



*All photos taken during Black Mental Health Youth Day at the Capitol*

# Black Youth Mental Health Day at the Capitol







[marnitastable.org](http://marnitastable.org)



# Black Youth Mental Health Day at the Capitol

## Event Summary

- On March 28, 2025, over one hundred 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from seven different schools participated in a powerful day of skills-building, learning, and civic engagement over their spring break.
- The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (BBAY) in partnership with Marnita's Table, Minnesota Department of Education, and Minnesota Department of Health on behalf of the Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health (RBYMH) initiative collaboratively created and delivered Black Youth Mental Health Day at the Capitol focused on advocacy, mental health, and community.
- Participants from various cultures and backgrounds joined to advocate for better mental health supports for youth. Students self-identified as Asian (Hmong), Asian Hispanic, Asian American, Asian, Latin, Mexican, white, White American, Black, Black American, African-American, mixed, African Guinean, Somali, Sudanese, Oromo, Kenyan, Liberian, Cameroonian, Nigerian, and Ghanaian.



# Student & Community Participants

Included 9th-12th grade students from the following schools and school districts:

- ❖ Anoka HS (Anoka Hennepin School District): 30 students
- ❖ Champlin Park HS (Anoka Hennepin School District): 9 students
- ❖ Brooklyn Center HS (Brooklyn Center Community Schools): 7 students
- ❖ Park Center HS (Osseo Area Schools): 3 students
- ❖ Cooper HS and Armstrong HS (Robbinsdale Area Schools): 32 students
- ❖ Quora Secondary School: 17
- ❖ Other students: 6

Adults (From partner organizations including the following: Intentions, Black Family Blueprint, BBAY, City of BP, City of BC, Greenlight Fund, Marnita's Table, Hennepin County, MDE, MDH, North Hennepin, ACER, etc.): 34+

# Advocacy Begins with Introduction

All students started with a creating a personalized 30- to 60-second introduction.

Each student practiced introducing themselves and sharing personal insights that aren't immediately visible. Each participant reflected on which aspect of Youth Priority #1 mattered most to them and why.

After students felt confident in this skill, they moved on to one of three skill-building stations. Some students stayed at one station for the entire time. Others chose to move and practice skills at more than one station.

# Specific Advocacy Skill Building

**Station 1: Peer-to-Peer / Verbal Advocating:** Adding more details to their 30 – 60 second introduction. Creating and practicing 3–5 minutes of talking points meant having a conversation for a conversation with elected officials and other decisionmakers. This included personal stories, community insights, or data to build a compelling case for change or to listen to the student.

## **Station 2: Sign-Making – Advocacy Through Public Awareness**

Participants shifted to visual expression by creating posters that brought attention to Youth Priority #1. They explored humor, cultural references, and creativity to design impactful signs that could grab public attention and spark dialogue. This activity encouraged artistic individuality and bold messaging.

## **Station 3: Written Advocacy – Advocacy Through Communication**

At this station, students explored various written formats—emails, letters, social media posts, blog entries, and even storytelling—to express their passion for Youth Priority #1. They reflected on their personal voice and began drafting or sharing their messages, focusing more on content and authenticity than on grammar or structure. Peer feedback and practice helped refine their advocacy skills.





marnitastable.org



# Black Youth Mental Health Day at the Capitol

## Event Summary



In the afternoon, students toured the State Capitol, posed for a group photo, and met with Minnesota elected officials who are passionate about mental health. They had the opportunity to present their posters and deliver short speeches about why these issues mattered to them personally. The day ended with everyone standing together and sharing reflections on what they took away from the experience.





The three circled people are all state legislators. Students spent over 45 minutes practicing their skills through peer-to-peer engagement in the Rotunda of the Minnesota State Capitol. It was an opportunity that all participants were offered, not just a few.



## MAKE SURE BLACK YOUTH ARE SAFE AT ALL TIMES.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- safety on social media from bullying
- safety in the community from gun violence
- safety in schools from racism



## GIVE BLACK PEOPLE THE SPACE TO CREATE OUR OWN SPACES AND HAVE OUR VOICES HEARD.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- dedicated spaces for Black students in schools supported by Black adults
- more opportunities for Black people to come together in positive ways



## PRIORITIZE THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH THAT ARE DEFINED BY BLACK YOUTH.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- access to more food throughout the school day
- real responses to issues that Black youth bring up



## PROVIDE MORE EDUCATION ON BLACK HISTORY AND CULTURE MORE OFTEN, INCLUDING LEARNING BEYOND ACADEMICS.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- Black history and culture throughout K-12 curriculum, not just Black History Month
- more books by Black authors
- uplifting Black culture in ways that prepare us for life outside of school



## MORE BLACK TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- **TEACHERS** in the classroom, not just Black staff
- Black principals, vice principals, supervisors, and school board members



## CHANGE THE NARRATIVE AROUND MENTAL HEALTH IN WAYS THAT STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR BLACK FAMILIES. ADDRESS GENERATIONAL TRAUMA.

Youth at the Summit defined this as....

- mental health professionals for Black/African parents
- free family therapy

# Youth Priorities





# Measuring Effectiveness

| Goals  | Measurable Indicators of Success (MIS)  | Progress Achieved  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Goal 1:</b> Participants learned about different forms of self advocacy, and how to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities. | <b>MIS:</b> 80% learned something about advocacy<br><b>MIS:</b> 30% had a chance to practice different types of advocacy (make a sign, practice an elevator pitch, or write)<br><b>MIS:</b> 30% had a chance to practice introducing themselves to a decision maker | <b>98%</b> of respondents to the voluntary sign-in sheet reported learning something about advocacy.<br><b>97%</b> of youth had a chance to practice a different type of advocacy.<br><b>90%</b> practiced introducing themselves to a decision maker. |
| <b>Goal 2:</b> Participants had a clearer picture of what to expect during the experience of going to the State Capitol.                       | <b>MIS:</b> 80% had a clearer understanding of what to expect at the capitol  | <b>76%</b> of students had a clearer understanding of what to expect at the capitol. [Students may have answered this as either a present state or a future state]   |
| <b>Goal 3:</b> Participants had a chance to reflect on the top priorities they identified related to Black youth mental health.                | <b>MIS:</b> 80% were reminded of the top priorities they identified   | <b>98%</b> were reminded of the top priorities they identified   |
| <b>Goal 4:</b> Have an intentional experience aligned to our goals.  | <b>MIS:</b> 20% We measure effectiveness based on the percentage of participants complete a google sign-out form (evaluation and something they'd like to say).   | <b>58%</b> - 58 students out of 100 students voluntarily filled out a sign-in sheet.   |

**“Everyone there was so friendly and welcoming, and it felt like such a safe space. The experience allowed me to put myself out there and get to know my peers better. I was also able to interact with government officials and learn more about the people in power who are fighting for my rights. It was humanizing and made them feel more like regular people instead of people in power.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**



**“We left with a feeling of empowerment, belonging, and motivation. There was a feeling of community throughout the entire day, and it was clear that discussing mental illness openly in the context of Black history was necessary and did work.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“The discussions were powerful, and much reflection was taken in the moment. The atmosphere was safe, welcoming, and inspiring, and helped for honest discussion.”**

– Participant Impact Statement



**“I believe that today will have a lasting impact. The conversations provided new awareness and a starting point for future discussion of mental health. The staff also became more aware of how to better help youth with these discussions. Overall, I believe that this endeavor seeded something that will continue to grow. I walked away feeling heard, but more so that some change might happen.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“I was overjoyed and felt a renewed sense of community, having been surrounded by so many people that looked like me, even though everyone was so diverse and unique in their own ways.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“Going forward, I hope to educate myself more on black history and connect more with my culture and identity as an African-American woman & other aspects that make up my identity and continue fighting for my rights and advocating for myself. It was a beautiful field trip and experience; I hope to go next year.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“I walked away feeling at home because I got to interact a lot more with people that had similar experiences and backgrounds. My experience was positive as I got to have fun with people like me.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**



**“I learned how to advocate for myself in three different forms and how to do it efficiently – it will impact me going forward in a great way because I will be able to communicate what I learned to the younger generations.**

**My experience there was really good. I felt like I was home. I walked away feeling like my mental health should not be something I’m scared to talk about. Especially with the people who can help me.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“I left the event feeling empowered. Being allowed a space to freely think and voice my ideas and experiences gave me more control over my emotions and let me brainstorm methods for coping and improvement.**

**I learned that there are people who care about me and understand what I’m going through, even when I feel completely alone in my pain.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“The Field Trip was honestly one of the best experiences I’ve had. It was powerful to be surrounded by other students who look like me and actually talk openly about mental health. I felt seen and understood in a way that doesn’t always happen at school.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“One of the biggest things I took away was that I’m not alone in what I’m going through. Hearing other students share their stories made me feel more comfortable being open about my own struggles. I also learned some new ways to cope and take care of myself that actually make sense for me.”**

**– Participant Impact Statement**



**“Going forward, I feel more confident speaking up about mental health and supporting my friends when they need it. This trip reminded me how important it is to take care of myself and look out for others too. I really hope more schools get to do something like this because it made a huge difference.”**

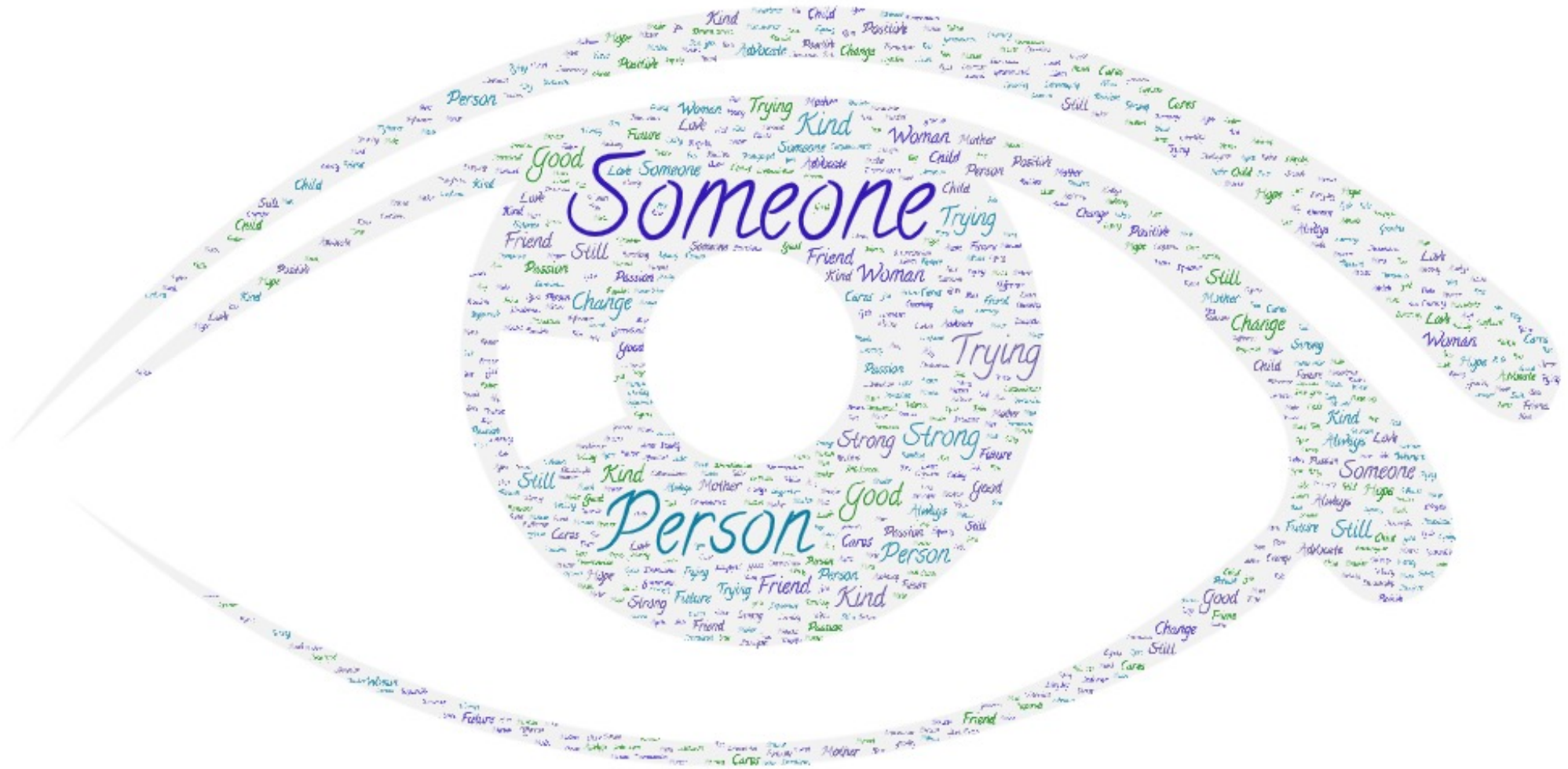
**– Participant Impact Statement**

**“I left feeling like a priority, I left feeling like the issues that me and people like me deal with everyday are important.”**

– Participant Impact Statement

# Closing Skill Building Circle Share-in Word Cloud 28 March 2025

Participants shared how they want to be seen  
“See me as...”



# Sign-out Form Participant Quotes

“It was very enlightening. I learned many new things about mental health.”

“I really liked it I felt heard and safe, and I felt like a priority, and I had a great time, and the food was good.”

“It was super fun, and I learned about the priorities, and the safety black mental health needs.”

“It is nice and great to be in a space with the constant energy fueled and full of support for the need for improvement.”

“It was really fun to community build and get to know people.”

“It was good, critical thinking.”







**Jerad Morey** • 2nd

Obama Foundation Leaders USA 2024 - 2025 | Cross-sector strategist, ...

2mo •



The reporter doesn't say it, but the two public gatherings were hosted by **Marnita's Table**. I attended one and appreciated getting to know my new neighbors - not just because we could share our concerns and solutions about kids and phones but also for how through food, movement, discomfort, and a festive atmosphere their IZI process built human connection.



**Mounds View schools tackle cell phone disruption with innovative solution**

kare11.com



[marnitastable.org](https://marnitastable.org)

# Please Donate Now!



[marnitastable.org](http://marnitastable.org)





# **We appreciate gifts of all sizes:**

\$25 Helps restock the “youth bracelet bar;

\$75 Hires a youth worker and invests in their leadership development (did you know we write reference letters for almost 300 young people every year?)

\$150 allows us to hire an individual community connector to open doors in new communities

\$300 provides interpretation / translation for one language during an IZI

\$900 pays for one local caterer for an IZI

# **Gifts above \$1,000 put a floor beneath Marnita's Table!**

We are humbled to ask for your investment at this level.

Your Significant Donation Allows us to:

- ❖ Build capacity
- ❖ Add a development lead so that we can sustain and grow
- ❖ Go where Marnita's Table is needed the most
- ❖ Continue serving people after project funding has ended
- ❖ Invest in our team, paying a living wage, providing benefits
- ❖ Prepare for the future

Please share & like us on  
Facebook  
(fb.com/MarnitasTable)  
follow on Instagram  
@marnitastable!

#IZI20  
#CelebrateIZI

**Text**  
**44-321**  
**“I♥IZI”**

**or**

**“IheartIZI”**

**(android)**

**to donate now!**

# **Got a Story about Marnita's Table / IZI, Please Share**



**Thank you!**