**Pegasus Legal Services for Children**

**Home Visiting Advocacy Project**

**Final Report**

**January – March 2018**

The goals of Pegasus’ Home Visiting Advocacy project were to:

* Educate and engage diverse Santa Fe Public Schools GRADS students to become subject matter experts and spokespersons on the importance of early childhood education and expanded access to home visiting services; and
* Provide compelling in-person and written testimony on the value of home visiting to legislators who have yet to express strong support for expanding home visiting programs.

These goals were met as described below. Overall, we felt that the program was very beneficial to the students who learned concrete skills they can transfer to their day to day lives. The legislators appeared to appreciate hearing from actual participants in the Home Visiting programs.

**Activities:**

1. Bring subject matter experts into the GRADS classroom to educate GRADS students about the importance of early childhood education and home visiting;
   1. This activity did not take place despite our best efforts to arrange to have an expert from the Santa Fe United Way Home Visiting Program come and speak to the students.
2. Present a workshop to Santa Fe GRADS students about how the New Mexico State Legislature works;
   1. Liz McGrath presented this workshop on January 16, 2018;
3. Partner with the GRADS teachers to develop GRADS students’ persuasive writing skills;
   1. Liz McGrath and Lauren Whitehurst partnered to present a two-part workshop on persuasive writing on 1/29 and 2/1. The students learned about the difference between Logos, Pathos, and Ethos and how these concepts can be applied to a persuasive argument about home visiting programs;
4. Partner with the GRADS teachers to develop GRADS students’ verbal advocacy skills;
   1. Liz McGrath presented a two-part workshop on verbal advocacy on 2/2 and 2/5. The students learned about the importance of providing specific and compelling examples of how home visiting has helped them. The students practiced their skills with each other in anticipation of meeting with Legislators;
5. Partner with the GRADS teachers to schedule one on one meetings with legislators who have yet to express strong support for Home Visiting.
   1. Liz McGrath and Lauren Whitehurst took 9 GRADS students to the legislature on 2/6/2018. The students met with three legislators: Representatives Patty Lundstrom, Nate Gentry, and Jim Dines. The legislators seemed guarded at first, but warmed up when they realized they were going to speaking with real students with real stories to tell. Two expressed surprise that current programs serve only 2% of the eligible children. All three seemed remarkably uninformed about implementation of home visiting in New Mexico. The students did a great job communicating their lived experience to the legislators.
6. Organize a post-card drive for GRADS students at the twenty-four GRADS sites around the state.
   1. The GRADS program director, Jeanne Johnston forwarded background materials and pre-formatted postcards to the GRADS teachers statewide. We have not been able to get information about precisely how many post cards were mailed. We will continue to try and get that information.
7. Contact legislators by telephone or email to ask about their response to the project, and its impact on their level of support for expanding high quality home visiting services that have quantifiable outcomes.
   1. We received a very nice response from Rep. Dines who wrote:

*“I learned more than what I previously knew because the students provided specific references, in other words they put faces to the information I knew. The students’ presentation provided me with more information and I will be in a better position to evaluate the needs of the programs during legislative discussions. I would have to review any requests for additional resources on a case by case basis which is my regular procedure. It was impressive to hear from the students in the program and they provided me with a better insight of how the program has impacted their lives. It is always refreshing to hear about positive impacts provided by programs such as NMGRADS. Also, I appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and to be asked questions by the students. They did a very good job.”*