

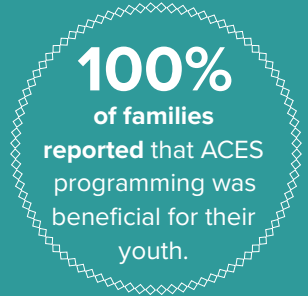


2020 IMPACT REPORT

MISSION

ENGAGE, PREPARE, THRIVE

The **mission** of ACES is to reduce the academic achievement gap and improve the likelihood of success for students in underserved communities. ACES works with fourth through eighth grade students in Minneapolis and Saint Paul to develop skills via an innovative curriculum that blends sports and math to spark learning.




Our **vision** is that ACES students succeed in college and career and become engaged citizens in safe and equitable communities.

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

A Message from Christina Saunders, ACES Executive Director

SINCE ITS FOUNDING, ACES HAS CONSISTENTLY CHAMPIONED THE VOICES OF YOUTH.



As our worlds were turned upside down this spring, our commitment to lifting up youth has been unwavering. We worked alongside our youth and families whose struggles were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the murder of George Floyd and the social unrest that followed. Our work certainly looked different, as we connected through a screen instead of in a classroom, but our mission and purpose remains as strong as ever.

What has this work looked like? We have been providing one-on-one virtual support to our youth while staying focused on building academic and social-emotional skills through sports. We continue to ground ourselves in our core values as we lead with empathy and even more attention to equity.

We maintain our focus on building consistent and healthy relationships with our youth, and we are there for our families when things don't go as planned. Along the way, we have been continuously inspired by the resilience and compassion of our youth. As an example, one of our students has repeatedly checked in on his academic coach throughout the pandemic!

Additionally, we delivered groceries to many of our families who have needed additional support during this crisis. In the coming weeks, we will add monthly school supply deliveries so that each of our students have a custom ACES kit with all the supplies needed for the month's curriculum.

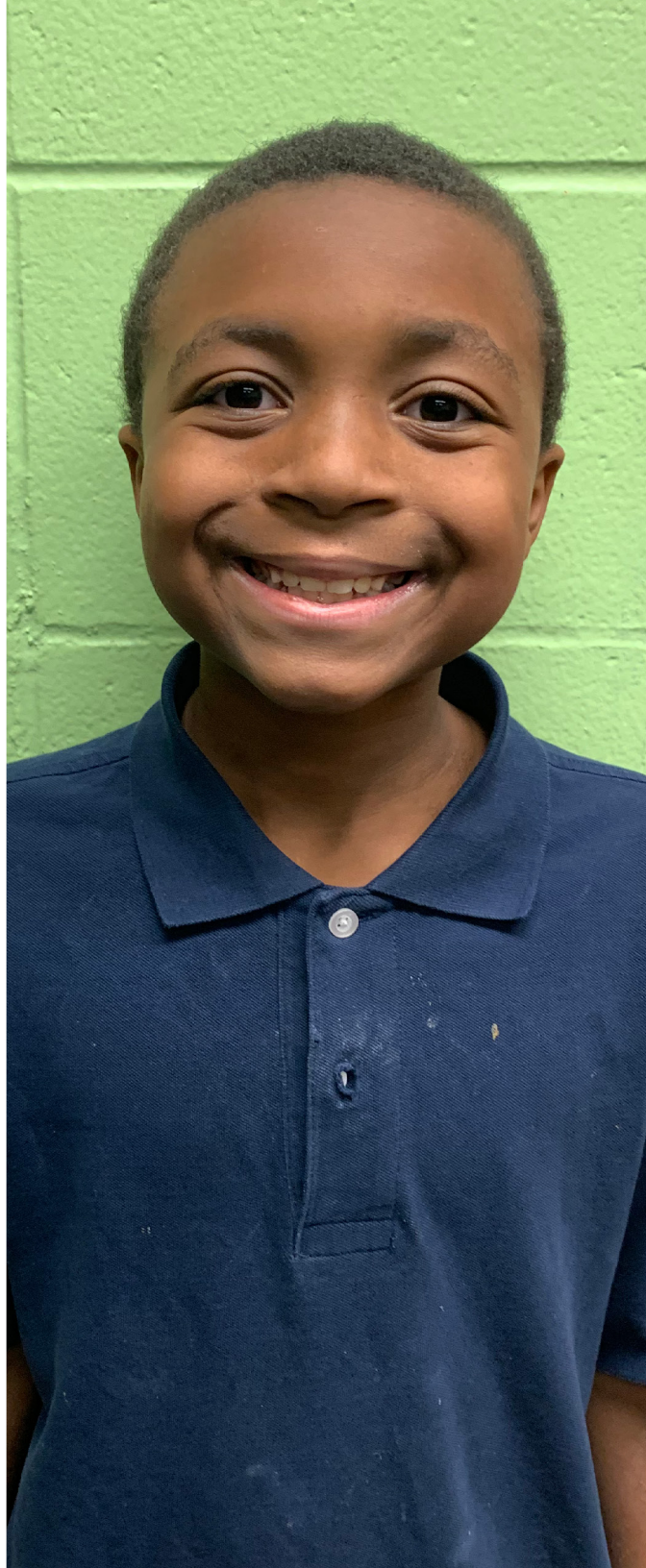
It would have been impossible to make the transition to virtual programming without the success of our ACES program prior to the pandemic and the relationships we have developed over time. For the 2020-21 year, our work is deepening, and we couldn't be more determined

to make the best of what lies ahead. We will create new and expanded partnerships and provide strong, continued virtual programming for our youth. We will add one-on-one homework support in addition to small group work, and we will continue to support family needs that have yet to emerge.

What ACES has been able to achieve this past year is nothing short of remarkable. We could not have reached this point without you, our supporters and partners. Your dollars have ensured that we can continue to provide the consistent support we know our youth need.

Finally, for the last six months, when the reality of the world has been incredibly intense and challenging, I have turned to the stories that always inspire me from the ACES community, and I have remained hopeful. This fall as we all continue to navigate new and existing challenges, we are determined to work harder than ever so that we can continue to spread that hope.

The spirit and dedication that has sustained ACES for nearly three decades continues to burn brightly, and I am certain it will carry us forward for another decade and beyond.



WE ARE DETERMINED

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

ACES was founded in 1994 to help close the academic achievement gap* in Minnesota, which is among the worst in the nation and carries major implications for Minnesota's economic and social health.

Middle school is a critical point in determining a student's future. ACES specifically serves fourth through eighth grade students and focuses on the development of math and social-emotional skills. ACES has helped countless youth in Minneapolis and Saint Paul increase their likelihood for continued academic and personal success.

Sports is a concept woven throughout programming as a hook to incite student interest as well as a useful basis for academic learning. **We partner with the Minnesota Lynx, Timberwolves, Twins, Vikings, United FC, and Wild to support our work.** These teams and athletes provide ACES students with once-in-a-lifetime experiences that make their classroom learning come to life, such as athlete visits to programs, field trips to games, stadium tours, and as mentors for ACES youth!

*achievement gap is defined as the disparity in academic proficiency between youth of color and their white peers.

224
students served
through ACES Programming
prior to shift to virtual
programming



WE ARE CONNECTED

LEADING WITH EMPATHY

Going Virtual: Due to the effects of COVID-19, ACES has made changes to our program model to help ensure the health of our students, families, employees and communities, while remaining committed to supporting our youth academically and emotionally.



We know that school and afterschool programming closures and disruptions will exacerbate the already wide education gaps in our communities. Students' normal routines, which for many serve as the main structure of their days, have dramatically decreased or disappeared.

Now more than ever, students need positive relationships and emotional connections with others.

E-Mentoring: We must meet socially with our students so that social distancing does not turn into social isolation. We believe that when students have a positive relationship with an adult role model, their perspective of themselves and the world grows. ACES' e-mentoring program connects students to adult mentors with whom they engage in discussion about topics like confidence in life and school, practice and training, and perseverance through challenges.



WE ARE RESILIENT

DEEPENING OUR IMPACT

ACES 2020-2021 programming is designed to address the need for connection alongside academic and social-emotional learning. All elements will be virtual.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Small-Group Sessions: Small groups of students (3-4) meet with an ACES Academic Coach (teacher) for synchronous learning once per week. These sessions use ACES' sports, math, and SEL curriculum.

One-on-One Support: ACES Academic Coaches conduct 1:1 sessions with students on a weekly basis. Sessions last 45 minutes to an hour with a focus on relationship building and distance learning support.

Large Group Virtual Field Trips: Students have the opportunity to participate in a large group virtual "field trip" once per month. In addition to extending learning in an engaging way, these meetings build a sense of community and reinforce the culture of ACES. They also provide a fun way for students to connect with one another.



90%
**ACES students are
students of color**

1500
**meals distributed
over 7 months to
ACES youth and
families**



adidas



#ACES AllStar

Ambres
Palmer
4th Grade



MEET AMBRES, ACES ALL-STAR!

Ambres has been in ACES since 4th grade, and is starting 6th grade this year. He has enthusiastically participated in many ACES events over the last few years and is a huge fan of geometry and field trips.

When Ambres started ACES in fourth grade, math was not his favorite subject. Throughout his two years in ACES, his confidence in math has improved exponentially. So much so that last year, he helped as a guest teacher during the stadium architecture unit demonstrating area and perimeter for his teammates.

WE LOVE WHAT AMBRES HAS TO SAY ABOUT HIS OWN SUCCESS:

“ACES is important to me and my success because it helps me with my math and it’s going to help me get farther in the future. There’s some math that I don’t know how to do at school and ACES helps me with that.”



16
percentile point growth
from Spring 2019 to
Spring 2020 for ACES
All-Star, Ambres!

Ambres went from the 25th percentile nationally to 41st percentile, putting him on track to meet grade level upon entering high school.



“SOMETIMES I WONDER WHO’S MENTORING WHO?”

Here’s what one ACES Mentor had to say about their experience:

My experience as an E-mentor with ACES has been nothing short of fantastic the past 3 years. The energy and enthusiasm from the kids is amazing. Every week I eagerly await the email from my Mentee. The zest for learning & life from these kids is inspiring and energizing. As an E-Mentor, I learned so much from my mentee. His ability to adapt & thrive during these crazy times was awe-inspiring. He came each week with new ideas, experiences & a love for learning.

Sometimes I wonder who’s mentoring who? I’ve learned so much for the resiliency & positive attitude of these students.



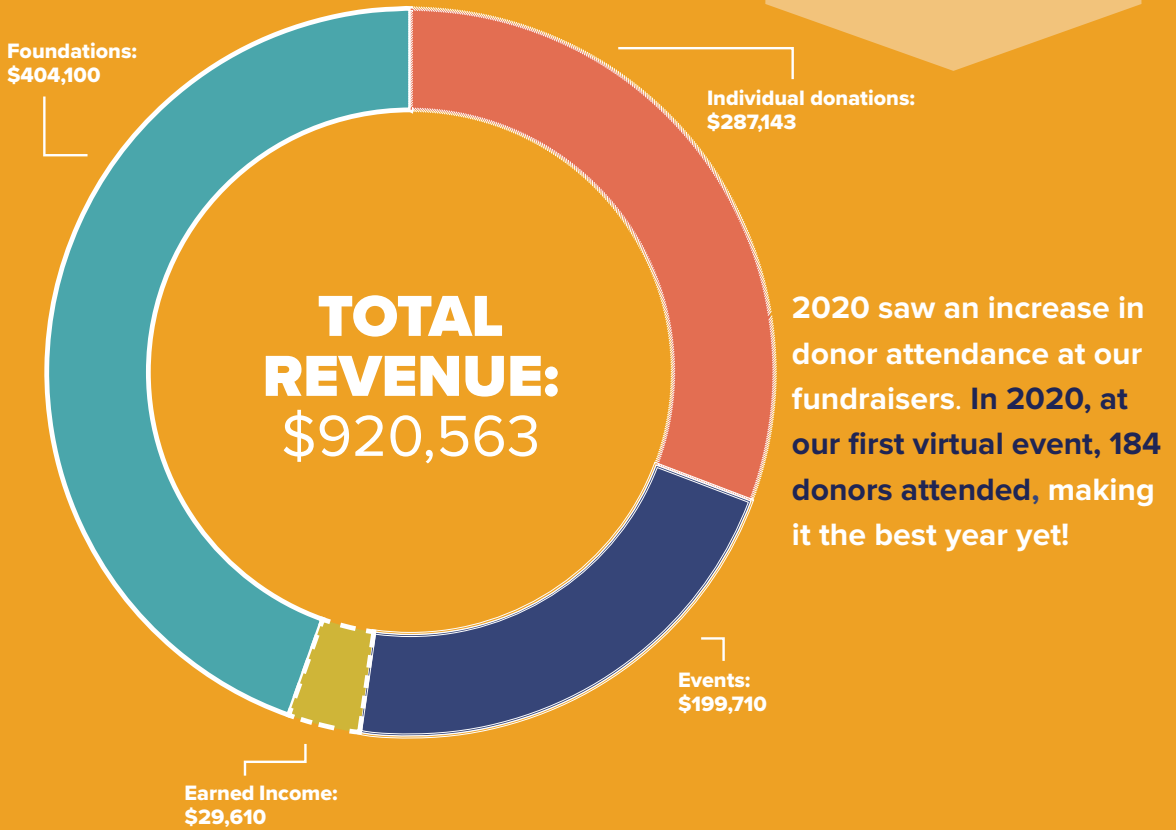
UNsung HERO

This year's "Unsung Hero" Award was presented to Minnesota United FC Defender, Michael Boxall.

Over the past two years, Michael has been an outstanding ACES ambassador. He has regularly helped with ACES programming, serving as an e-mentor and bringing youth out to MN United practices and games. He's even helped with COVID relief efforts, spearheading donation drives and fundraising for students and families affected by COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd.

Michael has continued to amplify the impact of ACES by lending a hand with fundraising initiatives and graciously endorsing the work. Growing up in Auckland, New Zealand, he understands the importance of youth education and mentorship.

FINANCIALS



25TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT: ALL-STAR EVENING 2020

The 2020 All-Star Evening was our first-ever virtual gala!

We celebrated the 25th anniversary of our organization and brought together supporters from around the country to support youth in the Twin Cities. We raised a total of \$200,000 made possible by the largest number of donors to ever contribute during the All-Star Evening! The virtual platform of this year's event allowed us to highlight the work we do in a new and engaging way, and extend our reach beyond our immediate geographic area.



SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS



\$100,000+

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\$50,000+

Alan & Melissa Spaulding

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Otto Bremer Trust

\$25,000+

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ACES
1115 E Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55414
aces4kids.org

“I think you should join ACES because it’s really fun and we play really fun games together. They also help you work on your math skills and it’s really fun!”

- Ambres, 6th Grader & 3rd Year ACES All Star

