



Brooklyn Bridge
ALLIANCE
FOR
YOUTH

Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth

Est. 2013



Brooklyn Bridge
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Our Partners:



ANOKA-HENNEPIN
SCHOOLS
A future without limit





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Our Mission

The BBAY is a backbone organization that coordinates the efforts of partners to build a system of high-quality, accessible, and fully resourced opportunities that address systemic disparities in graduation, pathways to college and career and youth safety and wellbeing.





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Our Goals:

1. Increase in partners' ability to respond and transform in response to youth needs & aspirations
2. Increase is youth leading community change while developing their skills.
3. Increase in BBAY partner results in eliminating predictable disparities in graduation, pathways to college and career, and safety & wellbeing.



BBAY Services to Partners & Community

Strategic Partners for Change

Coordination

- Mobilize and coordinate response to youth needs* (close the gap between youth and institutions that serve them)
- Sustainable asset-based resource development*
- Strategic planning
- Participatory facilitation
- Crisis response and thought partnership
- Collaborative grant writing and program partnership

Engagement

- Amplify youth voice and input
- Cultivate youth led Initiatives
- Youth leadership development
- Youth centered systems & policy development
- Capacity building for effective youth & adult partnerships
- Intercultural Development and Conflict (IDI, ICS)

Research & Innovation

- Participatory evaluation & action research
- Youth participatory action research (YPAR)
- Youth program quality assessment (YPQA)
- Human centered program, process and policy design
- Evaluation capacity building, development & training
- Continuous equitable quality improvement (M3)



Engaging Youth & Adults

to respond to the needs and aspirations of young people.

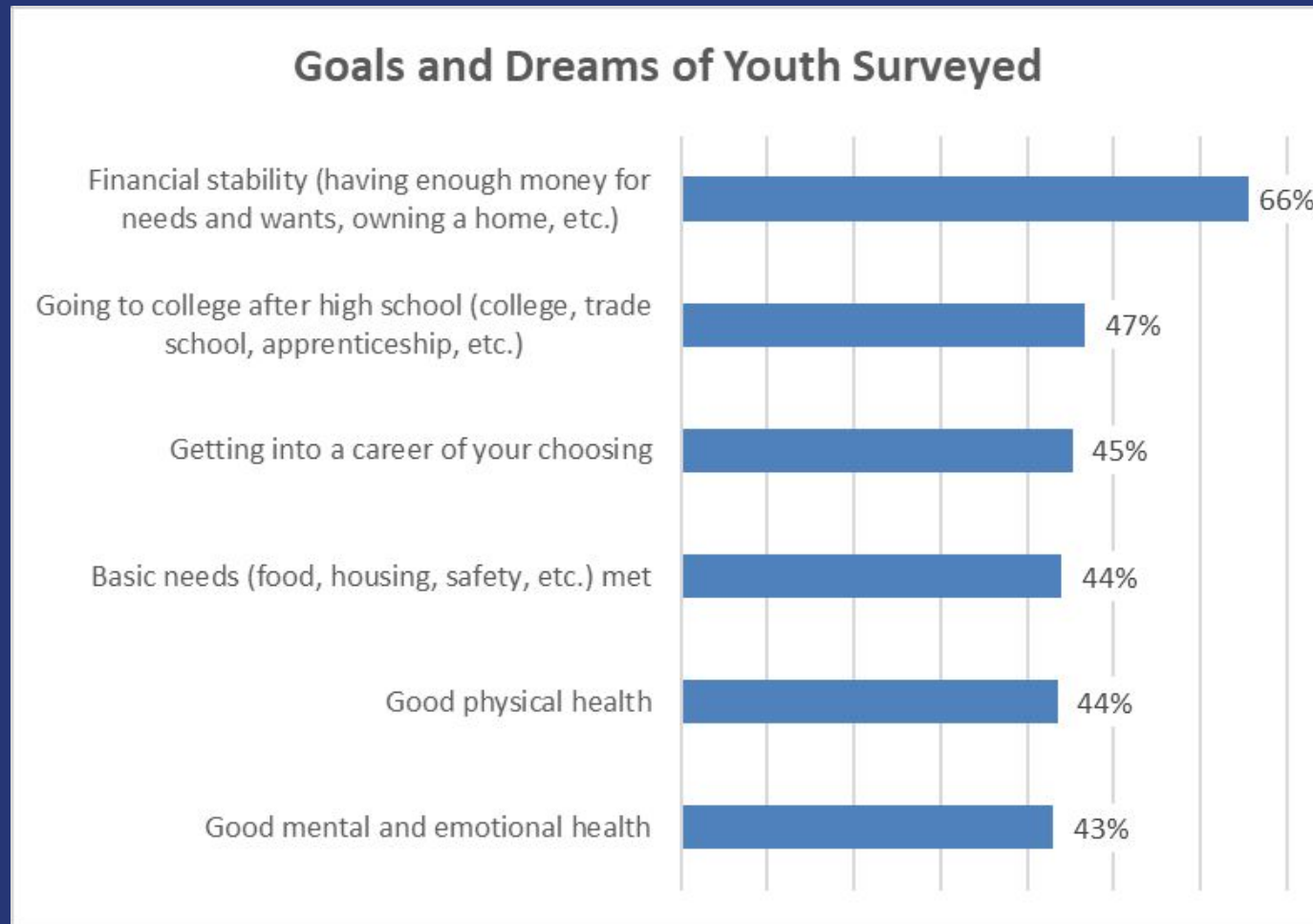
Engaging Youth

Biennial Youth to Youth Survey

- Youth Data Squad planned and implemented the survey - gathering insights from various youth in the Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, and surrounding areas.
- Summer of 2024, **411** youth were surveyed.
- What are youth needs and aspirations?
 - Goals and Dreams
 - Mental Health
 - Relationships
 - Safety
 - Technology
 - Interests
- **This data shapes ALL our programming efforts.**



Key Findings on Goals and Dreams



Comparison from past 2022 survey:

- Financial Stability both being #1 (higher % this year).
- Shift from physical, mental and emotional health towards financial stability, college, and career.
- The data aligns with BBAY's mission statement.

Key Findings on Key Themes

Mental Health

- “Having time for myself” top answer (87%)
- “Having positive relationships with others”(75%)
- “Feeling self love” (75%)

Relationships with Adults

- Being respectful, supportive, and understand how they feel

Safety

- 1 in 5 youth indicated they have been a target of hate or bullying based on their identity at school within the last school year
- Only 53% of youth indicating they would likely report if it happened to them

FOCUS QUESTION

What do you want to know from young people?

Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Initiative est. 2023

- ❖ **shift the narrative** by how we engage young people around mental health
- ❖ **strengthen the ecosystem of support** by convening our Advisory Council
- ❖ **change the conditions that are causing unwellness** by saturating young people with protective factors and advancing youth-centered policy

POLICY PRIORITY: “Keep Black Youth Safe At All Times”.

Reimagine +Robbinsdale Highlights:

- Representation on our Advisory Council
- Thank you Tony Patterson!
- Staff presence and RAS student participation at Reimagine Summits.
- Highview Well-being project



MN Dept of Education Youth Voice & Wellbeing Project

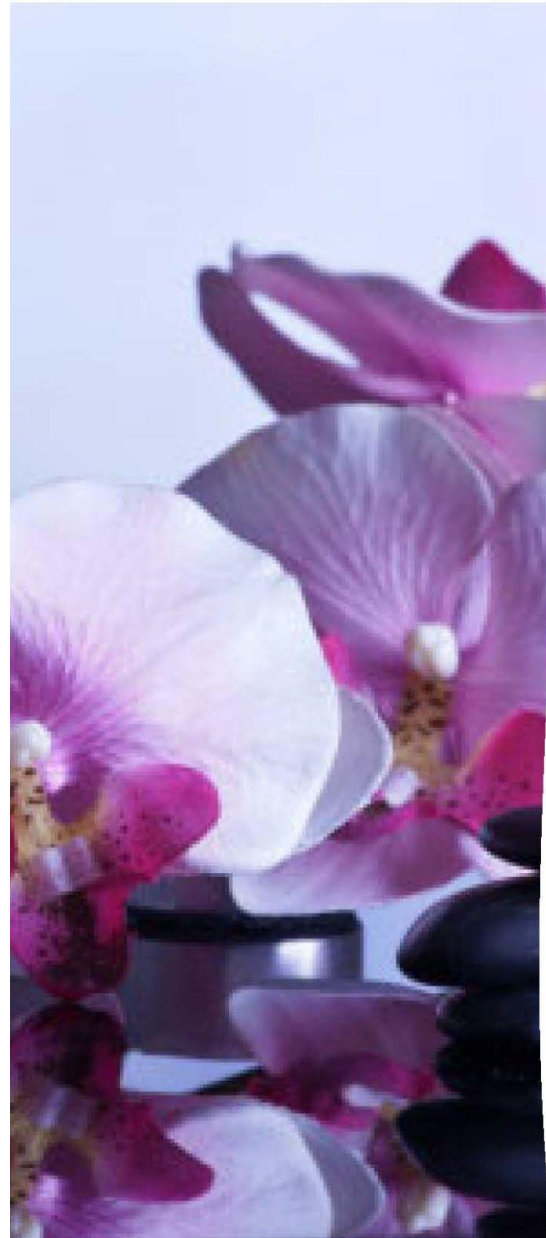
Youth identified issues and solutions for improving school engagement + student wellbeing.

Highlighted the importance of cultural responsive programs, relationship-building and spaces for empowering youth.

Recommendation: Create Affinity Group for Girls next school year.

Youth Outcomes:

- Increased peer-to-peer support
- Improved communication and confidence
- Development of healthy coping skills
- Greater emotional awareness and self-expression
- Enhanced feelings of support, belonging, and empowerment



Key Issues Identified

Youth identified three primary concerns impacting their school experience:

1. Modified school schedules

- Ability to change school schedule.
- Students wanted more choice about when they can return to regular school schedule.

2. Representation & Cultural Responsiveness

- Lack of African American female staff

3. Staff–student communication

- Argumentative interactions between staff and students.
- Students felt unsupported and unheard when corrected by staff.

The group collectively chose to focus on Representation, and Cultural Responsiveness, which led to the creation of the Black Girl Affinity Group.

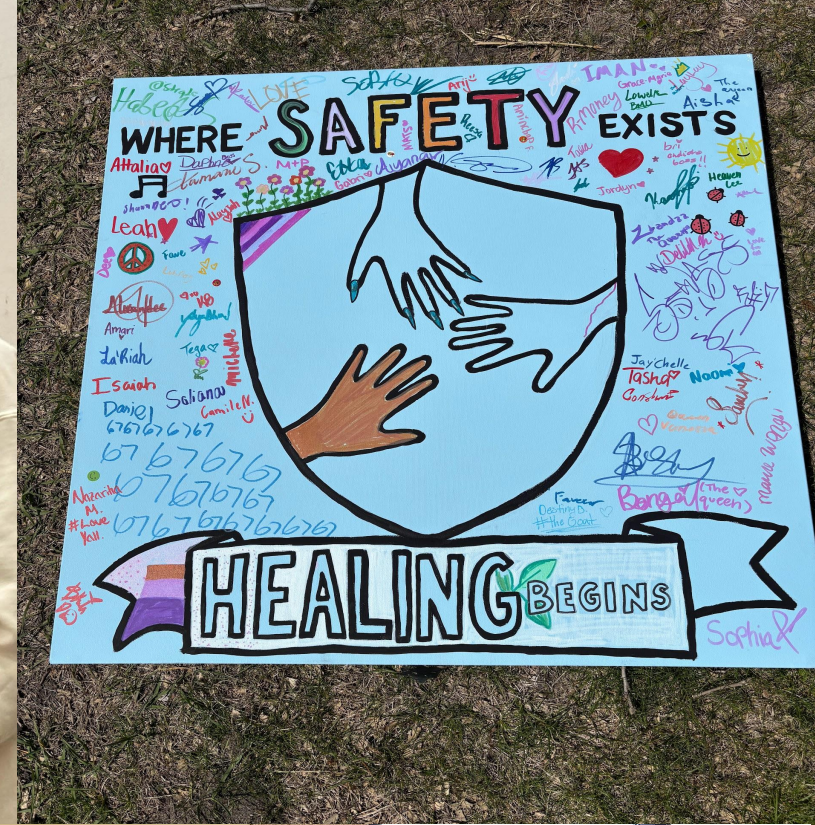
Engaging Youth

RBVMH SAFETY SUMMIT

- ❖ May 8th, 2026
- ❖ In partnership with BBAY members, MDH, Graves & Medica Foundation, and ProtectMN
- ❖ Roughly 120 youth and adult partners attended from all school districts
- ❖ 97 responses to the risk and protective factor survey that will help us shape further data collection and action

Purpose of Summit:

- ❖ space for young people to share their experiences related to violence
- ❖ envision the changes they want to see
- ❖ participate in healing activities and collective support
- ❖ give input on the risk & protective factors that matter most to them
- ❖ **“where safety exists, healing begins”**



Youth centered policy

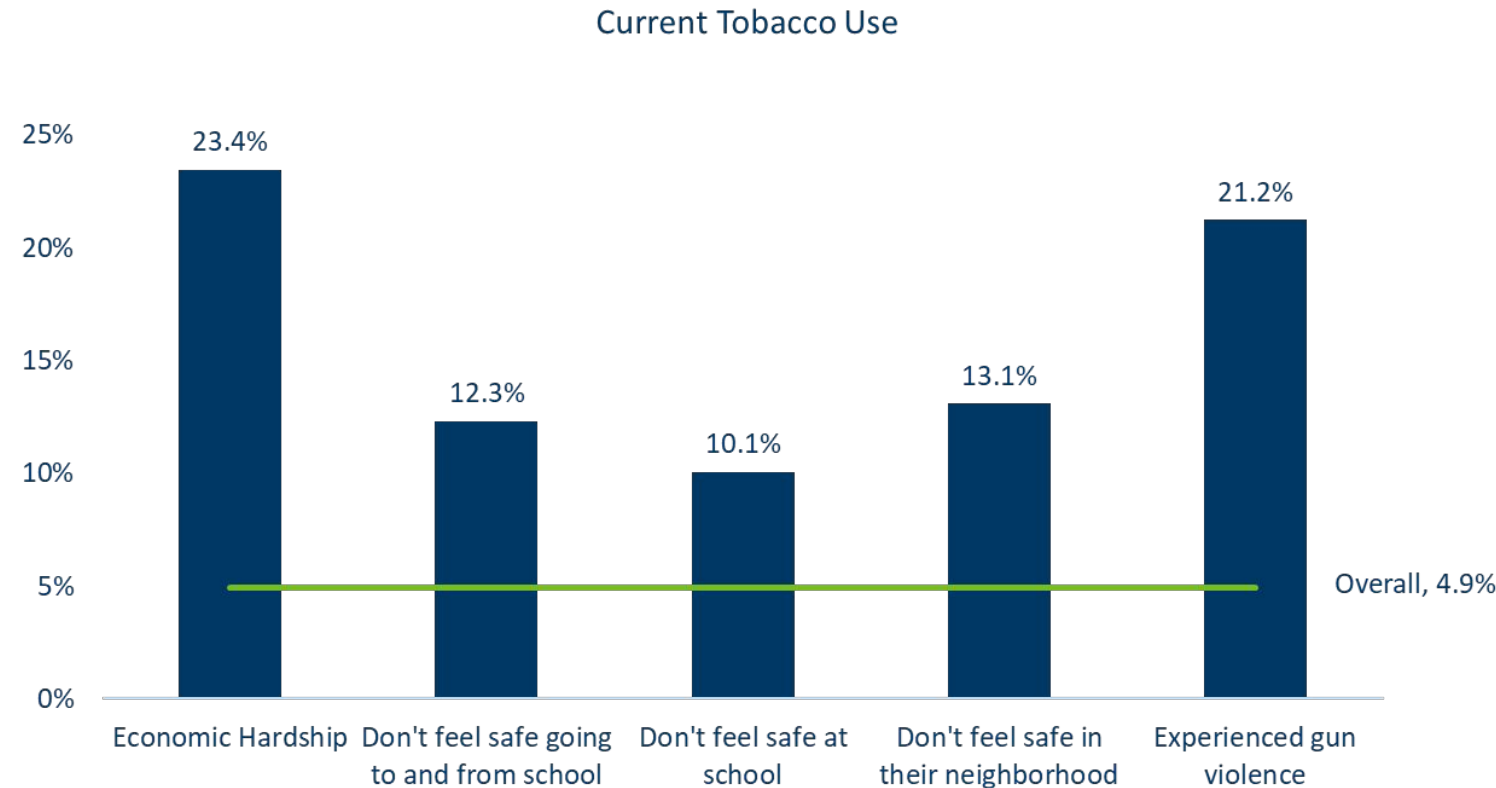
Reimagine Black Youth Mental

- ❖ **Strengthen the ecosystem** by saturating young people with protective factors and advancing youth-centered policy related to tobacco
- ❖ Issue: exposure to VAPE and tobacco
- ❖ Exploring the impact and intersections of Tobacco, Vape and other chemicals on Mental Health & experiences of violence.
- ❖ Goal: Understand the policies that would work in protecting Black youth and families in the Brooklyn from intergenerational harms

Next Steps

- ❖ Youth Review of data from MN Student Survey, proximity to tobacco, policies from other cities (Summer), Youth to Youth Survey Summer 2026
- ❖ Prepare recommendations for program, policy and process actions that protect youth. (Fall 2026)

Commercial tobacco use among students Economic Hardship, Safety, and Gun Violence



- Commercial tobacco use is higher among students who have experienced economic hardship or gun violence.

Afterschool Programming

- Minnesota Dept. of Education 3 year grant 2024-2027
- Focus on students who are underserved
- 4 sites & Unduplicated youth
 - Cooper (67)
 - Champlin Park (210)
 - Brooklyn Center HS (63)
 - Park Center (72)
- Outreach & Youth involved in Evaluation
- Also includes a 6 week summer program



Engaging Youth - ACLG

Culturally Responsive Tutoring

- After School study and homework space catered to the needs of young people.
- Currently operating at Cooper HS & re-launching at BCHS.
- Employing both adult lead and peer tutors to support academic success and excitement for learning.

Affinity Groups

- Identity-affirming spaces that foster belonging, peer connection, and student voice, while supporting social-emotional well-being and leadership development.
- Culturally responsive affinity groups across partner school sites: Latino Circle, Black Student Unions, African Student Association, and Hmong Club.



Engaging Youth - ACLG

Youth OnBoard (YOB)

- YOB is intended to help young people gain leadership skills and connect them to incredible opportunities
- Skill-building space to support young people voicing their perspectives and lived experience to create systems change on boards and commissions
- Train adults to prepare for youth who join their table.
- **Currently 6 youth seated**
- **92 youth engaged across 4 sites**



Engaging Youth - ACLG

Elevate Youth! Summer Program

- **FREE** - Six-week, theme-based summer program for middle and high school youth.
- Three Sites this summer; potentially a 4th Summer Academic Support Site at Park Center
- **Focus:** Wellness, leadership, youth voice, and skill-building.
- **Approach:** Youth-centered sessions with trusted adults and community partners.
- **Engagement:** Daily creative activities, hands-on learning, field trips.
- **Impact:** Builds confidence, connection, and readiness for the school year ahead.



FREE

Summer Programming

Join us this summer for free activities, field trips, and fun!

**For Rising 9th-12th Graders:
Program runs Tuesday - Thursday
June 23 - July 30, 2026**

nature activities | sports | digital media | art & improv |
future leaders | and more!

Brought to you by:



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**ELEVATE
Youth!**

This program is funded with a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education using state funding. After-School Community Learning Programs. The contents of this program do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Minnesota Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal or state government.

Lunch and snacks are provided during programming.

Interest Form



Engaging Adults

Governance Structure: Roughly 90-120 people collaborate to shape our work

- 13 adult, and 4 Youth Directors on our Board
- Executive Leadership Team (9)
- Strategy Team (9)
- Brooklyn's Youth Council (12)
- Community Engagement Team (38)
- Reimagine Advisory (20)
- Community & funding partners: CAPI, ACER, NorthPoint, Three Rivers, Intentions, Girl Scouts, Graves, Medica, MDH etc.
- Elected Officials
 - Senator Pha connecting with YOB Students
 - School Board Rep. Michelle Langenfeld celebrating RBYMH
 - Mayor Graves engaging youth at RBYMH Day at the Capitol
 - Mayor Winston, City Mgr Jay Stroebel showing up in support of youth



Engaging Youth

- **Brooklyns Youth Council**
 - The mission of the Brooklyns Youth Council (BYC) is to represent youth in Brooklyn Center and Park by providing a voice in collaboration with the community and local government in order to positively raise awareness of problems facing youth.
 - Annual leadership project: Know Your Rights - in partnership with CAPI





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Whats next?

1. Continue to strengthen youth leadership and adult capacity building.
2. Continue to leverage resources from state, philanthropic and others to benefit our young people, partners and broader community.
3. Affirm our Joint Powers & use data to shape our new Strategic plan in 2027.



Thank you

Rebecca Gilgen, Executive Director

