



**pando initiative**  
CONNECT • ENGAGE • THRIVE



THE POWER OF  
**STORY**

2018

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



## OUR MISSION: WE CONNECT WITH STUDENTS TO HELP THEM ENGAGE AND THRIVE IN EDUCATION AND THEIR FUTURE

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Dear Friends of Pando,

Since joining The Pando Initiative in June, I've been asked to describe or explain why we chose the name Pando. Simply – Pando means “to spread out” and that’s what we do. Like the roots of a tree we spread out into our local schools to help students to **CONNECT**, what every needed resources, so they can **ENGAGE** at school and **THRIVE** at life.

This year we wanted to share four stories of the amazing work our volunteers and staff do every day. Whether a ride to school, a snack to get a kiddo through the day, services for affordable glasses or an alarm clock to wake on time, Pando is there.

I am honored to join such a dedicated group of volunteers and staff as the new Executive Director and look forward to meeting many of you in the coming year. With Gratitude,

Penny Olsen  
*Executive Director*



This year was an exciting and fast-paced year for The Pando Initiative. Our student support advocates, staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to help Connect students with the resources they need so they can Engage in their education and Thrive in life!

Here are some highlights from the year in numbers:

## BY THE NUMBERS

The Core program served **1,312** students, none of which were expelled. Reading and math skills maintained or improved for **79%**, and **96%** of our senior students graduated.

The Check & Connect program served 408 students, **94%** of which were not expelled. Reading scores improved for **85%**.

The Core and Check & Connect programs wouldn't be successful without our fabulous volunteers. **245** mentors and tutors dedicated 3,609 hours, and a total of **1,278** additional volunteers gave **8,643** hours of their time to carrying out our mission. This represents an economic impact of **\$213,395** from **30** different businesses and organizations in the community.

More than **7,700** students participated in Reality U, an increase of **30%** over the prior year. The simulation was administered in **20** additional schools for a total of **48**, and engaged more than **1,000** volunteers for over **5,000** hours.

The 2nd annual 100 Men Who Cook what a success! It was our highest grossing event raising over **\$106,000**. **520** individuals including guests, chefs, and staff joined together to celebrate and raise funds for The Pando Initiative. We look forward to continued growth of this event in 2019. Mark your calendars for 100 Men Who Cook, Saturday, April 13th!

Effective June 30th, 2018, Executive Director Nancy Hinten retired from The Pando Initiative and her successor, Penny Olsen, has stepped into the role. I want to take this opportunity to thank Nancy for all that she did for the organization. During her tenure, she worked to improve the Core program, added the Check & Connect program and has helped launch Reality U to a new future. I would

also like to welcome Penny to the organization and look forward to continuing to improve the future of student in our community.

Sincerely,

Lori Thomas  
*Board Chair*



# PANDO VOLUNTEERS:

We could not do what we do without our dedicated volunteers, here's one their stories.

Students from Harry Street Elementary and Hamilton Middle School have benefited greatly from a partnership with Martin Pringle Law Firm. For the past three years a group of 35-40 volunteers from Martin Pringle have visited both schools once per week to mentor a group of identified students. They meet as small groups to ensure there is always someone available for the students. The 2018-2019 school year will be the fourth year of the program.

The students involved in the program look forward to weekly visits with the volunteers where they play games, talk about what is happening at school, educational activities, and any other ideas or topic this students come up with. Having the group come in on a regular basis is so important for the students as it establishes a routine, but also lets the students know there are additional caring adults in their lives

Each year the students participate in a field trip to the law firm for lunch and the opportunity to learn about all the careers that are possible for them in the legal profession. The kids really enjoy being able to sit where their mentors do and learn about what they do during the day.

## CHECK & CONNECT PROGRAM:

The Pando Initiative was excited to again partner with United Way of the Plains, USD 259 and the community to make a positive impact on chronic absenteeism. The Check & Connect program is designed to improve attendance in 7 Wichita elementary schools. We connect students with mentors, conduct home visits and monitor attendance. One story comes to us from Lawrence Elementary.

K, Z and R are three students currently in the Check and Connect program at Lawrence Elementary. Upon conducting a home visit earlier this summer, it was discovered

that the children were yet to be enrolled in school and the family had limited funds to purchase their school supplies. The mother was sick and had to be hospitalized for her illness prior to the first day of school. The Check & Connect program assisted in getting all three children enrolled in school and purchased school supplies and clothing for the first day. The children are participating in lunch groups and incentive programs addressing behavior, school engagement and attendance.

Since school started they have been successful in completing all their school assignments and have yet to miss any school!





## THE CORE PROGRAM:



*Every time he got grades that were passing, he would come in excited to share the news and get the incentive agreed on*

This program works with students in Wichita area Elementary and Secondary Schools, providing Student Support Advocates (SSA), to connect students who are disengaged from school due to economic, social and physical factors. SSA's partner with schools to develop student plans, and build community support to connect kids to services that will keep them in school. At the same time, Pando staff are, building relationships to improve socio-emotional skills and ensuring basic needs are met.

Paiton came to our Pando office during second semester of his freshman year. He was interested

in playing football during the 2018-19 school year, but his grades were not going to allow him to be eligible to play. We discussed all of the different ways that Paiton could improve his grades to make him eligible. We worked with Paiton on finding a plan to complete his work and get caught up. We checked grades on a regular basis and talked with Paiton on getting assignments turned in on time and staying in class. He attended after school tutoring and worked hard to pass the classes needed to play. Every time he got grades that were passing, he would come in excited to share the news and get the incentive agreed on. He is on the Derby football team this year!

# REALITYU PROGRAM:

Here we help students gain important financial literacy knowledge to help them plan for their future while recognizing the importance of their education today and how it is tied to their financial future. Here's a letter from one of our high schools.

I want to thank you again for being instrumental in the success of the RealityU event held at our High School last week. We once again received many compliments and encouraging words from our volunteers and students.

I wanted to pass along a story that I had the opportunity to personally be involved in during the survey portion of preparing for our event. We had all our students in the lunchroom going through the survey. Students began to finish and leave the lunchroom when I realized there was one young woman who seemed to be struggling and eventually was the last to finish. I sat down beside her and asked if I could help her. She was struggling because the occupation she is planning to pursue as a career was not available to her - she could see it but not choose it. I had to point out that her current GPA would not put her on a track to have access to that occupation. She was very disappointed, but it was an opportunity for me to share with her that she has three more years to change her path and still have the opportunity to be successful in her desired career path.



Additionally, during the actual event, I had it reported to me by a volunteer that her grandson was talking to her at home about the upcoming RealityU event and told her, "Grandma, because of my GPA, I can be anything I want to be!"

I realized that based on these moments that if these were the only benefits the RealityU event was to provide to our school it was worth every penny.

# THANK YOU DONORS

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Penny Olsen – Executive Director  
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 Stephanie Hislop – Office & Special Event Coordinator



## Elementary Core Sites

Cloud - David Larson, Student Support Advocate  
 Cooper - Stacy Betzen, Student Support Advocate  
 Jefferson - Abby Martinez, Student Support Advocate  
 Oaklawn - Bev Zuba, Student Support Advocate  
 Prairie - Janelle Durham, Student Support Advocate  
 Pleasantview - Stacy Betzen, Student Support Advocate  
 Woodman - Erika Rinke, Student Support Advocate



## Check & Connect Elementary Sites

Franklin - Jessica Smith, Team Lead  
 Harry Street - Crystal Botts, Team Lead  
 Lawrence - Mark Harmon, Team Lead  
 Park - Miranda Orłowski, Team Lead  
 Payne - Janessa Crittenden, Team Lead  
 Stanley - Lori Wright-Shinsato, Team Lead



## Middle School Sites

Curtis - Cassie Rice, Student Support Advocate  
 Derby Middle - Jacy Goodwin, Student Support Advocate  
 Derby North Middle - Jane Gaulding, Student Support Advocate  
 Hamilton - Ginger Pollock, Student Support Advocate  
 Pleasant Valley - Jess Ciriaco, Student Support Advocate  
 Truesdell - Phylcia Thompson, Student Support Advocate



## High School Sites

Derby High - Gary Meitler, Student Support Advocate  
 Jenny Heseltine, Freshman Advocate  
 North High - Kyle Fleet, Student Support Advocate  
 West High - Amber Bennett, Student Support Advocate  
 Jake Smith, Student Support Advocate

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