

OUR MISSION IS TO
TEACH EMPATHY AND SPARK
FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN
STUDENTS AND THEIR PEERS
WITH DISABILITIES



LAUREN SCHRERO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



RICK JACOBSON
BOARD CHAIR



“ Students are learning to listen to other's "stories" of who they are and what they think; and in doing so, are feeling empowered to be more transparent because they trust they will be accepted for who they are.

-TEACHER

FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, FY 2019-2020 was The Nora Project's most impactful year yet. We trained and supported more than 150 teachers, launched two innovative pilot programs, and effectively transitioned our classrooms to remote learning at a time when the lessons of The Nora Project were needed most. We're excited to share our annual report highlighting how you brought The Nora Project to the next level in inclusive education.



“Being disabled can sometimes be tough. People make fun of you. Or leave you out of something. But when we get a chance to share our stories things start to change. You’re telling people ‘I’m Human. Just like you’. That’s when friendships begin.”

– STUDENT

NEW PROGRAMS TO FACILITATE A LIFECYCLE OF LEARNING

Inclusion shouldn’t be a “one and done” experience. Students need the opportunity to explore the concepts of disability, social justice, empathy, and inclusion at multiple points and in different contexts throughout their education. In order to facilitate that lifecycle of learning, The Nora Project piloted two innovative programs last year to complement our flagship Storyteller Project for intermediate elementary students: (1) The Primer Pack—a year-long social emotional learning curriculum for pre-K and early elementary students to introduce the concept of inclusive play; and (2) The STEMpathy Club—an inclusive extracurricular program for middle and high school students meant to challenge students to identify problems, generate solutions, and impact change in their schools and communities.

MEETING PARENT AND TEACHER NEEDS THROUGH AN EARLY PANDEMIC PIVOT

As we saw school closures on the horizon in early 2020, our organization’s program team began rapidly transitioning to make content available online. We created remote teaching guides, launched a blog to share virtual empathy and disability awareness teaching materials, and ran a social media campaign to support parents interested in teaching these important concepts at home. This summer, The Nora Project piloted a text message-based curriculum to help students with disabilities stay in touch with peers during quarantine. Because of our early pivot, we are optimally positioned to meet the needs of our teachers and parents this school year, whether they’re teaching in person, online, or both.

BRINGING EDUCATORS TOGETHER FOR TRAINING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Once again, your support allowed us to host a remarkable summer training program for Nora Project educators, bringing them together for learning, reflection, and community-building. This year we moved Training Camp online, running a month-long course for nearly 150 teachers, consisting of a combination of self-paced learning modules, live virtual seminars, and certification opportunities.

Sessions included presentations on the theoretical models of disability and the need to shift away from medical model thinking, confronting and addressing personal and cultural bias, creating inclusive and accessible spaces, and the complex intersection between race and disability. We proudly introduced the first ever ‘Nora Talks’ presentations, which were given by an esteemed group of disabled activists who reflected independently and through a moderated panel discussion about their beliefs and hopes for how teachers will approach disability today and in the future.

The Nora Project program team provided curriculum training, set up our educators with coaching support and backend tools to navigate classroom management, and brainstormed ideas for how to approach a unique return to school in live Q&A sessions.



INNOVATIVE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Teachers across the country continue to feel empowered to both educate and lead their students in a time when so much is unknown. The Nora Project is poised to reach 4,000 students from 200 classrooms in 50 schools in 2020-2021. Whether students are together in person or on a screen, they’re learning to value and support one another. We have you to thank for making that learning possible.

That’s not all. The Nora Project has new plans for this school year—big plans that respond to the urgent need of these unusual times. We’re launching an online webinar series helping teachers across the country reimagine inclusive learning practices during times of crisis, developing new learning modules to support schools unable to complete the year-long Nora Project programs due to the limitations of the pandemic, and creating new series for both schools and homeschooling parents on topics such as Disability and Disability Justice, Empathy and Friendship Skills, and a Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) series beginning in January 2021.

The Nora Project is only able to be this innovative because of your steadfast support. The impact you’ve had on our students, teachers and parents is beyond measure. In these uncertain times, we are especially grateful for your continued partnership in this critical work to change hearts and minds to build a more inclusive future.

Yours,

Rick Jacobson
Board Chair

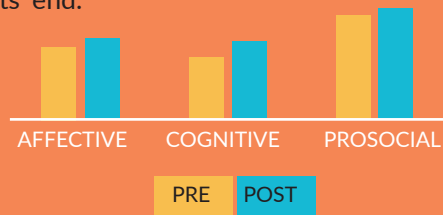
Lauren Schrero
Executive Director

“This is such a wonderful curriculum. Thank you for such thorough training. I am very excited to see how we can implement this curriculum and infuse it during remote learning as I believe it would enhance students’ emotional well being.”

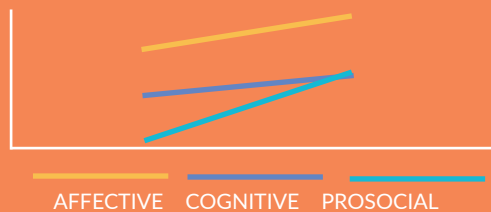
-TEACHER

THE NORA PROJECT: MAKING AN IMPACT

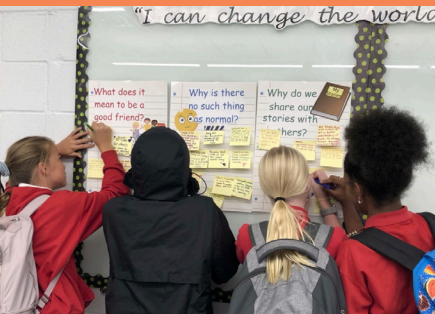
This fourth grade classroom in a low-income, highly diverse urban school is just one example of the stellar impact outcomes The Nora Project participants are experiencing. Students in this classroom increased their empathy scores in all domains from the start of the school year to its' end.



And while such increases are not uncommon in girls this age, research shows that on the whole, empathy scores for boys in this age range tend to decline. However, boys in this classroom made substantial gains—far more than the girls—particularly in the affective empathy domain as the graph below shows.



The real-life impact of these gains played out in the classroom.



“The participating class in Nora Project had zero disciplinary issues throughout the entire school year. They were the only classroom in our entire K-8 building with no disciplinary referrals. And students were able to show kindness and empathy towards others in a way that was not only age appropriate, but at times in ways that were beyond their age level.”

-SCHOOL COUNSELOR



IN 50 SCHOOLS



IN 7 STATES AND CANADA



4500 STUDENTS ENROLLED



150 TEACHERS TRAINED



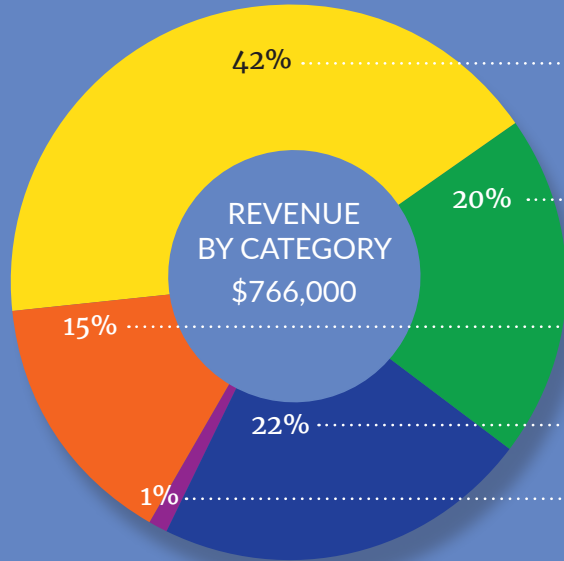
53 TEACHERS CERTIFIED



15% REVENUE GROWTH

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNAUDITED FY19-20 FINANCIALS



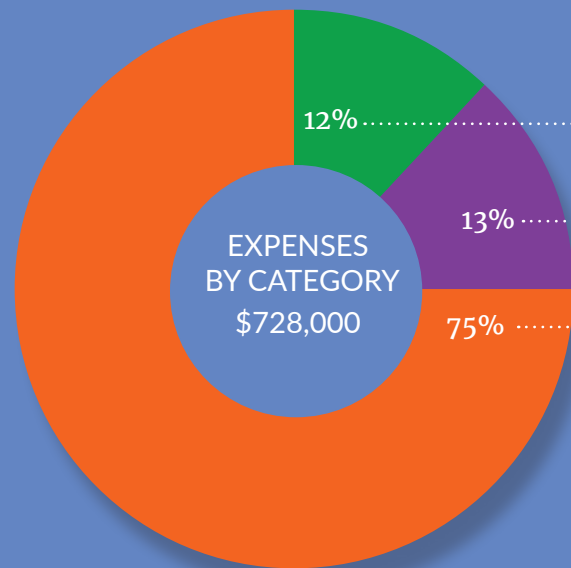
Special Events
\$326,000

Grants
\$151,000

Annual Campaign
\$112,000

Contributions
\$167,000

Other
\$10,000



Fundraising
\$91,000

Administrative
\$94,000

Programs
\$543,000



“ We really, really enjoyed this and would recommend it to any family who may be interested and any school that is looking into it! Thank you so much for including us. This has brought so much joy to our family!”

-PARENT

OUR PROGRAM SUITE IS DESIGNED FOR ALL STUDENTS—TOGETHER

The Nora Project Program Suite includes three, year-long SEL programs for students pre-K to high school. It is written by teachers, for teachers, and every participating classroom or club has a dedicated Nora Project program coach.

Each of our three programs is designed for students of all abilities, with carefully differentiated lesson plans including visual supports so all learners can access the entire curriculum. Our dedicated inclusion specialist is available on-demand to all program participants.

Nora Project programs take a deep dive into the concepts of empathy and inclusion, teach about disability as a part of human diversity, and position the disability justice movement as a powerful political force for social change that benefits all.

Our programs connect what students are learning to the real world, offering them authentic opportunities to practice the skills they learn during direct instruction.



PRIMARY AND EARLY ELEMENTARY PROGRAM: PRIMER PACK LEVELS 1 AND 2

The Primer Pack is a one year classroom curriculum that teaches a variety of social/emotional learning concepts and skills including emotional literacy, emotional regulation, empathy, friendship, inclusion, disability awareness, how to ask respectful questions, and how to adapt activities so that all can participate. The Primer Pack provides 38 complete lesson plans which utilize read alouds, video clips, activities, discussions, and reflections in 15-30 minute lessons.

The Primer Pack is available in two levels, and is recommended to be implemented in non-consecutive grade levels. Each level addresses the same concepts in a developmentally appropriate manner with differentiated materials and approaches.

For more information and sample lessons, visit <http://bit.ly/tnpprimerinfo>

INTERMEDIATE AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS: STORYTELLER PROJECT

The Storyteller Project is The Nora Project's flagship program, and while it has evolved over time, it remains our most popular offering. The project is now designed to be taught to intermediate or high school students with and without disabilities in a co-taught, fully inclusive setting.

In Storyteller classrooms, students learn together about empathy, disability justice, inclusion, storytelling, and advocacy. Students work to get to know each other's stories, develop friendships based on what they have in common, and create documentaries that share what the project has taught them about friendship.

To learn more, visit: <http://bit.ly/tnpstorytellerinfo>

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: STEMPATHY CLUB

This inclusive extracurricular program offers students of all abilities the opportunity to meet and work collaboratively on a STEM-based project to engineer a more inclusive school community. Students who join the STEMpathy Club learn about disability, allyship, the engineering design process, and how to work on a diverse team to make a positive impact in their school communities.

Like the Storyteller Project, the STEMpathy Club is required to be co-facilitated by a general education teacher and special education services provider to ensure all students have access and can make a meaningful contribution to the work of the club.

For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/tnpstempathyinfo>

ADOPTING AN ABILITY INCLUSIVE MINDSET (AIM)

The Nora Project curriculums are in hundreds of classrooms and our professional development offerings are available to all staff in participating schools. Through these programs, The Nora Project is changing school culture by encouraging administrators, teachers, and students to adopt an Ability Inclusive Mindset (AIM), believing and behaving like everyone belongs.

“I am wondering how and why...the Nora Project is not mandatory and being used in ALL school districts and classrooms throughout the entire country. Everything that has been provided has been both relevant and extremely helpful.”

-TEACHER

A view of the world that AIMS for ability diversity

ABILITY INCLUSIVE MINDSET

BELIEFS

1. Accessible spaces are better spaces
2. Inclusive activities are richer activities
3. All human lives have equal value

BEHAVIORS

1. Intentional and creative planning
2. Stepping outside your comfort zone
3. Practicing Empathy

THE NORA PROJECT

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

The Nora Project is grateful to nearly 800 donors for their generous support of our students, educators, schools, programming, staff and special projects. This list captures donations of \$5,000+ during the period July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020.

\$50,000+

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WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION TO OUR VALUED PARTNERS

The Nora Project is grateful to all our partners who have provided pro bono or discounted services throughout this past year.



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AUTHOR, *UNSELFIE: WHY EMPATHETIC KIDS SUCCEED IN OUR ALL-ABOUT-ME WORLD*



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THE NORA PROJECT IS CHANGING HEARTS AND MINDS,
TEACHING EMPATHY AND BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE.

WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE SO MANY SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS
AND HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE TO HELP US CHANGE THE WORLD.

WE ARE ALL MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT.



THE NORA PROJECT

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