

Making connections, all summer long

By Billie-Jo Slingerland, Director of Marketing & Communications

Summer loving had me a blast - Summer loving happened so fast... In the movie *Grease*, Sandy and Danny sang those lyrics on their first days of school as they reminisced about their summer experiences together. As we gear up for our first weeks back in schools and communities, I'm going to reminisce about TRI's summer experiences.

Once again, Sparkplugs deliver

Our summer season started in May when we celebrated five Community Sparkplugs who initiated programs for children in: Lowndes County, Ala.; Shreveport, La.; and Seattle, Wash.

- The Fort Deposit Outdoor Learning Classroom was started because their current playground was flooded and demolished. Sparkplugs Tanya Simmons, Aundrey Grant, & Krista Hill-Jones knew the importance of children getting outside in fresh air, which inspired them to create [The Fort Deposit Outdoor Learning Classroom](#). This program impacted 180 children at the school.
- Nickles Rankins started the [Lowndes County Intramural Track program](#), which offered extracurricular track and field activities to 2nd-6th grade students in Lowndes County after school and on the weekends. This sparkplug impacted over 100 students and families.



- The [Black Belt Youth Wastewater Program](#) exposed 38 fifth grade students at Jackson Steele and Ft. Deposit Elementary schools to the pervasive issue with waste disposal in their community and challenged them to help develop solutions.
- AMI Kids Aim High: This sparkplug, ReKeisha Fuller, motivated girls in an alternative school environment to have positive behaviors and grades by giving them an opportunity to cheer. This program impacted 40 students.
- [In My Neighborhood](#) was started by Lovell Davis and Kinza Shafir to give 64 students a space to express themselves freely through writing and music.

These Sparkplugs and their programs positively impacted more than 620 human lives.

Prepping for another great school year

In June, we turned our attention to our Instructional Coaching Program. We trained five new instructional coaches on our framework as they prepared to support teachers in using research-based and standards-aligned instruction to their students. Following that training, our leadership team met to review our progress from the last year and finalize our plan for the upcoming year.

Later in June, our team met in Austin, Texas to celebrate the work of our 2022-2023 principals.



Principals attended from Lowndes County, Ala., and Hartford, Conn.. At this conference, we spent two days discussing what worked and determining course corrections for the future. The inspired leaders received feedback from their peers, planned for the upcoming school year, and met "Coach" Gaffney as he shared how to integrate social emotional learning (SEL) into the daily schedules of staff and students.



July took the team to Seattle where TRI welcomed seven new principals with their teams to the School Turnaround program. At this conference, the principals were trained in our six proven turnaround strategies, analyzed their school data, set school targets, and developed a plan for the 2023-2024 school year. These principals left excited and energized to be a part of The Rensselaerville Institutes' 2023-2024 School Turnaround program.

Now, with school underway, TRI is checking in with principals and instructional staff as they begin the school year. And later in the fall - we will kick off a year-long celebration of our 60-year anniversary! We look forward to involving you in these events – stay tuned for more details.