



2025 IMPACT REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2025

**BLACK
SOCIAL-
EMOTIONAL
*LIBERATION.***



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INTRODUCTION

This impact report highlights Black SEL's reach and outcomes from July 2025 through December 2025, a pivotal period of growth and deepened community impact. Black SEL is a network of interlocking programs serving Black middle and high school students, families, and adults primarily in Durham, North Carolina. Grounded in the belief that emotional well-being, identity, and civic engagement are inseparable, Black SEL equips Black communities with tools for Social-Emotional Liberation.

This report combines data, lived experience, and community voice to demonstrate how the Black SEL Framework produces measurable growth and meaningful transformation. The findings affirm that when Black youth and communities are centered and resourced, they build agency, belonging, and purpose that support lasting individual and collective well-being.

During this six-month period, Black SEL served approximately 300 students and 150 adults through four core programs. These initiatives strengthened identity, leadership, critical consciousness, civic engagement, and community belonging, with ripple effects reaching thousands through youth-led advocacy and civic action.



100

PARTICIPANTS:

IMPACT: Resolution of low levels of racial identity and self esteem

Statistically significant increases in pillar areas

High levels of parents satisfaction



40

PARTICIPANTS:

IMPACT: Application of Black SEL pillars by advocates through community events

Advocate ability to connect pillars to their own lived experiences leading to stronger sense of identity, self confidence and leadership abilities.

1000
RESIDENTS REACHED



150

PARTICIPANTS:

IMPACT: Community gathering that increased shared understanding of the Black SEL Hub and Black SEL program



50

PARTICIPANTS:

IMPACT: Expected outcomes include increases in credit completion, attendance rates, graduation rates and surveyed SEL competencies. Expected decreases in course failure and negative behaviors.

OUR FRAMEWORK

The Black SEL Framework deepens traditional SEL by grounding it in Black lived experiences, ensuring practices are both relevant and empowering for Black youth, families and communities.



blacksel.org/framework

The series of programs mentioned in this report are guided by the Black SEL framework developed in 2024. The framework is informed by an extensive literature review of the social and emotional learning field and six years of SEL training, forums, workshops, discourse with teachers, parents, and students facilitated by the Dangers Of The Mind organization.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



The Black SEL Summer Institute is a free week-long immersive experience for students grades 6-12 that teaches the principles, skills, and orientations of the Black SEL framework. The program seeks to increase student confidence, leadership, relationship skills, and use of their gifts and talents. The Black SEL summer institute is an opportunity for students to learn about themselves, their history, their peers, and their communities in ways that foster their social responsibility and cement their commitment to student engagement. Summer Institute is the place where we connect with students and families that are great prospects for our advocate program.



**GRADES
6-12**

**DURATION
5 DAYS**

The program engaged youth in diverse learning modalities that centered Black joy, healing, and community focusing on the six Black SEL Pillars.



THE DATA

Data was gathered from a Pre survey and post survey. The Pre-post instrument was administered on the morning of day 1 (June 16) and the post survey was administered at the conclusion of Day 5 of the institute (June 20). Each survey also had open ended questions. Of the 98 students that attended the institute 66 students completed both the pre-and post-instrument and included in the analysis.

A two tailed paired sample t-test was used to measure significance of changes. A significant change was identified as any question difference from time 1 (beginning of institute) to time 2 (end of institute) with a p value of .05 or less (95% or more confidence that difference is not by chance). **Overall, there were 11 out of 34 variables (32.4%) that showed statistically positive improvements.**

Statistically Significant Positive Changes ($p < 0.05$).

	Variable	Pre-Mean	Post-Mean	p-value	Sig. Level	Cohen's dEffect Size
<i>Community Stakeholders</i>	I understand which organizations in Durham can offer me mentorship or internships	3.384	4.364	<0.001	***	0.702High
	I understand the pillars of Black SEL Other	4.015	4.485	<0.001	***	0.568High
<i>Lived civics, Social Responsibility, Civic Engagement</i>	I have a responsibility to improve my community	3.879	4.242	<0.001	***	0.494Medium
	I understand who I can go to in my community outside of my family that can support my career goal	3.828	4.281	<0.001	***	0.451Medium
<i>Lived civics, Social Responsibility, Civic Engagement</i>	I feel empowered to express my thoughts, feelings, and emotions	4.030	4.364	0.003	**	0.378Medium
	After high school I will work with others to change unjust laws	3.530	3.879	0.004	**	0.366Medium
<i>Community Stakeholders</i>	I understand what my community needs in order to make it a healthier space for everyone	3.750	4.172	0.005	**	0.362Medium
	I see myself as a leader	3.894	4.212	0.008	**	0.336Small
<i>Critical Consciousness</i>	If someone asked me, I would be willing to join a group to address discrimination in my community	3.703	4.078	0.009	**	0.339Small
	I am able to do things as well as other people	3.864	4.197	0.012	*	0.320Small
<i>Lived civics, Social Responsibility, Civic Engagement</i>	In my community, I feel like I matter to people	3.879	4.121	0.038	*	0.261Small



THE DATA

BLACK SELF-CONCEPT MEASURE

In addition to survey items used to measure program outcomes aligned to the Black SEL model, the summer institute used pre/posttest items from an Ethnic Identity scale developed by researchers from Harvard University (Umana-Taylor 2004, Douglas and Umana Taylor 2015) to gain understanding of the impact programming had on improving positive Black identity. Negative ethno-racial identity items were used to support understanding of how many students were impacted by lower levels of Black self-concept which correlates to negative self-esteem, higher mental health needs, lower levels of academic achievement and overall low levels of well-being.

SELF-ESTEEM MEASURE

The Black SEL summer institute also utilized the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. The purpose of the 10 item RSE scale is to measure self-esteem. Originally the measure was designed to measure the self-esteem of high school students. However, since its development, the scale has been used with a variety of groups including adults, with norms available for many of those groups. The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range, scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

BLACK SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF ESTEEM

The pillars of Self Concept (discussed later) and the related measure of Self Esteem (except for one item) appear to suffer from a ceiling effect. All but one of these items lack statistical significance in the difference from the pre-post items. In these domains, the majority of the participants already possessed high levels of positive identity. In the case of these measures, movement of students that lacked these base skills of positive self-concept, self-esteem and critical consciousness is critically important. Low scores place students at greater risk for drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, negative sense of belonging, and lower academic outcomes.

Data from the 2025 Black SEL summer institute (as discussed below) shows that while many students have a positive racial identity (82-91%), the summer institute had a positive effect on students at risk of having a negative ethnic identity. **100% of students identified as having negative responses improved enough to move into healthy resolution.**

Modified EIS Questions	Positive Ethno-social	Negative Ethno-social	Healthy Resolution post institute	% Resolved
Question 1: There are days that I wish I was other than Black	54	12 (18%)	100%	95
Question 2: If I could choose, I would rather be a part of a different racial group	60	6 (9%)	60%	98
Question 3: My feelings about being Black are mostly positive	57	9 (14%)	78%	83

Black SEL Questions	Pre	Post
Question 4: I understand the why is it important to have a positive Black self-concept	86%	90%
Question 5: I feel like I belong in the Black community.	80%	85%



THE DATA

SELF-CONCEPT: SELF ESTEEM MEASURES

Similar to the racial identity measures, lower levels of self-esteem place students with higher levels of risk for negative academic, emotional, and psychological outcomes.

In examining the data, the majority (87%) of students fell in the normal range of 15-25.

Of the 13% of students that were identified as at-risk for greater risk for academic, emotional and psychological challenges, 89% increased their self-esteem scores towards the non-risk range. Of those students (13%) scoring below 15 on the Rosenberg measures, 8 out of 9 increased their self-esteem scores towards the normal range (89%) with 7 out of 9 (78%) of these students moving within normal ranges.

Normal Range	At-risk Range	% Moving Positively Towards Non-Risk	% Resolve to Non-Risk
58	8	89%	78%

While these items have a specialized scoring methodology, the table below shows that the impact of the summer institute with visible increases in all questions.

Prompts	Pre % (n-66)	Post % (n-66)
I understand how to use my individual gifts to support my personal success	75	82
I feel like a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	77	81**
I feel like I have a number of good qualities	77	85
All in all, I am inclined to feel like I am a failure (Negative)	59	61
I am able to do things as well as other people	74	81*
I feel like I do not have much to be proud of (Negative)	37	35
have a positive attitude towards myself	74	74
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	67	80
I wish I could have more respect for myself (Negative)	19	17
I feel useless at times	39	30
At times, I think I am no good at all	28	24

* Statistically significant difference .05 * Statistically significant difference .10



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS & PARENTS

STUDENTS

Many students expressed how the summer institute increased their confidence about being who they are, specifically as Black youth.

"I learned how to be normal in a space that has a lot of people who don't look like me."

"Being proud of being me. I feel like I gained a confidence that I did not have before. I'm definitely going to use it when I go into the next school year."

"I would like to gain confidence in myself and be bold enough to be my full, beautiful, Black self without carrying the fear of discrediting my race or losing opportunities that I could have if I dialed myself down."

PARENTS

Parents of participants also saw the value of the summer institute with 72% of surveyed parents identifying an increased sense of confidence in their children and 90% appreciating the emphasis on building a positive Black self-concept and increasing confidence. Parents shared a strong desire for their children to be comfortable with who they are regardless of the environment they were in.

"I loved the mission and vision of the program. Personal and social growth centering and complimenting her Blackness?! Yes, yes, yes."

"To gain life skills as an African American in learning how to process emotions and become confidently, unapologetically Black."

"It's only day three and already her self-concept, self-confidence, and inner joy have been boosted. If nothing else happens, we won. Thank you for this program and all of the work you have done to provide it. We are grateful."

PARENTS RECOGNIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM FOR ALL BLACK PEOPLE:

90%

of parents expressed a desire for Black SEL programming when they were their child's age.

97%

of parents stated the Black SEL programming will help their children in school.

87%

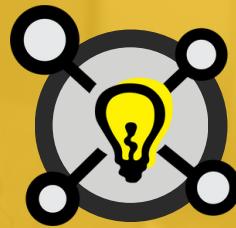
of parents desire to improve their SEL skills as parents.



PROGRAM SUMMARY

The findings regarding racial identity and self-esteem are cause for reflection. Specifically, that the Black SEL Institute acts as both an intervention for low levels of positive Black identity associated self-esteem and dually as a pathway to civic engagement, sense of belonging in the world (lived civics), social responsibility, critical consciousness and engagement with the community and leadership. The interaction with and internalization of these aforementioned areas allow participants to not only survive in racialized spaces but also to thrive. Several of the first cohort (2024) of summer institute participants joined the Black SEL advocate program, served as mentors for the 2025 summer institute and were eventually offered scholarships to higher educational institutions such as Duke, University of North Carolina and North Carolina Central University.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



STUDENT ADVOCATES

The Black SEL Advocate Program recruits 7-12 grade students to participate in monthly programming opportunities that:

Cultivates a healthy Black Self-Concept rooted in lived civics that embody the best of our cultural history.

Develops critical consciousness that supports student understanding of socialization, social movements, and the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression.

Deepens student's social responsibility by increasing community awareness and belief in their ability to create and contribute to change.

Increase students participation in community and school-based initiatives as a tangible commitment to student engagement.



Approximately 40 students participate in monthly gatherings to reinforce skills around the Black SEL pillars.

As Black SEL advocates they build a stronger Black SEL Durham community through:

- critical conversations
- community programming
- volunteer opportunities
- community outreach.



STUDENT ADVOCATES

THE DATA

In a focus group conducted with 12 SEL advocates in November 2025, students indicated they joined the program for several reasons including:

- Sibling previously in program
- Positive experience in summer institute program
- Family member encouragement
- Desire for community
- Increase self confidence

During the monthly sessions students learned about the Black SEL pillars and began to zero in on the pillars more important to them.



Black SEL Pillar	Number identified as most important
Positive self-concept	4
Inclusion of community stakeholders	4
Critical consciousness	2
Civic engagement	1
Sense of responsibility	1

TESTIMONIALS

"I decided to join the advocate program because when I did the summer institute I made a lot of good connections with people, and I realized that this organization could be really helpful to me."

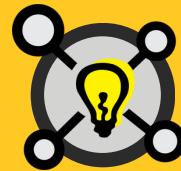
"It is important to know who you are as a Black person because once you know who you are as a person you can remain the same in each environment. Like... instead of having to switch who you are with people of a different skin tone... you can be your authentic self."

"Without inclusion of community stakeholders, it's all of us starting from nowhere every single time when it doesn't necessarily have to be that way. There are people that have started from nowhere and gotten somewhere and we can help continue that work."



BLACK AUGUST IN THE PARK

AUGUST 24, 2025



**STUDENT
ADVOCATES**

Black August in the Park is an annual community event established in 2015 in Durham, North Carolina, created to honor and uplift the legacy of Black political prisoners and Black revolutionaries who have contributed to the ongoing struggle for Black liberation. The annual Durham gathering centers political education, intergenerational learning, music, and celebrations of Black cultural heritage. In 2025, it is estimated that approximately 15,100 Durham residents and family members attended the event, reflecting its continued significance and impact within the community.

In August, Black SEL advocates directly engaged 500 Black Durham community members on voter registration and the importance of voting at the Black August in the Park event. Engaging with community members brought a strong sense of community and purpose to the Black SEL advocates as they handed out flyers to attendees about the importance of voting and engaged in issues important to youth.

"I feel like you can see people that look like you but you might not always feel like they're with you- but just seeing that amount of people just showing up for the same cause to learn and celebrate was really powerful."

"I got to talk to a whole bunch of people and stuff because I was doing the program and that was a lot of fun cause a lot of people really seemed interested in stuff I got to explain about."

"People see us out in the community, and they will be able to trust us and understand that we are trying to make things better."



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMIT

OCTOBER, 2025



STUDENT
ADVOCATES

Twenty students participated in an intergenerational dialogue in October 2025 to discuss ways in which collective power to improve the Durham Black community could be harnessed. Themes of service to the community, the potential power of collective impact and being solution focused were present throughout the two-hour discussion focusing on civic engagement:

What does Civic Engagement mean to you?

"To use your God given gifts and talents to serve others to meet a need, to right a wrong, and empower others to become the best version of themselves".

"Community involvement; knowing what's happening in your community and being an active part of maintaining or improving it."

"Civic Engagement means to me doing your civic duty which could be a task as big as voting. Or as "small" as picking up a piece of garbage or pouring love out into the world."

"A group of people within a community coming together to discuss social issues to build and empower."

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BLACK SEL SUMMIT

The 4th annual Black SEL summit took place on September 25th at Hillside high school in Durham, North Carolina with the theme *Resisting by Reimagining*. The one-day event focused on the power of Black SEL programming with an emphasis on the future of the Black SEL Hub.



The day began with a ribbon cutting ceremony and proclamation by the mayor delivered by former board chair Forte Brown to approximately 150 attendees. Extensive media coverage documented the event including a powerful story on ABC11.



THE blackSEL HUB

At Hillside High School



The Black SEL Hub is a school-based emotional liberation space located at Hillside high school designed to support Black students' confidence, identity development, leadership, and social-emotional well-being through the Black SEL Framework.

Approximately 95 students entered the Hub over the course of a month with 75% of those students identifying as Freshman and 36% attending multiple times. The most frequent reasons for attendance was to simply take a break from daily stressors (31%), to regulate their emotions/calm down (33%) and to find a quiet place to eat lunch (14%). 100% of students exiting the Hub identified their needs as being met. 70% of students completing exit survey information indicated they would be interested in joining the Black SEL Hub and 78% expressed interest in the Black SEL Advocate program.

WHAT WE DISCOVERED:

1

There is a need for a place for Hillside Black students to take a breath and regulate their emotions.

2

Students valued additional opportunities to be involved with Black SEL.

3

The program at this point in time appeals to Freshman students the most.

4

Students leave the welcoming space of the Hub highly satisfied.



The Black SEL Hub

Program Launch: January 2026

The Hub provides daily prevention-focused programming, real-time intervention, and a culturally responsive healing environment that strengthens school climate and student success.

The Black SEL Hub model will serve 50 ninth-grade students across two sixteen-week cohorts beginning January 2026. Students are identified in partnership with school support teams based on academic and social-emotional needs, including transition challenges, peer conflict, attendance concerns, identity and confidence development, emotional regulation, and ongoing social or racial stressors, with leadership potential also considered.

The desired outcome of the Black SEL Hub Pilot is for students to experience a supportive, culturally affirming space that strengthens their transition into high school while building a strong sense of identity, belonging, confidence, and leadership grounded in the Black SEL Framework. Expected quarterly student impacts include increases in attendance, reductions in course failures, and reduction in discipline referrals.

CONCLUSION

Over six months, Black SEL directly served more than 300 students and 150 adults, with thousands more reached through youth-led advocacy, civic engagement, and community-centered action. Across immersive spaces and applied leadership opportunities, the data shows consistent growth not only in social-emotional skills, but in identity development, critical consciousness, and collective responsibility, which are hallmarks of Black Social-Emotional Learning Framework.

Black SEL operates at the intersection of theory, practice, and lived experience. It moves beyond coping skills to cultivate identity clarity, emotional freedom, civic agency, and collective care. The results affirm what students, families, and community members already know: Black SEL works because it centers Black humanity and builds pathways not just to success, but to wholeness.

As Black SEL enters its next phase with expanded Hub cohorts, continued advocacy programming, and SEL for movement building, this report stands as both evidence and invitation. It is clear from the data, that investing in Black Social-Emotional Learning for Black Social Emotional Liberation holds significant promise in equipping Black youth and adults with the tools and experiences to lead with purpose, collaboration and emotional intelligence.



The data in this report tells a clear story:

When Black youth and communities are seen, affirmed, and culturally supported, they do more than improve outcomes. They are transformed in how they see themselves, their communities, and their futures.