

Coming Full Circle: A Story of Two Brothers and Peer Mediation

Meet Cargin Madison. He is a freshman at Tougaloo College, in Jackson, Mississippi. If he looks familiar to you, it is probably because you have seen him over the last 6 years of T.A.P. (Talk About the Problems), our peer mediation/conflict resolution program. Cargin started with us when T.A.P. was just launching. He was in the very first cohort of students at Blackburn Middle School and was eager to try this new program designed to help improve the safety and climate of his struggling school. With the help of his advisor Mrs. Harkins, Principal Brown, and his fellow mediators he was able to make a sizable impact on the school.

Over the next six years Cargin stayed in T.A.P. and became a more powerful and influential mediator. He was one of the leaders who helped expand our program into his high school, Jim Hill High School, as well as several other schools in the local school district. We at the ISJL came to know Cargin very well and loved seeing him grow as a student leader.

When it came time for him to graduate high school we were thrilled that he decided to stay local and attend a phenomenal university. Since he graduated he has helped us present T.A.P. to new school leaders, joined us to meet with university deans, and was an instructor at our annual T.A.P. Summit held at the beginning of each school year, when we bring all T.A.P. mediators together for a day of learning and bonding. One of the best moments of this year's summit was seeing Cargin pass the T.A.P. baton to his younger brother, Cameron, who is just starting out at Blackburn Middle School. These two young men are committed to making a difference in



Cargin (left) and his brother Cameron participate in the annual summer TAP training.

their school, community, and state; and that is why T.A.P. is so important.

Talk About the Problems is providing students throughout the state meaningful leadership opportunities at their school. They are able to work with their peers to resolve conflicts that arise and disrupt classroom learning, keep students in administrative offices, and degrade school culture. The mediators work with the teachers, counselors, and administrators to provide this meaningful service during the school day so that small issues can be resolved expediently and not develop into larger problems. T.A.P. is designed to empower students and show them that they can improve their school just as much as any of the adults on campus. Moreover, they are learning skills that will be valuable to them for their entire life.

Now that we are nearing the finish line for the 2015-2016 school year, there are some amazing opportunities on the horizon. We are expanding our footprint in Mississippi by reaching additional schools that cover a geographic region of more than 150 miles.

Here at the ISJL we are eager to improve the quality of our schools, increase opportunities for our future leaders, and teach students that there are ways to handle conflicts that arise that will lead to a peaceful resolution. Young leaders like Cargin are a shining example of what students can do—we're proud to be able to partner with them to make it happen.