

## New Futures Program Donor Report 2014

New Futures partners with families and educators to ensure that children succeed in school and in life. Housed in three South King County low income apartment complexes, New Futures creates community learning centers that serve hundreds children, youth, and adults annually.

The students served by New Futures attend the Highline School District, one of the most challenged districts in the state. Only 65.8% of students graduated in four years in 2014 – the lowest rate of graduation in King County. Additionally, the Highline School District has one of the highest percentages of students receiving free or reduced priced lunches, 69.9%. New Futures program participants are low-income, culturally diverse at-risk students who face a range of barriers inhibiting their likelihood of academic success. Nearly all of the youth are from first-generation immigrant and refugee families, originating primarily from Mexico, Somalia, Sudan, Bhutan, Nepal, Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. The current ethnic/racial makeup of families includes 67% Latino, 9% African American, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Caucasian, 1% Native American, and 15% identified as “Other.” Ninety-eight percent of families earn less than 30% of King County’s median household income (\$26,460 for a family of four in 2014) and 93% are recent immigrants or refugees. Nearly half speak little or no English. Approximately 73% of parents report having *less than* a high school diploma.



By the end of November 2014, 167 children were attending and receiving direct services and support in New Futures K-12 after school and youth development programs. Parents of several children and their siblings who are not currently enrolled are also being served directly through New Futures family advocacy services. Four programs have waiting lists; physical space is the primary obstacle to including all students who want to attend, though staffing limits also prevent expansion.

One important achievement of 2014 was that all participants of the summer programs in grades 1-6 maintained their or increased their reading levels. This is a significant accomplishment given that studies have shown that low income and minority children experience much higher rates of summer reading loss than their more affluent white counterparts. This meant that New Futures program participants started the school year going strong

on reading, with no need to use valuable classroom time relearning skills gained the previous year.

By the close of 2014, three high school program seniors had taken or were scheduled to take the SAT and are working with the Program Coordinators on their college applications. Not only will they be the first in their families to attend college, in some cases they will be the first to graduate from high school.

Students at New Futures participate enthusiastically in the programs. The older youth were asked to take on a planning role for an activity at our Literacy Nights that took place last fall at all sites. At Arbor Heights, the youth decided to put on a performance of the “Wayside School” Readers Theater. The teens read the three-part play to younger students and families, and demonstrated tremendous poise and professionalism. This was a major accomplishment, as many of them had never done anything in front of an audience and some of them are struggling readers. Their performance was well received by the younger participants - no small feat- and several parents commented how proud they felt to see their children in such a positive role.



The literacy nights were very popular, and served 278 children and adults with food, fun, story times and books. Another literacy night is planned for the spring at each site, during which the community will celebrate students’ learning gains.

At the Windsor Heights location in SeaTac, all programs are at capacity. A strong effort is made to keep at the most a 1:14 ratio of staff to students, per recommendations for high quality after school programs. As well, program rooms are only so big! This school year we are currently serving 76 children in our early learning, elementary, middle school and high school program. We had a very successful literacy night in the fall and planning another for the spring. The staff at Windsor Heights partners with Mercy Housing Health Services that has an office in the complex.

Despite the guidelines, the programs occasionally have to accept more students. An example is Jorge. His family was new to the apartment community, but they stopped by the site over the summer because they had heard about the summer program. Unfortunately, the program had already begun and quite a few students were on the waiting list. The family was informed about the school year program, and told to stop by once school had started to sign him up. His family was once again a little too late, and he was put on the waiting list. However, staff still saw him every day of program. At first, he would be outside playing with the other students in the evening, but then he began to stand outside the door at the beginning of program to ask if there was room for him yet.

Sadly, staff had to tell him no because fourteen students had already been accepted; and with only one tutor it was difficult to manage at times. Despite the same answer every day, he continued to show up to ask if he could be in program. Staff tried to find ways to include him and would invite him to come play a game at the end of program, because he would still be waiting outside. After a month of this, staff decided to bump the number of students up to 15, and welcomed Jorge into the program. On his first day he walked in and all of the students cheered his name, and made a special spot for him at the table. He was smiling from ear to ear.

Because only 48% of the New Futures budget comes from public sources, donors’ contributions are essential to the continuation of programs. Donors’ funds are being used to pay for programs supplies and the salaries of the Program Coordinators and Family Advocates who support the entire family as they navigate systems like the health care, legal, immigration, housing or in any way the families need. These positions are a crucial part of the wrap around services for the families and young people that make New Futures programs so effective.

Additional questions regarding this report and the New Futures programs can be directed to: Megan McJennett, New Futures Program Director at [mmcjennett@swyfs.org](mailto:mmcjennett@swyfs.org).