



SMALL STEPS NURTURING CENTER 2017-2018 Annual Report

Small Steps Nurturing Center's mission is to provide an exemplary early childhood program to instill and foster the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth of economically at-risk children and their families. The progress described below would not be possible without the help of our many community supporters, and we are sincerely grateful for their generosity.

2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR OVERVIEW

- 176 students and 137 families
- 31 teachers at 2 campuses
- 33 percent of our students received transportation to and from school
- 55,971 nutritious meals and 22,711 snacks served to our students
- 31 students received individual or group counseling from social and emotional program specialists
- 3,642 hours of mental health intervention and consultation performed on-site by therapists, therapy interns, and contracted therapists
- 26 parent education opportunities at both campuses and at varying times of the day
- 35+ additional parent engagement activities and events for families to be involved in school life
- 2,507 tuition hours completed by parents
- 169 referrals for our families to area social service organizations
- All children received speech and language screenings, and 49 students received individual speech therapy from our speech-language pathologist
- 102 students received vision screenings from Prevent Blindness Texas, and 13 were referred for treatment
- 99 students received hearing screenings from The Center for Hearing and Speech, and 9 were referred for treatment
- 92 percent student attendance rate
- 83 percent student retention rate
- 89 percent teacher retention rate over the last five years
- Accredited by AdvancED-Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the oldest and largest educational accrediting organization in the world

2017-2018 SCHOOL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

Making an Impact on Children in Poverty

Nurturing Intellectual Growth

In the 2017-2018 school year, Small Steps operated two accredited preschools for economically at-risk children living in the First, Second, and Fifth Wards of Houston, Texas. Small Steps provided a high-quality education, social and emotional support, a nurturing Christian environment, transportation, and nutritious meals to children ages two through six living in poverty. Our students attended school five days a week from late August through June, at no financial cost to their families. Well-educated, responsive teachers provided an exemplary early childhood education using an integrated curriculum in classrooms full of stimulating materials. Small Steps students also received weekly drama and music instruction from our fine arts teacher and weekly creative movement classes from Hope Stone, Inc.

Nurturing Social and Emotional Growth

Through their exposure to a nurturing and supportive environment and a strong social and emotional health program, our students learned positive communication, self-control, problem-solving, and empathetic behavior. Small Steps teachers helped create this caring atmosphere in their classrooms not only by creating the close relationships with their students but also by using strategies from our social and emotional program, SET (Social Emotional Tools) for Life©, created by Michelle M. Forrester, PhD.

Nurturing Physical Growth

Small Steps served our students breakfast, lunch, and a snack Mondays through Thursdays and breakfast and lunch on Fridays (due to a half-day on Fridays), providing the majority of each student's daily nutritional needs. Students played outside on our safe, spacious playgrounds, and Small Steps provided transportation to and from school in staff-driven vans to one third of our students.

Nurturing Spiritual Growth

Students experienced God's love through a loving, safe community of adults and peers. Small Steps' program included weekly chapel and incorporated the Godly Play curriculum in the classroom to teach students about the wonder of God.

Nurturing Families

Small Steps intentionally fostered a community of sharing, learning, and growing with our students' families, working alongside our parents to educate their children. Through our parent education events, engagement activities, and assistance from our social and emotional program specialists, Small Steps helped parents build and maintain healthy relationships with their children and work through family challenges. Small Steps served as a support network to students and families in times of crisis, often addressing issues such as instability, lack of resources, witnessing traumatic events in the home, or family endangerment due to mental illness or substance abuse.

Parent Education and Involvement

Parents must complete 10 tuition hours each school year; this can be done through attending parent education events, volunteering, serving as field trip chaperones, or participating in other parent engagement opportunities. Parents also have the opportunity to attend multiple parent-child events at school for both moms and dads, experiencing learning activities with their children. In response to the greater need for and increased interest in parent participation opportunities, Small Steps increased the number of parent engagement activities offered. The resulting higher participation rate has led to a stronger sense of community among our families and will lead to positive changes in our students' and families' lives.

Small Steps learned that our families have an increased interest in and greater need for parent education. In response, Small Steps offered significantly more education opportunities in the 2017-2018 school year. Our new parents attended a series of four orientation sessions to learn about Small Steps and SET for Life. Our SET team added parent support groups for parents of children ages two and three; the seven weekly sessions were offered in English and Spanish. ESCAPE Family Resource Center led positive parenting classes on Saturdays last fall, and Texas A&M Agrilife presented nutrition classes. Small Steps also provided financial literacy classes led by Women's Resource of Greater Houston.

New in the 2017-2018 school year, our SET team met with each new family after their children were accepted to the program. Learning more about the new students helped with class placement, and visiting with the families started the relationship-building process and helped the SET team find out about any critical needs the families might have. The SET team also started a new parent support group focusing on positive parenting and discipline techniques as well as self-care and stress management.

Technology Advances

One of the most significant technological improvements this school year was the creation of electronic sign-in systems at the Jensen campus for parents, volunteers, and visitors. Previously on paper spreadsheets, student attendance and volunteer records are now kept electronically and are much easier to calculate and share among staff. Small Steps has also contracted pro bono IT support on a proactive, regular schedule rather than using a “band-aid” approach to computer issues. New large flat screen monitors in the front foyers of both campuses, donated by generous supporters, are used for announcements, calendar reminders, and pictures of the students, which has strengthened the sense of community with our families.

Outcome Measures and Student Tracking

Small Steps’ recent partnership with the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) at the University of Houston will help determine the impact of our program on current and former students and examine the factors that might moderate program effectiveness. Implementing an electronic, integrated student database is crucial to this endeavor, and Small Steps is in the final phase of launching a system purchased with restricted grant funds.

Committed Volunteers

In the 2017-2018 school year, 721 volunteers served more than 5,300 hours, and 101 Small Steps students had volunteer Buddies. Buddies spend 30 minutes each week with a student engaged in child-directed play; the volunteer helps to model appropriate adult-child interactions and provides a source of stability and routine by returning at the same time every week. Buddy relationships with students are an integral part of our social and emotional health program. Volunteers also help Small Steps with on-site work projects and enrichment events for our students and families such as holiday celebrations and summer splash days.

Hurricane Harvey

Small Steps assisted 45 families and staff members significantly impacted by Hurricane Harvey last fall. Through restricted donations of more than \$450,000, Small Steps has helped with emotional support, delayed bill payments, home repairs, car repairs, furniture, immediate in-kind items, moving expenses, and transportation. Our social and emotional program staff members played a large role in helping our families recover from the storm by coordinating emotional support as well as helping allocate in-kind donations and funds for emergency needs and longer-term assistance.

2017-2018 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Audited financials for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018:

Contributions	\$1,527,101	
Event revenue	2,329,898	
Cost of direct donor benefits	(538,166)	
Investment return	41,463	
Other revenue	<u>2,741</u>	
Total Revenue	\$3,363,037	
Program expenses	\$3,031,189	81.8%
Management & general expenses	280,272	7.5%
Fundraising Expenses	<u>397,484</u>	10.7%
Total Expenses	\$3,708,945	
Total Net Assets	\$5,662,544	

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The following members rotated off the Board in December 2017: Townes Pressler, Mari Salazar, John Stilwell, and Kate Walters.

2018 Advisory Board

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John Rathmell, Jr.
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Executive Director

Ana Schick



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*Small Steps Nurturing Center
2902 Jensen Drive, Houston, Texas 77026
O: 713-236-0330 | F: 713-236-0312
www.ssnc.org*

*Contact: Mandy Giles, Grants Manager
mgiles@ssnc.org | 713-236-0330, ext. 227*