

MONROE PHILANTHROPISTS PILOT REVIEW



October 13, 2021 — February 1, 2022



“[It] showed me I can actually leave an impact on Monroe.”

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I. Overview

Monroe Philanthropists is a youth-led philanthropy program at Monroe Middle School where a team of 12 8th grade students designed and executed a philanthropic process with \$10,000. The pilot was developed in partnership with the Ed Darby Foundation.

The Monroe Philanthropists convened over two full-day launch workshops and eight work sessions between October 2021 – February 2022. Through the process they identified six areas of focus for their philanthropy: basic needs, menstrual products, classroom supplies / building upgrades, youth voice, school food, and mental health. Upon completion of the program, students were compensated through a gift card for sharing their time and expertise.

II. Results

For some focus areas the Monroe Philanthropists made direct monetary contributions, for some they focused on advocacy, and others were a combination.

Actions:

- ✓ Launched a food, clothing, and hygiene products pantry at Monroe, executed a drive to fill it, and purchased additional hygiene products for the pantry
- ✓ Purchased quality feminine hygiene products for Monroe
- ✓ Advocated to school and district leadership about access to quality feminine hygiene products
- ✓ Purchased each core 7th and 8th grade teacher at Monroe an Amazon Gift Card for classroom supplies and decorations, with guidelines to incorporate student voice in decision-making about what to buy for decorations
- ✓ Advocated for the creation of a Student Council and provided it a starting budget
- ✓ Contributed to 8th grade field trip and 8th grade graduation ceremony

(See Appendix A for complete giving budget.)

Youth Surveys:

- 100% students enjoyed coming to Monroe Philanthropists.
- 100% felt challenged in a good way at Monroe Philanthropists.
- 100% would recommend Monroe Philanthropists to a friend.
- 100% reported that Monroe Philanthropists helped them feel more confident in their ability to lead and influence change in their school and/or community.
- 100% reported that Monroe Philanthropists helped them recognize that their voice matters.
- 91% reported that they are more committed to impacting their community than they were before Monroe Philanthropists.
- 100% reported that they are proud of the work they did with Monroe Philanthropists.
- 100% reported that Monroe Philanthropists helped improve their leadership skills.

- 100% reported that Monroe Philanthropists helped improve their teamwork skills.
- On average, students who took The Children’s Hope Scale survey reported being 19 (the low end of moderately hopeful) before the program and 24 (the high end of moderately hopeful) after the program. (See Appendix B for more information.)



III. Reflections on Objectives

The primary objectives for Monroe Philanthropists were:

1. Develop the leadership, social emotional, executive functioning, and professional skills of participating Monroe Middle School students.
2. Empower Monroe Middle School students to execute a youth-led philanthropic process that positively impacts their community.
3. Collect data to learn the best way to position youth as the stewards of philanthropic funds.

Objective 1 was predominantly measured through a post survey which had very encouraging results, as described above. We are particularly excited about the results of The Children’s Hope Scale Survey. We did not expect the hope of students, on average, to increase five points through an approximately 15-hour program.

The degree to which **Objective 2** was a success will be determined in the coming months and years as the full impact of the cohort’s giving and advocacy is realized. However, reactions from both students and staff indicate that, at the very least, the youth identified and attempted to address relevant challenges in their school community. These challenges were not all easily identified by adults inside or outside of the building. We believe the results of this pilot suggest that including primary stakeholders (in this case, youth) in philanthropic decision-making and execution not only helps in the personal development of stakeholders, but it also can make giving more effective.

Objective 3 warrants more discussion. The ten-session cohort model that we employed is one of many ways that youth-led philanthropy can look. We can conceive of a program with similar objectives lasting a lot longer and supporting youth with the implementation and evaluation of each intervention they fund. We can also conceive of a shorter engagement, perhaps even a single meeting, where youth set priorities and allocate funds.

One question for organizations that would like to include a youth-led philanthropic process among its giving initiatives is: how much time with youth is necessary to achieve your objectives? We believe the pilot of Monroe Philanthropists, with its two launch meetings and eight work meetings, struck a good balance of impact, accessibility, youth power, and youth development. Shorter engagements might dial up accessibility while running a greater risk of positioning young people as decorations or tokens for adult-decisions and activities. Longer, more intensive engagements might dial up youth power and youth development but preclude some youth from participating. There is not a definitive answer to the question of how long, but this pilot provided us with valuable data and points us in a promising direction.

The biggest barrier to replicating a program like this in other contexts is access to strong facilitation. An organization that would like to include a youth-led philanthropic process among its giving initiatives will need to have someone in place (either an employee or partner) that can navigate challenging dynamics of youth voice, diversity, dialogue, philanthropy, and more. Tulsa Changemakers and other community stakeholders may want to pilot “train the trainer” models in the future to ensure the Tulsa philanthropic community has enough facilitators to meet demand for such programs.

IV. Additional Reflections

It was our expectation that by positioning Monroe 8th graders as stewards of \$10,000 from the Ed Darby Foundation, we would:

1. Democratize philanthropy by instilling the belief that everyone can be a philanthropist, leading to increased philanthropy overall.
2. Achieve better decisions/outcomes because people closest to the problems are frequently closest to the solutions too.
3. Promote social justice/equity because participation of traditionally disenfranchised constituencies in philanthropic activities can help increase participants’ agency and control over decisions affecting their lives.
4. Promote community engagement because participation in decisions on important issues can strengthen communities overall because individuals and groups that are directly affected by those decisions are connected, informed, and engaged.

Through Monroe Philanthropists, we believe that we achieved those four expectations. We demonstrated to the students and Tulsa community that Monroe 8th graders can be philanthropists, supported students in identifying and directing funds toward hyper relevant challenges, increased the hope of participating students, and invested the students more deeply in their school and community.

V. Potential Next Steps for Tulsa Changemakers

- Revise curriculum based on experience from pilot
- Facilitate another cohort at Monroe in fall 2022

- Identify and support 1-3 philanthropic organizations that would like to pilot some form of youth-led philanthropy into their processes. Part of these pilots may include a “train the trainer” model in which staff or a partner is trained to implement the program without direct facilitation from Tulsa Changemakers staff.

Appendix A

Topic	Action(s)	Budget
Basic Needs	Launched a food, clothing, and hygiene products pantry at Monroe, executed a drive to fill it (collected 608 items), and purchased additional hygiene products for the pantry.	\$1336
Menstrual Products	<p>Advocated to school and district leadership about access to quality feminine hygiene products.</p> <p>Purchased quality feminine hygiene products for Monroe.</p>	\$500
Classroom Supplies / Building Upgrades	Purchased each core 7 th and 8 th grade teacher at Monroe an Amazon Gift Card for classroom supplies and decorations.	\$1500
Youth Voice	Advocated for the creation of a Student Council and provided it a starting budget	\$250
School Food	<p>Switched this topic to Special Events.</p> <p>Contributed to 8th grade field trip and 8th grade graduation ceremony.</p>	\$4000
Mental Health	Decided to focus on the other topics and take action on this by increasing awareness and advocating in their daily lives.	\$0
		<p>TOTAL = \$7586</p> <p>The remaining \$2414 will be donated to the school to be used as school leadership deems appropriate.</p>

Appendix B

The Children’s Hope Scale

The Children’s Hope Scale, published in 1997 by Rick Snyder, can be used to help measure hope in children. Research has linked hope with overall physical, psychological, and social well-being. Children who can identify a means to carry out goals (pathways) and the ability to initiate and sustain action towards goals (agency) are considered more hopeful.

Key 1 – Scores:

- All of the time = 6
- Most of the time = 5
- A lot of the time = 4
- Some of the time = 3
- A little of the time = 2
- None of the time = 1

Key 2 – Assessing Total Scores:

- 6-12 = Very low hope
- 13-18 = Slightly hopeful
- 19-24 = Moderately hopeful
- 25-30 = Highly hopeful
- 30-36 = Very high hope

All students took a retrospective survey that asked them to answer how they felt before and after participating in Monroe Philanthropists. The below scores are the average for all students who took the survey.

	Description	Average Score for BEFORE Monroe Philanthropists	Average Score for AFTER Monroe Philanthropists	Change
1	I think I am doing pretty well.	2.9	4.7	+1.8
2	I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.	3.8	4.6	+0.8
3	I am doing just as well as other kids my age.	2.2	3.5	+1.3
4	When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.	3.5	3.6	+0.1
5	I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.	3.4	3.5	+0.1
6	Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.	2.8	3.7	+0.9
		TOTAL = 18.6	TOTAL = 23.6	+5

On average, students who took The Children’s Hope Scale survey reported being **18.6 (the low end of moderately hopeful) before the program** and **23.6 (the high end of moderately hopeful) after the program**.