FUGEES FAMILY:
WHAT A YEAR,
WHAT A YEAR
Because of you

If I had to choose two words to describe the last year? Pivotal and challenging.

We launched the ’19-’20 school ready to strengthen the foundation for our growth; our team worked diligently to make sure we were on track with fundraising, student recruitment and our facilities. We worked to get a charter successfully approved for Georgia, allowing for a seamless transition and sustainable funding. We incubated school leaders for our Cleveland campus, paving the way for our third location. And we continued to serve our students and their families the best way we know how, by treating everyone as family. We were ready.

And then COVID-19 reared its ugly head. Strategic planning for the future gave way to managing the crisis in front of us. We prioritized the safety and wellness of our current students and staff, fanning out across our cities to deliver everything from internet hotspots and chromebooks to reliable and clear information about the virus in a way our communities could trust and act upon. As weeks of distance learning turned to months, our “whole child” approach to education naturally grew into a “whole family” mindset. Parents lost jobs, family members became ill, and the fear was palpable. Getting accurate and actionable information to our kids and their parents in multiple languages was just as important as the bags of rice we began distributing.

I would be lying to you if I said everything went smoothly. But we kept going, with levels of energy, perseverance, humility, and humor that make me proud to be part of this team.

Without missing a beat, though with far less rest and recovery than everyone probably needed, we started preparations for the ’20-’21 school year. Extensive training for leaders and teachers to learn new platforms and better ways of connecting with students across screens. Technology set up - infrastructure and hardware for each and every student. New buildings in Cleveland and Atlanta, with all of the associated permitting, and with the added challenge of government offices being shut down. Recruitment of new students, but without being able to bring a big group of kids together on the soccer field. We fell behind schedule, we came up short of target numbers, we struggled and cursed and wondered how we were going to do it all. But we kept going, and we are doing it.

When I can’t sleep at night, chances are good that I’m thinking about one of two things: the appalling state of educational outcomes for English learners across the country, or fundraising for Fugees Academy. Back in the Spring, with all events and travel cancelled for the foreseeable future and foundations not taking on new grantees, for many weeks in a row I found myself wide awake at 3 am.

Then I reached out to you, and you responded. Your support - not only financial but also in the form of other critical resources, including your listening ears - has quite literally made it possible for us to keep going (and for me to sleep at night). In many ways, we are now stronger and more secure than ever before. It's knowing that we can continue to persevere, innovate and thrive during these uncertain times that gives me great comfort -- and the drive and determination to see us meet the needs of even more children during these unprecedented and unpredictable times.

With deepest gratitude and respect for your part in making this a successful year,
Our Mission
Fugees Family, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to working with child survivors of war. The organization empowers refugees to integrate successfully into their new country by providing them the support and structure they need to realize their vast potential.

Our Creed
Written by the Academy’s first graduating class, the Fugees creed is our connection to each other, and to our values. It is our “why”, our frame of reference, and our North Star. Its words teach students, from their very first day of school, what it means to be a Fugee. We recite the creed together every Friday, and teachers regularly incorporate its tenets - which also happen to be important vocabulary words - into instruction and reflection. “Which part of the creed do you think you were just demonstrating?” prompts students, again and again, to see themselves as strong, worthy, and full of potential.
I take PRIDE in the Fugees Academy.

**Perseverance:** In the face of challenge, I keep trying. I work harder, smarter, and more creatively; I do not give up.

**Respect:** I treat myself, my work, my peers and my teachers with respect.

**Integrity:** I am a person of my word; I believe in the value of honesty.

**Dedication:** On and off the field, I am committed to helping my teammates achieve success.

**Excellence:** I push myself to do my best and to serve as an example for my community.

I take PRIDE in where I’m from; I take PRIDE in my community; I take PRIDE in my future. I take PRIDE in being a Fugee.
At each Fugees Academy, educators and coaches deliver the core pillars of our unique model at each site:

**Holistic English acquisition** - In each classroom, every teacher is a teacher of English. All spaces are used to build language proficiency. Rather than a subject taught in isolation, English is acquired holistically via structured language lessons, classroom content, and school-wide immersion. Students are required to speak English to each other to model the importance of coming together as Fugees across cultural and linguistic origin. In hallways, before and after school, on the bus, and on the practice field, all students and staff speak English and provide one another with the guidance to build not just proficiency, but confidence.

**Integration of soccer for all** - In their new home country, students must learn a new language, become part of a new culture, and participate in new practices of schooling, yet soccer - the world’s favorite sport - is familiar to all students. Played in both refugee camps and affluent communities, soccer transcends ethnic identity, religion, nationality and is a source of fun, exercise, and community. As a cornerstone of the Fugees model, soccer supports social-emotional development and the relational trust required to take the academic risks necessary for rapid growth.

Relational, healing-centered approach to schooling - Refugee children commonly have experienced traumatic events. A study of Syrian refugee children found 79% had experienced a death in the family; 60% had seen someone killed, shot, or physically hurt, and 30% had themselves been shot at or physically hurt. Such children are further impacted by stressors during resettlement: economic hardship, language barriers, social isolation, and discrimination. Studies show nearly half of refugee students demonstrate psychological effects from trauma in their previous homes or in migration. As a result, these children have an increased risk for mental health issues - PTSD, anxiety, depression – which can disrupt the educational setting, impacting outcomes and development for all students. Our healing-centered approach prioritizes individualized support, stable relationships, and a high degree of structured routine to promote predictability, safety, and both teacher-student and student-student bonding. This support builds resilience by enhancing individual competencies, self-worth and a sense of control.

**Year-round programming** - In addition to an extended school day during the traditional school year, the Fugees model integrates a summer program for year-round, seamless schooling, delivering consistent instruction and support to stabilize students and help them close academic gaps. We limit summer “slide” through a mandatory summer program of ongoing enrichment and continuous engagement with the school community – compounding instructional gains and maintaining students' cumulative academic momentum.
The school community at the existing Fugees Academy sites includes students from nearly 40 countries facing conflict and upheaval, including Syria, Afghanistan, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nepal, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Congo, DR Congo, and South Sudan.

Staff members from: Jordan, DR Congo, India, South Sudan, Burundi, Nepal, Ghana, and Egypt.
My dream is to become a dentist, a calling that came to me when I overheard a doctor informing the parents of a toddler about their child having oral cancer. I imagined the child as myself, scared and facing the unknown. I wished for the ability to stop calamities like tooth abscess and other infections from further happening. I learned that the power of helping people fulfills me and has made me comfortable enough to grow into the man I am today. I plan to go back to Iraq one day to help provide low-cost dental care and to see what was once, briefly, my home. I was given a chance and a place to heal. Now, I want to provide the same opportunity for others. My name is Hussain Hassan from Baghdad, Iraq and I can walk, run, think, and even dream.

— HUSSAIN
CLASS OF 2020
That’s What Friends Are For
WE’RE STILL STANDING

OUR SCHOOLS

ATLANTA
84 Students
425 Family Members

COLUMBUS
56 Students
280 Family Members

ADJUSTING TO COVID

7
New Hires Made 100% Virtually

72
Internet Connections Provided

460
Hours on Zoom

140
Chromebooks Distributed
Better than we ever did

Since 2007, Fugees enrollment has grown from just 6 students to over 100.

Year 1: 6 Students
Year 5: 58 Students
Year 15: 140 Students
Abdulmalek and his family fled Syria in 2011. They made their way to Turkey, where they did everything in their power to survive. For six years, Abdulmalek did not attend school, instead working to help feed his family.

Abdumalek was sixteen when he arrived in the United States in 2017. Fugees Academy has a strong reputation in the local Syrian community, so it wasn’t long before his family found their way to us. Abdulmalek’s strength of character and eagerness to learn was immediately apparent; his smile lit up his whole face when we told him that we had a place for him...in our sixth grade.

Abdumalek’s scores on his first round of NWEA/MAP testing that fall show a lexile reading level of .2, putting him in the bottom 1% of students nationwide. This is a typical result of a student with disrupted formal education. Now no longer in survival mode, and ready to seize the opportunities afforded him as a 6th grader at Fugees Academy, Abdulmalek threw himself into his academics, athletics and getting to know his new schoolmates and teachers. He often reminded his fellow Syrians “English only. We have to learn English.” He carried a small notebook around. Every time someone used a new word, he asked them to write it and explain it. Often he made a small drawing to solidify his understanding.

After two years at Fugees Academy, in the fall of 2019, Abdulmalek’s lexile reading level was at a 4.5; he was now in the 19th percentile nationwide—still below grade level, but well on his way in the right direction. In math, his progress is even more remarkable: he went from the bottom 2% of students nationwide in Fall of 2017 to testing in the 65th percentile by Fall of 2019. His growth was an astounding 94%.

As we begin another school year, Abdulmalek is well adjusted and happier. He has found a place to call home. His story and growth are not unique to the Fugees Academies, rather they illustrate what is possible when we give students time, consistency, and our belief in their ability to accomplish the impossible.
When I get older I will be stronger

Spring MAP Performance Year Over Year

**MATH**
- 17/18: 33%
- 18/19: 37%
- 19/20: 41%

**READING**
- 17/18: 31%
- 18/19: 38%
- 19/20: 45%

Our Growth Compared to Other High-Performing Charters

- Fugees MAP Math Growth Met:
  - 17/18: 76%
  - 18/19: 74%
  - 19/20*: 72%

- Fugees MAP Reading Growth Met:
  - 17/18: 40%
  - 18/19: 74%
  - 19/20*: 108

*Dotted lines represent typical growth met among other high-performing charters. 2019 growth rates are projected, as COVID-19 impacted our ability to complete Spring MAP testing.
I Put Your Picture Away

Aug 2019

Fall Soccer and Cross Country Season

First Day of School

Oct 2019

International Potluck

Nov 2019

Fugees Idol

Halloween
Sat Down And Cried Today

March 2020
- Holi

April 2020
- Spring Break
- Camps
- Canceled

June 2020
- Field Day
- Canceled

March 2020
- Coach’s B-day

April 2020
- Varsity Soccer Playoffs
- Canceled

June 2020
- Graduation
- Canceled
Don’t Know Much About History

Thanks to generous donor support, 2019 saw the launch of an interdisciplinary, American racial and social justice education initiative at Fugees Academy. A faculty committee spent part of the Summer of 2019 constructing curriculum to explore themes of "freedom", "justice", and "mercy". Throughout the fall months, Clarkston-based Fugees high school students explored these themes in different classes and on local field trips. As survivors of atrocities and injustices themselves, and as young people navigating their own versions of the American Dream, each of our students brings a unique perspective to the study of racial injustice and economic inequality in the U.S.

As a culminating experience of the unit, the Clarkston-based Fugees high school students and some of their teachers were joined by Board members and supporters on a 3-day trip to Montgomery, Alabama to visit the widely-acclaimed National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum, both launched by the non-profit Equal Justice Initiative (EJI). EJI’s founder, Bryan Stevenson, is the author of "Just Mercy".

The visit had a profound impact on our students and teachers. As one senior wrote:

"Listening to Kuntrell Jackson has changed me because when he spoke to us, it went deep in my heart. He asked us "what are you going to do?" This question has been stuck in my head since that day. I want to be passionate like him and talk to my peers and enlighten them about the history. I want to go back to Myanmar and try to help unite all the ethnic groups to overthrow the government. The Burmese have been killing their ethnic groups for decades and it needs to stop. I believe that if they all unite for the same reason which is peace and freedom, they will overcome it.

– KAW HEI, CLASS OF 2020"
Fugees Family’s FY20 operating budget totaled over $2.5 million, more than triple our FY13 budget.
When our replication journey began, we knew that identifying the right leaders would be key to our success.

In 2016, we conducted our first principal search. Resumes piled up in two categories: “Too academic/- doesn’t get the athletic piece” and “Too athletic/ doesn’t get the academics piece”. Rather than prioritizing one set of values and compromising on the other, we headed back to the drawing board. Once we identified that the job Coach Luma had been doing was really the work of (at least!) two people, the rest fell into place. Our co-leadership model brings the best of both worlds to each Fugees Academy campus: equal in stature, responsibility, and presence, an academic co-leader and an athletic co-leader bring training, experience, and wisdom from their respective realms. To date, the athletic co-leaders at every campus in the network are all alumni of the Fugees Family - a powerful daily reminder to our entire community.
Georgia On My Mind:  
Agina Rai

Senior Essay, January, 2020

When we landed at Atlanta Hartsfield Airport, on January 18, 2011, it was the beginning of our new life in America. The first five months were hard adjusting to the new culture, language, and people. We only knew the words “Hello,” “Good morning,” “Thank you,” and “Please.” I went to Roswell North Elementary until 5th grade in Roswell, Georgia. I understood little and learned even less. But we soon moved to Clarkston, Georgia, a city full of refugees from all over the world, a city where I felt home.

In 2013 I started my 6th grade year at Fugees Academy, which I am still attending and now I am in 12th grade and will graduate in May 2020. Coming to Fugees has not only brought me together with my friends from different countries, like Iraq, Burma, Thailand, and Sudan but has introduced me to different cultures and languages. All of us are required to speak English at school, required to play soccer, and are held to high academic standards. Fugees has not only provided me with an education, but also a way of working and being on the field. I want to go to college and want to be able to support my parents for all the sacrifices they made for me. By going to college I will be able to accomplish not only my dreams, but theirs as well. I will be a successful doctor or medic. I will be a person who is mentally and physically strong enough to care for others. I will be an honor to my parents by being the very first college graduate and doctor in my family who is responsible, dedicated, and determined to her work in serving others.
Smiling Next To Oprah And The Queen

Not quite, but this year we dedicated ourselves to *amplifying our voice and our presence*. From traditional media outlets, to numerous op-eds as well as regarded education publications.
SITTING IN THE BOARDROOM

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THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND