Summary - African Centered Curriculum

Programs Committee | Strategic Recommendations

Overview:
This report synthesizes findings from two sources:

1. The **Amplifying Black Voices (ABV)** survey (2022), which collected insights from 371 Black Evanston residents, with a focus on the 5th Ward. (Link to full Report)
2. The **Programs Committee ACC Poster Data**, which summarizes community feedback from facilitated activities. (Link to Summary Report)

Both sources indicate community interest in expanding access to culturally responsive programs, particularly the African-Centered Curriculum (ACC), while also affirming a broad desire for robust STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) programing. They also raise critical equity concerns around access, staffing, transportation, and the curricular vision for the new 5th ward school..

Key Overlapping Themes:

1. Community Demand for Culturally Responsive Curriculum

- **ABV Finding:** Only 28–33% felt the current curriculum meaningfully includes Black history and culture. Yet, 72% of respondents believe such inclusion is very important.
- **Poster Activity:** There is consensus to replicate and expand ACC—especially to the 5th Ward.
- **Recommendation:** Prioritize district-wide curriculum development that integrates Black history and cultural perspectives year-round. Leverage ACC as a leading model for culturally affirming education

2. Access and Proximity Matter

- **ABV Finding:** Over 50% of respondents selected ACC as a top choice for the new 5th Ward school, despite 65% being unfamiliar with it prior to the survey.
- **Poster Activity:** Families prefer neighborhood schools, and transportation barriers may limit participation in ACC if it's not locally available.
- **Recommendation:** Find ways to align the gen ed program in the 5th Ward with the ACC to reduce travel burdens and increase enrollment. Improve program visibility through outreach and communication.

3. Missed Opportunities for ACC Enrollment

- **ABV Finding:** Despite widespread interest in culturally affirming curriculum, 65% of survey respondents were unfamiliar with the ACC prior to participating. However, once

informed, a majority (53%) selected it as their top curriculum preference for the new 5th Ward school.

- **Poster Insight:** Community feedback suggests that lack of awareness and limited outreach have hindered broader participation in ACC, especially among families in underserved areas.
- **Recommendation:** Strengthen communication strategies and outreach initiatives to build broader awareness of ACC. Provide accessible, culturally relevant materials that explain the curriculum's benefits and outcomes. Consider informational sessions and testimonials from current ACC families and educators.

4. Concerns About Equity in School Planning

- **ABV Finding:** Many respondents question whether teachers are invested in Black student success, and note disparities in discipline and encouragement for rigorous coursework.
- **Poster Activity:** Potential school closures, especially Oakton, could disproportionately harm students who rely on proximity and specialized supports and benefit from the ACC program.
- **Recommendation:** Conduct equity impact analyses before any program relocations or consolidations. Center the voices of historically marginalized families in decision-making.

5. Teacher Representation and Professional Support

- **ABV Finding:** 73% of respondents said having Black teachers is very important, but current representation is low (22–29%).
- **Poster Activity:** Community members called for continued professional development and investment in teacher training for culturally responsive instruction.
- **Recommendation:** Hire and retain more Black educators and ensure all teachers receive robust training to lift elements of ACC that promote culturally responsive pedagogy.

6. Evidence-Based Planning and Transparency

- **Poster Activity:** There is a call for impact data on ACC's effectiveness, transparency around program costs, and active parent and teacher involvement.
- **Recommendation:** Build a data-informed implementation plan with clear metrics for student success, community engagement, and financial sustainability. Publish regular progress updates.

7. **Aligning Desire for STEAM with ACC Expansion**

- **ABV Finding:** The full ABV report revealed that 79% of respondents selected STEAM as their top curriculum preferences, with 53% choosing ACC as their second choice. This indicates robust support for both and an opportunity to merge these interests in new school planning.
- **Recommendation:** Integrate STEAM-focused learning within the ACC framework by developing interdisciplinary units that highlight contributions of Black innovators in

science and the arts, while maintaining the curriculum's cultural and historical core. This alignment could broaden support for ACC and meet dual-community goals of rigor and cultural relevance.

Conclusion

There is a clear and compelling call to use the African-Centered Curriculum as a foundational element in shaping the academic vision for the newly established 5th Ward school. This approach honors cultural relevance and community voice while also creating space to thoughtfully incorporate STEAM programming priorities. Equitable implementation will require careful attention to overcoming logistical challenges, fostering trust through inclusive and transparent planning, and making sustained investments in both infrastructure and human capital.