



BlackNorth Summer Academy

Mission and Objectives

BlackNorth Summer Academy's mission is to empower Black youth through transformative education, leadership skills, and structured career pathways. The Academy focuses on rigorous, real-world education, leadership and teamwork development, mentor connections, holistic support, and fostering community impact with a commitment to equity. The Academy values inclusivity, cultural pride, self-advocacy, and resilience, equipping students with tools to navigate academic and career landscapes on an equal playing field.

Target Audience and Eligibility

The program is open to high-achieving high school students (Grades 11-12), ages 15-18, who have a minimum GPA of 3.5 (85% or equivalent) from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) or similar standards. Applicants must submit a personal statement outlining their goals, a recommendation letter from a teacher or mentor, and demonstrate a commitment to leadership, community impact, and diversity. They should also provide a summary of their extracurricular involvement or community service. Financial aid and fee waivers are available for applicants needing support with application fees or related costs.

Core Program Pillars

1. **Academic Counseling:** Customized academic plans, university partnerships, and skill workshops prepare students for university success.
2. **Career Counseling:** Guidance in high-growth fields with workshops on resumes, internships, and interview preparation.
3. **Mentorship:** Long-term support from BNI Connect mentors and alumni, providing consistent academic and career guidance.
4. **Summer Academy:** An immersive curriculum of capstone projects, field trips, and leadership exercises, exposing students to career paths and practical applications.
5. **Board Directorship:** Eligible students may apply for leadership roles within BNI Academy, including participation in governance, offering a unique directorship experience.



Summer Academy Structure

Duration: 6 years, with year-round and summer activities. Key program phases include:

Phase	Year	Activity	Details
Phase 1	Grade 11	Onboarding and First Summer Academy	Introductory academic and leadership training, including field trips and projects
Phase 2	Grade 12	Career Counseling and Academic Advising	Career guidance and academic advising with university application support
Phase 3	University Year 1	Mentorship, Scholarship, Internship	Mentorship support from BNI Connect alumni, scholarships, and career-related internships
Phase 4	University Years 2–4	Advanced Mentorship, Internships, Scholarships	Continuation of career internships.
Phase 5	Year 1 and beyond in workforce	Advanced Mentorship, Internships, Scholarships, Board Directorship Opportunities	Continuation of career internships board directorships with BNI Academy, and leadership roles
Phase 6	Alumni years	Career Counseling, Board Directorship Opportunities	Continuation of career counseling, board directorships with BNI Academy, and leadership roles

The main difference between the BlackNorth Initiative (BNI) Summer Academy and the Thrive Scholars Program in the United States lies in their program components. While the Thrive Scholars Program focuses on three core elements—Summer Academy, Career and Academic Counseling, and Mentorship—the BNI Summer Academy goes a step further. In addition to these components, BNI offers internships and scholarships for participants, supporting them throughout all four years of their university studies.

Parent and Community Engagement

To strengthen support systems, the Academy encourages family and community involvement. Parents receive regular updates on their child's progress, and community stakeholders are engaged in events and networking opportunities, fostering a collective commitment to student success.



Measuring Outcomes and Success

Program success will be measured through:

- **University Acceptance Rates:** Over 90% acceptance at competitive institutions.
- **Internship and Job Placements:** 80% placements within six months of graduation, supported by BNI Connect.
- **Mentorship Engagement:** Active participation with positive mentor feedback.
- **Skill Development:** Assessed improvement in academic and professional skills through pre- and post-program evaluations.

Expected Achievements for Students

- **University Readiness:** Enhanced academic skills and confidence with defined educational pathways.
- **Career Clarity:** Clear career goals, access to internships, and an established professional network.
- **Professional Skills:** Strengthened resumes, communication, networking, and interview capabilities.
- **Lifelong Support:** Ongoing mentorship and job placement assistance through the BNI Connect Program at BNI Academy.

Inaugural Class of 2025

Launching in summer 2025 with an inaugural cohort of 60 students, the Academy offers a unique opportunity for high-achieving Black youth to access premier academic and career resources. By developing future Black leaders, the BlackNorth Initiative strives to provide a lifelong support network, empowering these students to advocate for themselves and succeed on a level playing field.

Through the Academy and BNI Connect Program, BlackNorth offers a comprehensive framework for ongoing guidance, mentorship, and professional resources, supporting students from high school through university and into their professional careers.