



FIRST RING STUDENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

2023–2024 YEARBOOK



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SECTION I ADVANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION TOGETHER



The First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC) is an organization of more than 100 superintendents and administrators from 16 school districts that border the City of Cleveland. The FRSC represents over 50,000 students, pre-K through grade 12, and serves as the sponsor of the Leadership Academy. The FRSC was established in 2000 to help districts address the interrelated challenges of poverty, mobility, diversity, equity, and the achievement gap. In addition to sponsoring the First Ring Leadership Academy (FRLA) and the First Ring Student Leadership Institute (FRSLI), the FRSC has implemented student wellness initiatives, career development projects, academic achievement programs, and school-based health care programs. FRSC also supports networks of colleagues in similar roles, including administrators in Career Development, Curriculum, Early Childhood, EMIS, Equity, Family and Community Engagement, High School Principals, Public Relations and Communications, Pupil Services, Safety and Security, and Treasurers.

FRSC collaborates closely with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District as it serves the following 16 member districts:

- Bedford City Schools
- Berea City Schools
- Brooklyn City Schools
- Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools
- Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools
- East Cleveland City Schools
- Euclid City Schools
- Fairview Park City Schools
- Garfield Heights City Schools
- Lakewood City Schools
- Maple Heights City Schools
- Parma City Schools
- Richmond Heights Local Schools
- Shaker Heights City Schools
- South Euclid Lyndhurst City Schools
- Warrensville Heights City Schools

First Ring Student Leadership Institute



“Student voice is the true voice of the future.”

- Andrew Kurta, sophomore,
Cuyahoga Heights High School

Student voice is increasingly recognized in education as being critical to motivation, academic engagement and equity. This year, students in the First Ring Student Leadership Institute (FRSLI) are making their voices heard in new and exciting ways.

Nearly 80 students completed their first year in the program, investigating and attempting to solve issues in their schools on a range of important topics. Invited to research an issue they feel passionate about, students decided to tackle many of the same issues their administrators are focused on: improving achievement, boosting engagement, enhancing safety, increasing attendance, fostering stronger peer relationships and preparing students for life after high school. Other projects focus on the concerns of students everywhere: the quality of school food, student parking and the dress code.

This year, 40 students returned for their second or third year in the program. These advanced “Year 2 & 3” students worked as a unit to investigate High School absenteeism state-wide. After conducting a literature review, students created an online survey, *Students Solving Absent-teen-ism*, to gain insights from students across Ohio. This spring they will present their findings to state-level decision makers. In addition to their project work, several advanced students presented on student voice at the 2023 OSBA Capital Conference and this spring three groups presented preliminary findings of their absenteeism research at the Campus Conference Youth Research Symposium.

Students bring to the table their unique insights and perspectives, a flair for out of the box thinking, and a deep commitment to making real change. We appreciate the support of the First Ring Superintendents and our many other partners for helping to amplify student voices. We are excited to see all that they accomplish!

Wendy Jovan

NEW AT FRSLI THIS YEAR

- We separated our operations from the First Ring Leadership Academy (FRLA), allowing FRLA participants to focus on that program’s intensive curriculum. The role they previously played guiding FRSLI teams was filled by 1-2 dedicated adult advisors from each district, many of whom are recent FRLA “graduates.”
- We added a “Year 3” option for seniors to participate in a third year of the program.
- Advanced students worked collaboratively with participants of our sister program, the Ohio State University Student Leadership and Research Collaborative, to complete a joint, state-wide research project.
- We changed the location of our work sessions to the Student Center Ballroom in the heart of the Cleveland State University campus, allowing students to experience more of the university and enjoy lunch in the Viking Marketplace dining hall.
- Based on student feedback, we added a seventh in-person “work session” focusing on presentation practice in preparation for students to pitch their ideas to superintendents and state-level partners.

“

If you don’t stand up
for what you believe
in no one else will.
- Nandi, Senior

“

Student voices matter,
every single one of
them, & changes will not
be made in our schools
unless we speak up.
- Ella, Junior

“

Student voices are
important because we
offer new perspectives
and ideas.
- Korei, Sophomore

“

People in power can be
influenced by strong
data & analysis. Everyone
can push for change if
they’re credible enough.
Florin, Junior



OUR PARTNERS



MARTHA HOLDEN
JENNINGS FOUNDATION



The First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC), its networks and programs would like to thank the following partners and funders:

- Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio
- Center for Educational Leadership, Cleveland State University
- Center for Urban Education, Cleveland State University
- Levin College of Public Affairs and Education, Cleveland State University
- Martha Holden Jennings Foundation
- Ohio State University Student Leadership Research Collaborative



SECTION II – YEAR 1 DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Bedford City Schools

Project Summary:

“The Impact of Student Achievement at Bedford High School”

Throughout our time in the FRSLI program, we started out focusing on student and staff relationships and how it affects students achievements. However, based on our data, we found that student stress is a main issue and concern. Our original research question was, “How does staff and student communication affect student achievement and participation?” This question is important to us because many of our peers complain about teachers’ attitudes, favoritism, and unprofessional behavior. We collected our data by using digital surveys for both students and teachers, which were posted on each grade level Google Classroom. We also went classroom-to-classroom to get more student involvement in our survey. In the end, we collected nearly 100 student responses and 30 teacher responses.

Our three key findings were that students are stressed, they do not like how other students behave during school, and many students would like to have real world applicable material taught in class. With these key findings, we realized that staff and student communication may not have been the issue we thought it was. Because of this, we pivoted in our recommendations and decided to focus more on promoting positivity. First, we recommend more student and teacher involvement in school activities such as talent shows, pep rallies, etc. Secondly, we would like to add positive murals or posters in halls. Third, we believe that there should be mental periods on Fridays, similar to the discontinued advisory period, but it should be more focused on a brain break for the students rather than a learning opportunity. Lastly, we would like to have our announcements more positively worded instead of them being punitive and condescending in nature.



Bedford High School Leaders:

Left to right: Darnise Stephens (Advisor), Aleksandr Uruchurtu, Litzy Molina-Escarate, Caleb Harkness and Amy Hujarski (Advisor)

Not Pictured: Tristen Foote



SECTION II – YEAR 1

Berea-Midpark High School

Project Summary:

“Student Parking Safety Concerns”

Imagine on a Friday afternoon, school just ended and you’re excited to start your weekend. In an attempt to exit the parking lot, you witness a few of your classmates bumping into each other, eagerly trying to leave the school premises. After five to ten minutes, you can finally pull out of the parking lot. To guarantee that students return home safely after departing the building, we constructed a survey to gain insight into how the students feel in these types of situations.

With the help of 495 student responses and our extensive research, it is apparent that the cost per parking spot and the money generated per year can contribute to having assigned and numbered parking spots. The funds raised could also be utilized by hiring a police officer to direct the traffic during the afternoon rush. In addition, we are recommending creating an exit on to Bagley Road to help reduce the congestion when exiting the parking lot.



Berea-Midpark High School Leaders:

Left to right: Caprice Brennan, Grace Trella, Emmy Fleming, Keegan Gehri and Devin Voloschuk

Not Pictured: Pat Meyer (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Brooklyn City Schools

Project Summary:

“Bringing our School Together: Striving to Appreciate Cultures”

“Wow, your English is really good.” “You’re really whitewashed.” “Keep your bookbag away from me.”

And so many more comments and assumptions made about your language, religion, and culture. It can be hard to put yourself in someone’s shoes, but these small statements can make a big impact. How would you respond?

As a very diverse first ring leadership team, we felt the biggest issue in our school and community was cultural disrespect. We as students consistently hear stereotypical language used in the hall and we wanted to do something about it. Our research question was “How does cultural appreciation affect students at Brooklyn High School”? We gathered our data by collecting qualitative and quantitative data in a Google survey. The survey gathered 222 responses and we analyzed the data in Google Sheets and sorted the data. Some key findings were that 67.7% of students witnessed a student make disrespectful comments about other students’ culture/race/ethnicity at school or a school-sponsored event. Additionally, 42.2% of students have experienced disrespectful comments towards their own culture.

Because of the results, we decided that it would be helpful to form a diversity, equity, and inclusion team that creates ongoing ideas to incorporate cultures. Additionally, other suggested solutions would be a cultural fair, decorating the halls for different holidays, and having speakers come in to talk with the school. We hope to focus more on these issues during class meetings and ice blocks. In the future, we hope to bring the school together through these solutions

Brooklyn High School Leaders:

Angel Torres, Malak Chafki, Ryan Hilcu, Samadhi Holton, Youssef Elouardighi, Scott Urig (Advisor) and Kim Cramer (Advisor)



SECTION II – YEAR 1

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools

Project Summary:

“Improving Attendance at CHHS”

How can we improve our school’s attendance rate? This is important to our school because there are too many students in the hallways and not in class which is causing more disruption and impacting our academic success.

We surveyed a variety of students and teachers by utilizing a Google Form that was linked in classrooms as well as around the school. Our most important finding is that 44% of student’s miss one to two classes a week. Other notable findings included, 50% of students are tardy to at least one class, and based on student responses they feel the biggest barrier is not enough time in between classes.

We would recommend that administration review their tardy policy and daily schedule and work to improve PBIS by incorporating a more student centered approach. This can include developing a PBIS team/club who can work with staff to promote positive behaviors that focus on attendance.



Cleveland Heights High School Leaders:

Left to right: Karen Hansen (Advisor), Clinton Robinson, Janyla Stubbs, Darrell Green and Brittany Mosgo (Advisor)

Not pictured: Gavin St. Overby



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools

Project Summary:

“Scaling for Student Success and Wellness at CHS: Changing the Grade Scale”

After surveying 135 Cuyahoga Heights High School (CHS) students (more than half the high school student population), 91.1% of those students say that they do not agree with the current grading scale because of the negative academic effects and disadvantages they go through as a result. From the staff side, 61.6% of CHS teachers dislike the current eight-point scale, with even more stating that they would be in favor of it changing if the research proves a 10-point would be better. In addition to the opinions of students and staff, the survey showed 75% of CHS high school students are seeing negative effects on their mental health due to the grades they receive on an eight-point scale. With this grading scale, our survey shows both mental health and academic achievements of students are being negatively affected, in addition to a desire to change it.

To enact this change, we will start by presenting the change to the CHS staff and administration. Once the staff and administration team are on board, the next step would be to implement the new 10-point grading scale, starting with the freshman group at CHS. Current high school classes already on the eight-point scale would have to be phased out, and the freshman class of that year would carry the new one. From there, the plan over the next four years minimum would be to track student performance and see if the change in scales improved academic achievement, opportunity, and mental health.



Cuyahoga Heights High School Leaders:

Top (Left to right): Tristan Li, Andrew Kurta
Middle (Left to Right): Halle McPherson (Advisor), Aurora Robinson, Samantha Vallee

Bottom: Jackie Chen



SECTION II – YEAR 1

East Cleveland City Schools

Project Summary:

“School Engagement at Shaw High School”

You’re sitting in class and time begins to Tic...TicTic.. you forget where you are and what you’re supposed to be doing... Are students engaged at Shaw High School? We felt student engagement was important because students currently are not having good attendance and often don’t feel engaged in class or with teachers. Our recent study shows that on average 60.8% of students at our school are not engaged. Engagement is important because it helps the teachers and more so the students to get their work, attendance and grades good.

We used surveys to collect data and we had 194 responses. Our key findings included: responses from teachers that said 98% of teachers said phones were a distraction in class, causing less engagement. 80% of students said they liked their teachers, so that may not be the problem. Lastly, about 56.7% of students want creative choices to help them become more engaged.

Shaw High School Leaders:

Allie Holliday-Cadette, Ava Gibson, James Jones, Sarah Igraneza, Tishawn Benson (Advisor) and Nicole Culliver (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Euclid City Schools

Project Summary:

“Motivation... Do you have it?”

Would you put your best effort into something that you are not motivated about? We noticed that a lot of students at our school were not very happy to be attending school. We decided to survey our students and the teachers in the building to find a common ground. Our findings were very interesting and we were able to come up with possible solutions. We believe that it would be very beneficial to clean up our advisory period, improve the use of Xello, and lower phone usage. Doing these would result in students being more informed about how life after high school can look like for them.



Euclid High School Leaders:

Left to right: Sara Mattinson (Advisor), Braylon Atchley, Delilah Simmons, Tamia Norris, Jamari Mason and Adriana McKenzie-Upshaw

Not pictured: Phil Gasper (Advisor)

SECTION II – YEAR 1

Fairview Park City Schools

Project Summary:

“Preparing High School Graduates for Success: A Call to Action”

Do you ever stop to think about the number of high school graduates who leave without a plan, lacking the necessary resources and social skills to thrive in the real world? It’s a concerning question that deserves attention because it directly impacts the future success and well-being of our graduates. By addressing this issue, we can better equip students for life beyond high school. To explore this matter further, the Fairview High School FRSI team conducted a survey among students at Fairview Park City Schools. Surprisingly, our findings revealed that a significant 67% of students feel unprepared for life after high school. This sentiment is echoed in the Ohio Department of Education’s report, which highlights a post-secondary readiness rate of just 47.4%. To address this disparity, we propose the introduction of additional counseling services and a revamped mentoring program. These interventions have the potential to greatly improve students’ readiness and prospects after graduation.



Fairview High School Leaders:

Left to right: Kale Chevalier (Advisor), Mason Woodworth, Quinton Harris, Kwaw Yankee, Elizabeth Enold, Grace Wering, Lesley Ortiz and Adam Garcia (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Garfield Heights City Schools

Project Summary:

“Enhancing school safety”

Imagine walking through the halls, and encountering crowds of students engaging in negative situations daily. These situations could lead to unsafe outcomes for myself and my peers. This is why our main priority is school safety. If you walk through the halls of Garfield Heights you would see a number of students skipping classes, having negative verbal altercation and crowded bathrooms. That is why our research question is “Do students and staff feel safe in school?” This topic is important because as a student you want a safe learning environment and as a staff member you should feel safe so you can teach to the best of your ability. To develop a solution we gave peers a survey to determine how safe they feel, the total number responses was 131. We also did a survey for security guards. They recommended more security and more training for dangerous situations such as fights and other negative altercations. Another thing we did was interview a few teachers about how they feel in their place of employment. They all agreed that the school administration needs to be more involved. Some resolutions that we’ve come up with are more parental involvement and funding for things such as vocational classes and after school events.



Garfield Heights High School Leaders

Left to right: Rob Willson (Advisor), Brandon Erby, Alexis Fletcher, Camiyla Davis and Tamia Wagner

Not pictured: Jen Corrado (Advisor)



SECTION II – YEAR 1

Lakewood City Schools

Project Summary:

“Fueling our Students: Bettering Nutrition at Lakewood High School“

A general feeling among the students at Lakewood High School was that the food provided was not meeting the cut. To find a solution to this problem we surveyed the student body and received 279 responses to better grasp student feelings. We also met with the superintendent and nutrition services to discuss the level of change we could achieve. After analyzing the data from the survey, it became clear the student body was not satisfied with a lot of the meals provided. 86.7% of surveyed students rated 3 or lower on a 5 point scale. Additionally students were requesting healthier and more diverse options in the cafeteria. Through discussion with first ring peers we have come up with a number of solutions to this issue such as a new salad bar, replacing less popular dishes, and implementing a student-led advisory committee that could meet with nutrition services every quarter.

Lakewood High School Leaders:

Abigail Peck, Cora Barcelona, Delaney Starr, Maya Trempe, Riley Stallbaum, Bridgette Firstenberger (Advisor) and Abigaile Drost (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Maple Heights City Schools

Project Summary:

“Addressing After School Safety”

How would you feel if you were a student in today’s world and you didn’t have anything constructive or fun to do after school? On top of that, what if you felt unsafe in some parts of your neighborhood? The First Ring Student Leadership Institute is embarking on a project aimed at addressing a crucial issue within our school community: the lack of recreational activities for students after school due to the absence of a community recreation center. This project is driven by the students’ desire to enhance after-school safety and provide constructive outlets for their peers. Recognizing the importance of recreational opportunities in promoting physical and mental well-being among students, the FRSLI has set forth a bold goal: to transform the Athletic Center into a vibrant student recreation center. This topic is important to use because we wish to provide a refuge for students and create a sense of belonging. We collected data from a survey given by our staff that 47.7% of students go home after school, 53.7% said they don’t or are unsure if they feel safe after school, and 84.1% of students are interested in a student rec center.

Maple Heights High School Leaders:

Braelynn Shepard, Cayla Joiner, Chance Kirksey, Ramone Pernel, Angela McCay (Advisor) and Thomas Meyer (Advisor)



SECTION II – YEAR 1

Parma City Schools

Project Summary:

“Student Engagement and Motivation”

“You could be the most brilliant, informed person on earth, but if your class is in a state of boredom your teaching isn’t making an impact.” Does student disengagement in class lead to a lack of motivation and a decline in school attendance?

Students become disengaged during the second and third quarters and unmotivated to attend school due to repetitive instruction in several classes. Two Google Form surveys were sent to the Normandy High School student body and each YPAR team member interviewed two teachers about how they vary their classroom instruction and if they think it is important to differentiate classroom instruction and student activities.

Their key findings revealed that of the 938 student responses on the first survey 82% of the students feel that their teachers need to vary instruction more and 57% of the students want more hands-on activities and differentiated instruction. On the second survey, of the 555 student responses 69% of the students feel that repetitive classroom instruction causes them to be unmotivated to attend school. The YPAR team recommends the following based on their data and student survey open-ended responses: teachers need to vary daily instruction; more differentiated learning / hands-on learning activities; give students seat choice; option to listen to music during independent practice assignments; and weekly in-class reward(s).



Normandy High School Leaders:

Left to Right: Rajanard Brown, Makenna Herrera, Madeline Camacho, Heaven Higgins, Lily Fertilli and Lynn Monaco (Advisor)

Not pictured: Zuraya Abdalla (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Richmond Heights Local Schools

Project Summary:

“Richmond Hts. Upper School: School Spirit, Are you involved?”

This year at Richmond Heights Upper School, First Ring Leadership Students conducted research on students’ School Spirit Involvement during the 2023-2024 School Year. Our main question was “Do students have School Spirit?” This is important because according to a Yale study conducted in 2019 by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 75% of students who have higher levels of School Spirit, tend to have higher academic achievement (XQsuperschool.org). To conduct our research we sent out a digital survey to our entire school asking students multiple questions regarding school spirit and their satisfaction with their overall school experience. We received a total of 104 responses. An eye-opening find was that 51.9% of students reported having school spirit and 68.3% of students enjoy their school experience.

Richmond Heights Secondary School Leaders:

Breanna Kern, Kingston Jackson, Zahirrah Bowden and Jasmine King (Advisor)



SECTION II – YEAR 1

Shaker Heights City Schools

Project Summary:

“Shaker Heights High School, we are in a lockdown.”

After two long, grueling hours, there was little to no explanation for this stay in place. We heard only rumors and were forced to come up with our own conclusions. These events helped us to realize that student conflict within our building was far too prevalent. We then created a Google Form survey guided by the question: “How do student-to-student relationships affect behavior at Shaker Heights High School?”

Our data was thorough and widespread, with responses from 1/3 of the student body. We surveyed students in grades 9-12, with 47% identifying as male, 48% female, 2% non-binary, and 2% preferring not to answer. Of the 450 students surveyed, 45% identified as White, 43% African American, 6% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Native American and 2% preferring not to answer.

The majority of the students surveyed felt that they had positive relationships with their peers. Those who believe the school has healthy, beneficial relationships, maintain those relationships by socializing, exhibiting positive behavior, and by respecting and setting boundaries. In order to continue this, we recommend more social events to foster relationships and peer support groups that give students a better outlet for their emotions. Most students who responded negatively about relationships expressed that they don't know what traits and qualities make up healthy relationships and how to set boundaries in an unhealthy relationship. We also recommend a student-led initiative to help more students feel included by engaging students at lunch and in the halls. We can help fund these with greater fundraisers outside of the student body, whether by partnering with local restaurants or selling appealing merchandise.



Shaker Heights High School Leaders:

Left to right: Khaleb LeFlore, Nathaniel Price, Cora Bissett, Cailah Fountain, Korei Washington, Elizabeth Vokes (Advisor) and Keesha Bryant (Advisor)



DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

South Euclid Lyndhurst Schools

Project Summary:

“Bridging The Engagement Gap in BHS”

“Today was the big day, the day I got on stage to perform, as I watched the curtains open there were too many empty seats to count. I realized no matter how hard I worked to gain supporters, I still had no one.”

Disengagement in our schools is a widespread crisis in our district. At our school we have a very low turnout at our athletic, musical, and educational events. School spirit is a very rare sight at Brush, even during spirit week we still have no school spirit. We believe the lack of student engagement may be stemmed from students not getting notice of these events, and the students not having a chance to express their spirit for our school. Throughout the school year our building has not been decorated for any holiday. Taking time to decorate the school for upcoming holidays and events is a great way to get students more engaged at our school.

Results from our survey showed that 82.3% of students agreed that the best way to advertise was by using social media or decorating the school and putting up flyers. Athletes and musicians do all that they can to gain support, while they're giving 100% effort they receive 0% support. The only students who post or try to gain attention for our school events are the students who are involved in it. Our motive today is to bridge the engagement gap at Brush High School.



Charles F. Brush High School Leaders:

Left to right: Meia Christian (Assistant Advisor), Reggie Rucker, Amelia Quigley, Siera Russell, Toryn Reeves and Geofferson Betts

Not Pictured: Latricia Jethrow (Advisor)



SECTION II – YEAR 1

DISTRICT RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023–2024

Warrensville Heights City Schools

Project Summary:

“Effects of School Uniforms”

How do uniforms impact student learning? How can we make school uniforms better? This issue is important to our school community because our uniform policy is too strict and it prohibits some scholars from learning and being comfortable in class. We conducted student and staff surveys via Google forms to uncover the truth around uniform policies and dress code.

We conducted 134 student surveys and 15 teacher surveys. We found that 88.1% of students do not think schools should have a uniform and 53% of staff members said that schools should have uniforms. Although 73% of teachers said students should not be removed from class for a minor uniform violation, 60% of teachers said that a student has been removed from their class for a uniform violation.

We would recommend that the school moves toward more flexible uniform policy, which could include dress down Fridays as well as the ability to wear sweatpants, leggings, and joggers to ensure students are comfortable and ready to learn.

Warrensville Heights High School Leaders:

Akia Jackson, Aliya Cochran, Neveah Williams, Olivia Price, Traviana Holden, Gina Giriti (Advisor) and Brittany Reilley (Advisor)



SECTION III – YEAR 2 & 3

STATE RESEARCH PROJECT 2023–2024

“Students Solving Absent-teen-ism”

We are student collaborators researching why student attendance has become so poor in Ohio. Our goal is to find the root causes of absenteeism and solve them. We believe that through our research and advocacy, we will help build a better environment for students in the future.

As high school juniors and seniors, each of us has attended the First Ring Student Leadership Institute for two to three years. Although we are from 10 different districts, we worked together as a team, along with participants in the Ohio State University Student Leadership and Research Collaborative, to create an online survey called Students Solving Absent-teen-ism. The survey is for high school students across the state of Ohio.

Based on our interests and those of our state-level partners – the Ohio Lieutenant Governor’s Office, the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) and the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OSHAA) – we are looking at absenteeism through several different lenses. They include the effect of family factors, participation in athletics and extracurricular activities, social media, transportation, and mental health. Our research is in process at the time of this writing, but on the next page are some of our preliminary findings based on very early data. (see page 24)

Family Factors

Family factors give clues about what is happening inside the home that might make it tough for students to show up to school. By digging into these factors, schools can work with families to tackle the root causes of absenteeism and help students stay on track. Family factors also tie into mental health. Family is a major factor in how you feel on a daily basis which can affect your attendance. This is why it’s important to study the family aspect of absenteeism. In our survey, less than 45% of students say that their parents care completely if they come to school, and this leaves room for students to be less motivated to attend. Additionally, a third of students said that they have missed school due to family factors which were almost always family responsibilities. In the last year, 23% of students missed one or more days of school due to these responsibilities. Additionally, at least 10% of students said they sometimes miss school to go to work to help provide for their family. These factors are important and are clearly influencing chronic absenteeism among Ohio high school students.

Athletics

Sports can be a determining factor for why people either attend school or not. Rules often require students to miss practices if they miss school, but many teams or individuals don’t adhere to that policy, therefore adding another layer to increasing levels of absenteeism. Additionally, rates of participation in school sports and extra-curricular activities are usually high and they often take up a majority of participants’ personal time on top of their schoolwork. These could be major factors on why the rates of absenteeism keep rising.

In our preliminary findings, only 40% of respondents said they participate in sports and 35% participate in extracurriculars. A majority (57.8%) of athletes felt that athletics did not affect

SECTION III – YEAR 2 & 3

STATE RESEARCH PROJECT

2023–2024 [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

their rate of absence while another 14% did not know. We found that 36.8% of athletes and extra-curricular participants attended practice or events after missing school that day, and 26.3% said they had chosen to miss school the day after a game or event.

We identified a pattern between the GPA of students who participate in sports and extra-curricular activities and whether they reported that it affects their mental health. Students that participate and believe it is having a negative effect on their mental health generally to have a GPA of 3.5 and above, and students that participate and believe that it is having a positive effect on their mental health have a somewhat lower GPA of a 3.0 and above. Students that participate and don't know the effect it's having on their mental health seem to have a GPA of 3.1 or lower. Of students who participate in school-based athletics or extra-curricular activities, 33.9% said it improves their mental health and just 13.9% said it worsens their mental health.

Social Media

Use of social media is taking time away from students in school. What they see on Instagram may be fun, but in real life it's an entirely different environment.

In our survey, about half (49.5%) of respondents said they spend 3-5 hours on social media and 24.6% spend 1-2 hours. Other respondents spend more time (18.9%) or less (7.6%). We noticed that students who spend 1-2 hours on social media a day responded to our question, "What can adults at your school do to help you enjoy school more?" in ways that appear more mature and responsible than students who spend more time on social media who just wanted school to be more fun.

Most students (67.7 %) said they usually feel about the same after using social media compared to before using it, and almost a quarter said they feel either somewhat better (15.9%) or much better (6.8%) afterward. We personally find that social media takes away from real life conversations and events, and we believe that this might be the case for other students as well. Additionally, we think students who said social media makes them feel better might have social media accounts in order to deal with stress.

Transportation

The subtopic of transportation has great importance in understanding absenteeism due to the location of schools. When schools are further away from houses, such as in rural or suburban schools or when the school is separate from others like career centers and technical schools, there may be issues with the school busing. And if you're at a Career Tech school sometimes the school days and schedules don't line up with your home school, causing you to be on your own for transportation.

Looking at the results of our survey, 22.9% reported absences based on transportation issues. This preliminary data is based on very few schools, and we hope to collect many more responses that will give further insight. Once we have collected data from across the state, it will be insightful to get a breakdown of the number of transportation-related absences based on school location: rural, suburban, inner-city, etc. Speaking from experience as students from career and technical schools, things such as breaks can mess with student attendance. For example, sometimes spring breaks line up but there are many instances where the career school has a spring break a week before or after the person's home school. When this happens, students have to figure out their form of transportation in order not to have unexcused absences.



- Bedford:** Bosson Krah, Fernando Bigsby Jr., Kayla Butler, Sa'niya Benton and Sierra Sledge,
Brooklyn: Florin Socol-Boeriu and Mayhem Crowley,
Cleveland Heights/University Heights: Marley DeDino-Stadler and Ruby Tugeau
Euclid: Alexander Abernathy Jr., Anyla Sloan, Braylen Womack, Ella Hewis, Madisyn Bennings, Mario Seats, Nandi Grant and Toni Kincaid,
Garfield Heights: Avah Robinson, Dionardo Askew Jr., Essence Jackson, Kame'a Bolds, Precious Sadiq and Zaria Pitts,
Maple Heights: Chinaemelu Ezeanyika, De'Asia Williams, Jaden Miller and Myles Adams,
Parma: Alya Ibrahim, Carleigh Greene, Emily Juby, Francesca Bubnick, Jessyca Lampa, Logan Saban, Lynden Bryant, Trey Brosemer and Wes Hollis,
Shaker Heights: Kameron Walls,
South Euclid Lyndhurst: Jelani Carr and Ryan Stovall, **Warrensville Heights:** La'Velle Hall

1/3

of students have missed school due to family factors

57.8%

of students felt that athletics did not affect their rate of absence

49.5%

of respondents spend 3-5 hours a day on social media

22.9%

of students reported absences based on transportation issues

SECTION IV – OUR SENIORS

CLASS OF 2023–2024

This year, 13 seniors participated in FRSLI, completing three years of learning about the power of student voice, commitment to a cause, and advocacy on behalf of self and others. Congratulations to them all on an amazing three years and their many more achievements to come!



Trey Brosemer (Parma), Francesca Bubnick (Parma), Nandi Grant (Euclid),
Alexander Abernathy Jr. (Euclid), Toni Kincaid (Euclid) and
Dionard Askew (Garfield Heights)

Alex Abernathy, Jr. - Euclid High School

Carleigh Greene - Normandy High School

Dionardo Askew, Jr. - Garfield Heights High School

My favorite FRSLI memory is getting together with other people who share the same ideas. The most important thing I learned over the past three years in FRSLI is being available to criticism. I would like to thank my advisor for supporting my ideas. FRSLI has changed the way I approached other situations.

After graduation, I plan to go to college and triple major in Music Ed, Music Composition, Musical theatre.

Essence Jackson - Garfield Heights High School

Francesca Bubnick - Normandy High School

My favorite FRSLI memory is bonding with my teammates at the very first meeting of year 1! We really just clicked from the start. The most important thing I learned over the past three years in FRSLI is to be confident in yourself and never be afraid to speak your mind. I would like to thank all of the facilitators for keeping things running smoothly for the past three years. I also want to thank Mrs. Monaco for her continued support. FRSLI has changed the way I present myself when public speaking.

After graduation, I plan to attend Kent State University for architecture. I also plan on applying for the honors leadership academy there. I am looking to take part in student government and continue my leadership journey!

Jasia Jones - Maple Heights High School

Kayla Butler - Bedford High School

My favorite FRSLI memory is during the FRLI meeting in Columbus when a large majority of the FRLI students went to Chipotle near the OSU campus. The most important thing I learned over the past 3 years in FRSLI is what it takes to get authority figures to notice your efforts. I would like to thank Ms. Stephens, the Year 2 and 3 advisor for Bedford High School, for having in depth, thought-provoking discussions with me and paying for my food at the CSU cafeteria. FRSLI has changed the way I think about leadership and advocacy. I believe that if I wanted to complete my own personal project involving these fields, I will be able to do it efficiently by using information I learned in FRLI.

After graduation, I plan to attend college and major in Creative Writing. I'm not sure which college I plan to attend since I'm still waiting on some responses. However, most likely the college will either be Eastern Michigan University, which I have already been accepted into, or Swarthmore College, which is one of my top choices that I'm waiting on a response from. I've been awarded is the Governor's Merit Scholarship and a few college-specific scholarships.

Lynden Bryant - Normandy High School

Mayhem Crawley - Brooklyn High School

Nandi Grant - Euclid High School

The most important thing I learned over the past three years in FRSLI is if you don't stand up for what you believe in no one else will.

I would like to thank my mother for being my biggest supporter and pusher. My mom is the reason why I want to continue to be better than I am everyday. I am lucky to have her, I want to be the best for myself and for her to be proud of all the time she's invested in me.

FRSLI has changed the way I think about how important data is. When I see data from others I overlook it. Now I look at it more closely and think about what it means for others.

After graduation, I plan to go to the university of Toledo to do their 3+3 law program. I've received scholarship money and is planning on receiving more. I'm going to later plan on being a lawyer and later open up my own law firm, and hopefully run for senator.

Ruby Tugeau - Cleveland Heights High School

Toni Kincaid - Euclid High School

My favorite FRSLI memory is seeing everyone's hard work at the symposium. The most important thing I learned over the past three years in FRSLI is how to organize and structure research projects. I would like to thank Mrs. Mattinson for being an amazing advisor. She gave the best advice and was always honest with us.

After graduation I plan to attend Fisk University on a full ride scholarship to study biochemistry and molecular biology on the pre-med track.

Trey Brosemer - Normandy High School

Congratulations!

SECTION V
THE YEAR IN PHOTOS



SECTION VI

STUDENT REFLECTIONS



WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE THING YOU LEARNED FROM PARTICIPATING IN FRSLI THIS YEAR?

The most important thing I learned is to be confident in yourself and never be afraid to speak your mind.

I have learned to not be afraid to pivot and adapt when things do not work out as expected.

People in power and higher ups can be influenced by strong data and analysis.

I learned a lot about how to present and how to talk to sound professional and make people want to listen to you

I learned what it takes to get authority figures to notice your efforts.

I became more social.

I learned valuable presentation skills that helped me throughout other clubs I am involved in.

The importance of responsibility. This project is our responsibility and we really have to be responsible with our time in order to make a great presentation.

How to talk to anyone

How to get help and help others.

We need to come together so we can make a difference.



SECTION VII

FIRST RING STUDENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

STAFF BIOS



Dr. Bill Wagner is Director of the First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC) at the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio. He coordinates the FRSC’s activities across its many networks and programs, facilitates the First Ring Leadership Academy and assists with regional and state political advocacy efforts. Prior to joining the ESC, Dr. Wagner served as Superintendent of the Fairview Park City Schools. He earned his Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Ashland University.



Wendy Jovan manages the operations of the First Ring Student Leadership Institute. Her previous work in education was as the Project Manager for a virtual intervention program, and as a Special Education Supervisor and School Psychologist. Prior to that she worked in the business community as a Research Analyst.



Dr. Adam Voight is Director of the Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State University where he partners with urban schools, communities, and youth to create environments conducive to the learning and well-being of young people, particularly those affected by poverty and racism. Adam’s community-engaged research and action has been supported by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adam has a Ph.D. in Community Psychology from Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University.



Dr. Keith Bell, Sr. is a Director of Leadership Services at the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio. Currently, he is assisting with initiatives for the college and transition for underrepresented students to graduate school at Ohio State University. Prior to joining the ESC, Dr. Bell served as Superintendent of the Euclid City School District. He earned his Ed.D. in Educational Administration from Ohio State University.



Dr. Rosalinda Godinez is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Urban Education. She received her Ph.D. in Social and Cultural Studies from the University of California. Rosalinda’s research interweaves critical, interdisciplinary, and Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives to address the intersections of education, gendered labor, and immigration. Her research has focused on Latinx families’ education both in California and Washington, working with families in the research process to document their knowledge and create educational materials from their experiences.



Katelyne Griffin-Todd is a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. She is a second-year doctoral student in the Urban Education program at Cleveland State University specializing in counseling psychology. Her research interests are centered on trauma and its risk and protective factors. Her work is motivated by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory.



Amirhassan Javadi (Amir) is a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. He moved from Iran to the U.S. to enter the Urban Education doctoral program at Cleveland State University, where he is a first-year student specializing in counseling psychology. His research interests include critical consciousness, multicultural counseling, and the processes and outcomes of psychotherapy. In his work, Amir considers the lived experience of people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds in different settings (e.g., counseling sessions, school, and university) and the various ways that exist for each individual to gain balance.



Xiaona Jin is a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. She earned her Master of Arts in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at Yangzhou University in China and is a fourth-year student in the Urban Education doctoral program at Cleveland State University. Ms. Jin's research interests include school climate, Chinese language teaching and learning, online teaching and learning. She has worked in the education field in both China and the U.S. as a college Chinese instructor, international culture exchange program manager, and pre-K Chinese teacher.



Donald Wayne McLeod is a professional speaker and consultant on the topic of interpersonal communication and the founder of Perceptionology, LLC. At his sessions and seminars in schools, businesses and community organizations, Donald Wayne covers topics such as the keys to effective communication, understanding how others perceive us, and building 21st century skills. His publications include two books titled Perceptionology® 101 and Lunch Matters. Donald Wayne began working with FRSLI & FRLA participants this year on personal presentation and public speaking.



Barb Pritschau is an Administrative Assistant for the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio. Prior to joining the ESC, Barb was an Administrative Assistant with Brunswick City Schools for 16 years assisting the Director of Business Affairs and the Personnel Director. Prior to entering the education sector, Barb worked in manufacturing as a Mechanical Designer.



Marissa Stock is a research assistant at the Center for Urban Education. She is a third year doctoral student in the Urban Education program at Cleveland State University specializing in Adult, Continuing, and Higher Education. Marissa has experience working with diverse, underserved populations and is passionate about serving others. Marissa previously taught English as a second language to adult refugees and immigrants at beginner-to-advanced levels. Her research interests focus on the factors that lead to retention and attrition of LGBTQ+ students in higher education.

FRSLI BY THE NUMBERS . . .





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