



Reaching New Heights: Nurturing Adolescents in Urban Environments

Student Interns:

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Tahiyya Khan, Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health
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Academic Preceptor:

Renee Kottenhahn, MD, Drexel University College of Medicine, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children

Community Preceptor:

Daniel Ceva, Heights Philadelphia

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Heights Philadelphia (a merger of Philadelphia Futures and Steppingstone Scholars) is committed to transforming the pathways to college and career for Philadelphia's students. Heights' vision is to create a place where Black, Brown, and first-generation scholars find support to reach their full potential. When all students graduate high school and achieve economic mobility, this community thrives.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Heights Philadelphia provides summer enrichment programs to students as young as fifth grade through high school. Their programming also provides both middle and high school students with advisors throughout the school year in 23 partner schools in the Philadelphia District. As a non-profit organization, Heights relies on grants and donations for continued funding. The program provides many opportunities for adults and former program graduates to give back to their community.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

In addition to assisting in academic classes and high school/college preparation classes, interns led a weekly hour-long elective class titled Arts, Crafts, and Expression. The elective focused on lessons similar to Home Economics encompassing nutritional food choices, sewing, sustainability, debating, storytelling, and movement styles.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ JOYS



Working together to climb the obstacle course, using communication and teamwork.



Students shared their personal stories through acrylic paint expression.



Sculptures exposed students to a variety of ideas, people, and periods in history.



Students visualizing their DNA

REFLECTIONS

There were many instances where I was able to mentor students about the field in medicine, specifically with two students wanting to go into pediatrics. At the same time, the students taught me many important lessons about their understanding of the current era. Their knowledge about the complexities of sociocultural intersectionality and political activism was astounding as they expressed their knowledge of being able to do so much as students and that they had big aspirations in order to change the world for the better.

- Milan Patel

Over the course of the program, I had the opportunity to have a few intense one-on-one conversations with some kids about anger management, suicidal ideation, and the realities of violent situations in schools. These kids and these real-life situations challenged my personal empathetic boundaries and helped prime me for how I will need to interact in a therapeutic space in the future. These issues are real and are clearly on the forefront of these young adolescent minds.

-Tiffany Holmes

Although the time being in the program flew by very fast, the memories I will have of the students asking me what steps they can take to become successful will remain with me. Their reflection of leaning into each other for encouragement and support will continue to inspire my work as a public health professional dedicated to making communities safer.

-Tahiyya Khan