

Literacy Accelerators

Leveraging community educators in learning

Discover the ways schools are leveraging community educators to deepen learning for students. Community educators include youth-serving professionals and volunteers who leverage their knowledge and skills to support learners and complement professional educators. Below, Skyline High School students assume community educator roles at their elementary feeder school, Stevenson Elementary.



Recurring visits



Multiple community educators



Reading



Tutoring

What it is, and why we love it

Two to four times per week, Skyline High School year one teacher academy students follow a pull-out structure with data-identified kindergarten and first grade students at Stevenson Elementary, while year two, three and four students push-in to third and fourth grade classrooms, all assuming the role of community educators.



Teachers enjoy having another person in the room who is able to support what they're doing [and] seeing the students make progress and growth by having individualized support.

– Lennon Audrain, Skyline High School CTE Ed Professions

Skyline and Stevenson begin preparing for the first semester by pairing Skyline's teacher academy students with varying grade-levels from Stevenson, based on the two schools' schedule alignment. The first quarter is used as an onboarding period for all students, focused on establishing routines and building relationships. For teacher academy students, it's all about existing in the learning space, observing the classroom teacher and getting used to the school. For elementary students, they're adapting to having additional bodies in the room and recognizing them as educators. As quarter two approaches, Stevenson teachers from the select grade-levels use data to identify which students would benefit most from additional support in literacy.

Stevenson has designated a portable classroom not currently in use, for Skyline to use while on-campus. Meeting their teacher-academy, classroom-design standards, community educators arrange the space to support their tutoring needs and decorate the room using posters as additional teaching tools. To take advantage of the entire time they have with their students, different methods of intervention and assessment are used. For example, year one community educators use phonics cards to check letter sounds during the walk to and from the classroom to collect and return their tutees. They track their students' progress and turn in reports to the elementary classroom teacher.

Using community educators in this way, elementary students receive individualized instruction from cross-age peers. Classroom teachers are given additional support from trained tutors. High school students are given the opportunity to apply their tutor skills to facilitate learning, becoming adaptable and responsive to the actual learners in the space.

Sample schedule:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Literacy accelerator nanocoursesTeacher academy curriculum at Skyline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On-site, pull-out tutoring with kindergarten and first grade at Stevenson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Literacy accelerator nanocoursesTeacher academy curriculum at Skyline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On-site, pull-out tutoring with kindergarten and first grade at Stevenson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Literacy accelerator nanocoursesTeacher academy curriculum at Skyline

What's made this program a success

Program logistics and preparation

- Partnership established between a high school with a teacher academy program and a near-by elementary feeder school. Days and frequency determined by schedule alignment.
- Busses are reserved outside of black-out times to transport high schoolers to and from the elementary school during Career and Technical Education teacher academy class time.
- High school students assuming community educator roles are trained with literacy accelerator skills by using community educator nanocourses from the Literacy Acceleration collection by Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College.
- Tutors learn school routines while elementary students get used to more people in the learning space before structured tutoring time begins.

Social-capital and networking

- School staff and high school community educators establish relationships for future networking; a true "Grow Your Own" teacher preparation program.
- High school students are closer near-peers for elementary students than college students.
- This collaboration ignites more individuals who are prepared to support students in literacy skills. "...Not a staff increase, but a staff plus", says Audrain.

Establishing meaningful roles

- The defined rules and roles in the first quarter help community educators have meaningful responsibilities in the classroom and intentional opportunities to build relationships, interacting with students rather than solely observing.
- Communication between community educators and elementary teachers on student data and growth establishes trust; students are being pulled-out for academic benefit.
- High school students gain adaptability and responsive tutoring skills in a sheltered role.
- Teachers have trained support with the high school community educators and can create multiple, small-groups for individualized literacy instruction and acceleration.

Lasting connections

- Elementary students see cross-age peers as tutors and can envision what they might do themselves as they get older.
- High school students are able to see the industry of education and get teaching experience that can be used whether they decide to enter the field of education or not. These community educator skills are transferable to other career paths they may choose.

Impact on learning for students	Invite with clarity	Considerations for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elementary students are able to receive individualized instruction from a cross-age peer• Elementary students can visualize themselves in the tutor role due to having educators who look like them and are much closer in age• High school students get hands-on teaching experience before college	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a local high school with a teacher academy• Invite tutors to train using the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Literacy Accelerator nanocourse collection• Identify students who would best be supported by community educators• Identify the purpose: Supporting literacy? Building social capital?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a space where tutors can take kids or where teachers are willing to have student tutors work in their classroom• Identify the frequency of tutoring experiences• Consider transportation logistics if the schools are not within walking distance or students aren't drivers