



2023 IMPACT REPORT

Mission & Vision

ACES's MISSION is to reduce the academic opportunity gap in Minnesota and improve the likelihood of success for students in underserved communities.

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

Dear Friends,

As ACES closes the books on its 29th year of transformative programming for Minnesota students, there is so much to celebrate. During the 2022-23 school year, ACES increased enrollment by a phenomenal 39% — bringing engaging math and social-emotional curriculum, one-of-a-kind experiences, and meaningful mentorship to 426 young learners in some of our state's most historically marginalized communities.

Together, our incredible team of partners, volunteers, leaders, athlete ambassadors, students and families, staff, and supporters like you stepped up to the plate to make this unprecedented growth possible. In this letter, and through this report, you will read about what your support looked like in action this year.

- Energized by increased demand for programming, ACES expanded to four new partner schools — including our first site outside of the Twin Cities. In partnership with community and district leaders, we proudly launched Northfield's first and only afterschool math program — unlocking new and needed academic support for students in southeastern Minnesota.
- With incredible support from our Minnesota sports teams, ACES quadrupled the number of experiential

learning opportunities for our students. From running football drills with the Vikings to attending expert-led coding workshops, students saw time and again how classroom math translates to the real world.

- Responding to identified needs, ACES enhanced our original, sports-themed curriculum to better support students as they continue to rebound from pandemic learning disruptions — and students are making important gains in their math outcomes and social-emotional development.

With historically low test scores across the nation, heightened mental health concerns for students, and economic uncertainty impacting both the nonprofit and education sectors, these gains were not a given. Your partnership made them possible, and I can't thank you enough for being part of the ACES team.

As ACES enters a milestone anniversary year, I am inspired by the collective strength of our community. Together, we will continue to create opportunities, level the playing field, and empower our students to reach their full potential — next year, and for the next thirty.

Forward,
Christina Saunders
Executive Director

100% of families report that ACES programming was beneficial for their students

69% of students demonstrated math growth

81% of students reported that ACES helped them feel more confident in math



2022-23 School Partners

Minneapolis

Hiawatha College Prep — Kingfield
Hiawatha College Prep — Northrop
Northeast College Prep
Stonebridge World School

Saint Paul

Cherokee Heights Elementary
Global Arts Plus
Riverview West Side School of Excellence

Brooklyn Center

New Millennium Academy

Northfield

Northfield Middle School



63% of students demonstrated social-emotional learning (SEL) growth

ACES students attended **18,333 sessions** across nine program sites and received **13,817 hours** of targeted math and social-emotional learning skill-building.



ACES Expands to Northfield

Minnesota ranks at the bottom of all 50 states for equity in the education system — and the opportunity gap affects young people across the Land of 10,000 Lakes. This year, after decades of support for students in the Twin Cities metro area, ACES took an important step and expanded to its first site in Greater Minnesota.

Forty-four students at Northfield Middle School joined the ACES pilot program, spending after-school hours sharpening math skills and practicing teamwork, perseverance, and other social-emotional competencies by engaging with ACES hands-on, sports-themed curriculum.



After a year in the ACES classroom, more than 80% of Northfield students increased their math scores and more than 90% demonstrated social-emotional growth.

School year classes smoothly transitioned into Northfield Summer School, where ACES curriculum and staff integrated into daily programming. ACES is thrilled to return to Northfield Middle school in the fall of 2023 and to add programming at Bridgewater Elementary — expanding programming to serve Northfield 4th and 5th graders, as well!

“ACES has provided an excellent opportunity for our students to build and make connections, not only with caring adults, but also with peers. The consistency with ACES staff has been key to students returning each week, along with ACES’s upbeat and fun curriculum! We can’t wait to see what’s in store for this coming year!”

—Sarah VanSickle, Youth Development Coordinator, Northfield Public Schools Community Education



Get to Know Program Director, Malcolm Baker!

In the fall of 2022, Malcolm Baker joined the ACES leadership team in the vital role of Program Director. Bringing invaluable experience as a public school teacher and operational programming leader, Malcolm now oversees the implementation of and long-term vision for ACES's program model.

Malcolm hit the ground running — strengthening existing partnerships and building new connections, energizing ACES's dedicated team of classroom educators, increasing student enrollment, and much more. Read on to learn more about Malcolm's first year at ACES, what he envisions for programming the years ahead, and his introduction to Minnesota winter!

What drew you to the ACES Program Director role?

My education and teachers, experience and opportunities all come together to prepare me for this role. Being in the nonprofit, education space at an organization like ACES — there is so much opportunity to move the needle for young people in diverse Minnesota communities.

You served for three years as a public-school science teacher in Kansas City. What would it have meant to you, as a teacher, to have a program like ACES available to your students?

As a teacher, especially in STEM, I heard so many questions like “when will I ever use math in my life?” Having a program like ACES that helps students explore the real world applications of what they're learning — that would have been a game changer. It would also have been so meaningful to have other trusted adults, like the ACES

Site Coordinators and Academic Coaches, there to break down barriers and help students see that their success matters.

What were you most proud of during your first year as Program Director?

I am proud of the work we've done to empower our team, mindfully infusing their expertise with our strategic goals and my own innovations. With that, we have built stronger relationships with students, families, and school partners. We have curated purposeful experiential learning opportunities. And with so many students needing support, I'm especially proud of our surging enrollment.

What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the ACES program in the years ahead?

This is a pivotal time in which ACES can really impact the education space at a new level. As we embark on our next 30 years of programming for Minnesota students, there is great opportunity to creatively bring our curriculum to more communities across the state. And we can also bring more communities into our work in the nonprofit, education, and youth work space.

You moved from Kansas City to join the ACES team! So far, what are your favorite things about Minnesota?

The architecture, food, lakes, green spaces and access to the outdoors — I love it all! Where I grew up in Louisiana, it was a big deal to have frost on the ground. Minnesotans don't let winter slow them down. I've picked up ice skating, snow hiking, and cross country skiing. Just don't tell my mom that I've been out on the frozen lakes!



91% of students met year-end SEL benchmarks

9 program sites

426 students served

75% of families reported that their students math skills have improved since starting ACES

27,499 hours of programming attended

Bringing Learning to Life

Thousands of permission slips. Hundreds of miles on the school bus. Too many memories to count. This year, ACES students participated in **33** field trips and classroom workshops. A central piece of our experiential learning programming, these opportunities help students apply the ACES curriculum to real-world situations, explore new interests, and dream big for the future.



Technology Touchdown

ACES students ran on-field football drills at the Minnesota Vikings Headquarters and Practice Facility. Data collected using donated Microsoft Surface Pro tablets was later incorporated into several classroom lessons on statistical analysis. Special guests, including Vikings General Manager **Kwesi Adofo-Mensah** and players **Greg Joseph** and **Ryan Wright**, shared how their education — especially in math — prepared them for football careers.



Hour of Code

Volunteers from Accenture visited ACES classrooms to lead several workshops from the international Hour of Code program. HOC is designed to demystify code, show that anybody can learn the basics, and broaden interest in the field of computer science.



Practice with a Purpose

When the Women's Big 10 Basketball Tournament came to town, ACES students took to the court for a Practice with a Purpose clinic hosted by our partners at Bell Bank and several Gopher Basketball alumni. The day wrapped up with a conversation about the importance of youth mental health awareness and a Big 10 tip off game at Target Center.

Hockey Without Limits

Minnesota Wild defenseman and dedicated ACES athlete ambassador **Matt Dumba** welcomed students to his annual Hockey Without Limits Camp. The message of the day was clear: “hockey is for everyone.” For many students, it was their first time ice skating — and Matt was a great teacher!



Behind-the-Scenes Baseball

For a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience, the Minnesota Twins hosted batting practice and a pizza party in the Target Field clubhouse. Twins alums, players, and coaches, including General Manager **Rocco Baldelli**, helped ACES students tune up their swings!



Year-End Bowling Bash

The annual year-end celebration hosted by our partners at the St. Paul Saints and Treasure Island Resort & Casino was back and better than ever in 2023! 135 students from all nine ACES sites filled 24 lanes, bowling alongside Saints players and Minnesota's most famous pig, Mudonna!



All-Star Classroom Visits

Special guests help bring learning to life in the ACES classroom, sharing about their careers and expertise, and graciously answering myriad questions from curious students. This year, we were thrilled to welcome visitors including Minnesota United FC defenseman **Michael Boxall**, Minnesota Aurora FC President **Andrea Yoch**, and TV personality and education advocate **Michelle Young**!



Inside the ACES Curriculum

ACES's original, standards-based curriculum is carefully designed to reinforce school day learning and encourage students to engage with mathematics and social-emotional skills in new, exciting ways. Lessons focus on real-world applications and include hands-on projects — promoting critical thinking and accelerating retention. Depending on grade level and support needed, students follow one of three tracks.

Take a peek at some of the ACES curriculum units covered during the 2022-23 school year and key math and social-emotional skills taught in our classrooms.

Curriculum Unit	Selected Math Standards	SEL Focus
Training Camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Digit Addition and Subtraction • Order of Operations • Greatest Common Factor and Least Common Multiple 	Teamwork
Stadium Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Angles • Perimeter and Area of Quadrilaterals • Surface Area and Volume of a Cylinder 	Problem Solving
Breaking Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar and Line Graphs • Graphing Ordered Pairs • Plotting on a Number Line 	Perseverance
Technology in Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translations and Reflections • Classifying 3-Dimensional Figures • Calculating Simple and Compound Interest 	Positive Vision for the Future
Sports Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculating Percentages • Constant of Proportionality 	Confidence
Major Sports Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Decimals and Fractions with Words • Finding Equivalent Fractions • Solving 2-Step Equations 	Problem Solving
Sports Around the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solving Real World Problems Using Multiplication and Division • Creating and Analyzing Bar Graphs 	Teamwork
Athlete Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rounding Decimals and Fractions • Solving Real World Problems with Rational Numbers 	Goal Setting

Stay tuned: the 2023-24 year will bring exciting new units including Women in Sports, Paralympics, Outdoor Sports, and more!

Financials

Total Revenue:	\$1,481,815
Foundations:	\$482,900
Individual Donations:	\$289,237
Events:	\$454,757
Earned Income:	\$54,400
In-Kind Donations:	\$200,521



What ACES Families Are Saying...

“The field trips and opportunities are great. [My daughter] wants to be there early every day... she wants to get out the door to be at ACES.”

“The only way [the program] could be better for my daughter would be if she moved into the school building. She loves it!”

“All of my kids love ACES! It has helped us all in many ways.”

“The small groups are great for [my son]. I wish more of his buddies would join ACES!”

“ACES is a great way to start the day. You’ve created a positive atmosphere.”

“I’ve seen [my daughter’s] confidence and leadership grow a lot.”

“My kids are having fun while they are learning. They would love to join ACES again next year!”

“This is a great program because it helps my son be more responsible and do his homework consistently. ACES has also helped him improve his English language skills.”

ACES MVPs

ACES MVPs leave it all on the field for Minnesota students — season after season. The ACES team is grateful for and celebrates MVPs for their steadfast dedication to advancing education equity in our state.

Carin & Brent Anderson

Carol Bierbrauer

Kathryn Cunningham

Tom & Amy Foley

Matthew Grigal

Elizabeth & Erik Jensen

Jack & Anne Kennefick

David Knoblauch &

Susie Woodrich

Dave & Lynn Latzke

Seema Oberoi

Dale & Jeri Peterson

Bill & Lori Peterson

Tyler Phillips

Cal & Kris Robertson

Jenna Rosenberg

Roberta Saunders

Rajiv & Rajni Shah

Andrew & Cassidy Steiner

Jon & Lea Theobald

Syd Williams



ACES Hall of Fame

The ACES Hall of Fame honors individuals whose support for Minnesota's young learners is legendary. Hall of Fame members have gone above and beyond to ensure all students receive the all-star education they deserve. On behalf of the entire ACES team, thank you for your generosity and leadership.

Ken Fairchild

Tom & Amy Foley

Jack & Anne Kennefick

Bob Klefsaas

Dave & Lynn Latzke

Joy Lindsay & Roy Martin

John & Sallie March

Dale & Jeri Peterson

Bill & Lori Peterson

Cal & Kris Robertson

Roberta Saunders

Rajiv & Rajni Shah

Alan & Melissa Spaulding

Mary & Jeff Werbalowsky

Maria & David Wight

Andrea & Steve Yoch

ACES Supporters

Thank you for stepping off the sidelines for our Minnesota students.

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1115 E Hennepin Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55414

612-331-3454 | info@aces4kids.org
www.aces4kids.org

   @ACES4Kids