



# Annual Report

2018-2019



# Dear Friends,

The fall of 2019 marks the fifth year of the D2 Center as a nonprofit and the ninth year of providing crucial services to high-risk youth in our community. These youth are not in school, are in the process of disengaging from school, or are off-track to graduate on time. Many of them have experienced traumatic events and face a broad range of barriers such as pregnancy and parenting, lack of transportation or family support, housing instability, behavioral or substance abuse issues, involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice systems, and the list goes on. What the D2 Center has learned over the past nine years is that too many young people don't have enough relationships with stable, caring adults—adults who can listen, connect, and help them get what they need to get back on track toward graduation and their future. These young people need respect rather than judgment. They need resources and supportive actions more than advice. The D2 Center provides both relationship support as well as connections to resources in our community through our Youth Academic Navigator Program.

For the D2 Center, 2018-2019 was truly a banner year:

- An all-time high of 368 students were served in the Youth Academic Navigator Program.
- An additional 65 students were served in OPS alternative education programs by D2 Center Career Navigators through assistance in postsecondary career planning, job searches, training and educational opportunities.
- 79 D2 Center students graduated from high school—the most ever.
- D2 Center staff members did outreach to nearly 250 OPS students who had dropped out of high school. Twenty of these students have already graduated and many more are still enrolled in school.
- 24 students earned an elective credit this past year and 35 students attended tutoring at the D2 Center a total of 142 times.
- A strategic plan for the next three years was developed and is being implemented.
- A new staff member was added, Jodie Martinez, who will be a Staff Specialist working on special projects.

On November 15, 2019, we will celebrate the many achievements of our reengagement center and the positive difference it has made in the lives of so many young people. Many thanks to those who have provided financial support to the D2 Center: The Sherwood Foundation, the Weitz Family Foundation, the City of Omaha, the United Way of the Midlands, and the many individuals who support our cause. Please check us out on Facebook and Twitter or at our website at [www.d2center.org](http://www.d2center.org).



Jerry Bexten  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Greg Emmel  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Carolyn T. Miller  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## D2 Center Staff

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Greg Emmel  
Carolyn T. Miller

### INTAKE SPECIALIST

Charnella Mims

### STAFF SPECIALIST

Jodie Martinez

### CAREER NAVIGATORS

Bette Norton Ball  
John Moore

### YOUTH ACADEMIC NAVIGATORS

Jesi DeWitt  
Hansel Gonzalez  
Evelia Gutiérrez  
Kelsey Hansen

Olga Yaneth López  
Curtis Morgan  
Netta Prince

### PART-TIME CERTIFIED TEACHERS

Clem Bell  
Dianne Kielniarz  
Kathy Kocsis

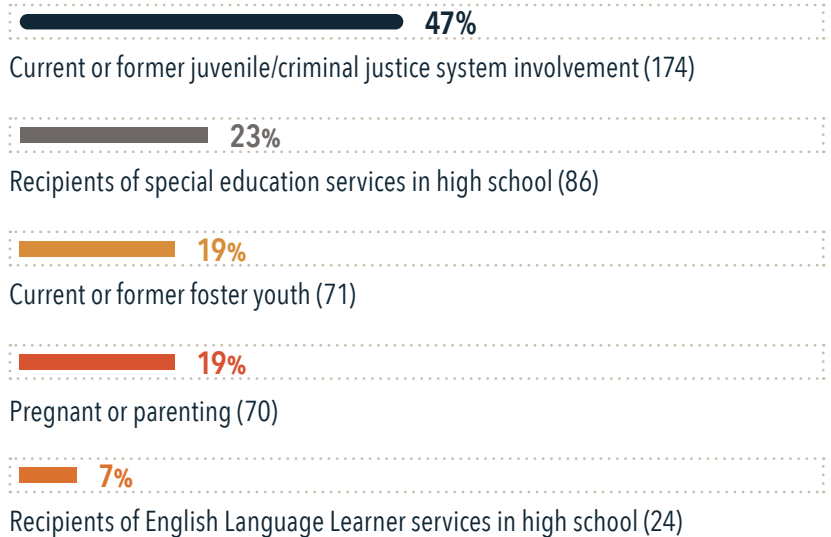
Terry Kocsis  
Jackie Thomas



# D2 Center Student Snapshot

**368**  
**TOTAL**  
**STUDENTS**

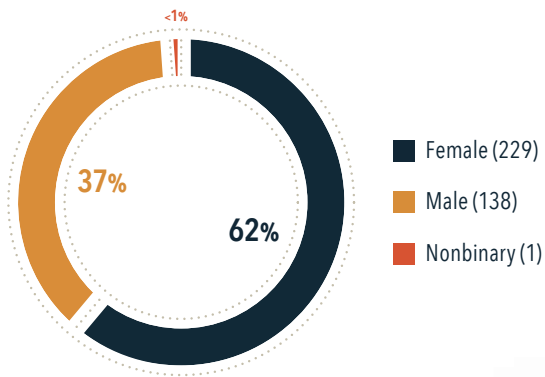
## PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE:



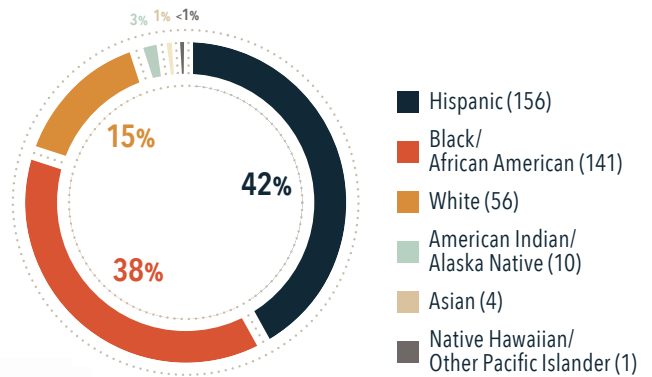
**"I couldn't have done this without you."**

Shayla, high school commencement speaker, thanking the D2 Center, YAN Kelsey Hansen and OPS program Accelere

## STUDENT GENDER



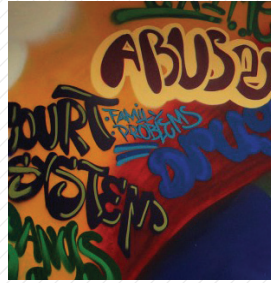
## STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY



# The History of the D2 Center



Nonprofit Building Bright Futures hires Directors Greg Emmel and Carolyn Miller to begin development of a reengagement center in Omaha. The Sherwood Foundation commissions The Parthenon Group to research Omaha Public Schools dropout and off-track student populations as well as U.S. reengagement centers.



100 students are active in the program and the first few students graduate. Development of the Careers and Community Engagement (C & CE) program begins with assistance from a grant from the Nebraska Department of Education.



The newly formed D2 Center Board of Directors meets for the first time, and 501(c)(3) status is granted. Funding from the City of Omaha supports the YAN program.

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014



The D2 Center opens in The Center Mall at 42nd and Center Streets and begins piloting a small group of youth. Development of the Youth Academic Navigator (YAN) program begins. The first elective credits are offered in the summer. The D2 Center joins the National League of Cities Reengagement Center Network.



170 students served in the program in its first two years; the process to establish a 501(c)(3) begins. Tutoring is offered two afternoons per week.



The D2 Center Services Agreement with OPS for dropout reengagement is signed and piloted. Participation in Omaha Gives! for the first time and support from The Weitz Family Foundation for the YAN program and development.



75 students graduate and over 300 are served in a single year. United Way Community Investment grant secured for two years to support YAN program. Staff grows to 2 directors, 7 YANs, and 8 part-time (1 intake specialist, 2 Career Navigators, and 5 teachers).

## 2015

## 2016

## 2017

## 2018

## 2019



More than 300 students served and over 100 students have graduated since opening. The staff grows to four YANs, a part-time intake specialist, several part-time teachers, and a C & CE coordinator.



To date, nearly 600 students served with over 200 graduates. C & CE program changed to Career Navigator program to strengthen partnership with OPS alternative programs for postsecondary assistance.



By mid-year, D2 Center's impact has grown to nearly 900 students served in the full program with 348 graduates. An additional 200+ OPS alternative education students served in the Career Navigator program, and outreach to over 500 additional students through the OPS/D2 Center Reengagement Project. Dozens of these students reenrolled in school and graduated or are still enrolled.

# How Students Connect With D2 Center

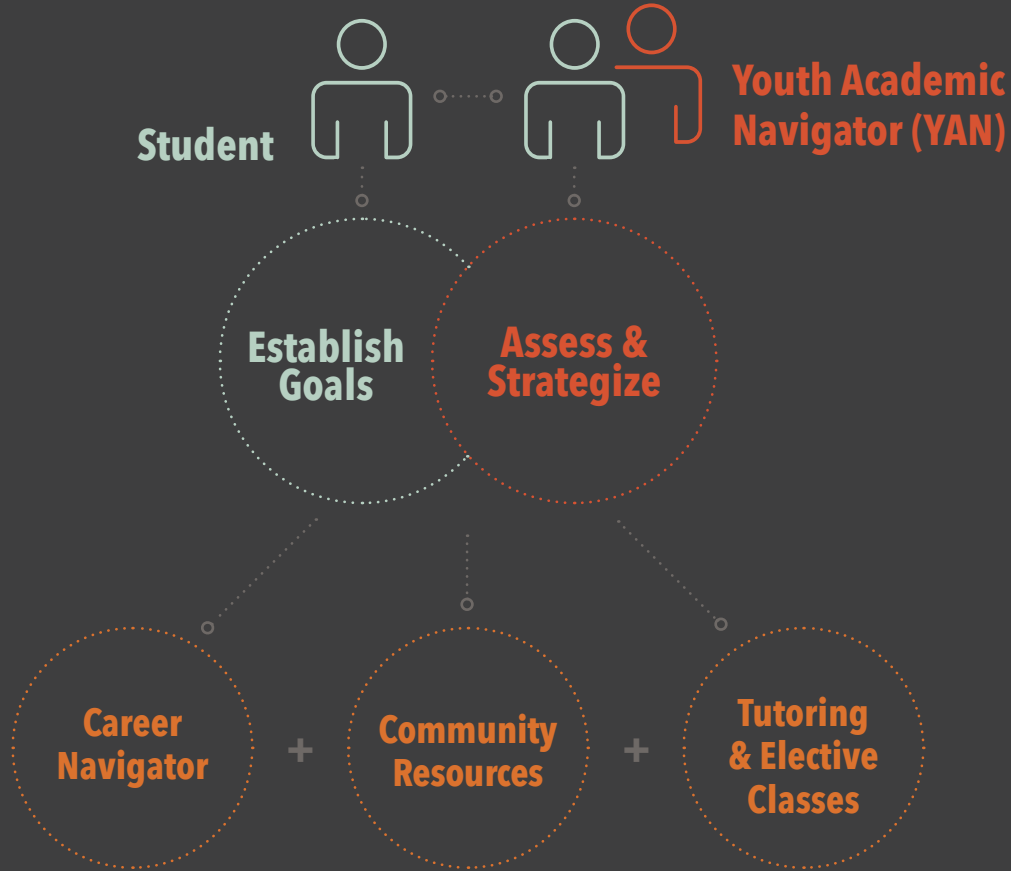
✓ **Omaha Public Schools**  
(and other school districts)

Via Social Workers,  
Guidance Counselors, etc.

✓ **Student/Family**

✓ **Community/Programs**

Via DC Juvenile Services, Promiseship,  
NECC Teen & Young Parent Program, etc.



## IDEAL OUTCOMES



**Reengagement**



**Graduation**



**Postsecondary/  
Career**



# Juan's Story:

## "You Never Gave Up on Me"

After receiving a crushing diagnosis of Hodgkin's Lymphoma during his senior year, Juan finished two credits short of graduating due to medical absences during his fight against the disease.

This didn't discourage Youth Academic Navigator Hansel Gonzalez, who considered Juan a high priority reengagement because he was so close to graduating. For months Hansel called, texted and made home visits but failed to make contact or get a response from Juan. Hansel persisted, though, and reached out again three months later, and Juan's mother gave Hansel Juan's mobile number. More calls and texts, however, were not answered.

A month later, Hansel finally received a call back from Juan telling him he wanted to finish school. Hansel arranged for Juan to come to the D2 Center and work on math packets through the Accelerere program. Juan found the quiet atmosphere at the D2 Center and the math teacher's help conducive to progress, even discussing college enrollment one time with a D2 Center Career Navigator.

To Hansel's disappointment, Juan disappeared without earning a credit. More efforts at contact ensued. A few months later Juan reached out to Hansel and asked about the D2 Center's tutoring schedule, but he failed to show up and failed contacts continued.

Six months later, out of the blue, Hansel received a call from Juan. He explained he'd been dealing with "personal family problems," and wanted to meet again to talk about finishing school. Juan decided to attend the OPS Accelerere Program and finish his two credits. He arranged with his boss at work to take several weeks off to focus on graduating. Hansel guided Juan through enrollment at Accelerere, and Juan started his first math credit a few weeks later.

When Hansel visited Juan at Accelerere to check on his progress, he saw the importance of the persistence and trust he had built with him. Juan finally opened up about the obstacles he had been facing—working full time to support his family, paying off medical bills, picking up his younger brothers at elementary school daily and watching them until his single mother got off work, medical check-ups to make sure the cancer hadn't come back...

A few weeks later Hansel was there on the day Juan finished his last credit at Accelerere. Hansel was reflecting in the hallway about the hardships that Juan had endured for so long at such a young age and Juan's revelation to Hansel a few weeks earlier. When Juan stepped out of the classroom and Hansel congratulated him, Juan said, "**You never gave up on me.**"



# Samantha's Story:

## "Giving Me a Second Chance"

Samantha was starting to believe that a high school diploma wasn't in the cards for her. After dropping out of school both her junior and senior years, she tried to work on a GED but found it was difficult and she lacked the motivation to complete it.

Then her sister, Sara, also started to struggle in school. Sara's school counselor recommended the D2 Center and so she and her mother visited for intake. It was during that visit that their mother met Youth Academic Navigator, Evelia Gutiérrez. This ended up being a game changer for Samantha.

That evening during dinner with her parents, siblings, grandma and husband, Samantha heard the great news that her mother had learned from Evelia: she only needed 11 credits to graduate. According to Samantha, the news was, "Just crazy. It was mind-blowing... that I had 38 credits already and only needed 11 to accomplish my high school diploma." Samantha texted Evelia the next day.

Samantha applied to the D2 Center and Evelia became her YAN and assisted her with reenrolling in school. While she waited for the OPS Accelerate Program to start, an eager Samantha took an elective class at the D2 Center for one credit. Through perfect attendance and hard work, she earned an "A" in the class. An assignment during the class, "A Letter to Forever", required Samantha to look forward by looking back. She was to write to her future self to recognize the people and things she was grateful for and had helped her achieve success.

### "Future Samantha,

- Put yourself first
- Save for ways to care for yourself
- Forgive your abusive father
- Prepare to leave your family and school
- Be thankful for getting a second chance."

Samantha continued; I am "thankful for Evelia. Strong believer in everything happens for a reason... for myself and my parents who I've let down a lot of times and am ready to be someone successful in life. **There are no words to express how thankful I am with God for giving me a second chance and sending the Angel Evelia in my path.** Having an extra support system means a lot to me. I want to make everyone proud."

Samantha shared her finished assignment with Evelia. After reading it, Evelia said, "When I received the letter from her thanking me and telling me I was her angel, I told her I was meant to be on her path. Then she thanked me for not judging her."

Samantha is still enrolled and making progress in school. Her story continues....



# YOUTH ACADEMIC NAVIGATORS



170

New Active Students



79

Graduates



222

Students Still Active



368

Total Students Served

# CAREER NAVIGATOR

D2 Center  
Students Served

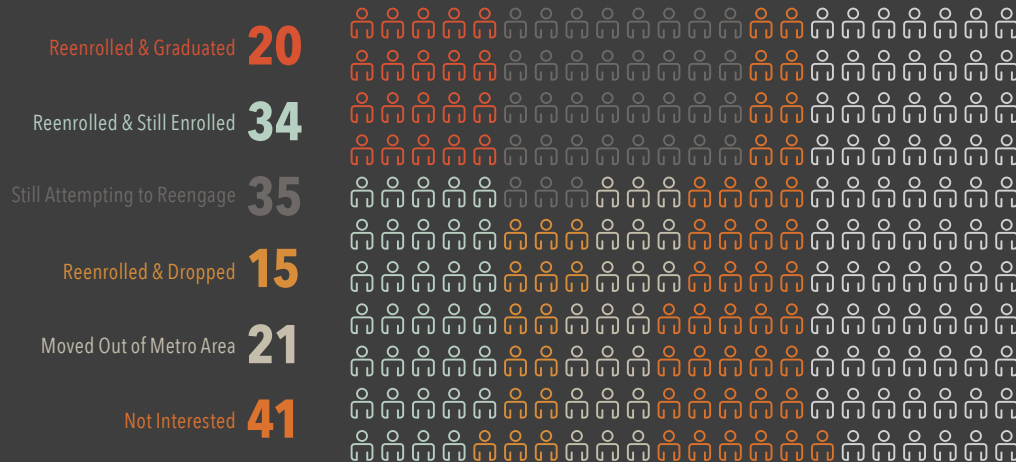
69

65

Additional OPS  
Multiple Pathways  
Students Served

# RE-ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

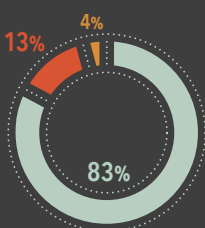
242 Students Contacted\*



76  
Unknown  
(ceased attempts at contact)

\*10 students recruited into D2 Center program

# EXPENDITURES



\$980,035

- Payroll & Benefits\*  
\$810,257
- Operations  
\$127,225
- Professional Fees,  
Professional Development,  
Community Outreach & Events  
\$42,553

\*Full-time Staff - 9 Part-time - 9

# ELECTIVE CREDIT CLASSES & TUTORING



32 students earned  
24 elective credits  
at the D2 Center

35 students attended  
tutoring 142 times



# Board of Directors

Dr. Jerry M. Barteo, Community Advocate

Mr. Jerry Bexten, Director of Education Initiatives  
The Sherwood Foundation

Dr. Chuck Chevalier, Associate Vice President, Secondary Partnerships  
Metropolitan Community College

Mrs. Susan Christopherson, Director of Secondary Education  
Omaha Public Schools

Mr. Greg Emmel, Executive Director  
D2 Center

Mr. Dominique McDaniel, Young Adult Representative

Ms. Lauren Micek Vargas, Assistant Public Defender  
Douglas County Public Defender's Office

Ms. Carolyn T. Miller, Executive Director  
D2 Center

Mr. Daniel Padilla, Executive Director  
Lending Link Omaha

Dr. Katie Weitz, Executive Director  
Weitz Family Foundation



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This program is supported in part by a grant from the United Way of the Midlands.