Temple for Tomorrow: Evaluation of a Curriculum Designed to Close the Gap in Black Representation in Classical Music

What brought you to this work?
Burgess: As I began to study classical voice in college, I became more curious about Black classical composers. From prior historical knowledge, I knew that Black people have interacted with Europeans since the Greek ages. Yet, when I was in the classroom, there was no mention of any Black classical composers.

Cross: Traditional research designs, including many researcher-practitioner partnerships, investigate research questions identified by researchers. I have always found this approach less than adequate. Research that originates within communities of practice is more likely to have a direct benefit for youth and the educational ecosystem in the Pittsburgh region.

Research questions
In what ways does the Temples for Tomorrow curriculum, developed by Ms. Burgess, impact student participants? What changes are noted in participants’ perceptions of race in classical music, knowledge of classical music terms, evaluation musical historical texts, presentation/public speaking skills, and awareness of Black participation in classical vocal music?

Research plan
Process data (adaptation, engagement) will be collected via observation and discussion between the partners in this project. Participant responsiveness data will be collected via “check-out” prompts for participants following each session. Student outcome data will be measured by a brief pre-post survey.

Working together
We have engaged in regular meetings and conversation about implementation, bringing in outside perspectives whenever possible. We have incorporated feedback from an initial pilot project into program development.