



Annual Report

2022-2023



Dear Friends,

The 2022-23 school year was one of growth and ongoing development of D2 Center programs. An additional part-time Career Navigator was hired in the fall of 2022, and a small satellite office at new community center Yates Illuminates opened in the spring of 2023. We remain steadfast to our mission to connect out-of-school and disengaged youth ages fifteen to twenty-one into an educational pathway with other resources and supports needed to earn a high school diploma and prepare for postsecondary opportunities and a career. Our eight Youth Academic Navigators (YANs) served nearly 400 students and together with the Career Navigators, did outreach to over 300 other Omaha Public School (OPS) students who had withdrawn from school. The reengagement partnership with OPS remains strong as we work together diligently to encourage these students to return to school.

Although the pandemic has finally eased, its impact on students has not. Disengagement, attendance, mental health issues, getting off track to graduate on time, and dropping out are still challenges facing many of the youth in our community. A high school diploma is a basic credential of economic citizenship and future success. It opens doors to further education and degrees, training programs, the military, and better jobs. When youth improve their life circumstances, we all benefit, and our community becomes a stronger and better place to live for everyone.

Some 2022-23 highlights included several all-time highs:

- 389 students were served in the YAN Program
- 217 were newly activated into the program
- and 94 students in the YAN Program graduated from high school.

We are proud of our 2023 graduates!

As we seek to expand and diversify our funding sources, we are thankful for the addition of the Lozier Foundation, the John and Jane Ellsworth Family Foundation, and the Omaha Public Schools Foundation for their support. We continue to appreciate the support of The Sherwood Foundation, the Weitz Family Foundation, the United Way of the Midlands, and the City of Omaha. Our thanks also to individuals like you who believe that the young people in our community are our future. Please follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn or visit our website at www.d2center.org.

Sincerely,

Jerry Bexten
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greg Emmel
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

Carolyn T. Miller
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



D2 Center Youth Academic Navigators
Front: Olga Yaneth Mares, Evelia Gutiérrez
Middle: Abraham Gómez Meza, Netta Prince, Jesi DeWitt
Back: Jason Thompson, Kelsey Hansen, Hansel Gonzalez

D2 Center Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Greg Emmel
Carolyn T. Miller

STAFF SPECIALIST

Jodie Martinez

CAREER NAVIGATORS

John Flemming
John Moore
Bette Norton Ball

YOUTH ACADEMIC NAVIGATORS

Jesi DeWitt
Abraham Gómez Meza
Hansel Gonzalez
Evelia Gutiérrez
Kelsey Hansen
Olga Yaneth Mares
Netta Prince
Jason Thompson

PART-TIME CERTIFIED TEACHERS

Kathy Kocsis
Terry Kocsis
Jackie Thomas



The **mission** of the D2 Center is to connect out-of-school and disengaged youth ages fifteen to twenty-one **into an educational pathway.**

Career Navigator Program Expansion

Thanks to a grant from the John and Jane Ellsworth Family Foundation, the D2 Center Career Navigator Program is growing. Our new Career Navigator is John Flemming, who retired in the summer of 2022 as a school counselor at Central High School. John joined Bette Norton Ball and John Moore who have been with the D2 Center for several years. Career Navigators focus on high school seniors and assist them 1:1 with postsecondary planning and connections. They are also available to D2 Center graduates who may need help with getting a job or getting into a training or degree program.

The assistance could include preparing a job resume or completing an application, determining what training or degree is needed for a specific career and then helping the student with action steps, completing the FAFSA, a scholarship, or enrolling at Metro Community College. During the past year, Career Navigators held regular office hours at two alternative education programs, Blackburn and Accelerate. During these times they were available to help any high school senior (including non-D2 Center students) with postsecondary assistance.

One goal accomplished so far in 2023 thanks to the Ellsworth Grant was the retooling of the curriculum for the D2 Center elective credit course "Navigating Your Future." The three Career Navigators have had numerous meetings, done research, and revised individual lessons and activities based on experiences they have had working with students taking the class.

Career Navigators focus on high school seniors and assist them 1:1 with postsecondary planning and connections.

Fifteen students earned credit in the class in the 2022-23 school year. The Ellsworth Grant has also allowed us to follow up with some graduating students who are entering postsecondary training or a degree program. The goal is to encourage them to maintain their job or school status and to assist with any issues that may come up. Career Navigators are connecting students to their future!

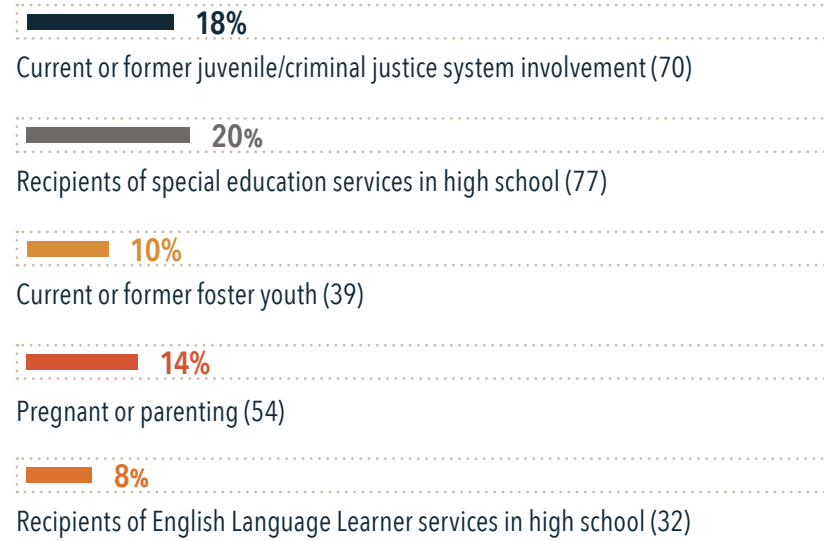
The D2 Center opened a small satellite office at Yates Illuminates, a renovated community center located in the former Yates Elementary School in Gifford Park. Yates Illuminates purchased the building from Omaha Public Schools in 2020 after years of grassroots neighborhood, community, and philanthropic efforts. Tenants are local agencies offering education and employment services, as well as serving immigrant and refugee populations. The D2 Center is thrilled to be a part of Yates. Please watch for the official grand opening celebration later this fall!



D2 Center Student Snapshot

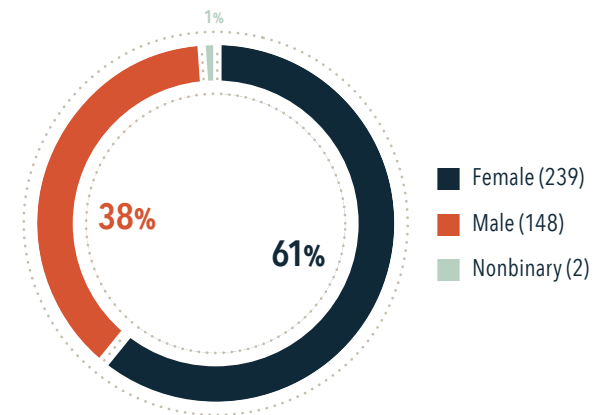
389
TOTAL
STUDENTS

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE:

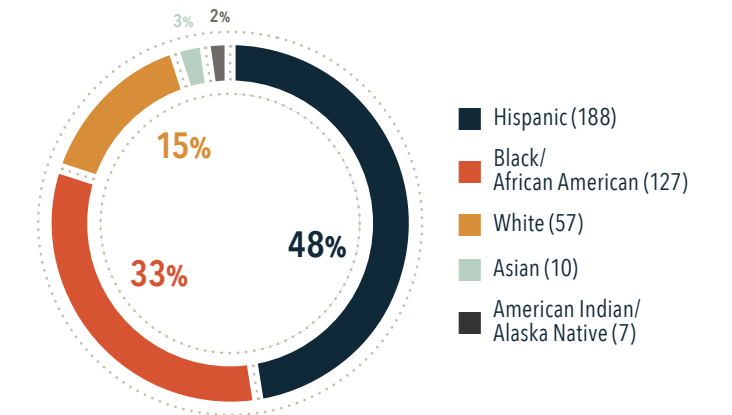


Students may be in multiple categories or none at all.

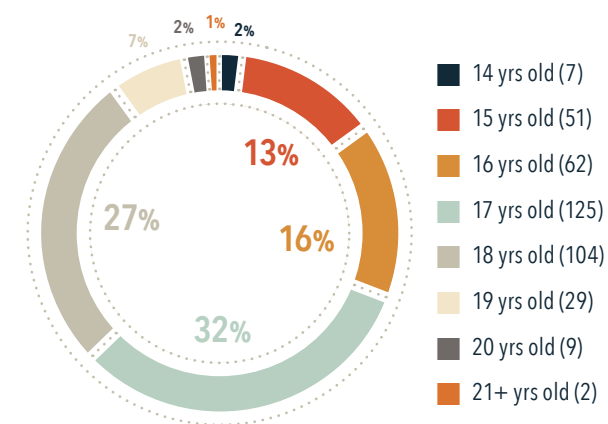
STUDENT GENDER



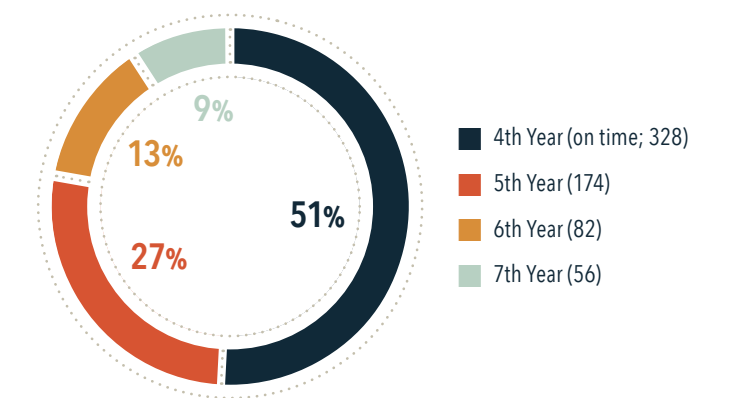
STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY



STUDENT AGE AT INTAKE



STUDENT YEAR OF GRADUATION



Geovany's Story: A Better Future

The school social worker in the Omaha Public Schools Accelerere Program was concerned that after a good start to the 2022-23 school year, Geovany's attendance was slipping, and he was failing his classes. She believed a D2 Center Youth Academic Navigator (YAN) could help him reach his goal of graduating in the spring of 2023. YAN Hansel Gonzalez first met Geovany in early December, and he failed his class again that month. Hansel considered the challenges that Geovany faced since he and his family had come from Guatemala in 2018 when Geovany was a 9th grader. He spent his first year of high school attending the ESL Literacy Center learning the English language. When he transferred to a regular high school in 10th grade, most of the classes he took continued to be ESL electives.

He gradually began working on required classes along with his ESL classes to earn the necessary credits for graduation. Geovany got good grades and was really focused on school. But when Hansel met him as a 12th grader, he had gotten a job at a meat processing plant and was working full time (4 p.m. to 1 a.m. on weekdays). Supporting himself and his family became a priority, and school attendance slipped into the background. When they talked about his job interfering with school, Geovany respectfully made it clear to Hansel that giving up the job was not an option. He felt a strong responsibility to help his family financially.

Hansel texted and made phone calls, made home visits, and met him frequently at Accelerere. He reminded Geovany how proud his parents would be when he graduated.

Hansel tried a different tactic. He would communicate more often and encourage him to get up and go to school, even if he felt tired, because he only needed seven required credits to graduate. Hansel texted and made phone calls, made home visits, and met him frequently at Accelerere. He reminded Geovany how proud his parents would be when he graduated. Hansel talked to the Accelerere ESL resource teacher, and he encouraged Geovany to get help from her. His mother told Hansel that she would often remind her son that the family had moved from Guatemala to provide a better future for him and his sisters. His attendance gradually improved, and he once again started earning credits. With a couple credits to go, Geovany learned that he would be a father later in 2023. This really lit a fire under him, and he began making plans to not only finish high school but also to save money to move out of his family home and start a home of his own. He talked about becoming a mechanic someday, but for now he would continue working. After graduating, he said to Hansel, "Thank you for pushing me, Hansel. Someday, it will mean a lot to be able to tell my kids I graduated from high school!"



How Students Connect With D2 Center

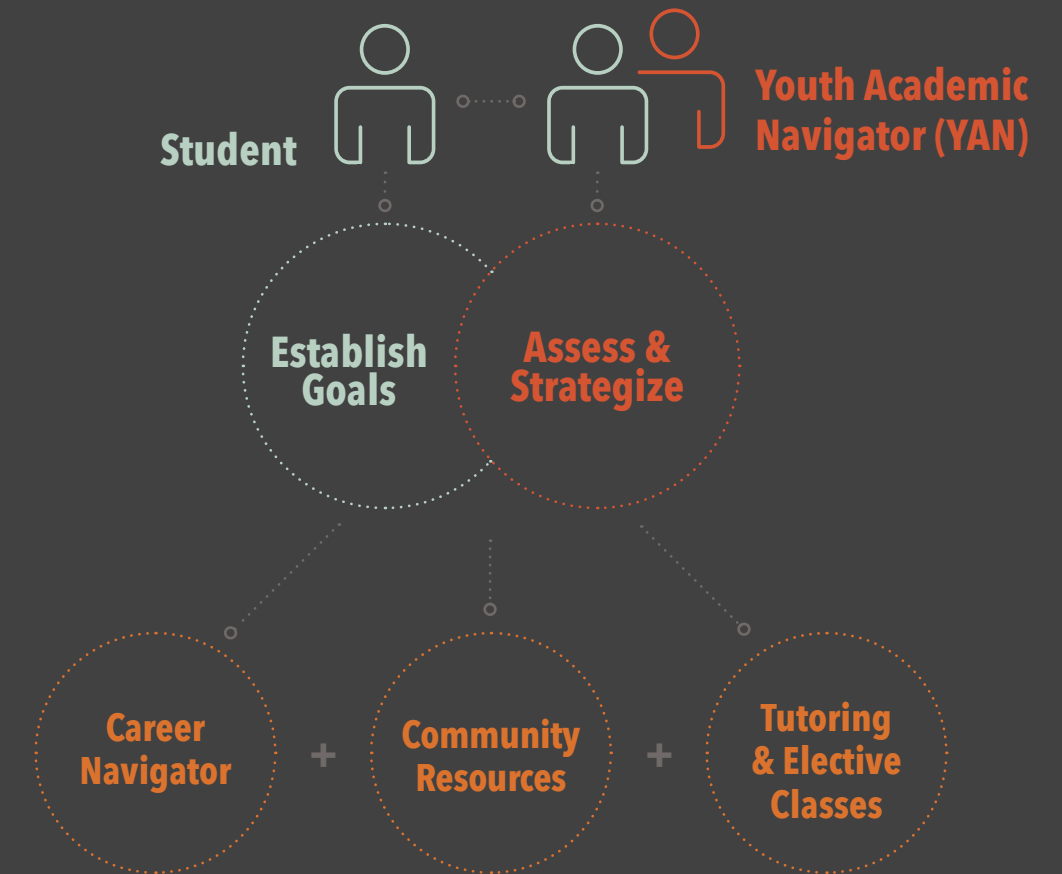
✓ **Omaha Public Schools**
(and other school districts)

Via Social Workers,
Guidance Counselors, etc.

✓ **Student/Family**

✓ **Community/Programs**

Via DC Juvenile Services, NECC Teen &
Young Parent Program, Boys Town, etc.



IDEAL OUTCOMES



Reengagement

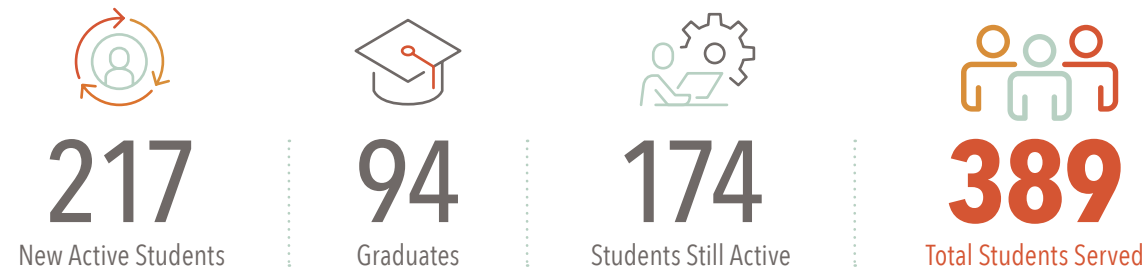


Graduation



**Postsecondary/
Career**

YOUTH ACADEMIC NAVIGATORS



CAREER NAVIGATOR

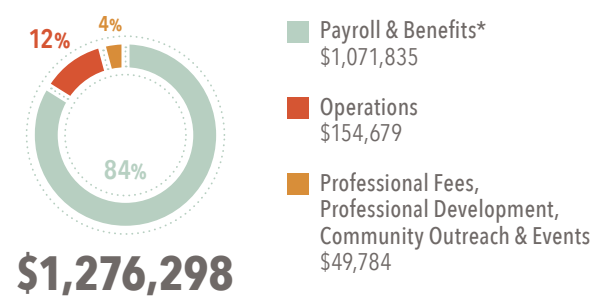
D2 Center
Students Served **151**

REENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

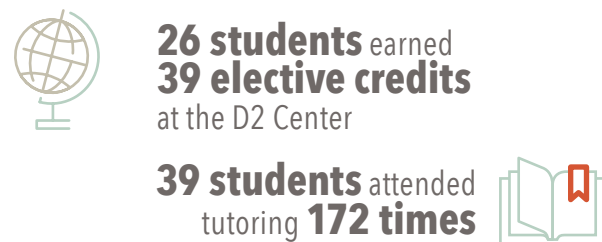
313 Students Contacted



EXPENDITURES



ELECTIVE CREDIT CLASSES & TUTORING



Katherine's Story: Unmasked

In the spring of 2022, Youth Academic Navigator Jesi DeWitt met Katherine, and Jesi knew she was strong academically and was a talented writer. However, during the pandemic years she had begun experiencing anxiety, and it became worse as the pandemic receded. She was getting therapy as she struggled to be comfortable with herself and around her peers. Katherine transferred from a large high school to the UNO/OPS Middle College Program thinking the smaller environment would help. She worried about the rigor of the schoolwork there, and she usually procrastinated until the end of the semester because she felt some of her work was not "perfect." For Jesi, building a supportive and trusting relationship moved slowly the first few months. Gradually, Katherine opened up about the severity of her social anxiety and how it was impacting her life.

Jesi decided to focus on small opportunities where Katherine showed growth or took risks, and they talked about these situations with Jesi praising her for these efforts. When things did not go as planned, they considered what went wrong and came up with a new plan. Katherine gradually began building some confidence in her senior year and made decisions showing she was interested in developing leadership skills. However, as Covid precautions lessened, Jesi noticed that Katherine was the only student who was still wearing a mask. One day they had a heart-to-heart, and Katherine admitted she kept wearing the mask because she did not like her appearance and felt it was a way to hide from others. Jesi was glad she shared this vulnerability, and that in the final weeks of school she felt comfortable enough to take off her mask. Katherine even gave a speech to her UNO public speaking class about taking off your "mask" and how we are all connected to others by our facial expressions.

Each senior gave a short speech at Senior Recognition in May. Katherine publicly thanked Jesi and the D2 Center as well as her teachers and the UNO/OPS staff. Jesi was so proud of Katherine and the positive changes in her life that it brought tears to her eyes!



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