

Vietnamese Friendship Association

Educational Assistance for Student Empowerment (EASE) After School Youth Tutoring Program 2008-2009

Program Report and Evaluation



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Summary: VFA's After-School Youth Program, titled Educational Assistance for Student Empowerment (EASE), continued to grow and expand programming and enrollment. Starting on October 6, 2008 and running through June 11, 2009 the program provided more than 240 direct service hours and served a total of 167 students, 43 of whom attended regularly, ranging from once a week to 4 days a week. 61% of registered students qualify as low-income based on school lunch status, and most resided in the Southeast (98118) area of Seattle. This year the program comprised three main groups: current students of the Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center (SBOC), residents of Seattle Housing Authority and returning students who live in or regularly access the New Holly neighborhood.

This year the quality of our program was measured in several different ways. Our most effective method of program measurement continues to be looking at the outcomes we had projected. Using this method, we can demonstrate that our program helped students improve in core academic subjects and pass on to the next grade level. We can also demonstrate that our program helped students increase their commitment to learning, provided a space for friendships to form, and helped them become more aware of cultural dynamics. The survey method used to measure these softer outcomes, however, is still being developed and has much to improve on. Right now, for example, survey return rate is under 50%.



Next year, the program will remain at New Holly Learning Center, and will continue to improve and expand. Plans for next year include more structured programming, increased evaluation, and improved record keeping systems. Our parent advocate will continue to work with families of our students. Our EASE coordinators will increase collaboration with our other programs, and have more consistent communication with teachers and parents. All efforts will be made to recruit highly qualified, reliable, long term volunteer and paid tutors for a more consistent tutor base.

I. Program Design

The program was a combination of three components: homework assistance, academic skills building, and leadership and recreational activities. It was held at New Holly Learning Center from Monday to Thursday 3pm to 5pm, from October 6th to June 11th.

Homework assistance: Qualified, trained, and background-checked college-level tutors and volunteers worked with our students on specific problems from their assigned homework or individual/group projects. Some tutors worked with groups of students on general problems that they all had, while other tutors specialized in one-on-one assistance. We also had many high school aged students help with the younger students as well as peer tutoring.

Academic Skill building: Students were involved in large and small group activities and games that helped them practice and improve their English skills in all areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing). There was also math and reading practice material available that was selected based on their performance on assessments.

Leadership and Recreation: Weather permitting, students went outside for team sports, games and activities. Team sports such as soccer, football, basketball, kickball and Frisbee focus our students on working together in a fun way, while games based on trust build leadership and cooperation in students as well as being a fun way of exerting positive energy. Some of the team games and activities also put real-world emphasis on math and science skills learned in the classroom.



Students also were introduced to a variety of resources for health, education and cultural development. Students attended acting workshops held by Jet City Improv, gardening and cooking classes taught by Cultivating Youth, and health seminars by Harborview Hospital. Our program year ended with a large group of students participating in traditional Vietnamese dance lessons and performing at the Seattle Folklife Festival.

Training: For our coordinators and tutors we tapped into a multitude of community and national resources. Our coordinators were part of the national Dan Than ('Be the Change') Americorps Fellows Program, which provided training, networking and resource sharing with Vietnamese organizations throughout the United States, and also provided one-on-one coaching with the Dan Than Program Coordinator at the National Alliance for Vietnamese American Service Agencies (NAVASA). We also continued our participation with the Seattle Tutoring Coalition which provided academically-focused trainings for our program coordinators, staff, service learners, and volunteers.

II. Demographics of Clients Served

Recruitment of participants in our program was made possible by the collaboration between VFA, Seattle Public Schools' Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center, and Seattle Housing Authority's New Holly office. Over the course of nine months the program served a total of 167 unduplicated students, 43 of whom attended regularly (defined as attending at least once a week for 75% or more of the year). Of the 101 students who reported data through enrollment documentation we found the following:

- Economic Status: 61% were low-income, as measured by whether or not they received free or reduced lunch at school
- Sex: 53% male and 47% female
- Age: Ranged from 6 to 19; most students were about 13
- School attended: 32% (32) of the students attended the Secondary Bilingual Orientation center, 12% (12) attended Van Asselt Elementary School, 6% (6) of the students attended Hamilton Middle School, 5% (5) attended Wing Luke Elementary, with the remaining 45% attending Aki Kurose, Ballard High School, Chief Sealth High School, Cleveland,

Dearborn Park, Franklin, Garfield, Ingraham, Jim Muir, Kimball, Madison, Maple, Meany Middle School, Mercer, New School, Orcas, Roosevelt High School, St. George, TOPS, Washington Middle School, West Seattle High School or not reporting.

- Geographic Region: 98118 (56 students; 55%), 98108 (25 students; 25%), 98144 (10 students; 10%), 98104 (5 students; 5%), 98106 (3 students; 3%) and one student from 98178. The remaining student did not report his/her ZIP code.

III. Partnerships

- Vietnamese Friendship Association—Design, implementation, and evaluation of program.
- Gates Foundation, City of Seattle Human Services Department, City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, United Way of King County provided funding for the Family Empowerment Program, one component of which is the after-school program.
- South Seattle Community College, New Holly Learning Center—Facilities, including classrooms and computer lab.
- Seattle Housing Authority – Recruitment assistance and space donation for large gatherings.
- Seattle Public Schools—School partnerships, particularly at Secondary Bilingual Orientation Center, which was instrumental in helping with recruitment of students and as a partner for the Seattle Folklife Festival.
- Schools’ Out Washington –Program structure training (coaching) and tutor trainings.
- Campfire USA – Leadership Curriculum and donation of snacks.
- University of Washington’s Teacher Education Program – Students teachers from UW’s Masters program were assigned to our classrooms twice a week to help with the younger students.
- Harborview Hospital – Health workshops for students.
- National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)—A worker to serve as chaperone and classroom assistant.



- Jet City Improv – Workshops for students.
- P-Patch Community Gardens Program – Weekly gardening, cooking and health lessons.
- Tet in Seattle – New Years Celebration Workshop
- UW service learning program – Students provided tutoring and academic programming to fulfill quarter-long service learning commitments.
- UW Carlson center – Referred University of Washington students for volunteer opportunities.
- NAVASA – Two Dan Than Americorps volunteers to serve as program coordinators.
- Atlantic Street Center, Horn of Africa Services, Youth Tutoring Program, Seattle Public Library, East

African Community Services,—partnerships for multicultural activities

IV. Accomplishments

- Attendance: Our program's total enrollment increased once again, from 73 registered students in 2007-2008 to 101. On average, we had 30 to 40 students attending daily.
- Direct Service Hours: The program provided over 240 hours of direct service.
- Volunteer hours: We received over 300 volunteer hours from parents, community members, and college student volunteers, more than doubling our 2007-2008 volunteer hours. The number of hours provided to high school service learners also increased this year, from 150 in 2007-2008 to over 500.
- 49 students showed an increase of at least one grade in a core academic subject. We believe this is a lower outcome than we expected as all of our elementary school-aged students do not receive letter grades that we can access on-line, and cannot therefore have an increase despite progress being made.
- Our students from SBOC performed a traditional dance choreographed and taught by VFA at Seattle Center's Folklife Festival.
- Staff, board members, and nineteen students participated in our 2nd annual camping trip.



V. Problems Encountered

- Keeping students attending consistently continues to be difficult due to the changing extra-curricular activities offered by students' schools.
- Students tended to socialize based on how long they have been in the US, which was not good for recent arrivals, as they tended to speak their native language and not practice speaking English. This issue was addressed with team building activities and games that relied upon simple comprehension and creative skills.
- We continued to have difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers to come as far south as our program. Creating work plans with added responsibility and continually requesting feedback through group meetings and online surveys helped volunteers feel more ownership and connection, but more outreach is needed.
- Our evaluation method is still being honed, as students do not respond well to surveys. Surveys were created using online applications such as surveymonkey and Google forms, which was useful for staff in evaluating the data we did receive. Additionally, we administered surveys in both English and Vietnamese so that students could better comprehend the purpose of the survey and meaning of the statements they were assessing.
- While we allowed students of any background to enroll in our program, most non-Vietnamese students felt that the program was tailored too specifically to the linguistic needs of the English language learning Vietnamese population.

- Monitoring the academic successes and challenges of our older students was improved through access to Seattle Public Schools Source system, but similar information was not available for the younger students. Increased communication with teachers and parents is needed to fill this gap.
- Further evaluation of student academic improvement was done through DORA (Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment), but had limited success due to students' resistance to online, standardized testing. Further research should be done to determine if there are better testing methods or evaluation systems.
- The addition of a younger room, which began during the 07-08 program year, has been successful in connecting to younger, American born Vietnamese students, but there has been little connection and interaction between the older and younger participants. Increased combined programming should be developed as the older students enjoy the energy of the younger room, and there is great potential for the older students to provide mentorship.
- Finding appropriate programming for older students continues to be a challenge. Utilizing volunteers and staff through the creation of work plans had some success that should be continued and improved for next years program.

VI. Program Evaluation

We started the year with students taking an online reading test, which was used primarily as a tool to assess students' strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension, and to develop resources for students based on their results. We also conducted three surveys of our students, which allowed them the opportunity to evaluate their own growth and offer suggestions for EASE programming. We finished the program with a survey of students' classroom teachers, which provided additional information on their growth throughout the year. However, our most reliable and impartial tool of assessment was access to student grades online.



Academic Performance: Students who enrolled were asked to have their parents sign a waiver that allowed VFA to access their Seattle Public Schools "Source" webpage. This access helped procure data such as:

- Daily homework assignments due or missing
- Current grades in each class
- Attendance and other truancy information that can affect academic performance.

Assets Development: VFA's after-school program focuses not only on academic progress, but also the development of motivation for school, social competencies, and other assets that are positively linked to students' success. Since many of our students recently arrived to the US, it was important for them to make friends and feel connected to their community. This year the surveys show some

successes and some areas that are in need of improvement. Some of these differences could be attributed to a response rate of less than 35% and a shorter, simpler survey format that does not allow for direct comparison to previous years.

These challenges notwithstanding, we are still proud to report the following:

- 55% said the program made them want to try harder in school.
- 60% said that the program made them want to learn new things.
- 55% agreed that they thought more about their future because of the program.
- 55% said that they learned more about being a leader at the program.
- 55% feel that they learned more about their culture at the program.
- 70% met new friends at the program.
- 63% thought that the tutors motivated them to learn.



Some of the lower numbers also deserve explanation:

- Only 26% of students responded that their school attendance has improved because of this program. Many of our students who regularly attend the program also regularly attend school. A shift in priorities and increase in communication with parents of students who do not regularly attend would be necessary to have an active impact on students' behavior towards school attendance. Overall, however, current research does not find a link between attendance in after-school programs and attendance in school.
- Only 44% of students responded that this program helped develop communication with parents. While we would like that number to be higher, and it is an improvement over last

years' survey results, it will still take more time and resources to develop these assets, due to cultural dynamics that do not focus on family communications.

- Only 49% of survey respondents said they think more about college because of this program. This is a significant increase over last year's feedback, but continued, increased attention to this area should be considered for next year's programming.

There are also areas that are simply shortcomings of the program:

- Improving our focus on reading, writing, and math for students, as 14%, 24% and 15% respectively expressed dissatisfaction with the program's focus on these topics. While these numbers are an improvement over last year, the percentage that express neutrality on these topics is quite high, and improved curriculum planning and more specialized tutor training could increase satisfaction levels.
- Only 57% of respondents felt that tutors explain concepts well. This question was not asked in previous years' surveys so a comparison can not be made, but improved tutor training, particularly in high school level math, should be an asset to the program in coming years.

Below you may find the complete aggregate results.

Survey Statement	Agree or Strongly Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Total
I am having fun at this program	69%	14%	17%	100%
My math skills improved because of this program	38%	47%	15%	100%
My reading skills improved because of this program	40%	46%	14%	100%
My writing skills improved because of this program	32%	44%	24%	100%
My science skills improved because of this program	10%	16%	9%	100%
My school attendance has improved because of this program	26%	43%	31%	100%
This program made me want to learn new things	60%	23%	17%	100%
This program made me want to try harder in school	55%	31%	14%	100%
I think more about my future because of this program	55%	31%	14%	100%
I think more about college because of this program	49%	34%	17%	100%
Tutors motivate me to learn	63%	26%	11%	100%
Tutors explain the concepts well	57%	34%	9%	100%
The activities helped me with small/large group discussions	43%	37%	20%	100%
I enjoy talking to the tutors and staff	59%	26%	15%	100%
I learned more about being a leader because of this program	55%	27%	18%	100%
I talk more to my parents because of this program	44%	41%	15%	100%
I learned more about my culture because of this program	55%	21%	24%	100%
There are clear rules on what I can and cannot do	53%	38%	9%	100%
I meet new friends at this program	70%	18%	12%	100%
I think my friends would enjoy this program	63%	17%	20%	100%

VII. Next Steps

Each year the after-school program grows in quality and the number of students served. This year's program continued to improve organization and documentation practices, as well as sustain workshops and collaborations with experienced organizations. Next year's program will continue this trend. For the 2008-2009 program plans are already in motion for:

- More thorough assessments, taken at regular intervals, to establish baseline levels and progress. Revising our evaluation system.
- Academic performance tracking needs to be discussed and shared with the students more frequently.
- A stronger, web-based database system to keep track of our students and parents' information.
- Ensuring that the program coordinators have more time before the start date of the program to prepare for the program.
- Specialized tutor training and increased communication with teachers so that the program is prepared to help students with challenging work, particularly in math.
- Have bilingual materials available to students and parents to empower parents to work with their children outside of the classroom.
- Researching and implementing specialized programming to target students changing needs.
- Continuing and expanding collaboration between other programs at VFA, particularly the Parent Advocacy Program and the Saturday morning program (for SBOC students)

