

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MENTORSHIP

Program Brief on Kingmakers of Seattle



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Culturally responsive mentorship: Program brief on Kingmakers of Seattle.

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ABSTRACT

Kingmakers of Seattle (KOS) is a Black education-based mentorship program for middle and high school boys and teens of African descent in Seattle Public School (SPS). Participating students take a rigorous Black studies course, receive individual care coordination services, and receive mentorship and leadership development. This brief review the program design and provides initial findings about student experiences from partnership program evaluation.

REPORT AUTHORS

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KINGMAKERS OF SEATTLE

Kingmakers of Seattle (KOS) is a Black education-based mentorship program for middle and high school boys and teens of African descent in Seattle Public School (SPS). Participating students take a rigorous Black studies course, receive individual care coordination services, and receive mentorship and leadership development. Course instruction, mentorship and supports are provided by Black male mentors. Mentors receive individualized professional development and technical assistance from AAMA and interested mentors have been supported by SPS on their own education pathway to achieve teacher certification.

KOS aims to create systems, structures, and conditions that foster positive identity development, provide cultural knowledge, increase Black male educator representation in schools, and build academic success for participating students.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In a formal partnership among SPS, DEEL, and Oakland Unified School District, KOS was launched in the 2017-18 academic year to advance the goals of the City of Seattle's Families, Education, Preschool & Promise Levy (FEPP), Our Best Mayoral initiative, and SPS's former, African American Male Advisory Committee. KOS is currently led by SPS's Office of African American Male Achievement.



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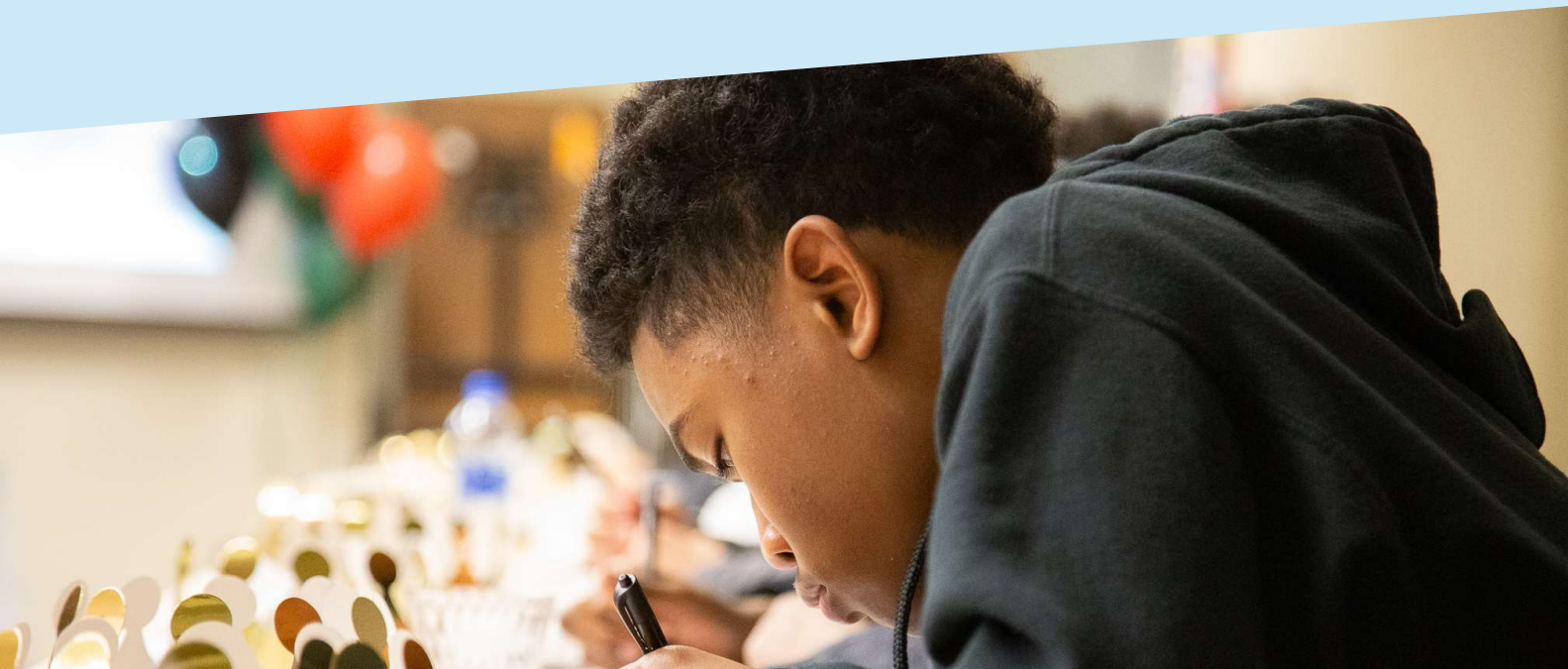
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Key Terms

“**Black**” in this report is used as a pan-African term, inclusive of people of African descent from across the diaspora. The capitalization of the term connotes its proper noun classification as it represents a reference to a cultural, ethnic or group of people of African ancestry.

“**Black education**” refers to course content grounded in the histories of people of African descent *and* culturally responsive instructional approaches that center students’ lived experiences.

“**Interagency Academy**” is a small, alternative high school, with campuses spread out across Seattle Public Schools, designed to engage students who have left a comprehensive pathway or students who would benefit from additional wraparound supports.



WHY MENTORSHIP?

Strong relationships with nonparental adults are essential to cultivating the brilliance, resiliency and long-term well-being of Black boys and teens (Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010; Jones & Neblett, 2017; Neblett et al., 2008; Seaton et al., 2011). Black middle and high schoolers with strong, long-term mentoring relationships (e.g., Grossman et al., 2012) have been found to be more academically engaged, have greater psychological well-being and autonomy, stronger racial identities, and greater self-efficacy than their Black peers without such kinds of mentor relationships, or those without mentors at all (DuBois et al., 2006; Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Tolan et al., 2020).

Research focused on mechanisms of change for Black youth specifically is sparse (see Sanchez et al., 2017). However, there are several mentorship success factors such as **age of mentee**, level of **mentor experience** in youth development, clear expectations of length of mentoring relationship, and the **structure of program** (e.g., embedded mentor training, professional development) that have been identified as important to consider for all youth engaged in mentoring programs (see DuBois et al., 2002,2012; Raposa et al., 2019).

Researchers have also identified several factors that may be particularly important for Black youth such as: grounding in youths' cultural background, integrating youth-driven approaches, empowerment approaches, and **similar life experiences between mentor and mentee**.

In addition, emergent research suggests that strong, positive engagement with youth's family and considering personal and environmental factors (e.g., youth's personality, youth's family situation, and youth's access to resources) are also associated with positive mentoring outcomes (Jones, in-prep).

With few Black educators in Seattle Public Schools, school-based, culturally-relevant programs can be an important student resource. Culturally responsive mentoring (CRM), here in the form of Kingmakers of Seattle (KOS), is an inherently complex mentorship model with a range of processes that occur at the interpersonal levels among youth, between youth and mentors, as well as at the programmatic, systemic, and broader policy levels.

Kingmakers of Seattle (KOS) is a Black education-based mentorship program where participating 6-12th grade students enroll in a credit-bearing, Black education elective course and receive mentorship from their instructor—a Black male mentor/instructor who provides care coordination and individual support.



We need people who look like our children to be mentors, to be an advocate for them, to run interference for them, to just love on them during the school day.” – Black mother, central-Seattle

PROGRAM DESIGN

Kingmakers of Seattle has three main elements:

1. **Individualized care coordination** where mentors cultivate relationships with students and develop support plans that can involve engagement from their teachers, family and community organizations
2. **Individual and peer-based mentoring** where students are engaged with their peers to build brotherhood and connection.
3. **Black education** course (Khepera curriculum) where students learn about Pan-African history, intersectionality, gender studies, and critical literacies.

A holistic measurement approach is essential to understanding KOS, given how mentorship and Black education impact myriad student outcomes. Below is a summary of program-aligned measurement areas.



Care coordination & Peer Supports

- One-on-one check-ins
- Care coordination & student success planning
- Educator-to-family connections
- Community and cultural events
- Brotherhood and friendships

Learning & Identity Development

- Critical Thinking
- Positive Racial Identity
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Leadership and Agency
- Joy of Learning
- Academic Engagement

Black-education Curricula

- Pan-African, diasporic history
- Hidden, BIPOC historical figures
- Black masculinity and gender studies
- Revolutionary literature and resisting stereotypes

Aligned Measurement Framework

The following dimensions are critical measurement domains to understand students, mentors, content, and embedded wraparound supports.

Relationship Development and Academic Supports

Interpersonal and academic outcomes

Culturally-responsive instructional practices and lesson plans

OUR STUDENTS

Students have participated in Kingmakers of Seattle since Fall of the 2017-18 academic year. In 2021-22, the program was expanded from 4 to 6 schools, adding [Franklin and Cleveland STEM High Schools](#). The table below shows program enrollment by school as of 2021-22.

Additionally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning, the office of AAMA uplifted a new, virtual mentoring program offered to students across middle school called Kingmakers of Seattle Extended. While KOS is concentrated in schools with higher numbers of Black students, [KOS-Extended](#) aimed to build cross-school brotherhood particularly among students who are one of few Black students in their buildings. *Note. The KOS-Extended, virtual program has continued through 2021-22 and student participation is not included in the table below.*

“

Kingmakers has taught me about being a better friend, being a good representative and being a good leader whenever.”

KOS 8th grader, Denny International, 2nd year in program

Number of Black boys and teens in Kingmakers of Seattle by School and Academic Year

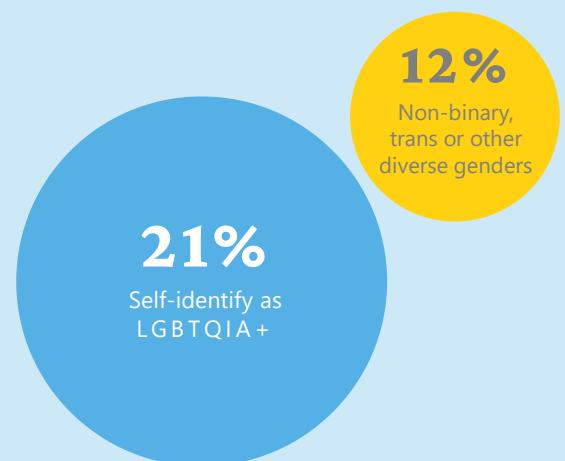
School Name	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total Served
Aki Kurose Middle School	24	39	27	36	34	160
David T. Denny Intl MS	39	44	26	50	52	221
Mercer Middle School	19	30	19	39	35	142
Interagency	34	29	21	34	26	144
Cleveland STEM High School	--	--	--	--	35	35
Franklin High School	--	--	--	--	21	21
Grand Total	115	142	93	159	N/A	N/A

Note. Annual counts include new and returning KOS students. “Total served” is the discrete count of all students by school across all 5 years of the program. 2021-22 and overall totals will be provided after June 2022. **Data Source.** SPS Atlas data warehouse.

DEMOGRAPHICS

2021-22 KOS Student Demographics & Supports	%	n
Advanced Learning Eligible	5%	6
In Highly Capable	1%	1
English Language Learning Services	10%	11
Experiencing Homelessness	8%	9
Special Education Services	24%	27
Top 3 Languages Spoken		
<i>English</i>	78%	87
<i>Somali</i>	10%	11
<i>Oromo</i>	5%	6

Data Source. SPS Atlas data warehouse



Data Source. Nov-Dec 2021 Student Survey of School Climate; **Participating Kingmakers of Seattle Students = 91**

EXPERIENCE IN KINGMAKERS

December 2021 to January 2022, KOS students ($N = 64$) participated in a brief, **program-wide pre-survey** focused on ethnic and racial identity, strong relationships and skills growth. This survey instrument represents a pilot effort to infuse student asset-based measurement and student voice in program quality. With a post-survey (anticipated May 2022) we will be able to examine within-student change across these dimensions.

Black identity. When reflecting on school experiences *prior* to joining KOS, 78% of students reported strong and positive attitudes about their cultural identity, yet few reported having opportunities to learn more about their culture (48%), especially in school settings (55%).

Relationships and Leadership. KOS students indicated strong leadership and social-emotional skills prior to KOS, yet when it came to meaningful instructional content and comfort in the classroom, few (49%) had experienced classrooms where they were able to connect lessons to life and only 58% reported feeling comfortable speaking their mind in class.

Skills Areas. Lastly, students reflected on the following program-connected skills and knowledge areas. Most students found KOS to promote friendship, leadership and cultural knowledge, and few students (22%) found KOS to support an overall connection to their school.

“Being in Kingmakers has promoted or increased my...”
(Select all that apply)

Skills Growth Areas	%	n
Friendships and sense of brotherhood	70%	45
Leadership skills	66%	42
Knowledge of Black/Pan-African History	64%	41
Cultural and racial identity	61%	39
Overall confidence	39%	25
Critical thinking skills	38%	24
Academic skills	30%	19
Sense of connection to my school	22%	14

Data Source. Kingmakers Student Exit Ticket $N = 64$ | Dec-2021-Jan 2022



“ I teach my other classmates about Black History, and I feel closer to the Black students.”
12th grade King, Cleveland, 1st year in Kingmakers

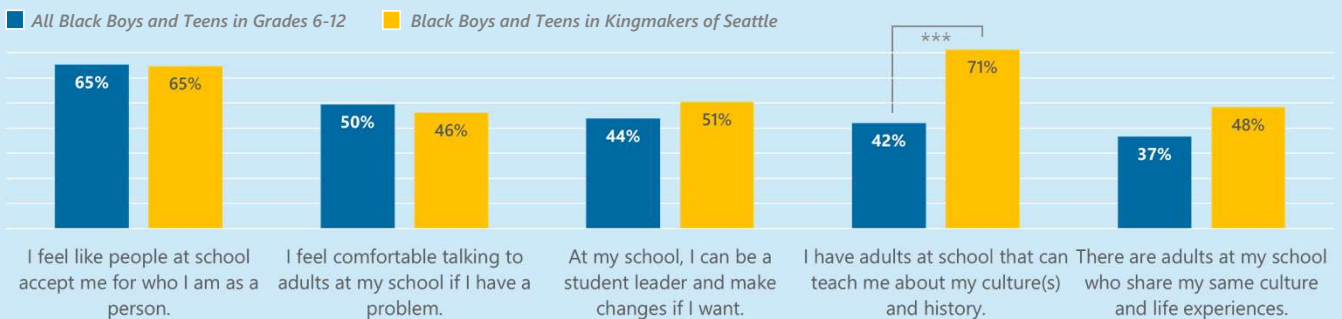
“ Leading by example and stepping when needed”
11th grade King Cleveland, 3rd year in Kingmakers

CLIMATE OF OUR SCHOOLS

Research confirms what our families, youth, and educators have known for decades: a safe and supportive school environment—where students have positive social relationships, are respected and engaged in their work, and feel competent—matters (Amodio & Mendoza, 2010; Bottiani et al., 2016; Bradshaw et al., 2015). How children and youth experience the overall climate of their schools impacts their achievement and success. Therefore, it is critical to understand the broader experience of school climate to achieve safe, welcoming and joyful learning environments.

65% of high school age Black boys and teens (both KOS and non-KOS) experienced general acceptance at school, yet far fewer (50% and 46%) felt comfortable talking to adults when they are having issues, and just **37% of non-KOS Black male secondary students reported having adults in the building that represented their life experiences and culture**. More KOS students experienced cultural representation in school staff with **71% affirming that they having an adult in-school to teach them about their culture and history**.

Proportion of Kingmakers and non-Kingmakers, Black secondary students who responded “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”



Data Source. Select items from the SPS districtwide Student Survey of School Climate, Nov-Dec 2021; *** = $p < .001$; $t(871) = 5.42$, $p < .001$

ACADEMICS AND ENGAGEMENT

Attendance

Attendance is a central indicator of student engagement and school connection. Regular attendance impacts many facets of education, including reading levels, academic achievement, graduation and likelihood of disengaging from school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). KOS mentors and AAMA staff promote attendance by cultivating a supportive environment.

Coursetaking and Credits

KOS mentors and AAMA staff support students in many elements of academic life. From tracking student assignments, grades, and attendance, to connecting students, families and educators in coordinated care, KOS takes a relational approach to academic support. The table shows the proportion of KOS students passing core courses and having 6 or more credits in 9th grade.

Year	KOS students by grade-level band		AAM, all grades comparison	
	6-8th	9-12th	KOS 6-12	*AAM
2017-18	78%	26%	53%	56%
2018-19	71%	36%	53%	54%
2019-20	75%	25%	51%	57%
2020-21	75%	26%	56%	61%

Year	KOS students passing core courses		6 or more credits in 9th grade	
	6-8th	9-12th	KOS	*AAM
2017-18	54%	29%	14%	69%
2018-19	49%	21%	47%	67%
2019-20	62%	42%	93%	84%
2020-21	99%	100%	88%	86%

Data Source. SPS Atlas data warehouse. **Note.** 1) Tables show proportion of students regularly attending school and passing core courses; 2) **AAM** = African American Males not in KOS, **KOS** = students in Kingmakers of Seattle; 3) 2020-21 data may not accurately reflect student engagement and performance due variance in attendance tracking and grading practices during remote instruction.

RESOURCES

RESOURCE

URL

Kingmakers of Seattle	seattleschools.org/departments/aama/kingmakers
DEEL Blog Post	education.seattle.gov/kingmakers-of-seattle-expands
Kingmakers of Oakland	kingmakersofoakland.org

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Kingmakers of Seattle Evaluation. Future SPS-DEEL reports on Kingmakers of Seattle will draw from an on-going multi-year evaluation that sets out to examine program impacts, additional dimensions of academic success and implications for investments in culturally responsive strategies.