Tee” Munroe is a Senior Research Coordinator with the TDSB’s Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement and Research & Development Services, and an Adjunct Professor at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her work centres Black students, families, and communities, with a focus on anti-Black racism, youth participatory action research, family engagement, and educational equity. She holds a PhD from the University of Toronto’s OISE. Through BSSLP, Dr. Munroe is passionate about creating spaces where Black youth are trusted to lead, research, create, and recognize themselves as knowledge producers whose voices, experiences, ideas, and brilliance matter.

Meron Bayu is a third year Political Science student at the University of Toronto. She is the Peer Mentor Lead at the Black Student Summer Leadership Program, and works as a Program Coordinator at Peacebuilders Canada. She hopes to pursue a career in research and policy analysis.

Donielle Francis is a second year Journalism Specialist undergraduate at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She is the Youth Research Fellows Lead at the Black Student Summer Leadership Program, and aspires to be a Human Rights Lawyer.

Contributors

Sahra Mohamud is a Peer Mentor Educator Lead for the 2026 Black Student Summer Leadership Program. She is a PhD student in the Curriculum and Pedagogy program at the University of Toronto. Currently, Sahra works as an Occasional Teacher with the Toronto District School Board. Her research focuses on teacher education, curriculum studies, and early childhood education, utilizing community-based research to promote equity in urban education.

Daniel Awodumila is a first-year Bachelor of Business Administration student with aspirations of pursuing a career in finance. He is passionate about investments and financial markets, particularly how investment strategies and financial decision-making are incorporated into the broader business world.

Sydney McGowan is a first-year Kinesiology and Psychology undergraduate at Ontario Tech University. She aspires to become a high-school teacher who inspires students to understand the importance of physical health.

Christian Monye is a first-year Bachelor of Engineering (Honors) student at Ontario Tech University with aspirations of becoming a mechanical engineer. He is passionate about designing innovative solutions that address real-world challenges through engineering.

Enewan Effiom is a first year Co-op HBSC in Psychology and Health Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She aims to make a difference in the lives of marginalised youth in her community.

Adura Adeyemi is a first-year student in Sustainability and Financial Management at the University of Waterloo. She aspires to be a CPA and is dedicated to shaping a future where sustainability and financial planning work hand in hand.

Ugo Njoku is a first year student at the University of Toronto (St. George) pursuing Political Science and Criminology. She aspires to become a criminal lawyer, hopes to work within the justice system to create change and dismantle systemic inequality.