

Las Artes *Getting Ahead* One Year Report March 1, 2017

1. What progress has been made toward achieving the project objectives?

While the *Getting Ahead* intervention began less than a year ago, we have already seen impressive results with the 53 students who have graduated the program. Another class with nine students just launched.

There is evidence of the retention rate tripling for these 53 students (from 20% in 2015 to 60%) as students advance through the program from basic education to murals to GED to graduation. We will be tracking graduation rates as well, but need a larger sample size. Normally, Las Artes students have a 90% graduation rate once they are in the final GED portion of the program, and the loss happens before this last component. This underscores the importance of one of the major impacts of *Getting Ahead*: building community and supportive relationships within the group and with staff. *Getting Ahead* seems to be the glue that is keeping students together and on track through these critical transitions.



Phil DeVol, author of *Getting Ahead*, speaks with Seanna Chavez, a Las Artes student and *Getting Ahead* participant.



We are also integrating in new evaluation tools that will allow us to begin developing better data on the impact of the program, particularly around indicators like increased social capital, motivation and self-efficacy. We will also have each student's articulated plan, class satisfaction surveys, and input from mentors. At the end of every class, we

hold a celebration and students present their vision boards. These boards will be a work in progress and used at the graduation to reveal their future story.

Thanks to external funding, we are able to give each graduating student a tablet with keyboard and case, a critical tool for future educational and professional success. We are now working to get their families signed up for the Cox program that provides the internet for \$10 a month for qualifying families. In October, we had a celebration at Las Artes with Phil DeVol, the author of *Getting Ahead*. Phil was here as the keynote speaker for a series of events addressing poverty. We made sure that he had a chance to visit Las Artes and meet some of the students and staff.

We have used two Las Artes and Getting Ahead graduates to serve as co-facilitators, Desiree Kimberley and Jose Gutierrez. Both have done an excellent job of motivating students and working with them to dig into the ideas. Desiree said of her experience, “I enjoy being a role model and example for the students and they also teach me so many things. I encourage

everyone to be a part of Getting Ahead.

It is a great resource.” Patty Short makes a wonderful home-cooked meal every lunch during which we bring in a motivational speaker who can share their personal journey out of poverty, including several Las Artes staff. At the end of each class, we hold a Completion Ceremony with family, friends, staff, and invited community guests during which each student shares their vision board and plans for the future.



Jose Gutierrez, Las Artes Graduate and Getting Ahead facilitator

We are putting the mentoring pods in place for the next graduating class (formerly coaching pods). We will increase capacity over several months

giving each Getting Ahead graduate an opportunity to participate and stay in a pod through and

While I was on the first level at Las Artes, I had Ms. Patty as my teacher. At the end of that class, I had the chance to participate in the “Getting Ahead” workshop with Maria and Desiree. Getting Ahead was very helpful, they taught me a lot of stuff I didn’t know, like understanding what poverty is and how to get out of it through education.

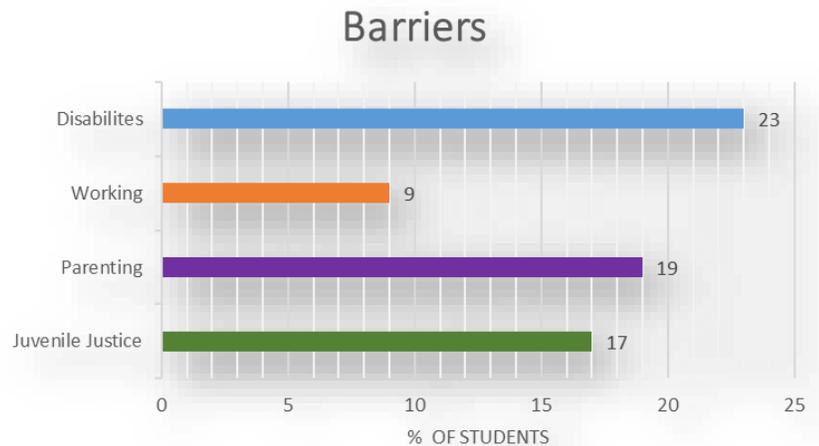
They also showed me how to set goals in life and how working on those goals can help you be successful, and I want to be successful. During the Getting Ahead workshop, I started thinking about my future and what I wanted to do after I got my GED... I know my future is bright now. *Sergio Rodriquez*



beyond their GED graduation. We have developed a curriculum to guide these conversations and help students develop a detailed career plan.

2. What challenges have arisen as this project has moved forward? How are these challenges being addressed?

In their very short lives, Las Artes students face significant challenges. Most come from poverty and are food insecure. Some are homeless or couch surfing. Many contribute financially to their families or are heading families of their own. Some are court involved. Some have serious health issues. Many face issues related to substance abuse in their neighborhoods, families, or in their own lives. They have all met failure in the normal school settings and often for the first time are in an educational setting where they feel valued and where they believe they can succeed. When they do drop out of Las Artes, the causes are often external: work, health, and parenting top the list.



We consistently track attendance, retention, and completion for all students. But we know we need to do a better job at telling the story of the Las Artes students in terms of the barriers they face, their reasons for dropping out, and the barriers they overcome. As a County program, certain information is collected for our County database, and each case manager has their own

The impact it [Getting Ahead] made on me and my life was absolutely amazing. I was stressing so much in my life at the time and this workshop helped me understand why things were the way they were and why I was struggling. It helped me become twice as patient, understanding and strong. The resources and strategies I learned helped me and inspired me to become the most loving and successful mommy I can be for my baby. *Seanna Chavez*

process for tracking students. We are still working through the process for re-aligning Las Artes data collection process so that we are gathering the right data at the right time consistently across all students that can tell the larger story of what is happening.

3. Are any difficulties anticipated in completing the project in the timeframe outlined in the original proposal?

While the classes have all happened smoothly, we are four weeks behind on the other components, including data collection and the mentoring component. Our first mentoring pods will launch the beginning of March instead of February. We have put some strong components in place, from the mentoring schedule and structure to evaluation and training.

Getting Ahead and the mentoring component are meant to give students the space and support they need to develop a new future story for themselves, and to anchor it a clear set of goals with very concrete steps and caring, knowledgeable adults to guide them through the process. It is meant to leave new knowledge, hope, and strategies that can carry them forward

to a self-sustaining future. And it is meant to recognize and celebrate the resources, talents, gifts, and resiliency within themselves, their families, their community and their culture. We are excited to see the results.

For more information, contact Arnold Palacios, Las Artes Arts and Education Center Director: Arnold.palacios@pima.gov or 520-724-5053.



Las Artes Getting Ahead students taking a break from class.



Murals created by the Las Artes Arts and Education Center grace South Tucson streets and celebrate the culture and landscape of Pima County.

