

## PROJECT PRIDE

*Hamlin, WV*



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The Project Pride team in rural Hamlin, WV works with the Lincoln County Schools and other community partners to engage families in academic programming—including Coder Z to build girls' STEM engagement and Readers are Leaders to build boys' reading skills. Their county has one of the largest percentages of families in which children reside with/are being raised by grandparents.

**Having observed that more “grandfamilies” want to volunteer, the Project Pride team wants to engage more grandparents in STEM learning environments** – this will bring grandparents a sense of fulfillment and support local children who return from school to empty homes because their caregivers are working. “We really want to focus on the parents and grandparents of kids who don't want to go on in STEM...[Grandparents] have the interest and capacity and experience...after getting them more comfortable with the action, we'll get them to reflect.”

### The Family Engagement Plan

Project Pride supported four girls (Grades 6-7) who designed a workshop to build awareness of STEM and connect it to lived experiences.

Following the workshop, the girls interviewed their grandparents and recorded their stories. Girls asked questions like: “What did they think about STEM then, as they were growing up, and what do they think STEM is now? One girl shared [when washing clothes] ‘...my granny had to hand-crank one that you had to shove clothes through... And now she just has to push a button.’” The girls are editing their own videos, which will be posted on Lincoln Public Schools' website.

The Program Director said “It will be a way of showing our grandparents the good things we can do with videos and technology as well as preserve some of our history. Many of our grandfamilies remember when Chuck Yeager was growing up here ...” (Chuck Yeager was a U.S.A.F. officer, test pilot, and the first human confirmed to break the sound barrier, in 1947.) During the workshop, one young man shared: “Chuck Yeager? My grandpa talks about him!”

## The A-Ha Moment

In supporting the girls as STEM teachers, Project Pride empowered girls to empower grandfamilies. While the girls were very nervous at first, the encouraging audience built their confidence.

“The girls started off asking ‘What is STEM?’ An older gentlemen said ‘It’s something leaves grow off of.’ The girls were so nervous. Then when he said that, it broke the ice. Then they started in talking about science, technology, engineering, and math. They went through their Powerpoint, showing how each one [S-T-E-M] is related to something they [grandfamilies] do everyday. They aligned it with fishing, cooking, hunting, and playing ball... It was really good. They answered all the questions—even the shy girl spoke up a bit.”

This experience inspired the team to host more workshops, and make them accessible to more families. “We’d like to have another training during the day, so those parents that can’t go out at night can participate...we’re thinking of training the grandparents... at another school, this time on cyber-security...so that they [grandparents] will be more aware of what is going on at home.”

## Family Engagement Strategies Reimagined

The Program Director felt encouraged to go deeper with family engagement in STEM. **“I don’t think we would have been able to do it to this capacity. I think we would have gotten them [the girls] more involved in the tech side with the drones, the robotics teams, the NASA parks...But I don’t think I would have connected it to the family engagement in this depth. That would have been a loss. Because we are now hearing ‘Wow!’ [from the girls and the families].”**

The team now plans to bring grandfamilies into STEM learning settings so youth and grandparents can learn from one another.

## Evidence of Success

The Project Pride team reflected on how the student-led workshop highlighted the relevance of STEM and new technology to their county.

They shared: **“Our girls are opening up some doors. They are taking that next step. They are helping educate those that are not aware [about STEM], and they are learning more about them.”** The team reached nine families in a very rural area, where caregivers work up to 20 miles from their children’s school.

Now the team hopes to increase their reach: “We want to target those girls that are sometimes ‘left on the bleachers’...I want them to step up and take the bull by the horns.”

