PROMISING PRACTICES- YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Chico Stewardship Network

Stewardship
Stewardship can be understood as the ultimate expression of self-governance; in the midst of Liberty, choosing to take on responsibility for the Common Good. Our “We the People” model of governance, with its twin goals of Liberty and Justice for All, finds its most natural expression in our communities and regions where Engaged Citizen Stewards develop common goals through relational grids that unite people with disparate ideologies, creating strength from multiple viewpoints. Regional Promising Practices presents examples of this stewardship ethic at work, believing that effective statewide governance will spring from the broad adoption of this ethic by Citizen Stewards across our great state. Stewardship, the bedrock of effective governance.

Issue
Bridging the Achievement Gap in Our Schools
Over 50% of elementary students reach Middle School unable to read at grade level. Reduced literacy limits economic potential. Without economic freedom it is difficult to be free at all and the opportunity for productive citizenship is minimized. Almost every negative social indicator is significantly impacted by this semi-literate demographic.

Stewardship Approach; Citizen Partnership with Public Schools
- Engage at-risk students at every level of the educational path. Partner the ‘hearts and hands’ of engaged citizens with teachers and other school personnel.
- Recover academic attainment
- Build personal confidence leading to an independent capacity (as opposed to a dependent approach to life)

Elementary School; Reading Pals
One-on-One Tutoring for Aptitude and Character Development

The Reading Pals program has been operating in Chico for 4 years in its current form. In 2016-2017, 148 volunteers spent 4,400 hours tutoring 168 students at 4 school sites. The program is expanding into two additional Chico Elementary schools and two elementary schools in an adjacent community in the fall of 2017.

Reading Pals provides supervised one-on-one tutoring by community volunteers for each child not reading at grade level. While teaching aptitude, the one-on-one setting allows the tutor to reinforce the identity and value of the individual child...the bedrock of a future independent person capable of becoming a productive and proactive citizen. A committed volunteer communicates value and pride in a student, giving them a reason to try and celebrating their success with a “you have what it takes to succeed” message. This one-on-one support is often all these kids need to become a self-motivated success story.
ABC’s

- Classroom Space. Designate a special room or portion of room where tutoring is accomplished. Room is divided into individual tutoring stations.
- Tutoring Sessions. Each student receives two ½hr sessions each week. Sessions may be during the school day or as a part of the after school program. Multiple tutoring sessions occur simultaneously, the number depending on the size of the room. A typical classroom can support 10 simultaneous sessions.
- Supervision. Credentialed teachers are trained in the use of the selected curriculum, supervise the room and provide support for the volunteer tutors.
- Curriculum. Curriculum is available at relatively low cost to support this approach.
- Volunteers. Volunteers commit for 1 semester and for 1 or 2 hours per week. Most volunteers continue with additional semester commitments. Each hour segment is divided into two ½ hour tutoring sessions with the same students each week. This consistency is a key ingredient in the overall success of the program. Volunteers must be screened (local Districts can do this directly) and TB tested (local hospitals can provide this service as a part of a community wide campaign). A key to retaining volunteers, is sharing with them the gains made by their students. Permission to share this information must be obtained from the school district.
- Community Coordinator. This role must be filled by a community advocate. It involves the marketing of the approach to the community and building out the multiple layers of the partnership with the school district.
- Site Coordinator. The creation of volunteer pools for each site, the organizing of volunteer screening protocols and the celebration of the program’s successes.

Metrics

90% of students involved in Reading Pals see significant acceleration in their literacy learning rate. In 2016-17, our data demonstrates students enrolled in Reading Pals gained an average of 2.3 months of literacy skills for every month they were enrolled in the program. In just 5 months of being enrolled in Reading Pals, students gain an average of one year in literacy skills. It is not uncommon for students to gain 2 or 3 years of literacy advancement in a single school year. Student confidence, although more difficult to measure quantitatively, also increases dramatically.

Testimonial

Juan was a disengaged 4th grade student significantly behind in terms of literacy skills. Rene, a 72 year old retired citizen, agreed to tutor Juan 1 hour per week. Things started slowly, but gradually, as Rene returned each week, Juan’s skills began to accelerate. By the end of his 5th grade year, Juan was recognized as having gained the status of ‘English Competent’ and was removed from the list of children requiring intervention. Juan’s attitude markedly improved as well, as he became an enthusiastic participant in classroom activities. Rene, also an active Rotarian, arranged to have Juan recognized at a Rotary meeting (Juan’s non-English speaking mom was in attendance). 200 Rotarians gave Juan a standing ovation as Rene hung a medallion around Juan’s neck.
Middle School; Peer Pals
This program will receive Reading Pals graduates with a foundation of academic success and self-confidence and place them in Peer Teams of 3 with a single mentor. The desired outcome is continued academic success with the accountability function transferred to the students. In this process students learn to be “interdependent”.

Chico is working on implementing this program in the Spring of 2018 to serve graduating Reading Pals students.

High School; Citizen Training
This program will challenge Peer Pal graduates to:
• Consider themselves as a Citizen of their high school
• As self-governing Citizens, identify issues that need to be remedied and rally students to take responsible action in partnership with school and community personnel.

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