

Program enforces a positive outlook

Kids at Hope advances idea that all children are capable of success

By Sherry Anne Rubiano
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Every day in the Pendergast School District, students recite a special pledge: "I am a Kid at Hope. I am talented, smart and capable of success. I have dreams for the future, and I will climb to reach those goals and dreams every day."

Having students repeat these words daily is meant to teach them positive self-talk and empower them to believe in their ability to succeed.

These philosophies are at the heart of Kids at Hope, a Valley-based initiative that advocates "all children are capable of success, no exceptions." The organization provides training, tools and principles for schools and organizations nationwide based on this statement.

Founder Rick Miller said Kids at Hope is more than a program.

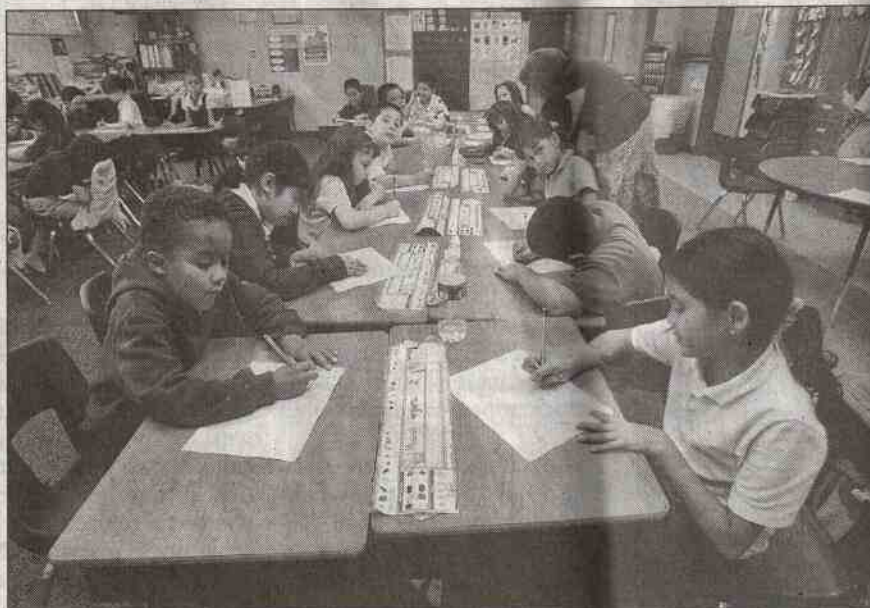
"We're about a cultural strategy, one that encompasses an entire community and everyone that touches kids," Miller said.

Kids at Hope outlines two fundamentals that all kids need: meaningful relationships with caring adults, and a focus on their futures in life's four destinations: Home and family, education and career, community and service, and recreation and hobbies.

Kids at Hope is not just about affecting students. The initiative transforms adults' belief systems, as well. Principals, bus drivers, cafeteria workers and other adults involved in children's lives are called "treasure hunters" and are encouraged to discover every child's talents, skills and intelligence.

Miller founded Kids at Hope in 1993 to reverse the stigma associated with the expression "kids at risk." It has grown into a movement that has affected 50 Arizona schools and 350 organizations in 10 states across the nation. A project in Annapolis, Md., will begin soon.

The Pendergast School District, which serves Phoenix, Glendale and



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Second-graders Xachary McCormick (left) and Mishel Argueta compose a page for their "We are a Class at Hope" book at Amberlea Elementary School.

Avondale, is the first to adopt Kids at Hope districtwide.

Superintendent Ron Richards said all teachers believe that all kids can succeed without exception, but they did not have a way to express it. Kids at Hope gave them a way to communicate their hope in their students' success.

"Now the kids know they are cared for, that they are valued, and that the teacher believes in them," Richards said.

Kids at Hope beliefs are incorporated into classroom activities throughout the district.

At Amberlea Elementary in Phoenix, second-graders create a "Class at Hope" book that teaches students to focus on what they are capable of doing, instead of what they cannot.

At Sonoran Sky Elementary in Glendale, students receive report cards that identify their talents and goals. At Sunset Ridge Elementary in Glendale, teachers honor students who represent Kids at Hope values.

We Are
A Class
At Hope

Kids at Hope events

- March 12-13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.: Parent Training of the Trainers. University of Phoenix, 2550 W. Union Hills Drive, Phoenix. Cost: \$175.
- March 25, 5-7:30 p.m.: Successful Parenting-Successful Children. Hope High School, 9040 W. Campbell Ave., Phoenix. Free.
- May 19, 8 a.m.: Second Annual AVID Golf Invitational benefiting Kids at Hope. FireRock Country Club, Fountain Hills. Cost: \$1,250 foursome/\$325 individual.
- Aug. 15: 3:30-5:30 p.m. reception. Debut of the book *The Kids at Hope Friends Meet the Dream Stealing Villain*. Kids at Hope offices, 2501 W. Dunlap Ave. Suite 155, Phoenix.
- Nov. 25: National Kids at Hope Day.

Information: www.kidsathope.org or call 602-674-0026.