



Industry Leaders Inspire UPSM Elementary Scholars

This past month, 4th & 5th Grade Scholars at UPSM Elementary were treated to a discussion panel with some of the most influential shoe designers and authors in their industries. This panel, composed completely of African Americans, included D'Wayne Edward, founder of Michigan's HBCU - Pensole Lewis College, Publishing Company COO and author Stephen Green, and shoe designers Jeffrey Henderson and Jason Mayden who have worked with many companies including Nike and Adidas. When asked about the panel event, Stephen commented, "For me, I am a firm believer that it is hard to be what you don't see, and these kids are surrounded by greatness just blocks away in their own city. So you can hope that they accidentally hear about Pensole Lewis College, but what better action than to be proactive and bring these industry leaders to the kids? We want to try to spur these ideas of what they want to do when they get older. Sometimes as kids grow, their creative light goes away, so we just want to inspire and introduce different ways to stay creative."



School Operations Manager, Ms. Traci Walker-Jackson acted as the panel moderator where scholars were given just over an hour to ask the panel any question that came to mind regarding their journeys as African Americans in the industry, design processes, being authors, etc. During the entirety of the panel, the guests spoke about their inspirations, what steps it took for them to get into their respective industries, and gave advice on how to spark creativity and expression. In the end, students received a signed copy of a book by Jason Mayden titled *A Kids Book About Design*

as a keepsake. Through Jason's personal experience as a designer and multistep process, the book exists to empower children to share their ideas, make, create and be the best designer they can be.

"Our kids need to hear about how their creativity can move them to be entrepreneurs and do great work outside of academics, but also use what they learned in school to move them forward while using their blessing to help the world. As a school that is 98% African American, we really wanted the scholars to hear from people that look like them, and to have four African American men sitting on that stage and talking about the financial, artistic, and creative side of design was inspiring. This was just another way of helping them see it IS possible and they can do it too", said School Director, Walter Reese.



Scholars will move on from this as a tool to continue with the scholars through Project Based Learning. The goal at UPSM Elementary is to create or design something that will positively impact the community. Going forward, students will assist with designing products or shoes for Detroit's homeless population. UPSM Elementary looks forward to connecting with professionals from a variety of industries to enhance the learning experience and spark future career interests in our scholars.