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STEM Outreach to the African Canadian Community - The Imhotep Legacy Academy¹

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Like the African American community in the US, the African Canadian community is underrepresented in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. To serve these communities two outreach organizations emerged in Canadian cities where there is a critical mass of learners of African Descent - Toronto and Halifax. I will describe the Imhotep's Legacy Academy, which began in the Physics labs of Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia and has grown to a province-wide program serving three-quarters of the school boards in the province with an annual budget that has grown to \$400,000 in 2011-12. It follows the learner from the time they enter grade 7 to the time they graduate from university, through three programs: (a) Weekly After-School science enrichment for junior high learners, (b) Virtual High school tutoring program and (c) Summer student internships and research scholarships for post-secondary students. This year, the program was the beneficiary of funding from TD Bank to establish scholarships for program participants to enter Dalhousie university. Modeled on the Meyerhoff scholarships the program participants are identified at an early stage and are promised a subset of funding as they meet selected criteria during participation in the program. The program enjoys support from the Department of Education and the highest levels of government. A tri-mentoring system exists where faculty of African descent train mentors, who are science students of African descent at associated universities, to deliver hands-on enrichment activities to learners of African Descent. Evidence supporting the success of the program will be highlighted. Project outcomes measured include (i) recruitment; (ii) attendance; (iii) stakeholder relationships; (iv) programming; (v) staff training; (vi) perception of ILASP's value; (vii) academic performance. The end results are new lessons and best practices that are incorporated into a strategic plan for the new project year. Teachers perceived that ILASP had a positive ripple effect on the entire academic and non-academic educational experience of the learners, crediting the project with (i) encouraging self-learning; (ii) assisting in honing learners' science and math skills; (iii) developing core skills that were applicable in learners' schoolwork; (iv) boosting learners' self-esteem; (v) improving school attendance; (vi) boosting learners' motivation to be engaged participants in all other classes.

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