

The **Links' Leadership STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Academy: Left Brain, Right Brain Program**, a "Saturday School," was established in 2007 as an educational outreach initiative of the Bakersfield (CA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. Since its inception, the Academy has grown to become the chapter's **signature programming initiative**, providing meaningful academic enrichment, mentoring, and career exploration opportunities for youth in the Bakersfield community.

The Academy was created to improve the academic achievement and future opportunities of **at-risk students of color** by providing academic tutoring, mentoring, educational field trips, hands-on experiential learning, and exposure to new educational and career pathways. Students also participate in workshops and seminars addressing important topics that support healthy decision-making, personal development, leadership, and overall well-being.

In **2012**, the Academy adopted a curriculum centered on education in the disciplines of **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)**. Recognizing the important role creativity and innovation play in student learning, the Academy expanded its curriculum in **2017**, going "full STEAM ahead" by formally integrating the **Arts** into its programming.

In **2024**, the Bakersfield (CA) Chapter further expanded the Academy by piloting **Dr. Me**, an initiative developed by the Western Area Services to Youth program. Dr. Me introduces African American youth to careers in **healthcare, medicine, science, and related fields** through engaging, hands-on learning experiences and exposure to professionals and career pathways.

Students of color continue to be underrepresented in many STEAM-related educational and career fields. Limited access to high-quality STEAM education, enrichment opportunities, professional role models, and career exposure can contribute to this disparity. The **Links' Leadership STEAM Academy: Left Brain, Right Brain Program** works to help bridge this opportunity gap by providing students with experiences designed to increase their knowledge, confidence, curiosity, and readiness to pursue STEAM-related educational and career opportunities.

The goal of the **Links' Leadership STEAM Academy: Left Brain, Right Brain Program** is to **educate, motivate, inspire, and encourage at-risk students**, providing them with the academic support, exposure, experiences, and spark they need to envision greater possibilities for themselves and achieve future academic, personal, and career success.