

Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Pongo Publishing

Address:
4701 SW Admiral Way, #308
Seattle, WA 98116

Contact:
(206) 852-9166
<http://www.pongoteenwriting.org>

Organization's General Goals:

The Pongo Teen Writing Project teaches and mentors personal poetry by youth who have suffered childhood traumas, such as abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence. We especially focus on young people who have a hard time expressing themselves. To accomplish our goals, we run and support trauma-informed writing programs inside juvenile detention centers, homeless shelters, psychiatric hospitals, and other sites.

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Date of Award: | Level: |
| 2017 Q4 | \$2,501 to \$5,000 |

For more information, please read the attached report from Pongo Publishing.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

TulalipCares.org

Disclaimer: This report may be a summary of content provided by the recipient, not always complete quoted material.



PONGO POETRY PROJECT

4701 SW Admiral Way, #308
Seattle, WA 98116
(206) 852-9166

Richard Gold
Executive Director

April 15, 2019

Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions
Attn: Marilyn Sheldon, msheldon@tulaliptribes-nsn.gov

URL for charity: www.pongoteenwriting.org
Number of recipients impacted: Please see attached report.
Code for report: Q4 2017 14.2

Dear Friends at the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions,

With this letter I am attaching Pongo Teen Writing's 2018 Final Report. On behalf of Pongo, thank you for your support of our efforts over the past year. Our partnership with the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions has enabled us to help underserved and institutionalized youth who have suffered traumas, such as abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence. Pongo facilitates healing poetry to help our authors understand their difficult feelings, find their strong voices, and address their life challenges and best hopes. As an outcome of this healing, we are empowering our authors and contributing to social justice in our communities.

Pongo's approach is unique and uniquely successful, as supported by data and pilot studies from over 23 years of service. And Pongo is not only helping hundreds of youth through direct service, but we are helping thousands more through outreach – our efforts to encourage, train, and support Pongo-inspired projects locally, nationally, and internationally. Together Pongo and the Tulalip Tribe are making a real impact!

In addition to the report, I am including a sample poem written by one of our youth in juvenile detention and a research poster from a study conducted by the statistics department at Seattle University. This is an ongoing study in which they are collecting and analyzing data from Pongo-inspired projects around the country. The results demonstrate a high level of satisfaction for the teachers/counselors and their students/clients.

If you have any questions, please contact me at pongo_publishing@hotmail.com or (206) 852-9166.

Sincerely,

Richard Gold

"Poetry helps our authors understand their feelings, find their voices, and address their best hopes."

ADDICTION

by a young man in juvenile detention

I am addicted
I am addicted to the streets
In my addiction, my life is filled with hatred,
enemies, guns, drugs

In my addiction, I'm glad to feel hated by many
I am addicted to the numbness
caused by the substance
I ingest to feel the rage

The emotion where the anger I carry
explodes
Within me splattering
Splashing breaking destroying

My soul, my self,
my mind,
ME.

In my addiction
I think about the damage I caused
The hearts I broke
The splinters on my fists

In my addiction the real me
becomes an unwanted "thing"

I am addicted
I am addicted to be understood
To be given the chance to express myself
without prejudice

In my addiction, betrayal comes in the form of denial
In my addiction, I'm in a constant battle with myself
I am addicted

2018 FINAL REPORT

PONGO TEEN WRITING PROJECT, Seattle WA



(Seattle Youth Poet Laureate Maven Gardner discussing Pongo's personal impact. May 2018)

20 Years of Service: Transforming Lives in Juvenile Detention Through Poetry

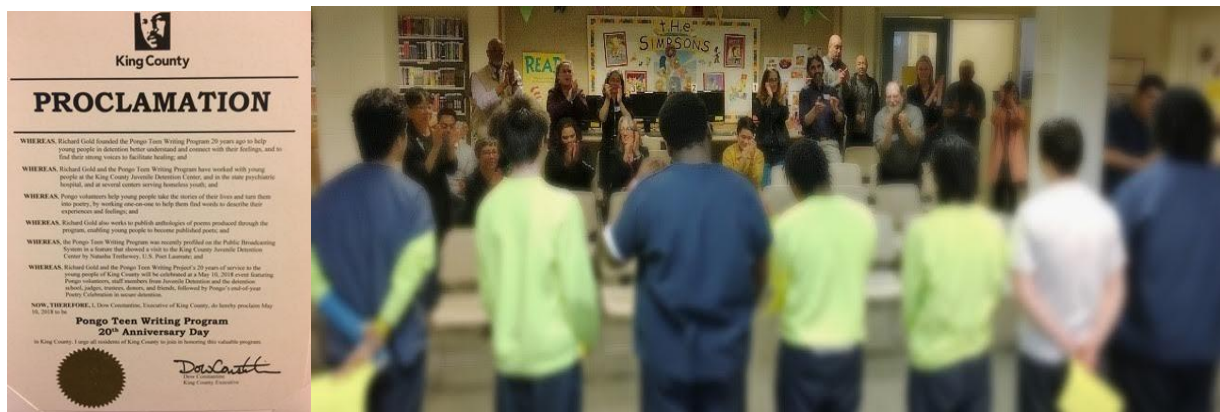
King County honored Pongo last May for 20 years of service to youth in juvenile detention. The county issued a proclamation declaring May 10, 2018 to be "Pongo Teen Writing 20th Anniversary Day." The head of juvenile detention and the chief judge of the juvenile court resided. The event culminated with Pongo guests entering detention to witness a poetry reading by youth.

“Thanks for giving us a voice. I really enjoyed talking about things I don’t really speak of.” -Youth in detention

Introduction

2018 was an exciting year for Pongo Teen Writing Project. Along with receiving recognition from King County for our 20 years of service in detention, we increased our overall direct services to youth and also shared our methodology for providing trauma-informed youth programming both nationally and internationally. As we grow, we have continued to evolve our understanding and role in the way we use healing to contribute to social justice in the community.

It was also a watershed year for creating organizational sustainability. After a long history of being an all-volunteer organization, we have hired new staff and secured the funding necessary for these to be sustainable positions into the future.



Pongo’s Direct Service

Pongo worked with **91 youth in 128 sessions** in King County Juvenile Detention and **35 youth in 73 sessions** at the Child Study and Treatment Center (CSTC) this past school year. Our writing mentors helped the youth to write poetry about their difficult personal experiences, as a way to find healing and empowerment. Participating youth wrote about many painful subjects including domestic violence, murder, addiction, gang violence and exploitation. The stories they shared were at times harrowing, but through the act of creative self-expression – and being “heard” - they experienced joy, dignity, and agency.

“This was the best thing. I got a lot of things off my chest. It made me express my feelings in a way that I never have before.” -Youth in detention

Our Results

As evidence of what the youth participants gained from Pongo's program, in terms of engagement and personal development, here are the results of surveys from 76 participants from Juvenile Detention as well as 27 youth at the Child Study and Treatment Center. It should

be noted that, of the individuals participating in our survey, 54% of the youth in detention and 34% of the youth at CSTC had only written a little or not at all before Pongo.

| Question | Juvenile Detention | CSTC |
|---|--------------------|---------------|
| | Yes Responses | Yes Responses |
| Did you enjoy this writing experience? | 97% | 100% |
| Do you feel proud of the writing you did with us? | 97% | 100% |
| Did you write about things you don't normally talk about? | 77% | 72% |
| Do you feel that you learned something about writing? | 85% | 83% |
| Do you feel that you learned something about yourself? | 75% | 85% |
| If you wrote about things that are bothering you, did the writing help you feel better? | 75% | 81% |
| Do you think you might write more in the future? | 88% | 98% |
| If so, do you think you might write during times when life is difficult? | 87% | 93% |

An Illustrative Story

Here are two stories from our volunteer mentors about youth encounters from this past year:

Arlene's Story:

In December, 2018, I sat with a young man in King County Youth Detention as he dictated a poem, as we say in Pongo, that came "from the heart." In his two-page poem, "The Change," the poet ponders his life, saying, "I've made mistakes...knowing it's not right...I pray everyday, hoping I get released/back to my community/to show that I am not the person/the prosecutor thinks I am/ to show that I deserve this change/to prove who I really am...." He continues, taking responsibility for his actions, never blaming others. He concludes his poem by saying:

I feel like if I keep on

doing what I did in the past
I'm going to end up dead

or in prison and that's not what
I really want. I want to be a successful

man in life, doing things to help others
and doing things to help

change the world. But I can't do
none of that if I don't change myself.

And the change starts with me.

"I loved working with Pongo. Thank you for helping me. It was fun, and I got stuff out that was hard." -Youth in the state psych hospital

Alex's Story:

Almost every week for the past four months, I've had the honor to work with transgender teens at the Child Study and Treatment Center. When we first encountered one young man, he was getting in touch with his strength through anger and put-downs. And yet, he returned. He admitted to staff last week he sorta, kinda likes the whole Pongo thing, and just this week, I saw the very first glimmer of a softer, more vulnerable emotional side. He began his poem wanting to make fun of staff members, but the second stanza was about how people made fun of him sometimes, too, for being smart, and this is why he wanted to hit people. We'd already talked about where his anger lived in his body -- his fists -- and I could see the look of insight as his demeanor softened for a split second. It doesn't sound like much, but knowing this young man, I could tell he had just moved a personal mountain. We then wrote a funny poem -- with a staff member! -- and, although he'd said at the beginning of the session he never laughed, we all laughed, him, me, and the staff member he'd been making fun of earlier.

Pongo's Outreach

In addition to our direct service, Pongo also helps encourage, train, and support Pongo-inspired writing projects locally, nationally, and around the world. Recognizing that anyone who suffers from trauma can benefit from a Pongo opportunity, Pongo works with counselors, teachers, artists, university students, and volunteers to help them start their own writing projects based on our model. In the last 5 years, Pongo has given 70 presentations and trainings, 36 locally and 34 nationally. This effort to share Pongo's methodology is also supplemented through free resources on Pongo's web site and through a book by Pongo's founder, Richard Gold, titled Writing with At-Risk Youth: The Pongo Teen Writing Method (Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2014).

There are now Pongo-inspired projects locally at Broadview Shelter, New Horizons Ministries, and other sites. There are Pongo-inspired projects nationally in Sacramento, San Diego, Colorado Springs, Ann Arbor, Atlanta, and many other cities. There have also been Pongo-inspired projects in Amsterdam, Cape Town, San Salvador, Krakow, Barcelona, and Bucharest.

"I think doing this for the kids is great and really helps us. Sharing my writing makes me feel heard and understood." -Youth in the state psych hospital

Conclusion

We love what we do, and we deeply appreciate all of the community support we receive. 2019 promises to be an exciting year as we grow our staff, share our model with other youth service providers and increase our capacity to offer thoughtful and impactful programming. Together we are all making a difference in the lives of young people!



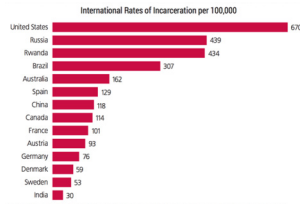
How do you teach poetry at Pongo?

Emily Stefhon & Xavier Hernandez
Seattle University and Pongo Teen Writing



Background & Intro

BACKGROUND



At a time where the United States incarcerating more people than any other country in the world, research investigating positive interventions for incarcerated individuals in becoming more urgent (Walmsley, 2016)

INTRODUCTION

In the literature, expressive writing interventions have continuously been found to improve psychological wellbeing (Alparone, Pagliaro, & Rizzo, 2015; Lepore, 1997; Smyth & Pennebaker, 2010). While many researchers have discovered this phenomena with traditional populations like college students, few studies have investigated the effects of writing programs on at-risk youth (Foley, 2001; Pytash & Li, 2014; Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Similarly, much research has focused on traditional teachers' writing curriculum (Lester et al., 2003; Melzer, 2009), while little attention has been paid to the experiences and methodologies of teachers in non-traditional environments (Pytash, 2017). As a result, this study will be looking at teachers' attitudes and uses of the Pongo Teen Writing Method, a poetry program designed for at-risk youth (Gold, 2014; Pongo Publishing Teen Project, 2015).

METHOD

Measures. Opinions on being a Pongo Teacher. A Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was constructed to measure participant's opinions of being Pongo teacher. For example, the participants are asked to rate their opinion on, "I experienced a significant success with Pongo" or "I was challenged by teaching poetry using Pongo."

Interpreting Students Opinions on Pongo. In order to understand how the students perceive Pongo without surveying them directly, the participants were asked to answer a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree on statements such as, "Participants enjoyed writing with Pongo" or "Participants were reluctant to join in Pongo."

Pongo Poetry Sample

When I Look in the Mirror
by a young woman, age 16

When I look in the mirror,
I see a young lady that's been through hell and back,
colors on the right eye
blinds on the left
hatted on the left hand
love on the right.
Sixteen years that I live and already seen
the good and the bad.
But blood on your hands,
you never wanna see that.
Losing a friend or family member is the worst,
especially in front of you.
Just thinking yesterday,
everything was a good day.
But you never know, things can switch up on you
anytime.
Before constraints are statistically significant $p < .05$

Analysis

| | How are the instructors' ideas related and how are the instructors' perceptions of participant's engagement related? | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| Instructors | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I found it easy to implement Pongo | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I need more help | -0.23 | | | | | | | | | | |
| I was challenged by teaching poetry using Pongo | -0.13 | 0.19 | | | | | | | | | |
| I found it easy to deal with emotions, including difficult ones, that arose with Pongo | -0.17 | 0.28 | -0.12 | | | | | | | | |
| I experienced a significant success with Pongo | 0.41 | 0.00 | -0.12 | 0.13 | | | | | | | |
| I feel more satisfied in my work after using Pongo | 0.45 | 0.07 | 0.07 | -0.08 | 0.53 | | | | | | |
| Participants | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Participants enjoyed writing with Pongo | 0.52 | -0.17 | -0.05 | -0.05 | 0.72 | 0.43 | | | | | |
| Participants were reluctant to join in Pongo | -0.07 | 0.10 | 0.45 | 0.15 | -0.14 | -0.16 | -0.12 | | | | |
| Participants were more in touch with their feelings after Pongo | 0.43 | 0.01 | 0.10 | 0.12 | 0.68 | 0.52 | 0.65 | 0.00 | | | |
| Participants were more comfortable relating to others after Pongo | 0.30 | 0.06 | 0.08 | 0.05 | 0.46 | 0.31 | 0.55 | 0.02 | 0.68 | | |
| Participants were more enthusiastic about their education after Pongo | -0.02 | 0.20 | 0.01 | 0.04 | 0.43 | 0.23 | 0.32 | -0.14 | 0.56 | 0.67 | |
| Participants continued to write after Pongo | 0.43 | -0.03 | -0.18 | -0.17 | 0.54 | 0.28 | 0.52 | -0.08 | 0.38 | 0.40 | 0.26 |

All correlations above $r = .3$ are statistically significant $p < .05$

Discussion

ADDITIONAL RESULTS

Teachers who found Pongo easy to implement:

- ↑ more success
- ↑ more satisfaction
- ↑ had participants who enjoyed in more
- ↑ had participants who were more comfortable relating to others
- ↑ had participants who continued to write

Teachers who were challenged had participants who were reluctant to write

Teachers who experienced success had participants who were:

- ↑ more in touch with feelings
- ↑ more comfortable with others
- ↑ more enthusiastic about education
- ↑ continued to write

Participants who enjoyed Pongo:

- ↑ more comfortable with others
- ↑ more in touch with feelings
- ↑ more enthusiastic about education
- ↑ continued to write

The following from a 1-7 point Likert scale with higher indicating being strongly agree, most teachers found Pongo:

- easy to implement ($M = 6.15$),
- experienced success ($M = 6.2$),
- felt more satisfied in work ($M = 6.2$).

The teachers also reported the participants being:

- more in touch with feelings ($M = 5.98$),
- more comfortable with feelings ($M = 5.46$),
- were more enthusiastic about their education ($M = 5.05$),
- continued to write after Pongo ($M = 5.32$).

DISCUSSION

- Overall, instructors reported high satisfaction with Pongo.
- Overall, instructors reported positive learning outcomes of participants including important soft skills like being in touch and comfortable with one's feelings.
- The Pongo program increased desire for education in participants, and this is vital as education is an avenue to avoid recidivism and move one's life forward in positive way.

Conclusion & Contact Info

CONCLUSION

- The Pongo program has promising results. The teachers are overall very satisfied and the participants are perceived to be experiencing important gains for the class and beyond. Specially, the instructors felt more satisfied in their work and the participants were more enthusiastic about education as well as in touch and comfortable with their feelings. Each of these outcomes is associated with a good return on investment for all involved.
- This work highlights important ways our students can aid existing needs in our community.
- Future work will want to address what may be related to the instructors who found teaching Pongo to be challenging. Additional future analysis will unpack hypothesized ideas for this question including looking at factors such as who they teach, how long they have taught, what type of support they have, and what type of support they may need.

CONTACT INFO

- Elise Murovchik, PhD, Lecturer, murovch@seattleu.edu
- Emily Stefhon, Student, stefhona@seattleu.edu
- Xavier Hernandez, Student, hernanx4@seattleu.edu