

# 2022 ARYSE annual report





# The 2021-2022 fiscal year was truly a transformative one for ARYSE.

In addition to getting back to fully in-person since 2020 for all of our existing programming – *After School Club, PRYSE Academy, Girls Art and Maker Group, and Youth Steering Committee* – we doubled the size of our team, designed and implemented 2 new programs, expanded our individualized support for students, and served over 150 youth. With each passing year of our organization’s growth, I feel such immense gratitude to our community of supporters for believing in the vision and purpose of ARYSE and making this work possible.

Back in 2017 when our volunteer team began building an organization to serve refugee youth year-round, one of our biggest goals was to hire someone full-time to coordinate our summer program, PRYSE Academy, knowing that it would take the program to new levels of creativity, learning, and community solidarity. It’s taken 5 years to achieve this goal, but I’m proud to say that in the same year, we exceeded it; in February, 2022, we welcomed 3 incredibly talented and thoughtful individuals to ARYSE: Cody Weisel, *PRYSE Academy Program Manager*, Abdi Lugundi, *Youth Leadership Coordinator*, and Meg Booth, *Afghan Youth Support Coordinator*. Read on to hear directly from them and our other wonderful program staff about successes, challenges, and learning from this past year.

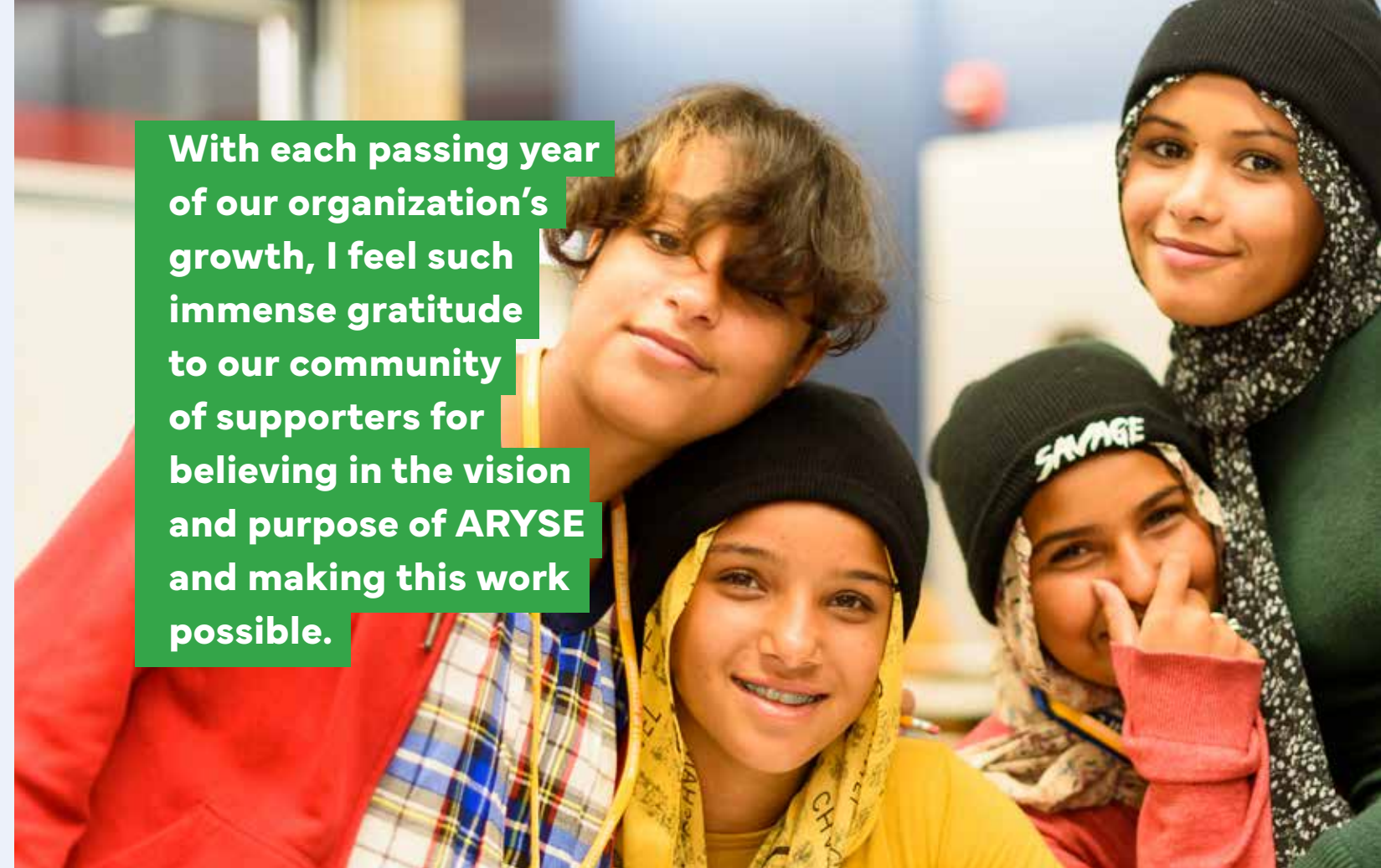
One major reason we were able to achieve this growth in 2022 is that in October, 2021, we were awarded the Refugee School Impact Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The purpose of the grant is to support PRYSE Academy and implement a new program to support Afghan newcomer youth, which we named *Empowered Afghan Youth*. This is the first state grant awarded to ARYSE directly, and due to the significant increase in refugee resettlement since January, 2021, the grant was substantial enough to support all of these new positions and programs.



**03**  
new full-time staff

**02**  
new programs

**150+**  
students served



With each passing year of our organization’s growth, I feel such immense gratitude to our community of supporters for believing in the vision and purpose of ARYSE and making this work possible.

Some other exciting successes from the past year highlighted in the report include hosting 3 Covid-19 vaccine clinics, establishing Future Planning Workshops for high school seniors, and returning to our original home for PRYSE Academy, the University of Pittsburgh. Each of these wins reflects the intentionality we take to our growth and our increasing capacity to stay involved in our students’ lives as they navigate life’s transitions, regularly adapting our programs to support their distinct needs and aspirations.

As we enter a new year, we have some big, exciting questions to answer through strategic planning: “How do we expand our work to support a growing community of immigrant and refugee youth?” “How do we maintain the most valuable and important aspects of our program while expanding to reach new students?” “What is our role in advocacy and affecting long-term change to improve the experience of English learners in our schools?” As we enter the 6th year of building this organization, our team is uniquely poised to answer these questions and others about our vision and the future of ARYSE.

I’m deeply honored to be in this role and to do this work of making our region a place where immigrant and refugee voices are prioritized in every space where decisions are being made about the future of our communities. Thank you for taking the time to review this report and learn about our work over the past year. We look forward to sharing many more great stories with you from 2023!

With love,

*Jenna Baron*

Executive Director



## ARYSE Staff



**Jenna Baron,**  
Executive  
Director



**Morgan  
Puterbaugh,**  
Operations  
Manager



**Mike Sirera,**  
After School  
Club Director



**Meg Booth,**  
Afghan Youth  
Support  
Coordinator



**Cody Weisel,**  
PRYSE Academy  
Program Manager



**Abdi Lugundi,**  
Youth Leadership  
Coordinator



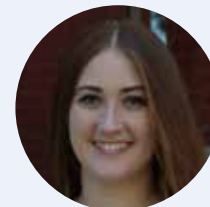
**Sophie  
Burkholder,**  
Family  
Communications  
Coordinator



**Jared Munoz,**  
Compass  
Americorps  
Member



**Danielle  
Akamba,**  
Social Work  
Intern



**Isabelle  
Rossetti,**  
Social Work  
Intern



**Maryam Nader,**  
Social Media  
Coordinator



**Taya Jackson,**  
Girls Art and  
Maker Group  
Coordinator



**Yongjie Zeng,**  
LGBTQ+  
Initiative  
Coordinator



**Sharifa Mkomwa,**  
Intern and YSC  
Co-Facilitator



**Rahwa  
Angesom,**  
Co-Facilitator



**Terri Matthews,**  
PRYSE  
Academy  
Co-Director



**Reece Dolbin,**  
PRYSE  
Academy  
Co-Director



**Prachi Patel,**  
Communications  
Consultant

## ARYSE Board

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Program Manager, Center for Inclusion and  
Immigrant Health, Allegheny Health Network

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**Faduma Saleh, Student, CCAC**

**Barbara Johnson, Education Department: Office  
of Special Partnerships, Carlow University**

**Mark Nakhla, Psychiatrist, Mount Sinai Hospital**

**Maya Ragavan, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics,  
University of Pittsburgh/Children's Hospital of  
Pittsburgh**

**Kate Berson, Department of Justice Accredited  
Representative, Justice at Work**

## Highlights in the Community

### Iragi and the Andy Warhol Museum

Thanks to Heather White and the education team at the Warhol Museum, for years, PRYSE Academy students have learned how to sew and create original clothing in fashion design workshops. This past year, one ARYSE student, Iragi Devine, continued to participate independently in the Warhol's spring Teen Fashion Workshops and showcased her work on the runway!



### Vaccine Clinic

In 2021, ARYSE joined the Community Vitality Collaborative, a coalition developed to address vaccine hesitancy in Allegheny County. Our Family Communications Coordinator, Sophie Burkholder, regularly attended and participated in 2 working groups, one focused on immigrant and refugee communities, the other focused on youth outreach. Through her relationships and knowledge, Sophie led an initiative to host 3 vaccine clinics in partnership with UPMC for families in Crafton Heights. Over the course of 3 clinics, over 200 vaccine doses were administered to community members. Since joining the collaborative, Sophie has helped over 100 individuals connected to ARYSE get vaccinated, including 30 PRYSE Academy 2022 participants. We're grateful for your hard work, Sophie!



### Youth Steering Committee Visit to Harrisburg

In March, members from the Youth Steering Committee joined the Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative organized by A+ Schools for the 2022 After School Advocacy Day in Harrisburg. YSC members spoke with elected officials about the importance of academic, enrichment, and leadership programs for refugee youth.



### WESA Feature on Empowered Afghan Youth

In July, Pittsburgh's NPR news station, WESA, featured a story on Empowered Afghan Youth and its role in supporting newcomers adjust to life in Pittsburgh. While it wasn't captured in the final piece, in her interview, Afghan Youth Support Coordinator, Meg Booth, expressed that like any other country and culture, Afghan culture is not a monolith; it's incredibly diverse, and we can learn a lot from listening to and honoring what people share with us.

### Presentation at the Refugee Education Summit

ARYSE was invited to present at the PA Department of Education's inaugural Refugee Education Summit to share best practices in out-of-school-time programs for refugee youth with agencies, school districts, and leaders across the state.





# Girls Art and Maker Group

As is tradition at Girls Art and Maker Group (Girls Group), we began the year by collaborating with students to determine what they wanted the program to look like in the 2021-2022 school year. Girls Group is designed to be an emotionally supportive program for immigrant and refugee teen women and femmes. As in previous years of the program, we utilized social emotional learning (SEL) practices to support students in identifying, accepting, and expressing their emotions in constructive and creative ways and fostering a space where they are supported in the moment by their peers, e.g. by establishing ground rules. The students were also excited to keep with the tradition of meeting with and learning from local artists, so we piloted a student-designed Request for Proposals to recruit someone who would meet with us every month from January through May, 2022.

For most months, Girls Group met twice per month on Saturdays at the Human Services Building in Downtown Pittsburgh or the Downtown branch of the Carnegie Library. This year, 11 students participated. This group represented 8 countries of origin, including Nigeria, Kurdistan (Iraq), Burma, Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Syria, and Kenya. The students' schools included Obama 6-8, Baldwin High School, Brashear High School, and Perry High School. We also had extra help from 3 Duquesne University students in the Community Engaged Scholars Program, Re'naye, Emmala, and Gia, who were a regular, immensely valuable presence at Girls Group.



Throughout the fall, Girls Group participants were involved in every aspect of the Request for Proposals process to recruit a teaching artist, especially in the selection of the candidate. Clips from interviews with each candidate were recorded and shared with the students who then evaluated the candidates and voted for their top 2 choices. As a result, the youth selected to work with Zuly Inirio, an Afro-Latina opera singer, SEL practitioner, and social worker.

Throughout the spring, Zuly led a curriculum focused on "The Foundations of Vocal Technique," sharing the basics of what every singer needs to know in order to continue to blossom into their own individual singing voice. Zuly led the group in singing together, learning Judy Garland's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and connected the lessons to emotional regulation skills and the concept of how community building brings harmony to our lives. At the beginning, students were very shy about singing, especially when they began practicing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," by the end, they sang with such confidence!

At times, it was a bumpy, challenging road getting back into the routine of meeting in person, but all-in-all, Girls Group this year was extremely successful. Having Zuly and her expertise at the program added a dimension of exploration and helped students build confidence. Our entire group grew together and students saw how it's possible to design a program for themselves. As I step away from this position at ARYSE and reflect on my experience with Group Group, I recognize that I have become a trusted mentor to students and feel the impact they have had on my life. Girls Group and ARYSE is a family and the relationships will always be important to me. I look forward to reuniting with everyone at future ARYSE events like the PRYSE Academy Final Showcase!

*Taya Jackson*

Girls Art and Maker Group Coordinator

*Note from the Executive Director: Taya Jackson first became involved with ARYSE during her Americorps VISTA service in 2019 with the All for All Coalition, providing support to the After School Club and becoming a mentor to ARYSE high school students. In January, 2021, she rejoined the team in an official capacity as the Girls Art and Maker Group Coordinator and has guided the program through the 2021-2022 school year. We are so grateful for all of the time, energy, and gifts that Taya has offered to ARYSE, our students, and community and we're excited to build on her legacy in the years to come.*



**Zuly led the group in singing together and connected the lessons to emotional regulation skills and the concept of how community building brings harmony to our lives.**



# After School Club 9-12

My goal for After School Club is that at its very core, it's a space where students feel loved, supported, and celebrated. While we built that into everything we did during the pandemic, returning to in-person programming reminded me just how much having a physical space to gather elevates the experience. After a year and a half of doing most things virtually, the first day of After School Club felt like a celebration. The day was filled with laughter, joy, and excitement, and it set the tone for what was an awesome year to come.

Our focus at the beginning of the year was to help students re-adjust to school and programming in person. During enrollment meetings, students set individual goals for the year and we supported their pursuit of those goals in group sessions and individual meetings. We held in-person programming on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Duquesne University where students received homework assistance and participated in outcome-driven

activities. We placed an extra emphasis on community building and academic success, while also doing activities focused on college and career readiness, celebration of culture and identity, social and cultural integration, civic engagement, and life satisfaction. Throughout the year, we supported 30 high school students through 38 sessions of After School Club, 4 special events and field trips, and provided 238 hours of additional individual support.

The beginning of the day at After School Club is always a shared meal that I think of as family dinner. We use this time to build community and sometimes as an extra learning opportunity. For example, in November, we shared a Thanksgiving dinner to expose students to common U.S. traditions, and in May our AmeriCorps member Jared shared Puerto Rican food that he grew up with. Some other highlights of the year included a panel of recent alumni that spoke to their experience transitioning from high school to college, holiday card making for patients and

families at the Ronald McDonald house, conversations about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, modified versions of the Price is Right and Family Feud to help students practice English, and a session to pilot the curriculum for PRYSE Academy. This year, we also introduced special workshops for students interested in non-profit careers and a College 101 seminar.

None of this work would be possible without the help of our partners. A huge thank you to Jared Munoz (Compass AmeriCorps), 412 Futures, our volunteers who served as mentors to the students at the program, and of course, Dr. Jennie Schulze, our faculty partner at Duquesne University, who is with us at the program every session. Your contributions bring out the best of our program!



**30**  
high school students

**38**  
sessions of ASC

**04**  
special events & field trips

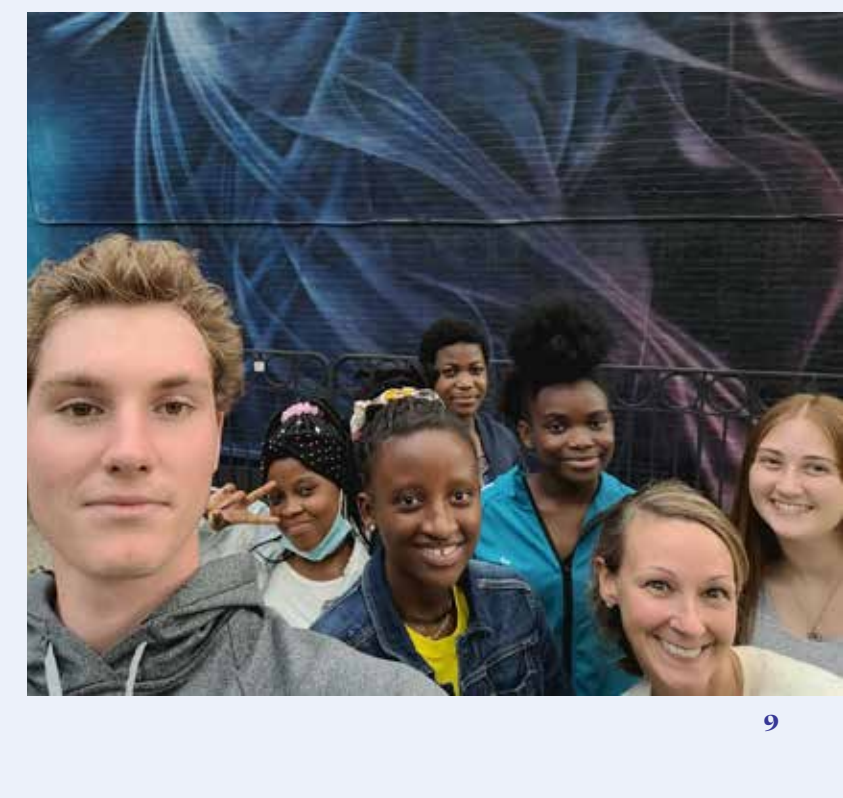
**238**  
hours of individual support

*Mike Sirera*

After School Club Program Director



I want After School Club to be a space where students feel loved, supported, and celebrated.





# Future Planning Workshops

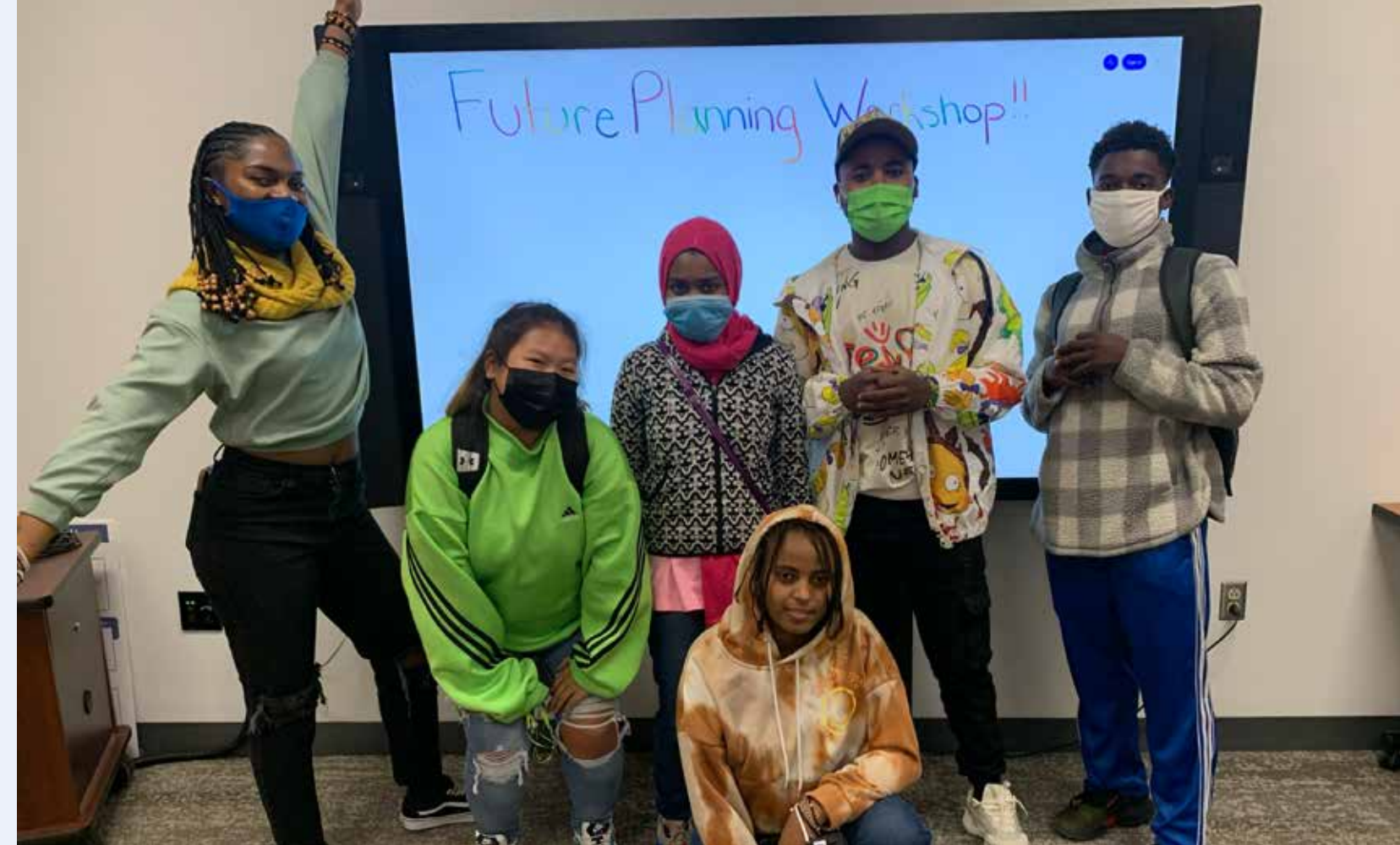
When I first learned about ARYSE's future planning program, 15-year-old me jumped for joy. I thought, "finally, an organization that gets me and aligns with the reason I have always wanted to be a social worker, an advocate, a voice, and most importantly a compass for our youth."

As a young woman from Cameroon, I wish a program like Future Planning was around when I was growing up. I was beyond grateful to be trusted to lead the program and went in whole-hearted, visualizing a part of myself in each student. I wanted each student to feel seen, welcome, and most importantly, heard.

My mindset at the beginning of the program was to help as many students as possible apply to university, trade school, or apply to jobs depending on their goals. Soon after kicking

off the program, I discovered a major barrier: our students were not given the proper tools or information at school to understand how to apply for jobs or college. Thanks to collaboration with school counselors and volunteers from the University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, and Carlow University our students received one-on-one mentorship to complete their college, FAFSA, PHEAA, and scholarship applications.

Some of my favorite memories from the program were during my individual meetings with students. I loved hearing them talk about their dreams and working together to find the resources they needed to achieve them. I always reminded the students to never be afraid to ask for help, something I really struggled with at their stage of life.



**10**  
high school students

**04**  
community college of  
alleghey county

**02**  
4-year university

**02**  
working

One of the greatest things I learned is that just because I'm African doesn't mean I automatically understand others who have come from different ethnic backgrounds. Our refugee students represent a diversity of cultures, languages, and backgrounds, and what connected us was a shared drive toward personal growth and success.

*Danny*

Future Planning Facilitator

*Note from the Executive Director: In the fall of 2021, ARYSE launched a new initiative called Future Planning Workshops to provide high school seniors with mentorship and individualized support to achieve their post-secondary goals. In the 2021-2022 school year, we worked with 10 high school seniors representing 5 countries of origin, including Congo, Eritrea, Venezuela, Rwanda and Kenya. All 10 students graduated from their high schools, which included Brashear High School, Taylor Allderdice High School, Mount Lebanon, and Urban Pathways.*

*Future Planning met one Saturday each month at the Human Services Building in Downtown, Pittsburgh, and met individually with Danny or their mentors throughout the month in between meetings to complete tasks and work toward their goals. Out of the 10 students, 4 are attending the Community College of Allegheny County, 2 are attending a 4-year university, 2 are working, 1 is still in transition, and 1 moved out of Pittsburgh with her family.*

*Future Planning Workshops were led by Danielle (Danny) Akamba, a senior at Carlow University pursuing her bachelor's in social work who interned with ARYSE for the year. We are so grateful to Danny and look forward to seeing all of the impact she continues to make in our community!*



# Youth Leadership

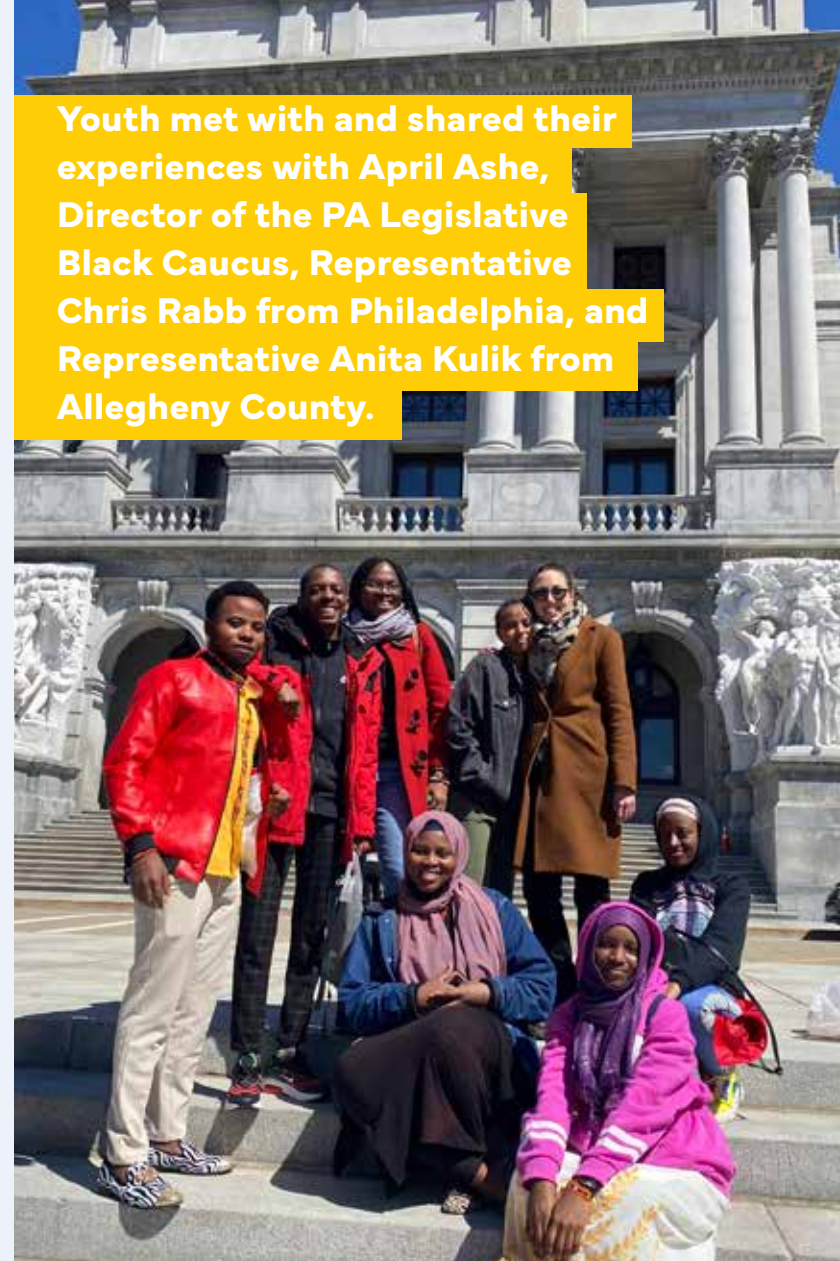
The 2021-2022 school year marked the 4th year of the Youth Steering Committee (YSC), a cohort of youth leaders and ARYSE program alumni who provide a voice and input to current and future programming. In addition, YSC members gain and develop leadership skills so they have the ability to make important decisions for the organization such as providing input in hiring staff, curriculum development and activity planning. In February, 2022, ARYSE hired its first Youth Leadership Coordinator, Abdi Lugundi, to lead the YSC and supervise Counselors-in-Training (CITs) during PRYSE Academy.

This year, the YSC was composed of 15 high school and college-aged members with refugee and migrant backgrounds. The schools represented include Brashear High School, Urban Pathways, Winchester Thurston, CCAC, Westminster College, and Carlow University. Among the YSC members, languages spoken

include Tigrinya, Swahili, Kizigua, Kurdish, English, Kinyarwanda, Dari, Portuguese and Yoruba. The countries of origin represented include Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Kurdistan, Yemen, Eritrea, and the United States.

The YSC met on a monthly basis with rotating in-person and virtual meetings. Throughout the year, we had multiple presentations by Danielle Obisie-Orlu, a Pitt student, former PRYSE Academy counselor, and Allegheny County's 2021 Youth Poet Laureate who provided public speaking sessions where youth learned about Ethos, Pathos, Logos. To commemorate Black History Month, youth learned about local Black-owned businesses, enjoyed catering from Pauline's Caribbean, and took a trip to Happy Day Dessert Factory, the only Black owned ice cream shop in Pittsburgh. During this visit, our YSC co-facilitators interviewed the owner, Galen Moorer, a recent CCAC graduate in his early 20's. This was a great opportunity for YSC

**Democratic Republic of Congo**  
**Eritrea, Kenya**  
**Kurdistan,**  
**Yemen and**  
**United States.**



Youth met with and shared their experiences with April Ashe, Director of the PA Legislative Black Caucus, Representative Chris Rabb from Philadelphia, and Representative Anita Kulik from Allegheny County.



ARYSE 2021-2022

members to learn about being a young business owner and the importance of post secondary education and out-of-school-time (OST) programs in pursuing career goals.

In March, we brought 5 YSC members to Harrisburg for After School Advocacy Day to meet with legislators to talk about the importance of OST programming. Youth met with and shared their experiences with April Ashe, Director of the PA Legislative Black Caucus, Representative Chris Rabb from Philadelphia, and Representative Anita Kulik from Allegheny County.

To wrap up the school year, the YSC invited Chio Ilochi to do a presentation on professional attire for interviews and workplaces and collaborated with the Empowered Afghan Youth program to visit the Mayor's office. Youth gained knowledge on what the Mayor's office and resources that the City Of Pittsburgh provides.

Going into the 2022 summer, YSC members were getting prepared for PRYSE academy. More than half of the members became CITs and Senior Counselors continuing their leadership development throughout the summer. CITs and Senior Counselors worked together in classrooms to provide campers a learning and creative experience. PRYSE wrapped up with the final showcase with campers and staff showing off their arts and skills including what they have worked on.

The YSC is looking forward to the new school year! We are creating leaders to help shape the future of ARYSE and the world. Looking forward to more leadership opportunities and growth this upcoming school year!

*Abdi Lugundi*

Youth Leadership Coordinator

*Sharifa Mkomwa,*  
*Rahwa Angeson,*

YSC Co-Facilitators



# Empowered Afghan Youth

In February, Empowered Afghan Youth (EAY) started! Funded through the PA Department of Education's Refugee School Impact Grant, EAY was developed to support newly arrived high school students from Afghanistan in Pittsburgh. Throughout the course of the school year, 29 students participated in monthly day-long meetings to explore local institutions and build community with each other. The program also carried out monthly individual meetings in order to provide social-emotional support and increase equitable access to resources as students navigate their lives here. Additionally, as part of our summer program, PRYSE Academy, we piloted an English language class developed specifically to provide traditional literacy support to a group of 10 Afghan middle and high school students who had extensive limited or interrupted schooling backgrounds.

In total, 36 students participated in EAY programming. During the spring, students ranged from 14 to 21 years and were enrolled in 8th to 12th grade. Those who participated in the summer English language class ranged from 11 to 20 years and were entering 7th to 10th grade. As a whole, students represented 4 different school districts and 8 distinct schools.

Throughout the year, we partnered with many local organizations to introduce students to post-high school opportunities (The Global Hub at the University of Pittsburgh), religious and cultural communities (The Islamic Center of Pittsburgh), community resources (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and The Mayor's Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs), technology support resources (Computer Reach), and of course, phenomenal food (Salem's, Rosewater, Turkish Kebab House). We also worked with UpStreet mental health services to support intentional community-building and emotional wellness. Working with student leaders (who were also from Afghanistan) and amazing interpreters also helped students feel more comfortable and engaged in the program.

**36**  
students

**14-21**  
age of participants

**8-12th**  
grade of participants

**04**  
different schools

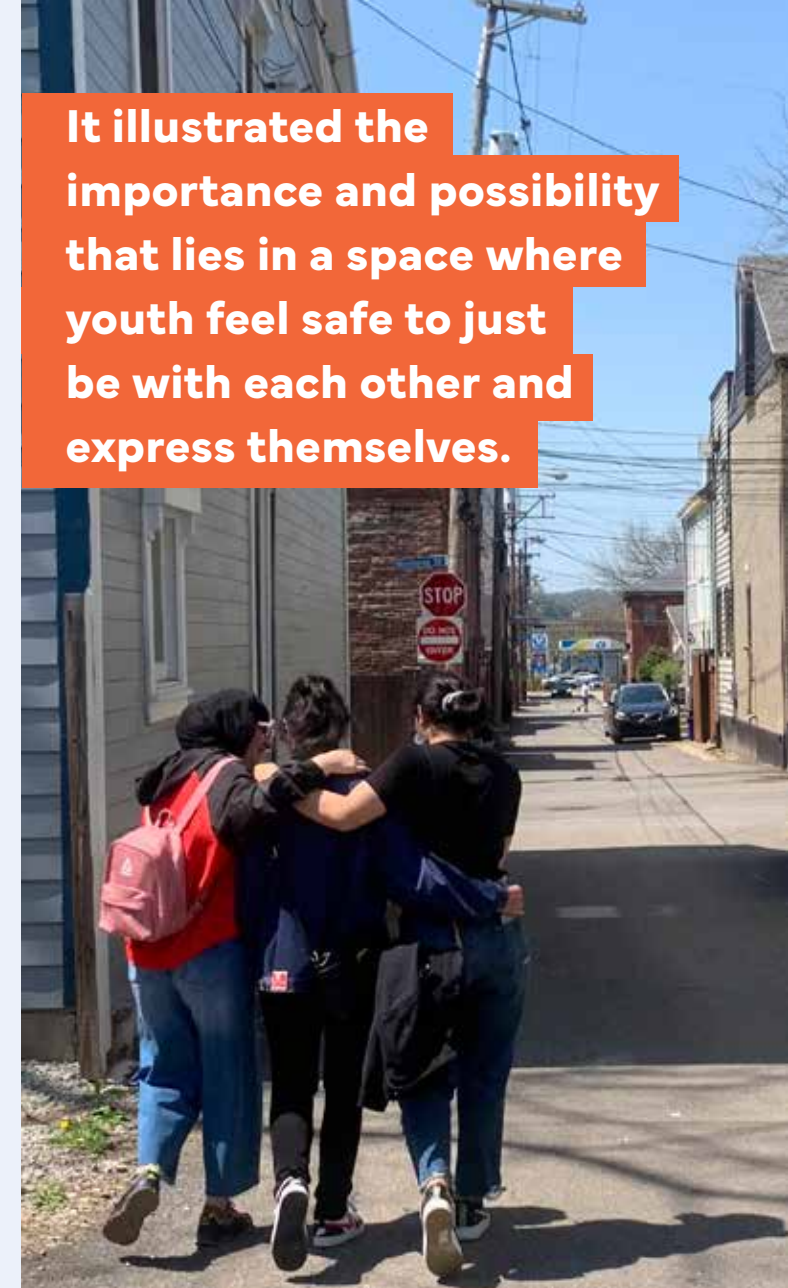
One particularly memorable moment involved a student from our partnership with Holy Family Institute, which facilitated the participation of 8 youth who were unaccompanied minors living under U.S. government guardianship. On our last meeting, there was an impromptu moment when the student got up and sang "Sarzamine Man," which translates from Dari to "My land," and is a famous song about Afghanistan, one's connection to the country, and the sadness of being far away. Other students also joined in. This moment of solidarity amongst an incredibly diverse group of youth was incredibly humbling to witness. It illustrated the importance and possibility that lies in a space where youth feel safe to just be with each other and express themselves.

This year was full of many other memorable moments, all of which have impacted what now seems possible for future programming. Aside from learning pretty quickly that I should be prepared to drink a lot of tea when visiting with students and families, we continue to learn much more about the experiences of Afghan communities in Pittsburgh and students' goals and desired support. We strive to build upon the foundation of trusting relationships established this year so that students feel increasingly confident and supported as they navigate their lives here in pursuit of their goals. I am inspired by the energy students offer, the vibrance and generosity of their spirits, and their visions for the future that seek not only to uplift themselves, but also their communities.

*Meg Booth*

Afghan Youth Support  
Coordinator

It illustrated the importance and possibility that lies in a space where youth feel safe to just be with each other and express themselves.



**Empowered**



# PRYSE Academy

2022 was an absolutely transformational year for PRYSE Academy. It was the first time since 2019 that the program was held fully in-person, we finally returned the camp experience to its original stomping ground at the University of Pittsburgh, and nearly half of all students were brand new to the program! Beyond the navigating of in-person programming amidst the backdrop of a continuing pandemic and being in a brand new space with new kids, we piloted a weekly classroom with dedicated ESL instruction and also ushered in a full-time Program Manager to lead all aspects of program planning, facilitation, and oversight. It truly was a summer of firsts!

As always, the campers were the best part of PRYSE Academy, and this year we enrolled over 100 students from across Pittsburgh. The majority participants came to us from Allderdice, Arsenal Middle School, Avonworth High School, Brashear High School, Mt. Lebanon High School, and South Hills Middle School. Our campers ranged in age from 10 to 21, and grades 5 to high school completion. Together, this 2022 cohort represented 14 countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Eritrea, Honduras, Guatemala, Kenya, Kurdistan, Nigeria, Rwanda, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen.

Alongside the Program Manager and administrative staff was a dream team of 2 Co-Directors, 15 Counselors and 15 Counselors-in-Training. Over half of all the Counselors in 2022 held previous experience in the program, and most of them were former students! Our Counselors-in-Training, or CIT's, were made up of high-schoolers and recent grads who were almost exclusively PRYSE alumni. In addition to this core team, we would be remiss not to recognize the amazing interpreters, artist-educators, community partners, and volunteers who also helped to support this incredible summer experience.

Camp took place July 5th through August 6th, and was held Monday through Thursday from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Fridays were held as staff development days, and also served as the time when our piloted ESL class took place. Students were provided bus passes each day to arrive at and depart from PRYSE, and were greeted every morning with a complimentary breakfast provided by the Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. This was followed by an hour of activities at the Cathedral of Learning lawn. Our long time partner, Open Field, helped with facilitating soccer matches, but students also had the opportunity to play volleyball, badminton, or engage in various arts and crafts. After free time,

students attended an hour and half of classroom time led by counselors and CIT's. These six classes were based around age and roughly divided between middle and high schoolers. Class sizes ranged from 12 to 18 students were led by 2 counselors and 2 CIT's. After students engaged in class time, everyone had lunch at the Eatery at The Towers - a true college experience! Staff and students then returned to classrooms after lunchtime for another hour and a half to participate in creative workshops like African Drumming & Dance (Yamoussa Camara), Zine-Making (Megan Heise), Photography (Kelly Lanzendorfer), and Fashion Design (The Andy Warhol Museum). Students were placed into the workshop which they had ranked highest after a series of short presentations, and then remained in the space for the entirety of camp to develop skills and knowledge in their desired tract. Each day closed out with announcements and dedicated time for students to shout out and recognize their peers.

Unlike previous years, all lessons in the class were specially designed by a team of education professionals. Our longtime advocate, Josué Lopez (Assistant Professor at Pitt's School of Education) and a team of graduate students created lessons that were tiered for all levels of English proficiency. Students strengthened their English proficiency while exploring weekly themes such as linguistic identity, home, personal and social issues, and artistic expression. The weekly themes then culminated

into individual or group research projects where students explored big issues such as climate change, women's rights, gun violence, police brutality, bullying, ending war, racism, and more!

Outside of regular programming, students embarked on field trips such as a University of Pittsburgh campus tour, the Carnegie Museum of Art, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. In addition, students also had the opportunity to embark on exclusive tours of the Cathedral of Learning every Wednesday during free time, where they were able to learn about and explore the highly esteemed Nationality Rooms. We are so grateful for all the folks at Pitt who made these excursions possible! ARYSE also cannot thank the Carnegie Museums enough for facilitating and funding a large portion of our visits, and for helping us get 58 students signed up for free teen memberships! Through these memberships, many students will have the ability to visit any of the Carnegie museums at no cost until they are 19!



**Students strengthened their English proficiency while exploring weekly themes such as linguistic identity, home, personal and social issues, and artistic expression.**

**100**  
students enrolled

**10-21**  
age of participants

**14**  
different countries





The PRYSE season officially closed out with our Final Showcase on August 6th at the University of Pittsburgh's O'Hara Student Center. The grand but sleepy ballroom was transformed into a vibrant public event with catering from Salem's, decorations made by students, and a featured "vendor village" where PRYSE participants were able to sell zine's, crocheted items, and henna designs! The showcase bill was jam-packed with 10 performances that comprised some 25 students and CIT's. Modeling, fashion, singing, poetry, art and multimedia projects went on full display for the crowd. Finally, the acts were closed out by a showstopping performance by all of the students and CIT's who participated in the African drumming and dance workshop. After recognizing our graduating seniors and being dazzled by the talents of PRYSE students, all participants were invited up on stage to say one final camp chant. With both joy and heavy hearts, we let out a final "I AM, SOMEBODY, WHO WON'T BE STOPPED BY ANYBODY, I GOT MY HANDS IN THE AIR, I GOT MOVEMENT IN MY FEET, I GOT LOVE FOR MY PEOPLE, AND IT STARTS WITH ME!" to close out the summer.

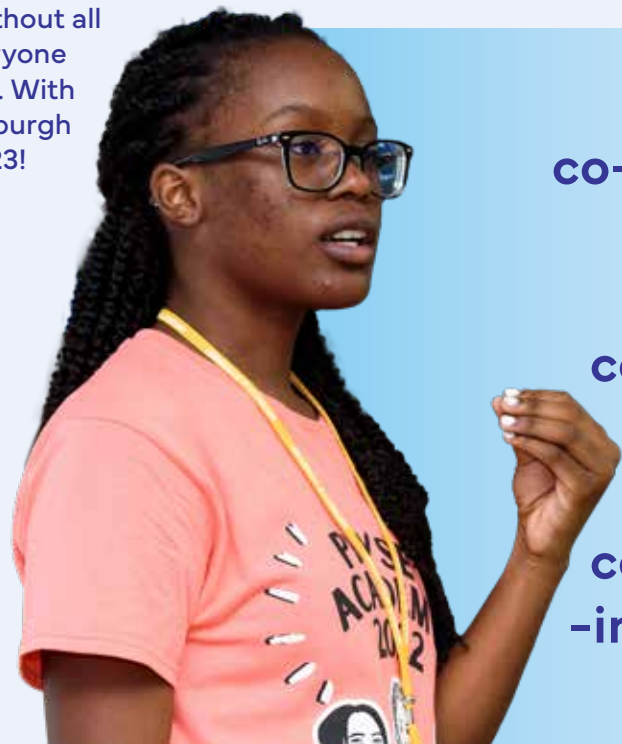
2022 was truly groundbreaking, and we are so excited to see how the program continues to grow, evolve, and adapt in order to meet the needs of youth with immigrant and refugee backgrounds here in Pittsburgh. Thank you again to everyone who helped make this summer possible, and a special shoutout to Professor John Stoner for opening the many doors which ultimately made Pitt accessible to our students. PRYSE Academy would not be possible without all of your help, and we are so grateful to everyone who helped make this experience possible. With our combined efforts, we truly made Pittsburgh a more welcoming place. See you all in 2023!

*Cody Weisel*

PRYSE Academy Program Manager



# PRYSE Academy 2022



**02**  
co-directors

**15**  
counselors

**15**  
counselors  
-in-training





# LGBTQIA+ Initiative: Queer Youth Space

The goal of the ARYSE LGBTQIA+ Initiative is to help all of the organization's stakeholders, especially youth participants and staff, become more expansive in their understanding and acceptance of gender and sexuality. Additionally, the initiative aims to support the needs of queer immigrant and refugee youth through consistent programming, mentorship, and staff training.

For the second year, we hosted the Queer Youth Space (QYS), a consistent, dedicated program space for ARYSE's queer immigrant and refugee youth and allies. QYS took shape as bi-weekly meetings on Zoom where we discussed LGBTQIA+ topics, including mental health resources, queer representation in the media, and artistic expression. I facilitated the program alongside a student leader who helped create the space during PRYSE Academy 2021.

There were a few notable successes this year. Firstly, a local artist donated a dozen copies of a graphic novel called "The Magic Fish" by Trung Le Nguyen (Trungles), a queer artist and author born in a refugee camp. Secondly, Stonewall Sports Pittsburgh held a bowling fundraiser and raised \$557 which they chose to donate to the initiative. Finally, we received our first external referral to Queer Youth Space.

In the future, the LGBTQIA+ Initiative will continue to host the Queer Youth Space and ultimately position ARYSE as a welcoming space for queer immigrant and refugee youth. In October, 2022, there was an organization-wide meeting to help staff feel more equipped in leading conversations about gender and sexuality with youth. One specific topic was leveraging students' curiosity and awareness about pronouns to expand their understanding of gender identities. In the future, the staff intend to facilitate spaces where ARYSE students can feel comfortable asking questions and have conversations about diversity in gender and sexuality. In time, the hope is that the LGBTQIA+ initiative and the QYS will grow its reach, its resources becoming available to queer immigrant and refugee youth both currently enrolled in ARYSE programs and beyond.

*Jeff Zeng*

LGBTQIA+ Initiative Founder  
and Queer Youth Space Facilitator



*Note from the Executive Director: Jeff Yongjie Zeng started working with ARYSE as a counselor at PRYSE Academy in 2018, and soon after was brought on as permanent staff to establish the Youth Steering Committee in January, 2019. Since then, Jeff has worn dozens of hats and transformed our organization, including through founding the LGBTQ+ Initiative and Queer Youth Space, which he did from thousands of miles away on the west coast. We are so grateful for all of the time, energy, and gifts that Jeff has offered to ARYSE, our students, and community and we're excited to build on his legacy in the years to come.*

# Congratulations to our 2022 seniors!



**Chance Eliah**  
*Brashear High School*



**Claude Gasana**  
*Mount Lebanon High School*



**Hamza Zangana**  
*Brashear High School*



**Iragi Kalala**  
*Brashear High School*



**Luwinda Kachale**  
*Brashear High School*



**Marie Nirere**  
*Mount Lebanon High School*



**Megenay Musa**  
*Passport Academy*



**Rahwa Angesom**  
*Brashear High School*



**Salha Mugisha**  
*Brashear High School*

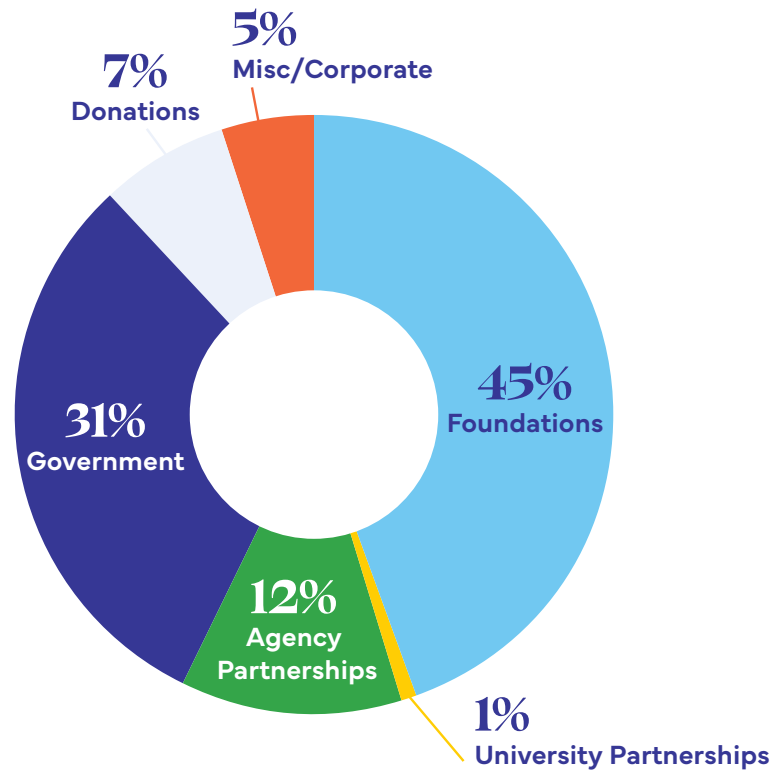


**Sifora Tekie**  
*Taylor Allerdice High School*



# Revenue

\$595,474.47



# Support

## Foundations

HANSEN FOUNDATION

McELHATTAN FOUNDATION

HILLMAN FAMILY FOUNDATIONS

THE GRABLE FOUNDATION  
dedicated to improving the lives of children

PPG

FISA Foundation

OPPORTUNITY FUND

BIRMINGHAM FOUNDATION

BARTHOLOMEW AGUAYO FAMILY FOUNDATION

## Agency & Government

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
Office of Refugee Resettlement | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 205

A+SCHOOLS PITTSBURGH

pennsylvania DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

United Way  
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania

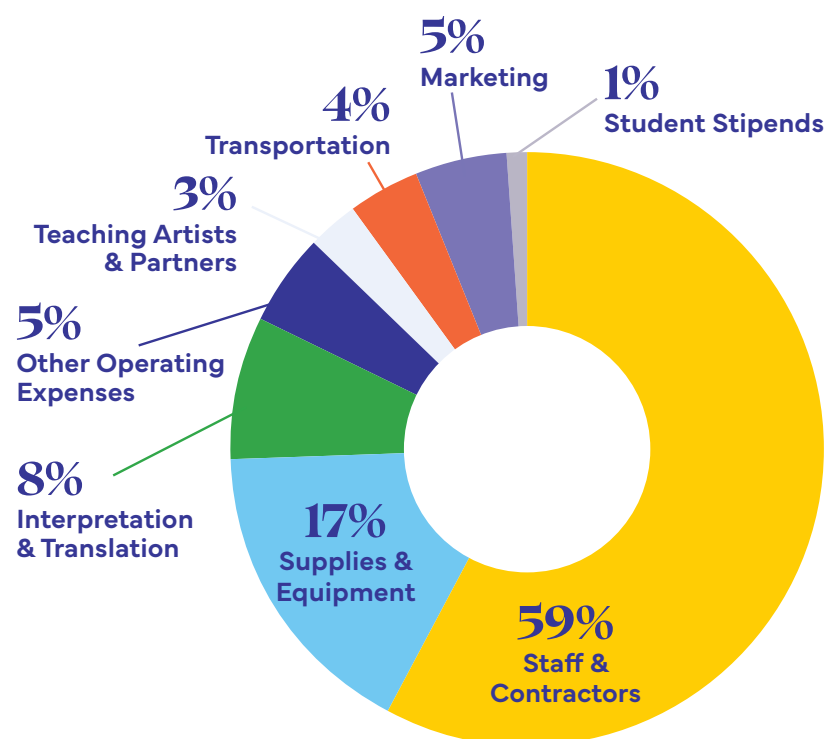
## University

Frederick Honors College  
University of Pittsburgh

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

# Expenses

\$433,679.28



To see a full list of donors and family funds, visit our website: [ARYSEpgh.org/donors](http://ARYSEpgh.org/donors)





**Supporting immigrant and refugee youth in becoming engaged, confident, and celebrated members of our communities.**

[www.arysepgh.org](http://www.arysepgh.org)

