

Instructional Policy & Student Achievement Committee

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Agency: Akron Board of Education

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Summary

- The Essential Experiences Program allows Akron youth from pre-K to 5th grade to gain equitable access to local activities and community experiences.
- Middle school-focused programs such as the Adventurers' camps help curtail youth violence from developing through gained career exposure and mentorship.
- These programs foster a holistic approach to education by appealing to the academic side of education and individual challenges (transport, parental figures and personal development).

Follow-Up Questions

- As this program expands (educators are hired), will more funds be needed? What is the projected budget for the next cycle?
- How does GAR raise funds, and what percentage of their budget goes to Akron Public Schools?
- Will there be any programs like the summer camps for younger grades?

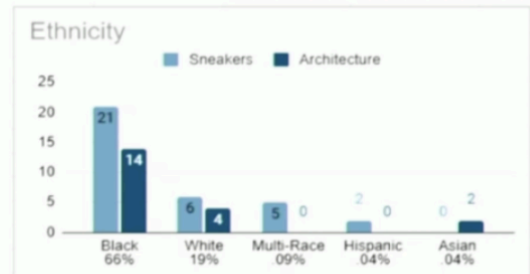
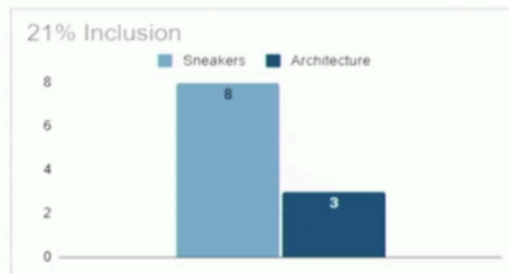
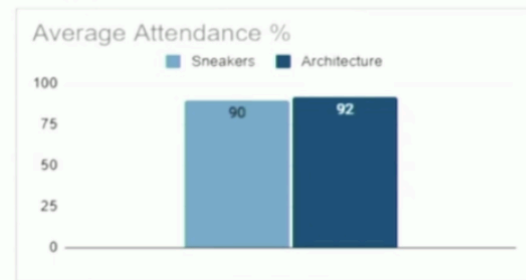
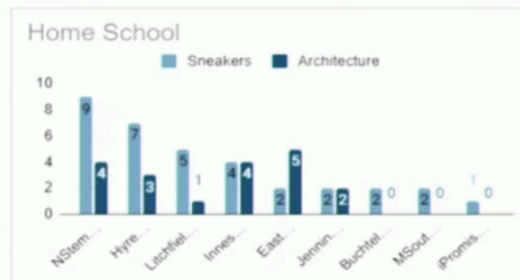
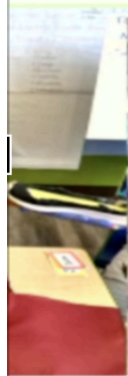
Notes

- Background:
 - The Instructional Policy and Achievement Committee reviewed two projects in collaboration with APS and saw presentations from guest speakers.
 - Present members of the committee: Carla Jackson (committee chair), ReneMolenaar, Tamea Caver and Gregory Harrison.
- Session opening:
 - Caver opened the session by presenting the agenda, which is available [here](#).
- Presentations: Two presentations were given: one from [GAR](#) leading the [Essential Experience Programs](#), and the other from [YSS](#) and [College & Career Academies of Akron](#) (CCAA) collaborative programs

- **GAR Senior Program Officer [Laura DiCola](#)** spoke first and opened with a 30-second activity. Board members were invited to think back to their elementary school years and a time they went on a field trip. They were asked to sketch the event that they went to. They went around the table and shared their memories.
- Jackson spoke of her recent experience with experiential activities. She thanked GAR and YSS for putting on these field trips for children.
- DiCola then tied this activity to the importance of collective community experiences and presented details of the Essential Experiences Program (EEP):
 - The program started in 2017 and 10,000 children have gone through the program. It won the [National School Board Association Journal's](#) recognition for exemplary innovative programming in equity
 - They're at the end of Round 2 funding (from 2022 to 2025 fiscal years)
 - Many children do not have the opportunity to go on field trips because some schools don't have the funds, while other schools do
 - The goals of EEP are:
 - Take children on field studies tied to the curriculum
 - Create equity between students
 - Provide an early exposure to career options
 - Essential experiences are guaranteed, not based on reward system
 - Put an emphasis on partnerships with local activities
 - Make activities accessible to special needs students through Special Education Department of GAR
 - EEP activities by grade:
 - Pre-K = dance
 - Kindergarten = ArtSparks
 - 1st grade = Akron Zoo
 - 2nd = Cuyahoga National Valley Park
 - 3rd = Hale Farm (community and trade studies)
 - 4th = Akron Art Museum
 - 5th = Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens
 - Jackson asked how big the groups are when they attend. DiCola said they vary, about five to 12, but it depends on the size of the class and the activity. Jackson said, "I like how there are hands-on experiences."
- Trisha Kelly developed GAR's funding model and APS' commitments, which are to provide transportation to experiences, provide food and provide a dedicated staff person to be a liaison between partners and teachers.
- Jackson asked who they intend on partnering with for the next cycle. DiCola said, "Many of the same providers and programs will be used again because we are not starting from scratch."
- Harrison thanked GAR for what they do and said that many students live within a few miles of these experiences but never get the opportunity to go.

- Molenaar said, “As a mother whose children are part of this program, I want to thank you for this program because it has been the highlight of their schooling experience.”
- Caver said “You mentioned disabilities, and some children have not been able to go to places right next door. As an adult, I can appreciate that this program brings awareness to local activities and gives these children these experiences.”
- **APS, CCAA and YSS collaborative projects**
 - These projects were modeled after large cities such as Boston’s [Boston After School and Beyond](#) program, which looked at trends and found that, in urban districts, there are many activities for children. The idea is to improve programming so that youth services in cities can be brought to communities.
 - Middle school Adventures Camp is a three-week program. Teachers and youth providers came together to create this plan as to how to engage children in learning without typical school setups. 53 students enrolled. They had two camps. One was a sneakers-themed camp ([Students with a Goal](#)) The other was architecture-themed.
 - - [YSS Executive Director Rachel Tecca](#) spoke about the intentionality of choosing middle school-aged children. They are most vulnerable in that space (violence prevention). Data shown at the meeting gave insight on attendance rate and accessibility of the program (getting to and from)

Program Demographics



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- Dominique Waters, [Sneaker Academy executive director](#), spoke about his program. The goal is to customize a sneaker for Lucky Shoes
- 'Sneaky learning' gets children to learn and research
- The program taught students about design and polymers
- Jackson said: "I know of a child who was inspired by you personally because she was inspired to go on this sneaker path as a young entrepreneur. She now works in Paris Fashion Week... Thank you for being on our team."
- Richard Gibson, [SWAG executive director](#), spoke about working for Sneaker Academy
 - Three of his 6th graders are now taking 9th grade math
 - Project took place at the [Vincent House](#) in Middlebury, which has the highest youth crime rate Gibson said.
 - They brought the children to an abandoned building and told them to create something the community needs. The students were introduced to a new career in architecture and then had social exposure by asking people in coffee shops what they thought the community needed. They also worked in groups on the project.
- Harrison said he wants to see a more robust presentation on how this program is doing. He would like to engage YSS in a deeper conversation with the board

- Jackson said: “You are an example of what parental figures and role models should be. I thank you for stepping up for our children.” She said kids are going to high school and they are lost, but this program helps.

Notes to reader: Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@signalakron.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line.