

# WJC in Action: Practicing What We Teach

## WJC Students Volunteered at Local High School

By Meghan O'Dell, AmeriCorps VISTA Project Coordinator

Six Scholars from the Black Mental Health Graduate Academy at William James College volunteered to engage students at Urban Science Academy (USA) in conversations about the profession of psychology. USA is a Boston public high school located in West Roxbury, MA. The curriculum at USA emphasizes science and technology to prepare students for STEM success in college and other vocational schools. Each January, USA holds **Science Week** to inspire, educate, and provide an opportunity for hands-on experimentation. Over the course of the first two days, USA welcomes successful scientists in the community to open discussion about their respective fields. The third day is dedicated to the Science Fair where students from grades 9 to 12 present the experiments that they designed and ran during the past month. The week culminates in field trips to local scientific institutions, including the Museum of Science and the New England Aquarium.



Nathalie Alexis and Darryl Sweeper, Jr. spoke with students at Urban Science Academy.

This year, Science Week took place from January 16<sup>th</sup> to January 19<sup>th</sup>. On Tuesday and Wednesday, **Damon Pryor, Nathalie Alexis, Darryl Sweeper Jr., Sade Callwood, Kwame Dance, and Oluwafunmilayo Aguocho** joined science classrooms to present on their career path in psychology – where they are, where they're going, and how they got there. The Academy Scholars shared personal anecdotes about the experiences that ignited their passion for psychology, practical challenges they faced in attaining higher education, and their goals post-graduation. The presenters dedicated part of the class period to dispelling popular misconceptions about psychology, therapy, and trauma as well as reviewing the different subfields housed within the discipline of psychology.



Kwame Dance and Fumi Aguocho led a class discussion at USA.

On Thursday, **Amanda Korff, Michelle Botus, Charline Melon, Sheila Gomez, Meghan O'Dell, and Sarah Zieminski** served as judges for the Science Fair. Prepped with the school rubric and a brief introduction to judging, the volunteers entered the gymnasium to find over 100 student projects already set up, complete with detailed poster board displays, photos, and demonstrations. The projects ranged from the mechanical properties of collisions to the causes of tooth decay to an analysis of NBA player statistics against team victories. Flipping the script from the previous two days, student-scientists took the lead on presenting their projects to individual volunteer judges. The students introduced their hypothetical questions, testable hypotheses, materials, experimental procedures, data, and conclusions. Judges, in turn, asked the students to clarify, expand, consider alternative experiments to address the same hypothetical question, and describe how to design a future experiment based on the data gathered. As of this publication, the winners have not yet been announced; the top five projects will be encouraged to apply to the city science fair.



Sarah Zieminski, Meghan O'Dell, & Sheila Gomez served as judges at the USA Science Fair.

Our deepest gratitude goes to **Mr. Ernest Coakley, Ms. Olinka Briceno, and the entire science department** for hosting a successful Science Week. We would also like to thank **Mr. Jeff Cook, USA's Headmaster, and Ms. Jenna Parafinczuk, Student Support Coordinator**, for making this opportunity available to the WJC community. Our volunteers felt welcomed and enjoyed interacting with the youth. We are looking forward to continuing this partnership with Urban Science Academy through the spring semester and beyond!