



TulalipCares.org

Tulalip Charitable Contributions Funds Distribution Report

NAME OF AGENCY: Take The Next Step

ADDRESS: 202 South Sams Street, Monroe, WA 98272

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GENERAL GOALS: To offer friendship, help and hope to our neighbors in need: our neighbors of all ages, backgrounds and situations - at risk children, homeless and street involved youth and adults, teen parents, low income and homeless families, veterans, the elderly, and disabled.

SPECIFIC USE FOR THIS AWARD:

Approximately 100 struggling students became better learners because of your grant dollars!

For more information please see the attached report from Take The Next Step.



RECEIVED
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BY: *D. Olson*

July 22, 2016

Offering
Friendship
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Board of Directors
Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund
8802 27th Avenue NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

Dear Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund Board of Directors,

Thank you so very much for the [REDACTED] grant awarded by the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund in December 2015. Approximately 100 struggling students became better learners because of your grant dollars!

Enclosed you will find an evaluation of our program based on the questionnaires completed by each child's teacher in the fall of 2015 and again in the spring of 2016. You will find we included the lessons we learned from both the students' teacher evaluations as well as our work with the disadvantaged learners in our neighborhood.

We offer a big THANK YOU to your charitable fund that makes it possible to re-write a child's future. The children with whom we work are expected to become high school dropouts, become incarcerated, or continue living in poverty. Beyond academic assistance, we offer hope and a vision for future beyond their current circumstances. Thank you for making Kidz Club and a new dream for the future possible for these students!

Sincerely,

Donna L. Olson
Acting Executive Director

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Take the Next Step’s Kidz Club Program

The mission of Take the Next Step (TTNS) is to offer friendship, help, and hope to our neighbors in need.

Funds from the Tulalip Charitable Fund Grant have been used in Monroe to provide a free after-school tutoring and mentoring program for 100 elementary-age students who struggle to keep up in school.

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 The overarching goal of Take the Next Step’s Kidz Club program is for students to develop valuable life skills which will lead to greater success in both academics and more importantly, life.

Kidz Club provides the only free outside school help for young students in our community.

When we first started Kidz Club, we thought we would be academic heroes – our kids were going to read and “do” math at grade level. We quickly discovered that our students faced obstacles we had never considered: parents who are unable to help with homework because of language limitations, the stressors, chaos, and uncertainty that often accompany a life lived in poverty, and the trauma that results from Adverse Childhood Experiences.

We soon realized that our kids needed new skills for life. Skills self-regulation and mindfulness so they can thoughtfully respond to difficult situations when they are afraid, or angry, or anxious rather than lash out.

Teachers tell us that these life skills are even more important than academics because now, our kids are ready to learn.

Children who Live in Poverty

Living in a high-poverty neighborhood compounds the effects of poor reading skills and family poverty. Research shows that students who fall behind in learning early in life face significant increased risks of dropping out of school ¹, unemployment, ² poverty, and prison time. ³ At Take the Next Step’s (TTNS’s) nearest elementary school, 74% ⁴ of the students qualify for free and reduced lunches. At Kidz Club, 100% of our students come from homes that fall below the poverty income range.

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 Students living in poverty, who attend high poverty schools are nearly 10 times more likely to drop out before finishing high school as compared to children who have never lived in poverty. ¹

Among the community that TTNS serves, the vast majority of students do not read at grade level. The 2014–2015 Washington State Report Card for Frank Wagner Elementary School, where a majority of students we serve attend, shows that 82.7% of third grade students scored below standard or well below standard in English Language Arts. ⁴

Research shows that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out than proficient readers. ¹

At Kidz Club, we see how the lack of proficiency in reading impacts every other area of study. Young students might know their arithmetic facts, but if they can’t read the story problem, they fail math. Moreover, family stressors—such as

hunger, housing insecurity, family mobility, family violence, parental depression, addictions, abuse and

neglect—distract children from the task of learning. A study by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) examined the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Within the areas of abuse, neglect and family dysfunction, ten key indicators were found to profoundly affect long-term health and well-being as a result of the accompanying toxic stressors⁵. Research also shows that the negative impacts of stressors can be alleviated when children are part of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships. Low income students find safe, stable, and nurturing environment, mentors and volunteers at Kidz Club.

In Kidz Club, we use evidence-based Resilience, Developmental Assets (Search Institute), and Kernels (Embry) strategies to create behavioral change in our at-risk students. All staff are trained in these proven strategies as they relate to students who face extremely difficult challenges in their young lives. Life skills lessons developed by marriage and family therapist, Debra Taylor, are incorporated each Kidz Club session. Interestingly, volunteers and student leaders often comment about how these life skills lessons positively affect their own lives.

Our Kidz Club Program

Throughout the school year, Kidz Club is held twice a week for two hours each on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help students improve their reading, writing, math, critical thinking skills, and improve life skills increase their chances for a brighter future. Each student receives at least two hours of individual or small group attention per week focusing on reading and homework, as well as two hours per week of fun group learning activities and life skills lessons that focus on self-regulation.

Students are paired with the same volunteer throughout the year for consistency and to build trust. Once a week, a licensed family therapist, or trained designee, teaches the lessons from the Kidz Power curriculum.

All staff and volunteers are trained twice yearly in best practices for working with children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as well as cultural competency trainings. Bilingual volunteers fluent in Spanish and English who are familiar with Latino culture are available to work with English Language Learners (roughly 85% of Kidz Club students are Hispanic.)

Kidz Club incorporates the following components to improve students' ability to learn at school:

- Students are transported to Kidz Club by our staff from school or their parents.
- A healthy snack is served
- Students unwind with educational games
- Kidz Club students work in a small group with their trained volunteer for 30 minutes with reading, 30 minutes with homework or an educational activity.
- Kidz Club trained staff lead Life Skills lessons from the Kidz Power curriculum, and focuses on Relationships, Reflection, and Resilience.
- School & Family Engagement: The Kidz Club Coordinator spends several hours each week at Frank Wagner Elementary school to work with students and develop relationships with the faculty and staff. He also visits student neighborhoods and homes.

Evaluation Criteria

Because research shows that self-regulation is one of the most important criteria to academic performance, Kidz Club performance measures were based on various aspects of student growth with respect to self-regulation.

For the 2015/2016 academic year, we chose to evaluate the program by students who were:

1. **Ready to learn** (emotional adjustment)- “Research, however, indicates that young children's emotional adjustment matters—children who are emotionally well adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success, while children who experience serious emotional difficulty face grave risks of early school difficulty.”⁶ Kidz Club life skills lessons are specifically geared to assist students in emotional growth and school readiness.

Teachers have classrooms full of struggling children. At Kidz Club, trained volunteers work with children one-on-one or in small groups; they often are able to identify a learning/life issue with Kidz Club students. The volunteer discusses their concern with the Kidz Club director, who in turn visits with the student’s teacher. A volunteer identified a student who needed glasses; the Kidz Club director found the child’s family could not pay for the glasses. The volunteer found a community member eager to financially cover the child’s eye exam and the glasses. This student’s reading ability has increased amazingly after getting his glasses. Kidz Club staff helps students become ready to learn.

2. **Self-Regulation Skills** – Self-Regulation is the ability to control one’s feelings, thoughts and actions. “Self-regulation is increasingly being seen as a good predictor of a child’s academic success....Self-regulation underlies our daily decisions and long-term tendencies ...When people make poor choices – for example about health, school, work, or relationships, it is usually because of a failure of self-regulation.”⁷ Therefore, at Kidz Club we saw self-regulation as being foundational to academic and overall life success.
3. **Completed Homework** - “During homework completion, students engage in self-regulation by motivating themselves, inhibiting distractions, using strategies to complete homework, managing time, setting goals, self-reflecting on their performance, and delaying gratification. As a result, self-regulation and homework are related and the findings show that from elementary grades to college, skilled learners engage in the above self-regulatory behaviors during homework activities.”⁷

Program Outcomes and Evaluation

Kidz Club students’ teachers voluntarily participate in our Kidz Club evaluation process. Teachers willing to participate 1) fill out an individual student evaluation in October and then 2) they updated the student evaluation form in May. In addition, teachers frequently gave recommendations regarding individual students to our Kidz Club director during his weekly school visits. They recommend activities, school materials, or ways volunteers can work with struggling students.

- 40% of our Kidz Club students’ teachers participated in the evaluation process

We were pleased 15 teachers of Kidz Club students went beyond the usual school requirements to complete Kidz Club evaluation forms for our students in the fall of 2015 and May of 2016.

May evaluations showed:

- 71% of Kidz Club students were ranked as proficient in Readiness for Learning in the spring
- 72% of our students were marked as proficient in self-regulation by year end
- 67% of our students were rated as proficient in turning in homework in May

- 29% of students improved in two of the three target areas
- 42% of students increased in at least one area

The students' teachers' very helpful comments will help shape our tutoring program in the next academic year.

In February 2016, the Washington Education Association, Diversity and Culture Committee presented the Take the Next Step Kidz Club program with an award for our work in the Hispanic community within our school district.

Lessons Learned

Our goals in the fall for Kidz Club students were:

- 75% of students will be better learners, as reported by semi-annual teacher evaluations
- 85% of students will be proficient in self-regulation, a quality essential to academic and life success, as reported by semi-annual teacher evaluations
- 80% of students will turn in homework, as reported by semi-annual teacher evaluations

Although our goals were not completely realized, the vast majority of our Kidz Club students grew and matured in the areas of readiness to learn, self-regulation, and returning homework.

We learned that:

- Although our original goals were unreasonably high, all of students developed in targeted areas during the school year.
- Because we work on homework with students twice weekly, we were disappointed that completed homework is still not being turned in. Throughout the school year, our program and staff must state and reinforce the importance of each student's homework being submitted to their teachers on time. Turning in homework will be emphasized especially next spring when many children become antsy and more interested in outdoor activities than schoolwork.

¹ Hernandez, D., "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills And Poverty Influence High School Graduation," Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2012).

² Porter, Laura, and Dario Longhi. "Stress, Strength, Work, Hope: Washington Adults' Answers About Life/Work Experiences." *Report for the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*.

³ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2010) *Early Experiences Can Alter Gene Expression And Affect Long-Term Development. Working Paper No. 10*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

⁴ OSPI Washington State Report Card, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Summary.aspx?schoolId=2588&reportLevel=School&year=2014-15&orgLinkId=&waslCategory=1&gradeLevelId=4&yrs=2014-15>

⁵ "CDC – Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study." Accessed July 21, 2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

⁶ Ponitz and McClelland, "A Structured Observation of Behavioral Self-Regulation and Its Contribution to Kindergarten Outcomes," *Developmental Psychology* (2009, Vol. 45, No. 3, 605-619)

⁷ Ramdass and Zimmerman, "Developing Self-Regulation Skills: The Important Role of Homework Journal of Advanced Academics," *Journal of Advanced Academics* (February, 2011, vol. 22, no. 2, 194-218) (2011), Accessed July 21, 2016. <http://joa.sagepub.com/content/22/2/194.short>