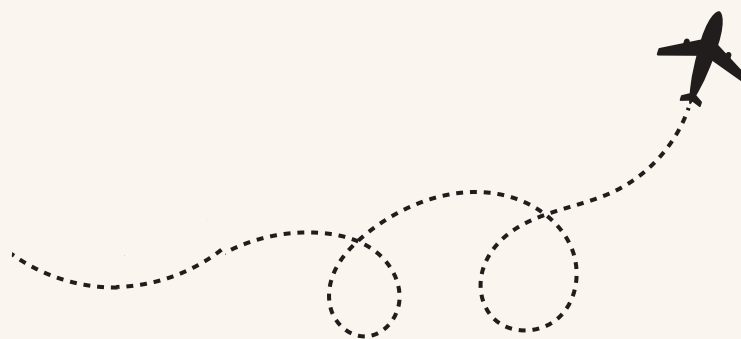


Dante Cotton



Dante Cotton's journey in education is a compelling blend of international experience, a deep commitment to equity, and a passion for empowering youth. His path, culminating in the Summer Principals Academy, highlights a desire to impact education from a leadership vantage point, addressing systemic disparities that he has witnessed as both a student and educator.

The Drive for Impactful Leadership

Dante's decision to pursue SPA was fueled by a vision for positive change. Recognizing "systemic disparities with equity and representation," particularly in

higher education, he sought to transition into a leadership role that could address these issues at their core. SPA has refined this vision, reinforcing his dedication to creating supportive environments where young people can explore their intellectual interests and find their own paths. His motivation is deeply personal:

"I see a lot of myself in the youth I teach."

A World of Experience: Japan, Hong Kong, and Beyond

Dante's early career began with his teaching in Japan after earning his bachelor's degree. This international experience, driven by a desire to understand diverse cultures and educational structures, significantly shaped his perspective. While adapting to a new country presented challenges—from managing finances to mastering the language—he ultimately found a surprising sense of belonging. He noted a fundamental difference in educational philosophies: the US emphasizes early independence, while Japan prioritizes group needs and communal learning.

His international engagement extended beyond teaching to roles as a translator and foreign policy researcher in Hong Kong and a UN DPI Yearbook Editor in NYC. These positions, spurred by an interest in international affairs and a desire for greater autonomy, allowed him to explore how foreign policies, migration, and labor rights intersect and shape societies.

Returning to Roots: Teaching in the Bronx

Returning to the US, Dante now teaches ENL (English as a New Language) in the Bronx. This move was driven by both economic stability and his genuine love for teaching and learning. In his current role, he finds immense reward in witnessing his diverse students' personal growth, recognizing the positive impact he has on their academic careers. His international background has profoundly influenced his teaching, leading him to understand that "policy influences practice" and that a country's history shapes its school climate. He approaches his work by considering his position within this broader societal context.

P.A.I.C.E. International: Cultivating Global Citizens

Dante's commitment to creating opportunities extends to P.A.I.C.E.

International (Purposeful Access to International Cultural Exchange), a company he co-founded. Inspired by a desire to help others discover their purpose, P.A.I.C.E. aims to provide lacking opportunities by exposing students to diverse cultures, languages, and societies. His vision for P.A.I.C.E. is to build educational partnerships, including dual enrollment programs with higher education institutions like Columbia University, to prepare underserved youth for college and entrepreneurship.

Looking Ahead

Dante aims to continue developing his leadership skills at SPA and plans to launch an overseas branch of P.A.I.C.E. to foster international education and cross-cultural exchange at the grassroots level. His advice to current and future SPA students is simple but powerful:

"Embrace everyone in your cohort—you never know what you might learn!"

Dante Cotton's journey is a testament to the power of global experience, a dedication to equity, and a profound commitment to shaping the next generation of global citizens.