

Asbury Park High School Students Take First Step to College with Project BAM

Dream Academy Students Partner with Monmouth University and Big Brothers Big Sisters for Mentorship and College Exploration



Asbury Park High School students enrolled in the Dream Academy program recently visited Monmouth University for the launch of Project BAM for the 2023-24 school year. | Photo Credit: Courtesy of BBBSCNNJ

By Alissa Deleo

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ASBURY PARK, NJ — 15 Dream Academy students from Asbury Park High School have begun a transformative mentorship initiative with [Monmouth University](#) and [Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey](#) at Monmouth University through Project BAM.

"Our students are overwhelmingly first-generation college students, so I think it's an invaluable experience for them to not only work with students that are already on the campus living that next chapter, but the opportunity to be on a college campus and see what it feels like and see all the different resources that are available to them," Asbury Park High School Principal, Bridget O'Neill, said.

Project BAM, an acronym for Big Brothers Big Sisters, Asbury Park High School, and Monmouth University, was recently officially launched for the 2023-24 school year.

This signifies the start of a beneficial mentorship experience for both high school and college students.

The program meets on campus two times a month, allowing high school students to build strong friendships with a college student mentor for an entire school year.

Matches engage in myriad activities, tours and presentations to help them learn about college, the admissions process, financial aid and student life.

"It's really nice that we have Monmouth here locally and that they're willing to open the campus up to our students," O'Neill said, adding, "There's also a representation of Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) students in this program, who are at Monmouth now, and many of our students would be eligible for the same program. I think it's great for them to build those connections."

By the end of each program year, the impact is clear – strong friendships are built, and high school students emerge with a clearer understanding of college and a more equipped toolkit for planning their future.

"Project BAM is one of our longest-running school-based programs, and that is in part because of our strong partnerships with Asbury Park High School and Monmouth University," William Salcedo, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey, said. "We've had several mentees go on to attend college at Monmouth University and return to the program to pay it forward as mentors."

The [Asbury Park Dream Academy Early College Program](#), which launched in the fall of 2016, allows eligible students to earn an associate degree by the time they graduate from high school.

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