



# Achieving Excellence Academy

## Culture, Equity & Leadership Team

### AEA Mission

The AEA summer program will serve as an immersive 4-week pilot cultural identity and ethnic studies program on Black/African-American & Latinx experiences and ancestral histories. This space will also provide opportunities to unpack and explore varied racial, social, historic, and modern civic complexities facing marginalized populations and communities in the 21st Century. We know that social studies curriculum education (ethnic studies and cultural learnings) in the middle grades can contain significant gaps with respect to Black/African-American and Latinx perspectives and experiences. Therefore, our initial focus on incoming 9th graders, especially Black/African-American & Latinx students, is a purposeful opportunity to address current efforts to strengthen student achievement, elevate student voices, and to provide the encouragement and support students' need to grow cultural and racial identities and understanding. It is our hope for AEA participants to carry forward their remarkable ancestral learnings, histories of resilience, and excellence into the upcoming school year. All incoming 9th grade students are welcome to apply.

### AEA Vision

The AEA envisions a future where Black/African-American & Latinx cultures, attributes, and talents are regularly celebrated. This year's AEA pilot summer program is one opportunity for students to develop within community, to see themselves in the curriculum, and to be represented in the faces of other students, teachers and leaders. The AEA will create the conditions for students to express pride in cultural and racial identities, have a sense of belonging, and receive the supports needed to become agents of cultural change - taking their learnings into every school community, building, and classroom across the district.

### AEA Spotlight on DPS Shared Core Values

#### Students First

**We put our kids' needs at the forefront of everything we do.**

- The AEA is one response to recent Black/African-American student data raising the need for conditions that foster a greater sense of belonging.

#### Equity

**We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all our kids.**

- The AEA serves as one resource for increased understanding of who Black/African-American & Latinx students are, the systems and structures of oppression that impacted their lives, and how to use student voices to call for the equitable conditions named by our DPS Equity Statement & Equity Approach.



The AEA will run as an in-person program during the Summer of 2022 at Denver School of the Arts

This 4-week program will take place June 21st through July 14th, 2022.

Monday-Thursday:  
from 8:30 am-1:00 pm

The AEA will be closed both June 20th & July 4th in observance of the Juneteenth & Fourth of July holidays.





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### Collaboration

Together as a team, we think, we work, and we create in order to reach our goal.

- We work purposefully across departments, teams, regions, schools, and partner with community members and organizations to create the conditions for every child to succeed - by passionately pursuing racial & educational equity, together.

### Fun

We celebrate the joy in our work and foster in our students a joy and passion for learning to last their whole lives.

- The AEA will provide space, workshops, and experiences that spark joy, passion, and understanding of one's racial and cultural identity, voice, and power to creatively contribute to positive change.

## AEA FAQs

### What is the drop-off/pick-up schedule?

- Students will need to be dropped off between 8:30 - 8:45 am.
- Students will need to be picked up/depart the building between 1:00 - 1:15 pm. (With the exception of field trip days).
- Families with transportation challenges are encouraged to reach out directly to [ashlea\\_skiles@dpsk12.net](mailto:ashlea_skiles@dpsk12.net), and indicate their transportation needs on the Google form. (The AEA is closed on Fridays).

### Will both breakfast and lunch be provided?

- Yes. Students should plan to arrive at 8:30 am for breakfast with their classroom community cohort. Lunch will be served from 11:30-12 pm followed by a 30-minute outdoor "movement break".
- Every Thursday will be "Pizza Party Thursday" (with the option for students to bring their own lunch if preferred).

### How many student cohorts are anticipated?

- For this pilot year summer program we anticipate 4- classroom cohorts of 20 incoming 9th grade students, with a minimum of 1-teacher assigned to each cohort.
- We hope to recruit a total of 80 students from diverse backgrounds, including -Black/African-American and Latinx identifying students (and classroom teachers who reflect that diversity).

### Will there be a set curriculum and will students receive 9th grade course credits?

- Teachers are asked to design curriculum specific to their student cohort needs with an emphasis on teaching the histories of pre-enslaved/pre-colonized cultures and communities, the shaping and reshaping of Black/African-American & Latinx culture before and after Reconstruction, current systems and structures of oppression/impact, how to advocate for change, and cultivate resilience. Students will independently and collectively explore cultural identities and intersectionalities, and learn how to participate in collective community care.
- While students will not receive curriculum credit (at this time), we believe their learnings will contribute to a greater sense of belonging and provide the necessary skills for a more easful transition into high school. Additionally, students will participate in group learning projects and workshops, and take local field trips to the [Black American West Museum and Heritage Center](#), the [Museo De Las Américas](#), [The Mexican Cultural Center](#), the [Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library](#), [Lincoln Hills](#), or similar. Students will also participate in a culminating project that includes overnight travel to [The Nature Place](#), [The University of Denver James C. Kennedy Mountain Campus](#), or similar for the program's celebratory commencement.

### Is there a plan to combine student cohorts during the AEA?

- Yes! Every afternoon for lunch and for their recess/movement break.
- For the AEAs opening/mid-point/closing ceremonies & activities and during 'Cross-Cultural & Shared Identities Week'

### What precautions & considerations are being made for Covid-19?

- We will follow our DPS 5, state guidelines, updated district guidance, and flex into synchronous learning if necessary.