

Elevations

The latest news and updates from the Education Elevators
Winter 2017, Vol. 1



A Note from the Executive Director

Allison McJunkin,
Education Elevators
Executive Director

Education Elevators is 9 years in the making thanks to all of **YOU!** When my father implemented Education Elevators in 2007, he never expected we'd be where we are today. We're adding more schools and businesses, welcoming more Elevators, and growing our team. We wouldn't be able to grow as fast as we are without the endless support, passion and commitment of Elevators, donors, friends and community partners. I consider my work with Education Elevators to be the most gratifying work I have ever done. Countless bodies of research have shown that nothing has more impact in the life of a child than a positive relationship with a caring adult.

It is through those relationships that kids discover their worth, their purpose, and their importance in the world. Because of you, children, that otherwise wouldn't, are able to have caring adults in their lives to help guide and support them, shape and mold their characters, and to make them feel special and valuable. *It's fitting that our anniversary is in February because the most important thing that Education Elevators does is let kids know that someone cares about them and their future.*

Mentoring Relationships Help Children in Poverty Thrive!

By: Beth Wesley, Education Elevators Intern

When it comes to solving the issues of society, we have all heard the adage in one form or another, "It starts with the children." Perhaps the adage should say: "It starts with the adults – who take the time to make the difference in the lives of children."

Children growing up in poverty face many obstacles. For example, children ages birth to 3 years who live in lower SES households hear an average of 30 million fewer words than more affluent peers by the age of 5. This is called the Word Gap. The reasons may be level of education of parents, the available time that the parents have with their child, quality of community resources, or the type of childcare the family can afford. This may cause the child to suffer later on in school. These deficits may then lead to decreased academic performance and lower paying jobs. Nevertheless, children living in poverty are not doomed! **In fact, there is a factor that can make all the difference – a developmental relationship with a caring adult.**

Children of all ages thrive from having someone genuinely invested in their lives, to mentor them, listen to them, cultivate their strengths, motivate them, challenge them, and encourage them. Although children may face great challenges from living in poverty, a relationship with a mentor, parent, church member, sports coach, or teacher can act as a buffer and a beacon of hope for them.

Through my work with Education Elevators, I was able to see the impact of a developmental relationship between children and their Elevators. I noticed some children who had a lot of anger open up to their Elevators and gain calmness just by finding comfort in their relationships. Children living in poverty are not destined to be behind. They face many more struggles than their peers, but that does not mean they will be behind forever.

With intentional and goal-directed intervention, such as that provided by Education Elevators, the effects of poverty like the Word Gap tend to diminish as they progress through school – the children who were once behind catch up. **Developmental relationships motivate children to work and aspire for something greater. Being the safe place for children to express themselves and grow with a motivating adult can make all the difference.**

School Spotlight

"I think Elevators is one of the many things that sets Piedmont apart from other schools with similar student populations. Our mission statement is all about the power of RELATIONSHIPS!!! and I think students with Elevators truly form significant relationships with these adult professionals... And that these relationships are positively impacting their lives. I also think our Elevator program raises community awareness for our school. I run into people all the time who say 'oh I know Piedmont, I used to volunteer there!' or 'my husband did the Elevators program there.' This community awareness and connection to our school brings in additional opportunities and resources for our students."

– Stephanie Haden, Title I Math, Piedmont Elementary



"During those 45 minutes each week, I try to be what the student needs: whether it is someone that listens, believes in her, helps with homework, or just plays games.

By volunteering as an Elevator, I have a chance to get away from my daily stress at work and play! It isn't always easy, but it is definitely rewarding to see your student grow and blossom."

– Jackson Kelly Volunteer
Lea Perkins



School Partner Piedmont Elementary

Length of Partnership Nearly 10 years

Why we Partner Tom McJunkin, a lawyer at Jackson Kelly (JK) founded the program after volunteering in local schools for 20 years. He was fond of saying, "Kids who aspire, succeed... those who don't, won't." Tom has since passed away, but the company is proud that this program, and its immeasurable impacts, continue on in his memory and honor... Education Elevators is one demonstration of JK's commitment to community and their support of employees who wish to give back to the community through volunteering.

Impact of Partnership Perkins has been in the school for more than eight years now. She says it is moving every time she walks into the school, and the students all know that she is an Elevator. "They believe that I am special." In addition, Perkins says random students come up to her begging to have an Elevator and she only wishes there were enough volunteers to meet every student need.

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