

The Academy for Artistic Excellence (AAE) —
Violence Intervention and Prevention (ROP-VIP) Project 2024-2026
INTERIM REPORT

Project Title: AAE — “My Journey through the Rites of Passage” Personal Growth, Wellness and Empowerment Project 2024-2026

The “My Journey through the Rites of Passage©” Personal Growth, Wellness and Enrichment Program, is an arts and culture based curricular framework designed to be a comprehensive approach to building developmental assets and emotional intelligence amongst youth, young adults and their families. Tested, evaluated and refined in the Pittsburgh Public Schools in collaboration with the Heinz Endowments, curricular and instructional methods embrace the cultures and ethnicities of all students and their family members. Offering 50+ workshops and lesson plans, the customizable program is designed to effectively lend to the augmentation of universal student and workshop leader interests and engagement in culturally responsive content through the use of relative (contemporary) and contextual learning tools. Similarly, the variety of workshops and activities are responsive to the principles of differentiated learning Instruction while celebrating significant improvements in engaging participants in critical thinking, formative debate, social skills development (adulthood), and accountable Talk. The overall goal of the hybrid program (via daily mentoring, weekly face-to-face workshops online, and monthly in-person caucusing) is to meet participants where they are to promote positive youth development, positive racial and cultural identity, academic and behavioral success, and resilience while creating a roadmap that gives tangible meaning to a purpose driven life.

Target area: Citywide, Onsite-- Afro American Music Institute in Homewood

Target Population: 20-High-Risk African-American & Hispanic Adolescent Girls & Boys, 16-21 years; 5-Young Adult Women & Men Peer Mentors, 19-25 years; Parents/Caregivers of Participants.

Program Objectives/Activities:

1. One-on-One Daily Mentoring & Mobile Check-ups;
2. Weekly Rites of Passage-Violence Intervention & Prevention (ROP-VIP) Workshops;
3. Weekly Mental Health Counseling;
4. Weekly Arts & Culture Education Activities;
5. Weekly Academic, Career and Goal Development Mentoring Workshops;

6. Quarterly Parental Engagement Workshops & Community Service Outreach Activities

Timeline: June 2024- June 2026

Standard Monthly activities:

- Weekly Rites of Passage-VIP Workshops & Activities outlined in the "My Journey through the Rites of Passage" online curricular intervention program;
- Daily one on one peer and faculty Mentoring check ins,
- Weekly psycho-social and mental health counseling;
- Monthly Faculty Planning and face to face student assessments;
- additional 12-month repeated cycle outreach meet-up activities as follows:

Month 1=ORIENTATION; Individual Assessments; Mentor Matching; Parental Engagement Workshop; Distribution of training materials; Training and implementation of weekly online Rites of Passage curriculum platform and distribution of Access Codes to online training platform

Month 2= BACK TO SCHOOL RALLY

Month 3=COMMUNITY SERVICE; SKATING

Month 4=TICKETS4KIDS

Month 5= BOWLING

Month 6=COMMUNITY SERVICE; BOWLING

Month 7=MASQUARADE & Senior Citizens Outreach

Month 8=POETRY SLAM

Month 9=COMING OF AGE CEREMONY PLANNING; TICKETS4KIDS

Month 10=COMING OF AGE PLANNING; COMMUNITY SERVICE; SNOW TUBING

Month 11=COMING OF AGE PLANNING; FINAL STUDENT ASSESSMENTS; ESCAPE ROOM

Month 12=COMING OF AGE CEREMONY/DINNER; EVALUATIONS;

How do you plan to define "success"?

Pre-program assessments will be conducted at orientation and documented in case files for monitoring; intermittent knowledge assessments will be conducted monthly through the secure ROP-VIP online platform & during daily mentorship & counseling sessions; final assessments will be done during the 11th program month to monitor impact/success.

Qualitative & Quantitative Variables to be measured (#):

1. Mental/Behavioral Health (MBH) Services & Support interventions: # of weekly workshop participants; # of counseling & mentoring participants; and frequency of attendance;

2. Expanding engagement w/ high-risk individuals to reduce violence risk factors:
Qualitative Analyses—# of High-Risk participants as demonstrated by Behavioral Youth Assessments, family, school, juvenile and/or court reporting
3. Teaching nonviolent conflict resolution & violence prevention methods: # of participants completing self-reflection, conflict resolution & violence prevention activities;
4. Violence prevention, social and empowerment activities for high-risk individuals to promote personal growth, wellness, and to aid in the pursuit of successful, violence free futures: # of participants receiving violence intervention and mental health counseling;
5. Encouraging utilization/normalization of MH care: Total # of MH participants
6. Modeling goals to create new positive identities: # of overall participants who complete ROP-VIP program each year
7. Fostering positive engagement with law enforcement officials: # of participants attending Community Policing workshops (CPW)
8. Encouraging law enforcement careers for underrepresented populations: # of minorities attending CPW

Projected Outcomes:

90% of participants engaging in at least 60% of program activities will demonstrate comprehensive skills in conflict resolution, violence avoidance and pursuit of a purpose driven life.

Interim Report Update:

AAE's ROP-VIP commenced program implementation in March 2024 with the execution of the contract with Core Extreme Technologies to assist with development of the program website and upload the "My Journey Through the Rites of Passage" curriculum to the Udemy Course Platform. The foundation of AAE's ROP-VIP program is its online weekly training program facilitated by the Udemy Course. To date, we have completed the upload of both the website and curriculum onto the Udemy platform. However, we are still in the process of uploading the videos that are mandatory accompaniments to the coursework followed by retesting the entire system for integration with the program website. Due to the inability of the Udemy platform to accommodate the original videos that accompany the curriculum in the original format, which we didn't learn until after uploading the curriculum, we needed to manually convert over 100 presenter video clips into the new format compatible with Udemy. This has significantly delayed implementation of the online program and we have had

to move our online program start date to September 23, 2024. In the meantime, program faculty has been meeting in person and via google meets with college mentors for pre-program implementation training and preparation for launching the program.

Ongoing Recruitment Activities:

To date we have recruited 11 youth and 5 mentors through referrals, and we have begun to assess them for faculty mentor matching. Program Faculty and mentors will begin sending notices to after-school program directors throughout Pittsburgh's East End area for additional referrals of students and young adults ages 16-21 who present as troubled or deemed in need of behavioral and/or violence mitigation intervention in late September. Upon acceptance into the program, participants will be assessed for social determinant of health needs (including economic stability, healthcare access, food, shelter [neighborhood], and education access), and aligned with a faculty mentoring teams who can assist with program referrals as needed.

We are excited about the opportunity to offer this Rites of Passage- Violence Intervention and Prevention program (ROP-VIP) to help mitigate the aforementioned challenges and to work with law enforcement authorities to mediate and initiate improved relations amongst law enforcement and high-risk youth. This program can and will lead to a better understanding of the importance of law enforcement, their roles and responsibilities to the well-being of the public and community at large and create a better understanding for how the youth can be their stewards and maybe future law enforcement officials themselves.