

Great Expectations: Transforming Lives

After nine years in the classroom, Montie Koehn was burned out. Her principal encouraged Montie to attend a four-day Great Expectations workshop before she made any decisions about her future.

“I walked in with trepidation, but by the third day, I was on fire and inspired,” she recalls. “It transformed me and I had a huge change of heart and couldn’t wait to get back into my classroom.”



Montie Koehn

After 22 years of working in the Oklahoma City Public School District, Montie was hired as principal at Kennedy Elementary School in Norman. At Kennedy, her mission was to create a climate of mutual respect, promote high expectations for all students and provide a structure where students took ownership for their behavior. After the first year, 28 teachers attended a Great Expectations summer institute and were excited to return to school to implement the practices. The results have helped create increased student achievement, a reduction in behavior referrals and an overall positive learning environment for students and staff.

“Ever since I attended my first Great Expectations session, I knew it was something special,” she says. “I’ve seen the program change the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and students time and time again.”

Founded in 1991 and headquartered in Tahlequah, Okla., Great Expectations is a school transformation model that emphasizes a climate of mutual respect and academic excellence. The organization’s workshops instruct teachers and principals on how to create harmony and excitement within a school, elements



Photo courtesy of Great Expectations

Newly hired Oklahoma City Public School District elementary classroom teachers participated in a four-day Great Expectations institute in early 2014. The school district has committed to having all new elementary school teachers trained in the Great Expectations model.

that Linda Dzialo, the organization’s president, says are basic elements for academic excellence. She adds that the program’s focus on improved student self-esteem, attendance, discipline and parent participation results in proven academic achievement. Great Expectations has trained more than 44,000 educators in 18 states, Mexico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Okinawa, Japan.

The success of the program has resulted in recommended grants from several advised funds at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation including the 7-Eleven Stores advised fund. Jim Brown, president and CEO of 7-Eleven Stores in central Oklahoma, says the company, founded by his parents in 1953, has a long tradition of supporting charitable and educational programs that enrich the communities that 7-Eleven serves.

The 7-Eleven Stores advised fund is making a difference and helping to transform the lives of teachers and their students. To learn how you can establish an advised fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, please contact Jennifer Stewart at j.stewart@occf.org or call 405/235-5603.

A Great Grant

Great Expectations Foundation is helping to improve the lives of children and teachers throughout Oklahoma.


Through its school transformation model, Great Expectations is working with educators to focus on the human qualities of teaching and learning. The program focuses on improved student self-esteem, attendance, discipline and parent participation resulting in proven academic achievement. In recent years, several advised funds such as the 7-Eleven Stores fund have recommended grants to Great Expectations.

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