



Proposal

Mission

To empower underserved teens to graduate from high school and go on to college.

We at Teens Act envision that our high school students will acquire the attitudes, skills, and behaviors that will enable them to make good choices, take control of their lives, and hold themselves accountable as individuals and members of a community.

Program Overview

Teens Act is based in Provo, Utah. We serve approximately 50 underserved students and their parents at both Provo and Independence High School.

Students who have a low GPA (less than 2.5) are selected to be in our program, however we also prioritize students who are on the free or reduced lunch program (low-income) and those who would be the first in their family to go to college. These qualifications are how we define “underserved.” The Teens Act program contains three major facets that together involve over 200 hours of high school student involvement per site:

1. **Student Success Class:** This is an approved elective taken during the day at participating high schools. In this class our students increase in motivation and self-confidence. They also receive help with homework, increase their GPAs, improve their study skills, go on college campus tours, engage in career exploration, and hear motivational guest speakers from the community.
2. **After School Tutoring:** Mentors meet with Teens Act students after school in the library to provide additional homework help, mentoring, and support. This allows our students to get the extra assistance they need outside of school hours.
3. **Parent Support Program:** This empowers the parents of our students with the knowledge, skills, and vision to nurture their students’ quest for higher education. This program is offered in both Spanish and English.

Request for Specific Project

At this time we seek support for our program costs, specifically to support a team of Teens Act mentors to work with our students at Independence High School, many of which are on the verge of academic failure. **We seek a grant in the amount of \$3,920 to support Teens Act mentors who will work with our students every day in the Teens Act Student Success Class, from August 2014-May 2015.** No other organization is currently targeting these students in such a direct way, and without outside help, these students are very unlikely to succeed academically.

Our Teens Act mentors are essential to successfully implement our program. Mentoring underserved youth on an individualized basis has been proven to help them succeed despite the many obstacles they face. Mentors are carefully selected based on their proficiency in math and communication, experience working with underserved teens, and their bilingual ability (Spanish & English). We hire and train our mentors because it is absolutely essential that they are qualified and reliable in order for our program to make a substantial impact. Besides spending time with students in the class and after school, these mentors spend time participating in weekly meetings and trainings at the beginning of each semester.

Our students require more than average amounts of attention and support in order to increase in motivation and drive to succeed. By spending so much time with our students, our mentors are able to truly get to know them, inspire and motivate them, and assist them with their individual needs so that they can succeed. This level of high-quality mentoring distinguishes Teens Act from other neighboring organizations in our community.

These funds will be used to support these highly qualified mentors, who will in the long run allow our program to have a greater impact and become more sustainable. A grant in the amount of \$3,920 from the C. Scott & Dorothy E. Watkins Charitable Foundation would provide the remainder of funds needed to support mentors for Independence High School throughout the entire 2014-2015 school year.

Goals/Aims

College Preparation Class and After School Tutoring

- Gain a **college-going mindset** through college recruiter visits to the class, college campus tours, and discussion about the importance of post-secondary education
- Increase in motivation and other **non-cognitive skills** such as perseverance, coping, resilience, self-discipline, goal-setting, and time management
- Improve **study skills**, including raising GPA, increasing homework submissions, and increasing class attendance rates
- Strengthen the **mentor-student relationship** through tutoring, weekly grade checks and goal setting, and journal writing
- Engage in **career development** and exploration, including picking a college major, interviewing skills, and resume building

Parent Support Program

- Build relationships with parents based on trust and respect for their expertise
- Collaborate with parents to find solutions to obstacles that would inhibit Teens Act students from graduating from high school and going on to college
- Use the best curriculum and community resources available to include in our discussion of how we can overcome obstacles
- Empower parents by providing opportunities for leadership within the Parent Support Program and through being a part of the Teens Act Advisory Board

Key Outcome Indicators

We will measure if we achieved our goals (above) through the following key indicators:

- GPA
 - Overall class attendance
 - Teens Act class attendance
 - Teens Act After School program attendance rate
 - Number of passing class and failing classes
 - Number of missing assignments completed per month
 - Motivation to graduate and go on to college
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- Number of contacts made with parents each month

History and Impact

2007:

While attending Brigham Young University (BYU), Dayan Bernal, Executive Director at Teens Act, created and implemented a successful college preparation course for at-risk Hispanic students at Provo High School as part of her honors thesis. Dayan Bernal was born in Bolivia and raised in California and personally traveled the challenging road of becoming the first college graduate in her family. Thus, she wanted to provide tools, knowledge, and resources to students who found themselves in similar situations. The original course was two months long and was very successful. In fact, three years later, 17 of the original 25 students completed their first year in college—students who otherwise would not likely have graduated from high school.

2011:

Dayan, Saeko Logsdon (current Managing Director at Teens Act), and a couple of fellow BYU students founded Teens Act, which won second place in the Brigham Young University Social Venture Competition and was awarded the necessary funds to start a nonprofit. Teens Act has been a 501(c)(3) organization since September 2011, with the mission to empower under-resourced students to obtain postsecondary education.

The results of our program have been remarkable. During the first two year cohort at Provo High School in 2011, twenty students enrolled in Teens Act and maintained

an attendance rate of 90%. Half of the students fell within the category of ethnic minority, and 100% of the senior students graduated from Provo High School in May of 2012. The average ACT score improvement was 4 points and the highest ACT score improvement was 12 points (from 15 to 27 points). Furthermore, 90% of our students will be attending college this fall.

2012:

Teens Act served over 70 at-risk students and their parents at Independence High School and Jordan High School. In addition, Teens Act served over 30 court-mandated youth by partnering with Centro Hispano and the Utah Department of Health. Moreover, Teens Act won the UVU Social Incubator Competition, winning funding and free office space at the UVU Business Resource Center.

2013:

We started an approved elective college preparatory class that is taken during the day in two high schools. We have also continued to collaborate with local universities to recruit qualified college mentors to help our students in their Teens Act class and with their homework after school.

Teens Act received a three-year CNCS grant to hire 3 full-time Americorps VISTA members who will help develop the capacity of the organization through program supervision, curriculum development, fund development, and research.

This last term all seniors in our Student Success Class graduated from high school.

2014-2015 Cohort Study:

Program & Research Coordinator (VISTA) at Teens Act, Rebecca Gardner, in conjunction with Dr. Carol Ward and Dr. Tim Heaton of Brigham Young University's Sociology Department, acquired a Mentoring Environment Grant (MEG) for over \$19,000 to evaluate the effectiveness of the Teens Act program. The grant funds will be used to develop and implement a long-term cohort study that will begin the 2014-2015 school year.

Reasons/Needs

There are many needs in our community that necessitate our program being brought into action. For instance, during the 2013 school year 9,700 students dropped out of high school (9th-12th graders) in the state of Utah. The school boundaries of Provo High School and Independence High School are particularly at-risk. In 2013, only 22% of Independence High School seniors graduated (44 out of 203). At Provo High School only 80% of seniors graduated (307 out of 378). We know that nationally the income gap between graduates and non-graduates is huge, and that this affects our students' futures and their quality of life. The state of Utah has a goal that by 2020 66% of Utah residents will have a college degree or technical certificate. We intend to contribute to this cause to improve our students' lives as well as the economy.

In our Teens Act classes at Provo and Independence High School we survey our students in order to track their demographics. This year, 81% of our students are ethnic minorities and of that, 58% are Hispanic. 70% of our students are on the free or reduced lunch program. Many of our students are from low-income families with

no college education or are from families that are new to the United States and our education system. Within Provo High School overall, 40% of students are on free or reduced lunch, while 73% of students at Independence High School are on free or reduced lunch (see Provo District Reports, October 2013). In Provo City, 16.8% of residents are Hispanic or Latino. 31.8 % of Provo is below the poverty line.

Evaluation and Research

We evaluate the success of our program through four major systematized reports and evaluations: (1) We submit quarterly reports to high school administration documenting our students' progress including GPA and attendance increases (2) Mentors submit weekly accountability reports to measure their effectiveness, (3) We survey our students biweekly to document their feedback on our class and how their mentors are doing, and (4) Students take pre and post surveys at the beginning and end of the school year that measure their college-going mindset, motivation levels, etc.

In addition, starting in the 2014-2015 school year, the BYU Sociology Department will conduct a longitudinal cohort study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Teens Act program. Students meeting our qualifications will be randomized into treatment and control groups, with those in the treatment enrolled in the Student Success Class. In addition to the evaluation tools that we use (above), the study will also use additional tools and data analysis to assess the program

Partners/Collaboration

Teens Act has formed and is developing several partnerships in our community that will help us achieve our mission:

1. Brigham Young University (BYU): BYU has been a long-term supporter of Teens Act in providing salaries for Teens Act teachers, specifically through the McKay School of Education. Bryant Jensen, a part-time faculty member and our advisor, has provided excellent feedback and advice for developing our program. We hope to continue to strengthen our partnership with the McKay School in this coming year and become a fully endorsed BYU program in the future. We also want to create a seamless and efficient recruitment process within BYU's pool of Secondary Education students.
2. Provo School District: The Provo School District has provided long-term funding through the 21st Century Grant that has allowed us to operate our program consistently at Provo High School and Independence High School.
3. League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC): We have partnered with a local LULAC council in Utah to have greater access to resources and grants provided to organizations that serve Latino youth. Many of our students are Latino (our mentors are required to speak Spanish fluently so they can talk with the parents of our students) and we hope to help increase the number of Latino students in Utah who graduate from high school and go on to college.

4. Other Tools/Resources: Teens Act is a Gold Participant on Guidestar Exchange and also has a membership with Network for Good to improve our donation page and engage with donors.

Teens Act Stories 2014

See more at www.teens-act.org and on our Teens Act Facebook page



Melvin Rodriguez (left) was one of our most enthusiastic mentors this year and is going to be the teacher at Independence next year. Melvin studies Landscape Management at BYU and hopes to pursue social entrepreneurship in the future. He is the first in his family to go to college and is a good example to the students of where hard work and positivity will take you. Melvin easily relates to the students and makes them feel comfortable. His love for each and every student is very apparent as he interacts with them, and he is dedicated to moving Teens Act's mission forward.

"One of my favorite quotes says, 'Ability is what you are capable of. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it.' I love helping our Teens Act students recognize this and apply in their school, work, and life. My favorite part of this job is helping students realize that there is no such thing as failure unless you fail to get up and try again."
-Skyler Wilcox, Provo High Teacher (right)



When Mitchell (left) came to Independence at the beginning of his senior year, he was 1 year behind on credit and in danger of dropping out of high school. With the help of his Teens Act mentors, Mitchell completed 12 packets to recover his missing credit during class time, afterschool tutoring, and at home. He has also signed up to retake the ACT this summer to improve his score in hopes of getting financial aid for college. Mitchell graduated from Independence in May and is planning on attending UVU in the fall to pursue entrepreneurship.