The Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative

Opportunities for School District & Community Partnership

Budget Book
As a response to the COVID crisis, A+ Schools spearheaded the development of a coalition of over 70 regional organizations and individuals across Pittsburgh’s learning community to create the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative (PLC).

From the emergency school closures at the beginning of the pandemic through reopening plans and into the next school year in all its forms, the purpose of the PLC has been to serve as a coordinated asset to ensure equitable learning opportunities and resources for every student.

During the pandemic, the PLC’s focus was on increasing technology and internet access, improving family communications and at-home learning environments, and out-of-school time.

Based on the successful outcomes and strong network developed during the pandemic, A+ Schools is continuing to serve as the backbone organization of the PLC with a renewed mission, focus areas and goals to serve students and families.

To ensure every student shows up to school, ready every day. We serve as a coordinated asset to remove barriers to learning. Working with and leveraging the relationships of existing community organizations, we:

• **Identify issues** and needs of families
• **Coordinate** community-based distribution of existing resources and information
• **Identify** and apply local and national best practices
• **Work** collaboratively to develop and implement new solutions where needed

Over the coming years, the PLC will serve as a coordinated asset across the following focus areas:

• **Participation** (both in attending school and quality programs outside of school that help learning)
• **Literacy** (building partnerships with families and caregivers to help all children read)
• **Academic Support** (helping those students that need it)
• **Resources** (connecting families to the many supports that exist in our community to make sure their needs are met)
In March, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). ARPA provides $1.9 trillion in federal stimulus funding to help state and local governments—as well as individual taxpayers and businesses address the impact of COVID-19. This act provides almost $220 billion for education, child care, and education-related programs, plus $362 billion for local and state fiscal relief, much of which could ultimately support education. The total for the Department of Education is more than twice that of fiscal year 2021 regular funding, making this the federal government’s largest ever single investment in our schools. State and district leaders now have the opportunity to use these funds to address short-term needs associated with the pandemic and to invest in the structural changes that will, over the long term, make schools more equitable and whole-child focused.

ARPA includes $122.8 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER). ESSER funds will be distributed to states in the same way that the last two federal rescue packages were distributed: based on their relative Title I, Part A funding. The first $800 million of ESSER funding must be used by states to provide educational and wraparound services to students experiencing homelessness. The bill requires states to distribute the remaining $122 billion in the following manner:

- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) ($109.8 billion): Ninety percent of funding will be distributed to districts based on their relative share of Title I, Part A funding.
- Lost Learning Time ($6.1 billion): States must use at least 5% of their ESSER funding “to address learning loss by supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning, extended day, or extended school year programs, and ensure such interventions respond to students’ academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on [students of color, students from families experiencing low-incomes, students with disabilities, English language learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care].”
- After-School Programs ($1.2 billion): A minimum of 1% of state funding must be used for after-school programs that address students’ academic, social, and emotional needs.
- Summer Enrichment Programs ($1.2 billion): At least 1% of funding must be used by states to provide students with evidence-based summer learning programs.
- Administration Costs ($610 million): States can spend up to 0.5% of their funding on the costs of administering this program.
- Remaining State Funds ($3 billion): States will be allowed to use these funds on any of the allowable uses in the act.

LEAs will be required to use at least 20% of the funds they receive ($22 billion) to address lost learning time for students. They will have the freedom to spend the remaining 80% ($87.8 billion) of funding based on local needs and priorities.

In the final bill, a number of amendments approved by the Senate were included that increased funding for students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and sought transparency in school district’s plans for reopening and addressing continuity of services.

- As amended, the legislation provides $2.6 billion in additional funding for state special education grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. That’s on top of the roughly $12.9 billion in state grants for special education for this year in the regular federal budget. In addition, the legislation provides $200 million for special education preschool grants, and $250 million for infants and toddlers with disabilities, both under the IDEA.
• The Senate took $2.75 billion out of the House bill’s K-12 relief fund and earmarked it for private schools. Governors would allocate this money; it would basically work the same way as a fund for private schools in the second COVID-19 relief bill signed by former President Donald Trump in December. That legislation also provided $2.75 billion in direct aid for private schools. Governors are supposed to prioritize that pot of funding for schools serving disadvantaged students and private schools “most impacted” by the virus.

• Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H) offered an amendment that will ensure schools are transparent in their plans surrounding reopening and learning opportunities. The amendment says that within 30 days of receiving this new relief funding, school districts will have to publish “a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services.” If districts have already released such plans, they can use those to satisfy this requirement.

• Sen. Lisa Murkowski, (R-AK) introduced an amendment that was agreed to by the Senate that provides $800 million help identify students experiencing homelessness, and to provide those students with wraparound services. The $800 million would also be earmarked to help those students “attend school and participate fully in school activities.” This funding would be set aside by states. By one estimate, schools have lost track of more than 1 in four homeless students during the pandemic. And the number of homeless students appeared to be rising before COVID-19, hitting an all-time high in the 2017-18 school year.

Other elements of the bill that are worth noting include:

• States and schools must reserve roughly 25 percent of the stabilization fund for learning recovery (e.g. summer school and extended-day programs).

• $350 billion is available for state and local governments.

• $7 billion is available to help students and educators connect to the internet and provide them with connected devices, through the federal E-Rate program.

• $39 billion will go to early-childhood programs, including Child Care and Development Block Grants and a stabilization fund for child-care providers.

• Language in ARPA would punish states that want to enact/expand a new voucher tax credit by requiring them to pay back the equivalent amount of federal aid dollars as the tax credit they are issuing.

• Families can claim up to $3,600 per child under age 6 and $3,000 for children up to age 17 for one year to help combat the economic damage of the pandemic. House Democrats are looking to make the tax change permanent. The current tax credit is up to $2,000 per child.

As districts, municipalities, counties and the state begin to make plans for how to spend their American Rescue funds, advocates can be at the table with recommendations and with evidence about how critical needs can be addressed.

This book is meant to offer districts and other government entities receiving stimulus dollars with a possible menu of partnerships that LEA’s may choose to support financially by way of their ARPA funding as an allowable expense. Many of the partners featured have long standing histories in our communities and have demonstrated records of success with students.

Dr. Kaitlyn Brennan, 2021

“If you’re not at the table, you’re probably on the menu.”

See you at the table!
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

COACHING & CONVENING

Services:
- Coaching, consulting, facilitation
- Partnering with: Districts, schools, & education orgs

Focus areas:
- Instructional strategy
- Restart and recovery
- Professional learning

*New to Pittsburgh and quickly learning about the region - projects below describe my recent work nationally.*

Professional Learning: technical assistance for teacher leaders as they facilitate continuous improvement cycles among colleagues. I led a cohort of 4th-grade teachers in Lafayette, LA, alongside Teaching Lab, focused on implementation of their literacy curriculum through a model of teacher-led professional development.

Leadership coaching: support to principals, assistant superintendents, and central office leaders. I coached leaders in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities - mostly around instructional leadership - and more recently bringing in management coaching, group dynamics, and catalyzing/sustaining teacher leadership.

Strategy: facilitating a project to diversify the teacher workforce by improving high school programming, reshaping residency programming and teacher training, and rethinking how current teachers of color are supported and sustained. Funded by Dell, with Rodel of Delaware, I convene partners statewide, including the Department of Education, all college and university Educator Preparation Programs, and school systems.

Facilitation: co-led a workgroup for leaders across nineteen state Departments of Education, which focused on simultaneously advancing standards-aligned instruction and culturally responsive teaching. Alongside CCSSO, this cross-state group evolved from a theme of Closing the Achievement Gap, to Supporting Students Below Grade Level, and finally to High-Quality Culturally Responsive Instruction.

Policy: working with a network of thirteen states, convened by CCSSO, funded by Gates and Schusterman, and in partnership with Student Achievement Partners, EdReports, and others. We are focused on advancing the use of high-quality instructional materials and curriculum specific professional learning. Most of my part is with Rhode Island and Nebraska.

Thought partnership: facilitated a strategic planning process for the School District of Philadelphia, with Bloom Planning, alongside a working group of chiefs, assistant superintendents, literacy experts, principals, and the teachers union. Funded by the William Penn Foundation, we led the concept development for team-based professional learning among early childhood teachers and coaches.

Bio: I am a coach and facilitator, supporting those who are shifting mindsets and practices across the education sector. I am committed to a system of schools where students of color and those in poverty are thriving. I provide facilitation, strategy, and coaching services to leaders and teams within school districts, universities, nonprofits, foundations, and state Departments of Education. I started as a teacher and worked in leadership roles in districts, nonprofits, and technical assistance firms. My policy and strategy work focuses on: restart and recovery planning, standards-aligned and culturally responsive instruction, high-quality curriculum and professional learning, teacher leadership and continuous improvement, Ed Prep Programming, teacher residency, and diversifying the teacher workforce. Alongside clients and partners, I work to advance new legislation, open and allocate new funding streams, and shift mindsets/narratives/practices across large and complex systems.

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Creating System Change

We believe we have all of the resources in Pittsburgh to holistically meet the needs of children in our region. We hope this book will serve as a resource for school districts and providers alike to build strategic partnerships and a better tomorrow for our youth.
Operational Excellence - Invest in Your Leadership and Staff

In the February 1, 2021 presentation to the Board Business Committee, PPS leaders declared that “Our system is perfectly designed to get the results that we are getting.” While district finances were the main topic of that meeting, the observation holds true for the whole organization. The district has worked hard to implement an astonishing array of programs, initiatives and professional development opportunities aimed at improving SEL supports, school culture, the instructional system, and developing a culture of high performance across all PPS staff. Yet integrating these many building blocks of excellence into a coherent system capable of realizing its ambitious Imagine PPS vision remains challenging.

The current opportunity is to invest in further developing PPS’s capacity for delivering operational excellence and continuous improvement that can pay extraordinary dividends in magnifying and sustaining the impact of the district’s many strategic initiatives. Other districts that have achieved breakthrough results indicate that realizing this opportunity required them to:

- align all systems and processes (operational and instructional) to its key goals and values,
- develop leaders at every level to model and coach improvement, and
- use feedback to drive rapid learning about what works to produce desired results and when adjustments are needed.

This is hard work, but if done well it can:

- dramatically reduce duplication of effort, hassles and frustration;
- increase employee agency, collaboration and productivity;
- shift the role of the central office from compliance to support; and
- build a common approach to sustainable excellence – both within the district itself and in partnership with the community.

This would require significant upfront investment of leader and staff time and approximately $4 million over 4 years to fund executive advising and coaching to lead the effort, professional development at all levels, and enhancements in the districts’ improvement infrastructure. The examples of Birmingham, AL and Cincinnati, OH illustrate the potential of this approach, as shown in the tables below.

### Birmingham City Schools in partnership with Studer Education

“Purpose, practice and performance at a higher level.”

**Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent, Birmingham City Schools (2016-2020)**

- Serves 24,000 students in 51 schools
- 95% African American, 4% Latinx, 1% White
- 88% qualify for free & reduced lunch

**ACTIONS**

- Align district around unified strategic direction and cascaded measures that matter
- Set standards of practice to operationalize values
- Leader development in leading improvement cycles and organizational excellence tools & tactics
- Service excellence training

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<tr>
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<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
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<td>District received ‘F’ grade on state-issued report card</td>
<td>District received ‘C’ grade on state-issued report card</td>
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<td>22 ‘F’ rated schools</td>
<td>6 ‘F’ rated schools</td>
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<td>65% graduation rate</td>
<td>79% graduation rate</td>
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<td>Accreditation in jeopardy</td>
<td>No longer an ‘underperforming’ district</td>
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<td>Defeated, disengaged culture</td>
<td>Improved employee engagement (as measured by annual survey)</td>
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### Cincinnati Public Schools in partnership with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital

“Quality improvement became part of the system, a part of the culture – the way we did things...it’s not a program that might go away in a few years.”

**Christopher Grant, Principal, Westwood Elementary**

- 36,500 students in 63 schools
- 6,000+ new students since 2012-13
- 64% Black, 24% White, 6% Latinx, 6% multi-racial, 1% Asian
- 72% qualify for free & reduced lunch

**ACTIONS**

- Leadership engagement
- Agreement on system level measures, critical processes and dashboards
- Hardwired, reliable improvement routines and rhythms
- Individual capability and system capacity building for improvement
- Community partnerships to increase child health and K readiness

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<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
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<tr>
<td>46% 3rd grade reading proficiency rate</td>
<td>66% 3rd grade reading proficiency rate</td>
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<td>78% White proficiency rate</td>
<td>86% White proficiency rate</td>
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<td>37% Black proficiency rate</td>
<td>69% Black proficiency rate</td>
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<td>Accreditation in jeopardy</td>
<td>No longer an ‘underperforming’ district</td>
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<td>Launched small literacy pilot with 2 teachers in 1 school, 44 children.</td>
<td>Scaled to 5 elementary schools, 150 teachers, 11,000 children. Focus on literacy, math, SEL and absenteeism.</td>
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COACHING &
CONVENING

**Services:** Strategy, professional learning, leadership coaching

**Focus Areas:** Instructional strategy, professional learning, teacher leadership, quality curriculum implementation, stakeholder engagement, grow-your-own programming, diversifying teacher workforce

**Partners:** Schools, districts, agencies, foundations, nonprofits, colleges

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**Professional Learning:**
- Technical assistance for teacher leaders as they facilitate continuous improvement among colleagues
- Supporting professional growth through multiple structures for teacher and principal development
- Thought partnering with districts to set a professional learning strategy aligned with district priorities

**Leadership coaching:**
- Leadership and management coaching for superintendents, central office, principals, emerging leaders
- Advising on strategy, policy, and implementation - as well as group dynamics and change management
- Adaptive change, Agile, Lean, antiracism, growth mindset, Suzuki, Atomic Habits, Brene Brown

**Developing strategy for new program or initiative:**
- Thought partnering with leaders and stakeholder to identify vision, outcome goals, and priorities
- Driven by values of equity, instructional leadership, cultural responsiveness, and change management
- Team approach includes structures for shared voice, multiple forms of feedback, and professional growth

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**Bio:**
I am a coach and facilitator, supporting those who are shifting mindsets and practices across the education sector. I am committed to a system of schools where students of color and those in poverty are thriving. I provide facilitation, strategy, and coaching services to leaders and teams within school districts, universities, nonprofits, foundations, and state Departments of Education. I started as a teacher and worked in leadership roles in districts, nonprofits, and technical assistance firms. Recently I co-led a four-year workgroup for leaders across 19 states, focused on advancing both standards-aligned instruction and culturally responsive teaching. I also coach CAOs as part of a national policy project. My policy and strategy work focuses on: restart and recovery planning, standards-aligned and culturally responsive instruction, high-quality curriculum and professional learning, teacher leadership and continuous improvement, Ed Prep Programming, teacher residency, and diversifying the teacher workforce. Alongside clients and partners, I work to advance new legislation, offer and allocate new funding streams, and shift mindsets/narratives/practices across large and complex systems. I am fairly new to Pittsburgh and quickly learning about the region. Most current and recent work is in Rhode Island, Delaware, Philadelphia, Nebraska, and supported by large agencies and foundations.

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Diversifying and Rebuilding the Educator Pipeline

As we look toward reopening schools, districts will need the capacity to meet students’ needs in this evolving environment; personnel with expert research-based skills will be required. Before the pandemic began, our education system was at a crisis point – with woeful underfunding of and a dire shortage teachers reported in nearly all states. Our need for a fully prepared and highly skilled educator workforce and a substantial investment to do so has never been more evident than it is right now.

This American Rescue Plan Act provides LEAs with nearly $110 billion through a single program with a great deal of flexibility. Funds can be spent on any educational expense allowed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and IDEA, plus a number of specific allowable uses. This includes stabilizing and diversifying the educator workforce and rebuilding the educator pipeline.

The Department of Education has issued suggested guidance on allowable uses of funds to rebuild the educator pipeline by way of partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education and Community partners. These suggestions are outlined below:

• Providing loan forgiveness, grants, or service scholarship programs that significantly underwrite the cost of postsecondary education in exchange for a commitment to teach in a high-need field or school for a minimum number (e.g., four) of years (see the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program).

• Developing and implementing high-quality comprehensive teacher residency programs (further described below) that provide extensive clinical experience and have been shown to increase teacher retention and effectiveness

• Developing and implementing professional development programs and mentoring models, particularly for newer teachers, that emphasize building effective instructional strategies and provide time for ongoing collaboration.

• Programs that engage students early and give them hands-on opportunities to learn about the teaching profession, such as “Grow Your Own” programs, might be particularly effective in recruiting educators who reflect the diversity and specific needs of our most underserved students. “Grow Your Own” programs often also support paraeducators, high-quality substitute teachers, and others in a community who are interested in transitioning into roles as educators by supporting their training and path to certification. Partnerships with educator preparation programs and especially Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities can provide pipelines and opportunities that best prepare candidates for the real-world experiences of teaching in high-need communities. Partnerships among schools, districts, and IHEs (including community colleges) can support recruiting diverse educators.

• Residency programs, especially those that allow new teachers to earn income, have also shown promise in both supporting new educators and diversifying the pool of educators. These programs give teaching candidates extended, year-long opportunities to learn alongside mentor teachers in ways that are tightly coupled with their coursework. Candidates completing these experiences can provide crucial support for accelerating learning as students recover from the impact of COVID-19. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education used CARES Act funds to expand teaching residency programs. Given that school districts will have through 2024 to use such funds and the projection of a robust investment in education by way of the Biden-Harris Administration’s FY 2022 budget—this can be a sustainable investment.
Homelessness

Student homelessness is not a fringe issue. Schools throughout Allegheny County identified 3,451 students experiencing homelessness (SEH) in the 2018-19 school year, and preliminary reports from PPS for 2019-20 indicated their numbers had increased to over 1,800 students in their district alone. That’s about 7% of the total PPS student body. Based on expert estimates and identification rates throughout the nation, it’s also likely an undercount.

These students face significant barriers to academic achievement. They are 87% more likely than stably housed students to drop out of school before they graduate, which traces a direct line to future homelessness -- young adults who do not achieve at least a GED are 4.5x more likely to experience homelessness than their peers with a diploma.

With $800 million in federal education spending from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) set aside specifically to support the identification, enrollment, and school participation of students experiencing homelessness, it is essential that Local Education Agencies (LEAs, including school districts, charter schools, magnets, etc.) in Allegheny County apply for these funds from the state, then spend them on effective interventions.

Students experiencing homelessness (SEH) have been disproportionately affected over the course of the pandemic, and these funds could go a long way toward alleviating some of the otherwise deepening educational inequities that they face.
While recognizing many schools are already successfully implementing some of these strategies, Homeless Children’s Education Fund (HCEF) urges districts/LEAs to use new funds from the ARPA to:

- **Improve 1 to 1 technology access** by paying for insurance on all devices provided to SEH and by waiving technology replacement fees for SEH. All students may start the year with technology, but families who lose their housing throughout the year often struggle to maintain that tech access. It’s crucial that LEAs create policies that can quickly restore access to devices/internet for these families. Even after schools return to in-person education, improving access to technology will improve SEH’s ability to participate in school activities.

- **Reduce transportation delays for SEH**. It frequently takes multiple weeks for schools to re-route buses to transport SEH who have moved due to loss of housing. These extended periods of missed class time due to lack of transportation cause SEH to fall behind academically. Hiring incentives to address driver shortages combined with policies that prioritize efficient school transportation of SEH could help reduce these inequitable wait times.

- **Transport students to out of school programs**. Transportation remains a barrier for low income and housing unstable students for extracurricular activities as well as to school itself. Providing transportation will help re-engage students/families in valuable out of school time programs who are otherwise unable to access them.

- **Increase regular, individualized, and proactive outreach to improve identification of families in crisis**. Identification of SEH in Allegheny County and across the country has plummeted during the pandemic. Most experts agree this is most likely not due to a real number decrease but rather due to the changes in the way schools have engaged with families during the pandemic. LEAs could use funds to offer stipends to teachers and school staff who volunteer time to methodically make calls and even knock on doors to build connections with families, find out how things are going, and see if their living situations have changed.

- **Create basic needs pantries at schools**. Free lunch and Grab n Go sites throughout Allegheny County have increased family engagement in schools by meeting basic needs. Extending these offerings to healthy snacks and basic supplies that can be accessed at any time during school hours would continue to build better connections with students/families while meeting real needs.

- **Fund valuable out of school time partners**. Summer and out of school time programs continue to play a key role in engaging students in education despite the challenges of the pandemic. They deserve to be compensated for services that are indispensable to the work of the education system as a whole.

- **Follow any of national leader SchoolHouse Connection’s recommendations for ESSER funds** https://schoolhouseconnection.org/how-to-use-esserii-funds/.

HCEF will happily consult with districts to provide support in developing any of these policies/practices. Please feel free to reach out to bknight@homelessfund.org for help getting started or further suggestions.

The following housing and education organizations have expressed their support for the above funding priorities for Allegheny County’s students experiencing homelessness:

- STEM Coding Lab
- Arts Education Collaborative
- Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh
- A Martinez Consulting
- Auberle
- Sisters Place, Inc.
- Allegheny Valley Association of Churches, Inc.
- Family Promise of Southwestern Pennsylvania
- Voices Against Violence
- RefocusED, Inc.
- Education Law Center
- C-clear Empowerment Inc.
Out-of-School Time (OST) programs continually show up year after year, unofficially partner with Pittsburgh Public Schools, and provide safe spaces for children before and after school, over the summer and on weekends. OST programs provide positive and welcoming spaces for children to explore interests, get homework support, socialize with peers, develop skills for future work, and a broad array of additional services.

During the COVID pandemic, OST providers showed up in force and without any guarantees of financial support from the district or any other funder. Throughout the pandemic, Community Learning Hubs have provided holistic, in-person support to children of the district with meals, safe space, access to reliable internet and other educational tools, adult support, and community resources to support the whole family. Community Learning Hubs served over 1000 PPS students per month from September 2020 – May 2021 at an average cost of $50 per day or approximately $9 million. Funding was provided through Allegheny County DHS and CARES dollars and managed through a partnership with DHS, United Way of Southwestern PA, and Trying Together.

PPS OST office has approximately 140 preferred partners that serve about 30% or over 6400 of the district’s students over the course of an average year. During the 2020-21 school year, preferred partners continued to serve about 12% or over 2600 students. None of these partners receive any financial support from the district. Instead they must continuously search for funds from foundations, grants, and other private donations to ensure ongoing and consistent programming.

PPS has an opportunity to grow and sustain these partnerships and have true community involvement in schools. Even with the 140 preferred partners within the district, the supply of high-quality programming still does not meet the demand from families. It is estimated that for every 1 child being served by an OST provider, two to three more children are waiting to get in. With continuity of funding from the district, community OST partners could help close the gap in services and begin to build a more meaningful and sustainable partnership with PPS.

While these programs typically operate in the out of school time and after school environment this could be an opportunity for school districts to partner with organizations for in-house programming.
Since 2017, **Hello Neighbor** has been building relationships with refugees and immigrant families in Pittsburgh through family mentorship. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a new program, **Study Buddy**, was launched in Fall 2020. The program is designed to virtually match Pittsburgh-area refugee and immigrant students with peer tutors who provide remote homework help, assist with navigating digital learning, encourage students to feel empowered and ask for help, and celebrate student success. Matches meet twice per week for one hour each session.

The program piloted with 16 students and has expanded to support 31 refugee and immigrant students across eight (8) school districts in Allegheny County. We provide 60+ hours of virtual support per week and have logged over 300 hours of tutoring since the program launched. We’ve also hired three (3) supporting staff members and developed relationships with school staff, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) departments. Hello Neighbor plans to continue Study Buddy into the 2021-2022 school year with hopes of expanding our reach.

In addition to Study Buddy, Hello Neighbor has supported over 500 refugees and immigrants across our additional Family Services programming: Family Mentorship, Smart Start for refugee and immigrant mothers and their children and Direct Services supporting basic needs. We also have a cash assistance program the Refugee Assistance Fund (RAF). RAF typically helps refugees cover the costs of important things like rent, education and technology needs, job development support, transportation support, and more.

When the pandemic hit, and many refugees who work in sectors like hotel housekeeping and ridesharing lost their jobs, the requests for RAF funds to cover food, specifically, spiked. Plus, our COVID-19 Direct Response program was born out of a need to deliver essential items to our families who are struggling with the economic ramifications of this public health crisis. 100% of our refugee families live on or below the poverty line, needing support more than ever as their incomes are threatened.

### Outcomes

- 31 immigrant and refugee students currently participating, with a 1:1 ratio.
  - 18 (58% of participating students) students currently enrolled in ESL classes.
- 8 school districts, including Pittsburgh Public Schools, Carlynton, West Mifflin, Baldwin-Whitehall, Brentwood Borough, Northgate, and two charter schools (Propel McKeesport and Young Scholars of Western PA).
- 90+ hours of virtual support per week and
- 300+ hours of tutoring since the program launched
- Fall to Spring Retention Rate: 87.5%
- Spring 2021 Retention Rate: 97%
- Students have reported feeling supported, improving grades, guidance in asking teachers for help.
  - 100% of students indicated that their Study Buddy sessions were helpful; 83% of student evaluations indicated that they felt their Tutor was “very helpful” during sessions. The remaining 17% of student evaluations indicated that they felt their Tutor was “mostly helpful.”
- Back to School Distribution:
  - 105 students benefited from the distribution, deliveries, and the 2nd round of essential item pick ups
  - Received over $5,110 from donations, in-kind donations, and Wishlist purchases
  - Students received stuffed backpacks with school supplies like calculators, notebooks, folders...etc.
  - 8 students received Chromebooks purchased by funders and individual donors.

### Partnerships

**Allegheny County Department of Human Services**
- Staff received Trauma-Informed Care Training
- **Mental Health First Aid training scheduled for Spring 2021**

**Tutor Pipeline:**
- Higher Education: Study Buddy is a peer-tutoring model and many of our tutors are currently enrolled in undergraduate and post-graduate programs at the University of Pitt, Carnegie Mellon University, Community College of Allegheny County, Grove City College, and more.
- Several tutors are currently serving in the Americorps National Health Corps

**Back to School Distribution:**
- Global Wordsmiths, East Liberty Presbyterian Church, and individual donors provided school supplies.
- Metamorphosis Salon provided free haircuts to students.
- The Good People Fund and an individual donor provided money for 8 students to receive Chromebooks.

**Mayor Peduto and the City of Pittsburgh**
- Mayor Peduto has signed a letter of approval for Study Buddy and Hello Neighbor’s related programming

**Education-related Collaboratives:** Hello Neighbor Youth Development Program Coordinator is an active participant in the following education-related collaboratives:
- Education Justice Network for Immigrants and Refugees (EJN-IR)
- All for All’s Education Sub-committee
- A+ Schools Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative
- Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition

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**Opportunities for School District & Community Partnership:** A project by the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative
Overview of need: Our network of literacy programming serves children who were at risk of academic failure long before COVID. RIF kids are predominantly Black and low-income, the two demographics in Pittsburgh schools whose 3rd-graders register the lowest literacy and the greatest disparity in achievement. The 2020 A+ Schools’ Report to the Community reveals that at the city’s lowest-performing elementary school, Pittsburgh Miller in the Hill District, 92 percent of students are growing up in low-income households and a stunning 79 percent of Black third-graders can’t read at grade level.

In the last year, these young lives have been further upended by twin crises: the pandemic, which has had outsized health and economic impacts on Black communities, and the ongoing consequences of unrelenting police violence against people of color. The abrupt shutdown and ongoing disruptions, both in school and in day-to-day life, are having profound effects on children, the extent of which is not yet known. At the very least, learning loss, compounded by psychosocial and emotional challenges associated with remote instruction, threatens to increase the literacy and achievement gaps that already put many of these children at a disadvantage. It is these disparities that RIF Pittsburgh works to mitigate.

What RIF does: RIF Pittsburgh works to lessen the literacy gap by improving access to books, activities, and motivational relationships in struggling neighborhoods in Pittsburgh; at the time COVID struck, we were reaching 23,000 children a year and putting over 104,000 books into their hands and homes. Our core programs work together to provide literacy support that follows children from birth into their teens, engaging their families, caregivers, and the important adults in their life all along the way.

- **Books for Keeps (BFK)** visits pre-K to 6th-grade classrooms across the city with reading celebrations that inspire children to want to read, and supply the books that make it possible. Kids enjoy a story and an interactive activity, then pick a book “for keeps”!

- Our **Storymobiles** are RIF Pittsburgh’s “street” ambassadors; libraries-on-wheels that visit partner sites and schedule community stops in seven neighborhoods of need: East Liberty, Hazelwood, the Hill District, Homewood/East Hills, North Side, South Side and Wilkinsburg. At early childhood centers, pre-K and kindergarten classrooms, schools, and after-schools, we build reading and social skills, and help stock children’s home libraries with great books to snuggle into bed with.

- Our **Book Babies** initiative invites parents onto the Storymobile to Read, Talk, Sing, Play, EVERYDAY! with their tots. At each visit, families get books, toys and care items to strengthen crucial, at-home literacy development.

- Finally, our literacy mentoring programs – school-based Everybody Wins! (EW!) and corporate-based RIF Readers – match pre-K-3 students with volunteer mentors for weekly reading and discussion, and kids thrive under the one-on-one attention. RIF Readers also exposes children to a corporate environment, to help broaden their visions for the future.

“Read Today, Change Tomorrow”: It’s become undeniable in this year of uncertainty that the inequities affecting our children’s education, families and futures have racial underpinnings. At this critical juncture, with many Americans listening, a window of opportunity for real change is opening. As we reassess the values we are instilling in our kids, we need to examine the content of the children’s books our society turns to – at story time, bedtime or in the classroom – while raising the next generation. In the communities RIF serves, we are a primary provider of the books in children’s homes.

Our “Read Today, Change Tomorrow” initiative to address systemic racism and advance racial equity is an effort to ensure that across all of our programming, we are providing powerful titles by Black authors and illustrators that enable families of all backgrounds to celebrate and find inspiration in the lives, voices and rich experiences of Black culture and communities. For little ones in Book Babies, Storymobile kids, Books for Keeps classes, or Reading Buddies in our mentoring programs, Black-centered stories resonate across generations and racial differences. With this initiative, we are committing across all our programming to highlight books that strengthen children’s voices, validate their goals, and elevate their thinking about the great, wide world of possibilities open to them.
YWCA Greater Pittsburgh has provided out-of-school time (OST) opportunities for youth, particularly students of color, for over 20 years. Our OST programs are holistically designed with a STEM focus and offer students equitable opportunities and pathways to economic success. According to the recently released America After 3 PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks report, 24.6 million children in the U.S. lack access to out-of-school opportunities. “More than half of Black and Latinx children are not in an afterschool program but would be enrolled in a program if one were available” (Afterschool Alliance, Edge Research, 2021). Funds allocated to community organizations like YWCA Greater Pittsburgh from the American Rescue Plan Act allow us to continue to respond to the underrepresentation of women, especially women of color, in STEM fields. YWCA Greater Pittsburgh provided 2,000 youth, 72% of which are youth of color, with OST STEM enrichment programs pre-covid.

Recent statistics show that 61% of low-income families consider cost of out-of-school time a barrier in enrolling their children in programs. Coupled with 58% of parents reporting safe transportation to and from programs as a barrier and 44% of parents identifying the absence of afterschool programs altogether, the data is clear that only those from certain socioeconomic levels have access to the current OST system (Afterschool Alliance, Edge Research, 2021). To address OST access barriers, YWCA meets students where they are by providing programs in schools and community centers and at no cost.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing opportunity gaps and magnified the divide of systemic inequities faced by students of color from low-income families. Throughout the COVID pandemic our enrollment dropped significantly (approximately 800 youth served) due to various challenges for families and funding being diverted to meet basic needs of families. Financial resources provided through ARPA will help close these opportunity gaps by providing the resources and opportunities our youth deserve in the OST space.

Our role as out-of-school time professionals in the education ecosystem is vital to the well-being of our students. OST programs not only provide educational benefits, but they offer students the ability to develop interests, find their passions, build positive relationships with caring adults, and provide social and emotional learning opportunities (Afterschool Alliance, 2021). As our schools re-open, we recognize that everything will not return to “normal” overnight. Our programs must be agile, and we must cultivate environments that support students in ways we would not have imagined 18 months ago.

Re-opening will impact all children, and we need to ensure that our most vulnerable have more opportunities for success. Out-of-school time programs provide youth with a safe place to grow academically and cultivate the foundational skills they will need as successful adults. As a partner of our local school districts, we should protect and improve educational programs, services, and policies that empower the women, children, and families we serve. Funding from ARPA allows for collaboration between school districts and OST providers to meet these needs while addressing educational inequities that have expanded during this time.
INNOVATIVE PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Since 1888, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania has served several thousand youth ages 4-18, making us the largest after school and Summer youth provider in our region. Our goal is to provide every young person with the essential tools needed for a successful and bright future by doing whatever it takes to activate and advance their potential.

The vision of Boys & Girls Clubs and the dynamics of our programs and services has grown and changed with the needs of our youth. Every day, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania strives to improve each young person’s life by growing self-esteem, academic abilities, professional skills, courage, and positive values through our five core program areas. BGCWPA is here to serve communities, school districts, and families. Two years ago, our organization embarked on a strategic planning process to reimagine how we might best support youth, families, and communities in this region. We have incorporated new academic support, STEM, and Career Development programming for teens in addition to our historic Afterschool and Summer enrichment programs.

BGCWPA has the ability to offer programs and services at our sites, or within community partner or school district sites. Below is a menu of programming, services, and outreach opportunities for partnership that you may consider. BGCWPA has programming built for you and is able to customize programs, outreach programs, and support services that best meet your children and youths’ needs.

BGCWPA’S CORE SERVICE MODEL

BGCWPA offers programs and services in school based sites, stand alone sites, and other partnership based locations.

School Based Sites: BGCWPA’s school-based Clubhouses are enriching places for your child to spend time before and after school! Before school services are available immediately before the school day, with after school services available immediately after until 6:00 or 6:30 PM. School based Clubhouse programming generally includes homework help, STEM programming, physical fitness & recreation activities, art, literacy and academic support, gaming, fun and an afternoon snack or meal!

Stand Alone Sites: Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania stand alone Clubhouses are located in easily accessible locations throughout Allegheny and Somerset counties, and are a safe, enriching and fun place for your child to spend time during the school day while virtual & hybrid learning options exist, or before and after school. Specialty and teen programs are also available at all of our stand alone sites. Our action packed activities inspire creativity, build leadership skills and provide academic enrichment and support. All children qualify to attend our programs regardless of family income.

Partner Sites: BGCWPA collaborates with many community organizations who have their own Afterschool and Summer programs, and we are a provider of specialty arts, STEM, and mentoring programs for them. Reach out to learn more on how BGCWPA can enhance your organization’s current programming. We are available to run our programs at your site.

YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Early childhood development is fundamental to the growth of your child! BGCWPA offers Preschool programming for youth ages 3-5, with breakfast, lunch, and snack provided daily! BGCWPA’s dedicated, certified and nurturing staff provides age-appropriate curriculum, proven developmental activities, and a vibrant and fun environment to get your child on the path to a GREAT FUTURE! We are geared to start a Preschool program at your site.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Not your average Afterschool program, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania offers an innovative, supportive and enriching environment for youth to spend time after school where they can learn, have fun, and receive healthy snacks and academic support utilizing the most current, proven methods youth need to set them up for long-term success and a GREAT FUTURE!

BGCWPA’s quality Afterschool programming provides youth access to diverse learning programs including STEM programs, specialty arts programs, mentoring, computer skills, CoBox robotics, and leadership training. Guided by our highly trained instructors in both in house and Boys & Girls Clubs of America curriculum, our Afterschool program offers playful, age appropriate opportunities for ALL children! BGCWPA can host your students at any of our stand alone locations, or offer an Afterschool program within one of your buildings.

SUMMER DAY CAMP

BGCWPA has decades of experience as a premier Summer Day Camp provider. BGCWPA can host your students at any of our stand alone locations, or offer a Summer Day camp program within one of your buildings. Unleash your inner Olympic athlete, paint the next great masterpiece, learn to cook your favorite recipe, discover your passion for the performing arts….the possibilities this Summer are endless! With 9 exciting thematic weeks, youth will get to explore fun and engaging camp rotations including STEM, arts, athletics, literacy, and outdoor exploration. With breakfast, lunch and snack included daily!

BGCWPA also offers community located specialty Summer Camp classes, specialty sports and recreation, STEM, arts, and teen programming including Learn & Earn, Career Works, and our Artificial Intelligence Pathways Institute. Your students can attend Summer Day Camp at one of our existing locations, or we can bring one to your facility.
VIRTUAL CLASSES
While traditional learning may look a bit different in the near future, BGCWPA is committed to advancing education, and giving youth the resources they need to explore their interests virtually. As the first Boys & Girls Club in the nation to partner with Outschool using our in-house certified and highly trained instructors, these virtual courses allow us to flip what online learning normally looks like and turn it into highly interest driven, live sessions. We offer highly curated classes ranging between 25-45 minutes, taught by our instructors as well as offer our members special access to numerous classes taught by teachers from all over the world! We have partnered with United Way, school districts, and community organizations to create custom virtual classes just for them!

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

STEM
At Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania, we believe that STEM (typically defined as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and the skills developed in STEM programming will grow with learners throughout their entire lives. Our programs are meant to be a both a continuum for students who are part of the larger Boys & Girls Club movement, and accessible for students who would like to experience quality STEM programs to meet their individual passion. STEM careers dominate the workforce. Allowing students to not only build skill sets that will propel them into their futures, but also see different options is important to our work and mission. STEM programming is incorporated throughout our daily Afterschool and Summer Day Camp rotations in addition to specialty Clubhouse and community-based STEM programs. In addition to our STEM program that all children receive as part of our Afterschool and Summer programs, we can partner with organizations and school districts to offer on-site specialty STEM classes as part of your existing program. The cost to run these programs is affordable and gives every student the opportunity to build their technological literacy.

Current Specialty STEM Program Offerings:
- Robotics, LEGO, and Invention Camp
- Lego Robotics and AI
- VEX IQ Robotics and AI Camp
- Artificial Intelligence Pathways Institute (AIPI), PA Smart Award Winning
- STEM Teen Ambassadors
- E-Textiles
- Girls STEM Club
- Robotics Classes
- Virtual STEM Classes

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PATHWAYS INSTITUTE
Ever wonder how Alexa or Siri works? How can your phone recognize your face? We utilize Artificial Intelligence in our everyday lives frequently, but do we understand how it works and the implications of its use? Spend 3 weeks with Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania and AI experts in multiple industries to become AI literate! This program is also run during the school year, where youth who participate are paid to learn advanced programming and entrepreneurship skills.

In the Summer, students will spend three weeks exploring the basics of AI, debating the intricacies of living with AI in our complex human society, tinkering with understanding how Artificial Intelligence is used through fun hands-on projects, touring AI rich industries, and designing and creating AI projects that allow us to impact our society. Students will walk away with valuable experiences including local technology company visits and mentoring, a monetary stipend, a laptop or other equivalent device, and a certificate from Carnegie Mellon’s Robotics Academy for students who meet all project requirements.

THE ARTS
Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania’s Art Program encourages youth to develop their creativity and cultural awareness through knowledge, appreciation and performance. Art used as a relaxing hobby can offer mental health benefits of stress relief, improved everyday mood, creative thinking, boosted self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, and improved clarity throughout the school day. In addition to our art program that all children receive as part of our Afterschool and Summer programs, we can partner with organizations and school districts to offer on-site specialty art classes as part of your existing program.

Current Specialty Art Program Offerings:
- Cultural Cooking Classes
- Children’s Imaginarium
- Entrepreneurship Extravaganza
- Music & Performing Arts

SPECIALTY PROGRAMS

CLUB ON THE GO
Last Summer, at a time when children and families needed us most, Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania continued to evolve our services. Last summer, over 1,000 youth and families received deliveries of basic necessities and enrichment kits right to their doorsteps. BGCWPA can provide this service to school districts or community partners through our network of couriers and vans.

Past Club on the Go Deliveries Have Included:
- Growing Hope Kits: Centered on exploring healthy eating and physical wellness, including plants, seeds, pots and soil along with a pedometer, water bottle, fitness tracker, and healthy living materials.
- Art Kits: Kits provided by Artsmiths of Pittsburgh, Art4All initiative with each kit containing four art & media making activities to encourage youth to develop their creativity and cultural awareness.
• **STEM Kits:** In partnership with Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy, youth had the opportunity to become a Game Designer with a series of boxes full of materials to create their own game, delivered right to their door.

• **Food & Hygiene Kits:** In partnership with Fifth season and Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, youth received fresh fruits and vegetables, shelf stable meals, hygiene products, and household cleaning supplies right to their door.

**FITNESS & RECREATION PROGRAMS**

Our Sports, Fitness and Recreation programs attract young people to our Clubhouses and can be offered at your facilities as well. Participants enjoy team sports, skills clinics, leagues, and the opportunity to participate in a variety of fitness activities. Staff ensure that these activities develop fitness as well as positive use of leisure time, skills for stress management, appreciation for the environment, and social skills. Fitness & Recreation is incorporated throughout our daily Afterschool and Summer Day Camp rotations in addition to specialty Clubhouse and community-based sports programs.

**Specialty Sports & Recreation Program Offerings**

- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Soccer
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Pickleball
- Girls Only Sports Clinics Fencing
- Flag Football Lacrosse Hockey
- Golf
- Baseball
- Dance
- Martial Arts
- Pittsburgh Pirates RBI

Other Custom Programs available as requested in BGCWPA buildings or yours.

**TEEN PROGRAMMING**

Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania offers programs specifically designed for teens and pre-teens. The CLUB Teen Center offers a full-range of special activities and programs that have been designed just for teens in a free space where they can be themselves, have fun, and grow. The CLUB is a safe place where teens can develop their strengths and meet their many self-identity needs, and training intermediaries and higher-educational institutions, we connect youth and young adults with viable career options and expose them to high demand industries through our career captures, mentoring programs, signature Boys & Girls Clubs of America Career Launch Curriculum, and financial literacy programming sponsored by Charles Schwab. **BGCWPA can run the Career Works Program at your school or community site with our award winning curriculum.**

**CAREER WORKS**

For years, teens have had access to a full service program that takes them on a formalized journey from filling in academic gaps, career exploration, and soft skills training to relevant occupational skill building, work experience, apprenticeship programs, and a formalized plan for their future. Our goal is to help our young people surpass major barriers in the way of their success. By hiring an internal staff of BGCWPA career coaches, actively partnering with corporations to fulfill their diversity promises and meet their workforce needs, and training intermediaries and higher-educational institutions, we connect youth and young adults with viable career options and expose them to high demand industries through our career captures, mentoring programs, signature Boys & Girls Clubs of America Career Launch Curriculum, and financial literacy programming sponsored by Charles Schwab. **BGCWPA can run the Career Works Program at your school or community site with our award winning curriculum.**

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

BGCWPA offers a world-class Summer, Junior Staff, and internship program that continues to introduce young people to paid job experiences and career exploration. Participants will gain the soft skills and valuable work experience necessary to become college and career ready, and successful members of our region’s workforce. Not only do young people have the opportunity to work in our Clubhouses, but they can also be a part of our signature programs including STEM Ambassadors and the IT & Robotics Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. **We can provide partners and school districts the opportunity to place their students in Summer internships as well as customized independent studies. BGCWPA is committed to adapting, and maintaining program integrity to provide the opportunity for young adults to grow while keeping them safe and healthy during COVID-19.**

**GREAT START**

Great Start is an award winning program that focuses on supporting teens to commit to healthy lifestyles, restore community relationships, and lead great futures by focusing on whole person development. Great Start is a program in partnership with Allegheny County Juvenile Probation by referral only. School districts or partners with youth in the juvenile justice system may benefit from participation in this program. **Contact us for more information on youth participation and enrollment.**

**HEALTHY LIFESTYLES**

Using the evidence-based Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program (TOP), our Healthy Lifestyles Program promotes the positive development of teens through curriculum guided on building self-identity, reducing risky behaviors, and limiting teenage pregnancy. This program has interactive group discussions, positive adult guidance and support, and community service learning. Programming is delivered by trained adult facilitators throughout the school year to groups of teens to meet their developmental needs. **This program can be offered at your community based site or school district.**
BENEFITS OF PARTNERING WITH BGCWPA
BGCWPA is a historic, 130 year old youth services provider with a new and exciting array of programs, services, and outreach opportunities to enrich your school or existing community program. Our staff have the expertise and experience in running out of school time programming to complement the existing programs you offer to youth. Not only can we assist you to fill in gaps and supplement your existing program, BGCWPA can help you reach youth populations you do not currently serve that need additional support, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We can offer individualized programs listed on the previous pages, or run your Afterschool or Summer program right at your site. In locations where we develop and launch a new Boys & Girls Club, these locations are certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Benefits of licensure:

- BGCWPA can accept Child Care Works (CCW) funding to supplement the cost of programs
- BGCWPA participates in the Keystone STARS Quality Rating Improvement System, seeking the highest level of quality is our priority Safety has always been paramount to BGCWPA, and certification adds an additional level of safety measures

CURRENT STAND ALONE CLUBHOUSES
- Carnegie
- Estelle S. Campbell (Lawrenceville)
- Northern Area (Millvale)
- Orchard Park (Duquesne)
- The Georgian Place (Somerset)
- Career Works (Mon Valley Center)
- Shadyside

CURRENT SCHOOL BASED PARTNERS
- Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship
- Duquesne City School District
- Scott Primary (Shaler)
- Sto-Rox Primary Center
- Sto-Rox Upper Elementary
- Urban Academy
- Somerset Area School District

CURRENT COMMUNITY PARTNER SITES
- North Side, Foundation of Hope
- Larimer, Cornerstone & Larimer Consensus Group
- Brookline, Brookline Teen Outreach
- Hill District, Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh
- Homewood, Homewood Children’s Village
- Clairton, Will Allen Foundation & Clairton City School District
- Urban Strategies, Inc.
STEM Coding Lab is the only Pittsburgh nonprofit devoted exclusively to bringing computer science (CS) education into under-resourced schools and communities throughout our region. In providing expert instruction for both in-school and afterschool settings, the work of STEM Coding Lab is designed to activate the next generation of digitally literate STEM professionals and expose those students learning in underfunded environments to lessons that will prepare them to compete in the 21st Century. Since its founding in 2016, STEM Coding Lab's programming has yet to be paused or cancelled by any partner – every year, we are invited back because our instruction is fun, interactive, and inspiring, a quality too infrequently seen in the world of computer science education.

**Our Partners**

STEM Coding Lab works with the Pittsburgh Public School District, as well as numerous charter schools and afterschool programs to provide CS classes to the young people in our region living in under-resourced and often distressed communities. Since 2016, STEM Coding Lab has served more than 1,000 young people, in in-school and afterschool settings, in libraries, community centers, and anywhere else where opportunities to inspire the imagination of our youth are available. A full list of our partners may be found here: [https://stemcodinglab.org/about-us/our-partners/](https://stemcodinglab.org/about-us/our-partners/).

**The Need**

Currently, there are more than 20,000 vacant computer science jobs in Pennsylvania. More specific to the Pittsburgh region, in June of 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pittsburgh had more tech job openings than any city in America. Our city is brimming with opportunities that we have, to date, failed to prepare our children for. Our commitment to Pittsburgh youth is rooted in a vision where our region doesn’t just attract innovators, it molds them in our own backyard as well.

**A Rising Tide**

According to Code.org, more than 70% of superintendents and principals say offering computer science is just as important as offering subjects like English, math, history and science. Moreover, students who learn computer science in high school are six times more likely to major in it, and women are ten times more likely. Yet, only 59% of Pennsylvania’s public high schools offer a foundational CS course. STEM Coding Lab’s work, while poised for growth and expansion, falls short of the structural reforms and systems changes necessary to prepare our youth for the future of work – so we invite you to join us in galvanizing the next generation of CS professionals, both locally as well as nationwide.
Addressing literacy learning in Pittsburgh: The literacy problem facing students living in Pittsburgh cannot be understated. A close look at school level data reveals that in some schools as high as 80% of Black third-graders cannot read at grade level. These numbers are going to likely become even more alarming because of the learning opportunities lost due to Covid-19 related school closures and the challenges of engaging in remote learning.

What OpenLiteracy does: OpenLiteracy’s founder, a former Pitt professor of reading, is committed to bold innovation that shifts the status quo. Students who are struggling readers are often tracked into remediation pathways in which they remain stuck in a cycle of low literacy achievement for the entirety of their school careers. OpenLiteracy works to disrupt this cycle by creating pathways to strong beginning reading skills and supporting 1-1 tutoring efforts.

Programs

412 Rhymes
Young children need really strong phonological awareness in order to learn to read. 412 Rhymes is an innovative video-based program that features Pittsburgh-based Black artists and educators. Through short engaging lessons, 412 Rhymes focuses on crucial beginning reading skills such as rhyming, letter identification, and phonemic awareness. This program is delivered via text message to caregiver’s cell phones. Learn more at https://openliteracy.com/412rhymes

On Ramp to Reading
For many students the global pandemic has cut short the opportunity to take part in robust preschool experiences. The result is that students will enter kindergarten without a strong foundation in beginning literacy. On Ramp to Reading, which can be delivered live or entirely On Demand via text message, includes activities focused on phoneme segmentation, letter sound identification, and letter formation. By mid-way through the class, students are writing short cvc words such as hat and map. Learn more at https://openliteracy.com/on-ramp-to-reading

High Impact Tutoring
OpenLiteracy’s high impact tutoring program is a turn-key solution for organizations focused on implementing reading focused tutoring. Teaching beginning readers requires tremendous specialized knowledge; our solution makes it possible to implement high quality tutoring lessons aligned with the science of reading regardless of a tutor’s background and experience in teaching reading. Learn more at https://openliteracy.com/tutoring

Summer Reading Book Boxes
Summer reading should be defined by choice. Our diverse and exciting 2021 Book Box selections, carefully curated by teachers and librarians, include titles that will provide windows and mirrors for readers of all ages as they experience storylines that are relatable, while building perspective and understanding about our world. Each book comes with a special code that, when activated, links readers to a daily text or email message and a range of materials that deepen their relationship with the book. These boxes will inspire curiosity, cultivate empathy, and nurture comprehension. Learn more at https://openliteracy.com/summer-reading

Writing Foundations
For many schools, writing instruction has been put on the back burner this year. The Writing Foundations class, which can be offered live or entirely On Demand, supports young writers in developing confidence and skills as writers. Inspired by the work of The Writing Revolution, this class supports students to write complete sentences, generate ideas for their writing, and add details. Learn more at https://openliteracy.com/writing-foundations

Contact
Sarah Scott Frank, Founder, OpenLiteracy
email: sarah@openliteracy.com
cell: 734-846-6146
www.openliteracy.com
INVESTING IN ARTS EDUCATION

During this time of prolonged social isolation and general uncertainty, students need outlets for their imaginations, personal expression, and meaning making. Now is the time to rely on the arts as part of the solution and ensure that youth benefit from the holistic education they deserve while this public health crisis continues.

“For students living in a rapidly changing world, the arts teach vital modes of seeing, imagining, inventing, and thinking. If our primary demand of students is that they recall established facts, the children we educate today will find themselves ill-equipped to deal with problems like global warming, terrorism, and pandemics. Those who have learned the lessons of the arts, however – how to see new patterns, how to learn from mistakes, and how to envision solutions – are the ones likely to come up with the novel answers needed most for the future.” Excerpted from ‘Art for Our Sake’ by Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland (2007)

In 2021, Arts Ed Collaborative, community partners, and advocates introduced the Arts Are Education campaign to school districts in SWPA. They requested that school boards adopt the following resolution:

“Whereas all students have the right to an arts education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts taught by certified arts educators, in partnership with community providers.

Whereas arts education has the power to change students’ lives.
Whereas arts education is a key to re-igniting students’ learning in a post-COVID-19 world.

Whereas arts education helps nurture healthy, inclusive communities where all points of view are respected.

Whereas arts education experiences help students understand their own cultural roots and appreciate others’ cultural roots and traditions.

Whereas arts education supports the social and emotional well-being of students and fosters a more positive, safer school environment.

Whereas arts education is part of the well-rounded education for every student as outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act and in state law.

Therefore, we pledge to maintain and grow our arts education programs in the 2021-22 school year and beyond”

In combination, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund) and American Rescue Plan Act Fund (ARPA Fund) provide a unique opportunity for school districts to invest in arts education.

Proposed Arts Education Investments

- Maintain and/or increase staffing to achieve a minimum 1:350 Arts FTE (dance, media arts, music, theatre, and/or visual arts) to student ratio
- Increase budgets for materials and supplies to accommodate COVID safety protocols and address historical underfunding: $20/student
- Establish annual dedicated budget line item for arts partnerships including but not limited to teaching artist residencies, workshops, field trips, and professional learning: minimum $10,000/school x 4 years
- Increase substitute teacher pay for teaching artists who go through guest substitute teacher training program to simultaneously address the substitute teacher shortage and increase student access to professional artists and arts learning opportunities during the school day: increase teaching artist substitute teacher pay rate to $250
- Invest in designated arts learning spaces (e.g., dance floor, theater lighting, print studio, sound proofing, etc.): 1-time expenditures of $20,000/school on average
A Selection of Arts Education Facts and Figures

- Low socioeconomic status students with a high participation in the arts have a dropout rate of 4 percent, but their peers with a low participation in the arts have a dropout rate of 22 percent. Catteral, J.S., Dumais, S.A. & Hampden-Thomas, G. (2012)
- The report Critical Links contains 62 academic research studies that, taken together, demonstrate that arts education helps close the achievement gap, improve academic skills essential for reaching and language development, and advance students’ motivation to learn. Deasy, R. (ed.) (2002)
- Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more likely than their peers with low arts involvement to have obtained gainful employment, completed college, and volunteered in their communities; Catterall, J.S. (2009)
- 72% of business leaders state that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring; Lichtenberg, J., Woolc, C., & Wright, M. (2008)
- In 2008, Black and Latinx students had less than half of the access to arts education than their white peers. Rabkin, N. & Hedberg, E.C. (2011)

Supporting organizations:

- 1Hood Media
- Arts Ed Collaborative
- Assemble
- Attack Theatre
- Balmoral School of Piping and Drumming
- BOOM Concepts
- Bricolage Production Company
- Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council
- Hill Dance Academy Theatre
- Kelly Strayhorn Theater
- Neighborhood North Museum of Play
- New Hazlett Theater
- Pennsylvania Music Educators Association
- Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
- Pittsburgh Festival Opera
- Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
- Pittsburgh Youth Chorus
- Remake Learning
- Repair The World Pittsburgh
- The Andy Warhol Museum
- The Legacy Arts Project
- Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras
- The Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition

Contact Arts Ed Collaborative for additional information or support
Yael Silk, Executive Director
silky@artsedcollab.org
310-633-3897
Partnerships to Advance Learning in STEM (PALS) Tutoring Program

The Partnerships to Advance Learning in STEM (PALS) program is a unique online learning ecosystem established in response to the needs of two sets of learners: those in the K-12 arena and those in schools of education. These two groups are being brought together with parents to create an innovative, community-based environment of learning that is supported by coaching and mentoring.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread learning loss which has already begun to exacerbate existing disparities in academic achievement. Learners of color are anticipated to lose 6 – 12 months of learning, compared to 4 – 8 months for white students (Dorn, et al 2020). At the same time, K-12 school closures are estimated to have impacted the studies of at least 4,000 educator candidates (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020).

“High dosage” tutoring has been championed as an effective strategy to address COVID-19 learning loss and is one of the most effective ways to accelerate academic achievement for under-resourced learners (Robinson, et al, 2021). ASSET’s PALS program pairs preservice educators with K-12 students to provide 1-on-1 learning acceleration opportunities in an online tutoring environment. In addition to supporting young learners, this approach strengthens the educator pipeline by enabling school of education students to earn valuable field experiences and credit hours.

Preservice educator tutors also work as a professional learning community and engage in professional learning and coaching. All sessions are moderated and facilitated by ASSET and university staff. The PALS program is led by ASSET Associate Executive Director Deborah Luckett, whose professional honors include Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) National Honor Roll Teacher, and Milken Family Foundation National Educator.

About Asset Inc

ASSET Inc. is an educational improvement nonprofit with a mission to advance teaching and learning to engage, inspire, and empower all learners. ASSET (Achieving Student Success through Excellence in Teaching) provides educators with rigorous professional learning and coaching to help increase student achievement and foster the development of 21st century workforce skills. By supporting educators, ASSET prepares young people to live, work, contribute, and lead in a global community.

An approved Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform (LASER) organization since 1995, ASSET is authorized by the Smithsonian Science Education Center to work in partnership with schools, districts, industry representatives, community members, and other key stakeholders to help create infrastructure to effect sustainable change in education.

Independent studies show that ASSET teachers develop increased understanding of content and concepts, improved pedagogy, and strengthened peer collaboration. These advances have fostered increased student achievement in science, math, and English Language Arts in high-needs schools (Banilower & Weis, 2009; Raghavan, Cohen-Regev, & Strobel, 2001; Nedley, 2016).

Other Services

Professional Development (PreK-16)
Programs model inquiry-based teaching; connect practice, content, and materials to educational standards; and integrate formative assessment and literacy development to advance student learning.

Educator Coaching
A non-evaluative coaching model grounded in providing support for reflective teaching practices for change, growth, and professionalism. This virtual coaching service seeks to help educators find sustainable ways to develop as 21st century educators for today’s classrooms.

Standards Alignment
Alignment of curriculum, materials, and practice to Common Core standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), the Career Education and Work Standards, among others.

Customized Education Solutions
ASSET provides critical insight and feedback to districts and organizations that are striving to change the dynamic of the teaching and learning environment. Customized professional development and Professional Learning Community facilitation services are also available.

To discuss learning acceleration or professional development opportunities, contact ASSET
Sarah Toulouse, Director
stoulouse@assetinc.org
(412) 481-7320
Supporting Community Schools & Organizations

The school building has long served as more than just a building where learning occurs. School buildings have always been an anchor of a community, serving as a place where students and families gather for social activities, hosting civic events and elections and being one of the most visible physical public spaces in a community.

As the needs of students have changed, so too have the role schools play in their communities. Across the county cities and districts have worked to forge long term partnerships to provide an array of services at schools -- not just for students and their families, but for the community at large. These schools have come to be known as Community Schools and have seen success in boosting health outcomes, mental health, and perhaps most important, academic achievement among students. The undergirding principal of community schools is pooling a community’s resources and amenities inside a school building. This requires forging partnerships across multiple sectors with service providers, healthcare and dental providers, and others depending on a community’s particular needs.

Perhaps the best example of the potential benefits of community schools can be found in Cincinnati Public Schools. The district partnered with Cincinnati Children’s Hospital to take a whole child approach to help alleviate the barriers preventing children from fully accessing their education. The potential in the Pittsburgh region is tremendous. We have large and small healthcare providers in abundance, university partners within walking distance and community organizations in every corner of the city who are well positioned to take stock of what their neighborhood has and what they need to support their students.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zd5DXCLoKcyJhkwtRqMYc9MokC3mutVP/view?usp=sharing  letter of support from PPS

Storehouse for Teachers DBA the Education Partnership operates at the intersection of education and business, offering effective opportunities for the community to create a meaningful impact among students throughout Southwestern PA in a way that allows them to participate in the region’s success.

Since 2009, The Education Partnership, an independent 501c(3), has partnered with public, private, and charter schools, as well as invested community members, foundations, and organizations to deliver results-driven and scalable programs designed to provide school supplies to students in under-resourced schools, ultimately providing pathways to success in school and beyond.

Throughout the 2020 school year The Education Partnership has distributed more than $7.5M in purchased and direct gift-in-kind donations of school supplies (new, nearly new, and reusable) and put them into the hands of teachers and students. This includes everything from basic supplies like notebooks, pencils, and crayons, to high-tech materials like computers, iPads, and accessories, to school resources like chairs, lamps, and hygiene products.

This past year, Pittsburgh Public Schools composed 50 of our 143 regional partner schools representing 2,434 teachers and 18,138 students. It is by our conservative estimation that this past year alone the value of goods and services received by PPS through TEP was between $2.5M-$3M. We anticipate that level of support to increase or, minimally, to hold steady, in the foreseeable future.

Educational resources are distributed through three program offerings, each playing a critical role in addressing the unique needs and challenges of under-resourced schools especially with the challenges presented by Covid-19 this past year.

- **The Teacher Resource Center** invites teachers from partner schools to “shop” for free school supplies once per semester. Each teacher is guaranteed an allotment of core school supplies (notebooks, pens, pencils, paper, crayons, etc.), and extra classroom supplies—like toys, clothing, cleaning supplies, furniture, etc.—that vary based on availability.

- **The Adopt-A-School** program connects businesses and community members to schools in need, facilitating the creation and distribution of 1:1 student supply kits, or “Power Tools Homework Kits”, complete with age-appropriate basic supplies students need at home to complete assignments and fully engage in their schoolwork. The STEAM Lending Library, launched in 2017, equips our partner teachers with classroom kits of ready-to-use, hands-on STEAM resources and the technologies required for engaging lessons in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math. Each enrolled teacher at our partner schools is eligible to reserve one of our STEAM kits, based on availability and use that kit for up to 6 weeks before returning it for others to use.

**Contact**

Josh Whiteside  
Executive Director  
theducationpartnership.org
Computer Reach is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that has served the community since 2001 by refurbishing used computers and providing them to individuals most in need. To ensure that recipients get maximum value from their device, we provide digital literacy training and support through classes and one-on-one assistance. We offer a variety of ways for people to secure their own personal device including "earning" a device by successfully completing a series of digital literacy courses, and sales of low cost used equipment. In many cases, contributions from donors and area foundations offset or underwrites the cost of a refurbished device and an accompanying "hotspot" which provides access to the Internet for an entire household. The majority of our outreach and digital training occurs in southwestern Pennsylvania. Working with school districts, community organizations and ethnic and religious groups we have distributed over 10,000 devices serving more than 30,000 people. This includes providing computers and technology equipment in 46 states in the US and 40 countries around the world.

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Computer Reach accomplished the following:

- Distributed 3,311 devices (including 3,217 computers and 94 hotspots with Internet).
- Working closely with community partner Neighborhood Allies, Computer Reach assisted in the distribution of 600 free laptops to Pittsburgh Public Schools students through the "Beyond the Laptops" project, and an additional 400 laptops were distributed to local nonprofit agencies.
- Distributed 178 free Desktop Computer Bundles through our Computer Lottery Program.
- Distributed 13 All-In-One Desktops and 13 Wi-Fi Hotspots (equipped with 12 months of pre-paid internet) to the homes of 13 older adults identified by North Hills Community Outreach.

Digital literacy classes offered by Computer Reach

Techie Camps - Designed for underserved and at-risk boys and girls ages eight to 14 whose families cannot afford computers. Students who are successful are given their own computer and software to take home.

Interactive Tech Camps for Teens - Offered during school breaks and in the summer for high school students ages 14 to 18. By engaging in STEM-based computer learning exercises, teens learn hands-on technology that includes taking apart a computer, reassembling it and earning a computer to take home with them.

Tech Camps for Teachers - Four-day camps open to teachers from public, private and charter schools including early childhood centers, Head Start, Pre-K, elementary, middle and junior/senior high schools.

Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment tests determine adult students’ level of proficiency. Those who pass the skills assessment test receive a refurbished computer, and a Northstar certificate of completion.

Featured Programs

- Digital Navigators - Computer Reach is building an improved Tech Support model called Digital Navigator Services. Each device will be hand-delivered and our Digital Navigators will provide on-site setup and training support. This personal method of support continues via phone, text and email long after the initial setup visits. Digital Navigators will serve to enable end-users with the skills needed to experience a benefit from technology.

- Computer Lottery - We successfully provided a free desktop computer bundle complete with an open-source office software package to 365 local residents over the past year.
Opportunities for School District & Community Partnership: A project by the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative

After much engagement with the school community, a direct connection between the schools and the park was determined to be a catalytic opportunity to provide greater access for classrooms to use the park as part of their learning, recreation, and overall programming. With the implementation of Arsenal Park’s master plan now moving forward, with construction set to begin in 2022, the City has repeatedly requested that PPS contribute towards the construction of the bridge to make this plan a reality.

Community Schools -- We have long been a vocal champion of the Community Schools model and helped Arsenal 6-8 to apply to become among the first in PPS. PPS’s commitment to this model is terrific. However, the district needs to provide more support to school buildings working to implement the Community Schools model. Right now, the resources provided to the schools are inadequate to implement the model effectively. PPS should prioritize resources for Community Schools at the school level so that these funds can go where they’re needed most: supporting families.

STEAM -- Lawrenceville United was part of the initial effort that brought STEAM to PPS and to Woolslair PreK-5 specifically, after parents and staff identified it as a priority for the school. We’ve been encouraged that PPS has made this an entire K-12 program across the district. Like other great programs outlined in this brief, however, the STEAM program needs additional resources to fully realize its potential and intent. Right now, students at the STEAM schools get precious little time actually working in STEAM, and the STEAM teacher has few resources to bring STEAM programming into the regular education classes. We would like to see PPS prioritize additional staffing to support rigorous implementation of this encouraging model.

Restorative Practices -- We have also been a strong supporter of PPS’s efforts to utilize restorative practices to reduce suspensions and other exclusionary forms of student management, create thriving school climates, and develop the skills that students need in life. Our experience with the rollout of restorative practices, however, has been that school buildings lack a single person in each building to champion implementation and build capacity among teachers and staff. Efficacy has suffered as a result. Other school districts that have been successful have committed to hiring champions for restorative practices in each school building, whose job is to be the building’s expert -- to be laser-focused on supporting the entire school and deepen their work around restorative practices.

Work with City & County to coordinate investment opportunities into infrastructure & safe pathways to school -- Safe pathways to school -- including deep intersections, crossing guards, and traffic calming measures -- are critical parts of the school experience for families. Like the connection between Arsenal PreK-5/6-8 and Arsenal Park shows, there are also often overlapping infrastructure needs between the City, County, and PPS. With the City & County also poised to receive large amounts of recovery funds, and a possible federal infrastructure bill coming, PPS should partner with the City & County to have a coordinated and partnering approach to investment in areas that benefit both the school system and the broader community.

School Closures / Reconfigurations -- We also remain gravely concerned about the reconfiguration & school closure plan put forward by PPS in February. As we have said previously, Arsenal 6-8 is a shining example of a school getting results for its most marginalized students, and Woolslair PreK-5 dramatically increased its enrollment after becoming a STEAM school at the request of families, staff, and community. Any treatment of school closures or reconfigurations should center equity, the desegregation of our school system, investment in our neighborhood schools, and the needs of especially our Black and Brown students, students with exceptionalities, and English Language Learners.

Contact
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Priorities
Through this long-standing relationship and through direct engagement with families at our neighborhood public schools and in our community, we’ve seen "up close and personal" the successes, opportunities, and challenges facing our public school system. In light of this, we encourage Pittsburgh Public Schools to consider the following priorities as it determines how it will use new federal aid funds:

• Connection to Arsenal Park -- During the master planning of Arsenal Park, a very intentional effort was made by our office to include the teachers, families, and students of Arsenal PreK-5 and Arsenal 6-8 in the redesign of our neighborhood’s largest and most historic park, which directly abuts the schools but is underutilized by them.

• Community Schools -- We have long been a vocal champion of the Community Schools model and helped Arsenal 6-8 to apply to become among the first in PPS. PPS’s commitment to this model is terrific. However, the district needs to provide more support to school buildings working to implement the Community Schools model. Right now, the resources provided to the schools are inadequate to implement the model effectively. PPS should prioritize resources for Community Schools at the school level so that these funds can go where they’re needed most: supporting families.

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Established in 1972, the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition gives voice to the hopes and concerns of our residents, institutions, businesses and visitors and works to preserve, improve, and celebrate the quality of life in our vibrant urban Squirrel Hill neighborhood. Volunteer-supported committees provide leadership to our community by studying, debating, and advocating positions on issues affecting our neighborhood’s vitality. Our mission is implemented through a long range planning process, fostering community-based initiatives in the areas of education, public safety, transportation, parks and open spaces, plus commercial, institutional and residential development.

From discussions with local community members and school officials, Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition recommends use of ARPA funding to:

- Create **outdoor spaces** for “mask breaks;” teachers need outside areas for breaks and/or outdoor learning spaces to improve their ability to deliver safe, engaging instruction to students.

- Install a bench at John Minadeo Elementary dedicated to Ella Cornelious, the girl who also passed away along with John Minadeo in the tragic 1954 accident. They would also like to host a socially distanced event honoring her.

- Improve **student internet access** through purchase of more **prepaid hotspots**.

- Fund **tutoring support** resources through schools and by paying partner organizations.

- Fund **Learning Hubs** and after school care/support, also through partner organizations.

- **Increase existing** funding for:
  - Community Schools models and general partnerships with community organizations
  - Student enrichment and field trips
  - Supports for students with IEPs and their families
TeenBloc is a collective of 8th-12th grade students in the city of Pittsburgh from varying backgrounds and experiences. TeenBloc brings like-minded students together who want to learn to advocate through creative avenues to ignite change and bring forth the voices of the overlooked.

Through a series of artistic outlets, TeenBloc guides students in advocacy and leadership development to help them find and use their voices to ignite changes that will impact their education. Our TeenBloc members get hands-on experience with writing/journalism, social media output and PR, visual media, and peer engagement and community outreach.

**TeenBloc Primary Service Model**

TeenBloc is a flexible student advocacy program that offers programming and opportunities in School-based sites, at A+ Schools’ offices and other locations through partners.

**School-Based Sites:** TeenBloc’s school-based opportunities provide direct and live opportunities for students to voice their observations and concerns regarding their education with TeenBloc staff as well as fellow teachers within the school to create campaigns that encourage student voice, collaboration with administration, as well as the change students need to thrive in their environment(s). TeenBloc meets during school hours and on location.

**TeenBloc offices:** TeenBloc headquarters are located in the Hill District along easily accessible personal and public transportation locations and is a safe and enriching environment for students to meet after school to coordinate and participate in larger scale advocacy and development projects and training. Our student-lead and peer to peer support modeled project development provides an arena for students to develop their leadership skills, receive opportunities for specialized training in various artistic and creative mediums, network with other students from partnering sites, and have a supportive space from staff as well as their peers. TeenBloc is open to all students in Pittsburgh grades 8 through 12.

**Partner Sites:** TeenBloc currently partners with various schools and community organizations by expanding the work of current TeenBloc students into their individual schools and communities, which provides opportunities for students that may have other factors preventing them from attending programming otherwise. This provides space for existing partnerships to contribute to TeenBloc projects in their own style, through coordination between both staffs and students, to create a diverse community message of advocacy and equity for all students. Contact TeenBloc to learn more on how we can work together to ignite, inspire, and empower our youth to create the changes they deserve in order to thrive.

**Current Youth Peer to Peer Enrichment and Engagement Programming:**

**Perry Fellows:** The Perry Fellows is a collective of Northside students that currently attend Perry High School. The Perry Fellows narrate and illustrate their experiences, thoughts, hopes, and vision for their education, peers, and future of their school through various creative and communal projects.

**TeenBloc Podcast Crew:** TeenBloc partners three times a year with The Lighthouse Project at the Homewood-Brushton YMCA to record a student-facilitated and coordinated podcast, with content varying from current social topics, social justice, education, media, entertainment, and more.

**Arts-Based Advocacy:** TeenBloc creates messages of empowerment, growth, and change by highlighting student experience and voice through visual and other multimedia platforms including (but not limited to): Gallery Exhibitions and Video Documentaries/Short Films to empower their communities.

**Student Teach-Ins:** TeenBloc students create and facilitate workshops for Teachers-in-Service where they provide honest and constructive perspectives for future educators to learn what students are currently facing in school, and how to build better connections with students.

**Speciality Programs**

**Student Advisory Team:** TeenBloc’s Student Advisory Team is an internship program that currently attends virtual PPS Schoolboard meetings to learn about local agenda items and discussions that impact their education. The Student Advisory Team educates their peers on their observations and learnings in order to help steer advocacy-based projects and education.

**Student Community Outreach:** TeenBlocs Student Community Outreach program is an internship program that trains students on community-based asset mapping, identifying resources and techniques for providing resources and peer support in their neighborhoods.

**Student Advocacy and Research Team:** TeenBloc’s Student Advocacy and Research Team interns focus specifically on student data within their schools and others to learn how to navigate systems with fact-based research that is then translated with the rest of the team into creative venues for students of various voices to express themselves, be heard, and for positive changes to take place.

**Benefits of Partnering with TeenBloc**

TeenBloc has the ability to be flexible with many enrichment programs and opportunities. While our center focuses on education and social equity for students, we also provide students with a safe space to be themselves, a supportive and developmental environment and community, and the tools they need to put into action their ideas with fact based models as well as emotional development and support.

Equity has so many layers, and we can only hope to scratch the surface to empower our youth to know they do, in fact, deserve and will always have several seats at the table. One thing we pride ourselves on is our clear actions and intent to listen to students, hear them out, and then build from there.

We believe that working together with others to complement existing work, further creates opportunities for enrichment for our students and their overall environmental well being and an example of a community mindset is established and shown through action.

**Current School-Based Partners:**
- Perry Traditional Academy
- Brashear High School
- CUE (Center for Urban Education via the University of Pittsburgh)

**Current Community Partners:**
- Pittsburgh Promise
- ARYS
- BOOM Concepts
On behalf of the All for All Coalition Education and Language Access Subcommittees, we ask that Pittsburgh Public Schools’ administrators utilize funding that has been allocated to the district through the American Rescue Plan Act to increase funding allocations for interpretation and translation services to better serve students and families. As committees representing 30 organizations with decades of experience supporting and building trust with immigrant and refugee communities in Pittsburgh, we know that effective, high-quality, and consistent communication between schools and non-native English speaking parents has been a long-standing issue.

Being able to effectively communicate with parents is critical to a student’s success. Many non-native English speaking parents want to be more involved in their child’s education but are at a disadvantage when it comes to communicating with teachers and school counselors and being able to fully comprehend written materials that are sent home with their children. We acknowledge that PPS has made great strides in providing language access to English Learner students and their parents. However, with the growing immigrant population in Pittsburgh, additional funding is needed to ensure that parents’ and students’ rights to meaningful language access, as secured and guaranteed by Title V1 of the Civil Rights Ace and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, are fulfilled and that PPS is able to keep up with the increasing need for language access services.
Overview of need

Latino students currently make up 4% of Pittsburgh Public Schools’ student population. While that may appear to be a small number, it is critical to note that many of these students attend ESL regional schools, where the Latino student population may actually be as high as 28%, and that these are some of the most vulnerable students in the district.

Many Latino students enter kindergarten having no prior academic experience, and with little to no English proficiency. Not only do these young learners have to catch up academically to peers who may have attended daycare or preschool, they must do so while simultaneously learning the English language and adapting to a brand new cultural experience - American public school. Further, few have the academic support of parents at home due to language barriers and educational attainment, and many of these students are also considered “economically disadvantaged,” which carries another set of challenges.

PPS data show that these early gaps widen as the years progress, with only 19% of PPS middle school students demonstrating math proficiency on the 2019 PSSA, and 31% demonstrating ELA proficiency. These numbers plunge in some schools, as student needs are ever-increasing and teachers are stretched thin. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the challenges Latino students face in school without the appropriate level of support.

Overview of LCC Offerings

The Latino Community Center’s (LCC) Education Department offers a comprehensive continuum of services specifically tailored to address the unique needs of Latino individuals and English learners in Allegheny County. Our programs include:

- **ParentChild+**, an early childhood home visiting program that targets early literacy and school literacy;
- **Bilingual SOY (Supporting Our Youth)** after school programs that focus on academic advancement and cultural empowerment for elementary and middle school students, along with family engagement;
- **ALAS**, a college and career readiness program that provides personalized support to Latino high school youth;
- **SOMOS Pittsburgh**, offering youth mentoring;
- **K-12 Latino virtual tutoring**;
- **English as a Second Language** courses for adults
- **Internet support and family advocacy program** through our education department that helps with devices, internet, school enrollment, and other questions that arise related to navigating the school system.

At LCC, we believe that a healthy home is critical for the success of the child, so we also provide wraparound support through our Family Services Department. Some examples include visits from our community health workers, case management services, counseling, and food support.

Changing the Educational Landscape for Latino Students

The Latino Community Center is deeply committed to educational equity for Latino students, and to full access to the educational process for Latino families. These students will be an integral part of Pittsburgh’s future, and they deserve access to a high quality education and as many opportunities as possible to prepare them for their dream career.

Our SOY Pittsburgh Elementary program has been running successfully in Beechwood Elementary School since January 2017. A Department of Human Services data review, along with PPS data, shows that students who participate in SOY have higher GPAs and better attendance than any other students in Beechwood. The program has grown in size, currently has a waitlist, and has expanded to South Hills Middle School. We have received requests to expand SOY Pittsburgh to both Arsenal Elementary and Middle, and to Banksville Elementary. We also hope to expand and adapt our virtual tutoring program as students are back in school.

Further, in March alone LCC’s Student Success Specialist provided intensive, personalized support and guidance to 16 PPS high school students. As his caseload has grown county-wide, we look forward to strategically partnering with PPS to support even more Latino high school students and their families as they apply to college, seek financial aid, and make critical decisions about their future.

Finally, the Education Department at LCC is composed of experienced, talented professionals who specialize in ESL, dual-language early education, bilingual family engagement, and more. Our team has partnered with PPS in the past to provide training and support to both PPS personnel and to Latino families, and we welcome the opportunity to continue this work and to expand it as we collaborate with our partners.

**Education Partners**

| OST Partner Organizations PLC / Advocacy Partners | Pittsburgh Public Schools Catapult Greater Pittsburgh |
| Citizen Science Lab A+ Schools | Sarah Heinz House CUE Center for Urban Education |
| Duquesne University All for All | STEM Coding Lab Lawrenceville United |
| Los Sabrosos Dance, Co. ARYSE | Venture Outdoors |
| Pittsburgh Center for the Arts Boys & Girls Clubs of W. PA | |

Opportunities for School District & Community Partnership: A project by the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative
Organizational Overview
ARYSE is a student-centered organization that supports immigrant and refugee youth in becoming engaged, confident, and celebrated members of our communities. Through out-of-school-time programming that prioritizes literacy, the cultivation of youth voice, and healing centered engagement, ARYSE youth gain the tools they need to take their place as leaders within their communities and our world.

Community Need
ARYSE programs address a critical global issue in the local, Pittsburgh context. The immigrant and refugee population is growing, and in the context of post-resettlement, out-of-school-time programming is especially critical for helping youth fully access their education, develop supportive relationships, and feel a sense of belonging in their new community. Pittsburgh Public Schools has over 2,000 students who speak a language other than English, including roughly 1,200 English Learners. These students represent over 60 countries and 96 languages. ARYSE programs are designed through a strengths-based lens and to intentionally celebrate this linguistic and cultural diversity while incorporating activities that develop students’ English literacy and knowledge of local culture.

Culturally competent academic and enrichment programs for immigrant and refugee youth are more important than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified structural inequities that were already disproportionately impacting these communities. ARYSE youth, i.e. immigrants and refugees, have faced unprecedented difficulty navigating the remote learning environment, there has been significant loss of employment in their families, and in some cases, there is observable deterioration of mental health. Since spring 2020, ARYSE has adapted all of its programs to reach students where they are in order to support their continued learning and help maintain connections with their trusted peers and mentors.

Proposed Funding Allocations
ARYSE currently serves 100-150 immigrant and refugee youth each year, the majority of whom are PPS students and many of whom have interrupted or limited formal education1 (SLIFE). Program offerings include the After School Club (2 sites: 1 for grades K-8, the other for grades 9-12), Girls Art and Maker Group, Youth Steering Committee, and PRYSE Academy Summer Camp. Students are referred to these programs by PPS ESL teachers, local refugee resettlement and other immigrant-serving agencies, libraries, and churches and community-based organizations that advocate for refugees.

Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act that is allocated to PPS can go toward expanding upon the existing partnership with ARYSE to provide more after school and summer program offerings for youth in Kindergarten through 12th grade. With additional resources to hire more staff and increase interpretation and translation services, ARYSE could facilitate after school programs at multiple ESL hubs within the district and tailor programming to specific grade levels, e.g. K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. In addition to improving academic outcomes and literacy among ESL students, these programs will serve as a bridge between parents and schools, ultimately providing new and improved pathways for families to engage in their children’s learning.

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1WIDA Focus On: “SLIFE: Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education” https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/FocusOn-SLIFE.pdf
On behalf of the All for All Coalition Education Subcommittee, we ask that Pittsburgh Public Schools’ administrators utilize funding that has been allocated to the district through the American Rescue Plan Act to increase funding allocations to services and supports that improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for immigrant and refugee youth and families in the district.

The All for All Coalition represents about 30 organizations in the region with decades of experience supporting and building trust with immigrant and refugee communities in Pittsburgh. The Education Subcommittee recently surveyed members of the full coalition and surfaced the following areas in need of investment to support immigrant and refugee youth and families:

- Invest in more interpretation and translation services (high priority)
- Invest in hiring more social workers and paraprofessionals specifically trained in providing relevant and culturally competent support to immigrant and refugee students (high priority)
- Invest in professional development training to foster cultural competence for the district Board of Directors, educators, and staff who interact with children and families. (high priority)
- Invest in identifying and training more staff members to serve as liaisons between schools and immigrant communities. (high priority)
- Invest in existing and new early learning, after school, out-of-school, and summer programs that are culturally relevant and that meet the linguistic needs of the children served.
- Invest in initiatives, strategies, and mindshifts that create partnerships and feedback loops with parents and make schools more welcoming to immigrant families and the broader community
- Invest in initiatives and strategies that recruit, promote, and retain a more diverse and representative workforce, especially teachers and staff who represent immigrant communities served by the district
- Invest in resources, events, programs that are tailored to immigrant and refugee youth needs specific to their preparedness for post-secondary opportunities/pursuing careers after high school.
- Invest in partnerships with community based groups to expand access to adult ESL literacy programs for PPS parents.
- Invest in mini-grants and/or paid programs for teachers to attend professional development workshops and/or to develop programming to assist students in the classroom.
- Invest in improving access to vocational programs for immigrant and refugee youth.
- Invest in initiatives, strategies, and professional development that address structural racism and honor multiculturalism
- Invest in systems that prioritize data to understand the experiences, efficacy, and outcomes among immigrant and refugee students.

Anecdotes from Coalition Members:

“Human relationships and personnel who look like, talk like the immigrant population in schools will make a big difference in the success of students. Create spaces and programs for this new personnel to have authority to plan and implement new programs. Train current school staff on multiculturalism, immigration cultures, languages, countries where they come from to improve their understanding of these new groups in their schools.”

“Being able to effectively communicate with parents is critical to a student’s success. Many non-native English speaking parents want to be more involved in their child’s education but are at a disadvantage when it comes to communicating with teachers and school counselors and being able to fully comprehend written materials that are sent home with their children. We acknowledge that PPS has made great strides in providing language access to English Learner students and their parents. However, with the growing immigrant population in Pittsburgh, additional funding is needed to ensure that parents’ and students’ rights to meaningful language access, as secured and guaranteed by Title V1 of the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, are fulfilled and that PPS is able to keep up with the increasing need for language access services.”
Trying Together supports high-quality care and education for young children by providing advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, families, and educators. Trying Together is a principal organization of the statewide Early Learning Pennsylvania coalition which includes the advocacy campaigns Start Strong PA (focusing on increased access to and affordability of high-quality child care programs for infants and toddlers) and Pre-K for PA (focusing on investments to serve more 3- and 4- year olds in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs). Regionally, Trying Together partners with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers to support Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) 5.

Additionally, Trying Together, in partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit and the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, provides strategic leadership by engaging school districts across Allegheny County (including PPS) through the Hi5! kindergarten transition initiative. As an organization supporting the work of early childhood for children ages birth through age nine, Trying Together understands the critical importance of aligning systems and the coordination of birth-five programs and services with K-12.

While Pennsylvania is receiving $1.2 billion from the ARP funds to stabilize and support child care, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency (ESSER) funds provide an opportunity for school districts to strengthen connections with the early childhood community and reach families and children before kindergarten. Early childhood is an allowable use of COVID-19 relief funds provided through ESSER funds. Many kindergarten teachers have expressed concern with the lack of social and emotional development for incoming children. Using ESSER funds to include pre-k and incoming kindergarten students in efforts focused on lost learning time and enrichment programs will greatly benefit young children in the district.

As the largest pre-k provider in the city, Trying Together encourages PPS to consider how ESSER funds can support early childhood within the district as well as strengthen connections to other programs in the city by:

(1) Offering coordinated professional development for pre-k and kindergarten teachers;
(2) Developing elementary school level transition planning teams;
(3) Engaging families through information sessions and resources at neighborhood schools that are culturally and linguistically responsive and focus on the whole child;
(4) Including pre-k and incoming kindergarten students in summer enrichment opportunities; and
(5) Sending kindergarten teachers or elementary school principals to early learning programs, especially those not located in PPS buildings in order to strengthen and build relationships.

This is not an exhaustive list. We hope district leaders will consider ways to use ESSA and ESSER funds for early childhood spending as outlined in the Foresight Law + Policy guide, as well as connect with Trying Together for further resources and strategies to strengthen the early learning continuum and support the district’s youngest learners.

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The Economic Justice Circle (EJC), is a grassroots coalition of community leaders, activists, organizers, and advocates committed to creating an economic justice agenda for the Pittsburgh region with a race and gender equity lens. We are building cross movement solidarity with coalitions like the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative to implement an organizing strategy that centers the experiences and leadership of people who are affected by multiple systems of oppression. We are focused on democratizing the city and county budgets by promoting transparency, equity, and community engagement. And we’re formalizing a People’s budget that will allow communities to hold officials accountable for spending ARPA funds and future monies in communities historically excluded.
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