

I AM STEM

Layla Joseph

Layla Joseph's STEM path started as a child, with her first mentor - her mother. Layla's mom encouraged her to explore STEM at a very early age, and she's been exploring the world ever since. Layla graduated from Shaker Heights High School and Stanford University. She's now a research assistant at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and will be starting an MD/PhD program in Summer 2022.

Can you please describe some of the experiences that helped you realize you wanted to become a physician?

I think first and foremost, I would credit my mom with a lot of the path that I've taken because she, I don't know how much you know about her, but she is very involved in STEM outreach and a lot of the work she's done throughout my entire life has been getting kids, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds interested in STEM and seeing themselves in STEM careers.

I remember going to a pre-surgical camp at the Cleveland Natural History Museum one summer, and that was particularly inspiring for me. While growing up, I participated in STEM camps with great learning experiences every summer.

Have you met many STEM professionals of Color and how has that influenced you?

I was fortunate to meet many doctors and educators, particularly Black doctors and educators who really showed how to pave the way. It's more easy to feel confident in pursuing a particular career, if you see people who look like you.

What advice do you have for students?

If you aren't privileged to have a mom or family member who is deeply involved in STEM experiences, the responsibility sometimes does fall on you to seek those opportunities out. But I would suggest finding city resources, find out what the surrounding colleges and universities offer and see what opportunities are out there because I think a lot of these places have great ways for young people to get involved in STEM activities. A lot depends on knowing the right place to look.

And so I think if students are inspired by something they're learning in school, I would highly recommend for them to look for resources online and look for opportunities in their city or region to learn more. Summer is the perfect time to capitalize on both your freedom to relax and explore some of the things you can't do during school.

"FIND YOUR COMMUNITY. IT IS OUT THERE. WE REALLY DO NEED YOU IN THIS AREA AND THE FIELDS ARE MADE SO MUCH RICHER AND SO MUCH STRONGER BY YOUR PRESENCE."



The NeoSTEM Ecosystem is a collaboration of organizations throughout Northeast Ohio who partner to improve STEM educational opportunities for all students. Formed in 2014, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem's goals are to improve meaningful STEM learning opportunities for all students in the Northeast Ohio region. As one of 94 ecosystems operating as a part of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice, the NeoSTEM Ecosystem holds regular virtual and in-person meetings to learn about what community educational needs are and to develop solutions for those needs. For more information, please contact us at info@neostem.org.

Listen to the Interview →

