



Chapters for a Change

Community Awareness Project

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I. Executive Summary

Project Overview

The *Chapters for a Change* Team's goal was to raise awareness of literacy struggles within the community. The Team partnered with the Alexandria Education Foundation, the Alexandria School District, and the Douglas County Library to not only raise awareness but also to encourage children to read using a variety of exciting reading-based activities and competitions. The *Chapters for a Change* campaign targeted third through fifth-grade elementary students across all six elementary schools within the Alexandria School District. *Each member of The Team has experienced a childhood full of reading, so when the struggling literacy rates in their hometown, Alexandria, Minnesota, were brought to their attention, they felt it was imperative to raise awareness of the issue.*

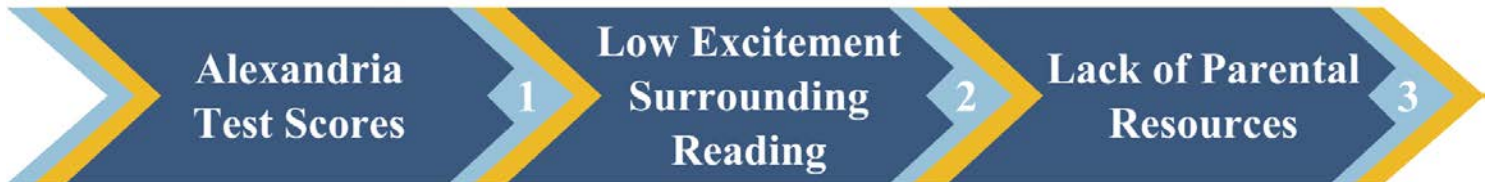


Fund initiatives that ignite passion, unlock potential, and foster engagement for all learners and staff within Alexandria Public Schools.

Alexandria Education Foundation Mission

Problems

At the beginning of the *Chapters for a Change* campaign, The Team recognized that low reading test scores, low enthusiasm for reading, and families' inability to afford the resources needed for successful education are all significant concerns in the Alexandria area. For example, 47% of fourth graders from low-income families in the area read below grade level (Reading Is Fundamental). *Based on this realization, the Community Awareness Team identified three specific literacy issues facing their community.*



Goals

To address the problems listed above, The Team established three campaign objectives to ensure the campaign's success. *These objectives were divided into an overall goal, a primary goal, and a secondary goal.*



Campaign Acronym and Activities

The *Chapters for a Change* Team kept campaign milestones in mind throughout the project. The campaign is divided into four main milestones: *Reach Community, Excite Children, Aid Local Students, and Donate to Community.* The Team ensured all events fell under one of the four milestones.



Execution

Table 1: Activities Overview

Activity	Description
R.1 Public Reading	Readings hosted at the Douglas County Library and local elementary schools.
E.1 Book Bingo	A Bingo event hosted twice, where children played bingo for a chance to win books.
E.2 November Reading Race	Class competition across the school district to read the most during November.
A.1 Bookmarks	Children made bookmarks at the local Douglas County Library.
A.2 Bookworm Vending Machine	Fundraising throughout the Alexandria community for the installation of a Bookworm Vending Machine in a local elementary school.
D.1 Books and Basketball Raffle	Fundraising raffle at an Alexandria Area High School girls and boys basketball double-header.
D.2 Book Donations	Donating books to the Alexandria community throughout the entirety of the campaign.

Budget

Throughout the *Chapters for a Change* project, The Team raised funds to host exciting events and donate reading resources with the help of the Alexandria community. No expenses were incurred due to community support and generosity.



Human Resource Management Plan



Ava Anderson
Marketing Manager

Strengths:

- Creativity
- Meticulousness
- Organization

Responsibilities:

- Create Graphics
- Promote Project
- Create Presentations



Erin Cross
Communications Officer

Strengths:

- Communication
- Public Speaking
- Networking

Responsibilities:

- Schedule Meetings
- Community Outreach
- Lead Events



Lennon Justice
Project Manager

Strengths:

- Leadership
- Critical Thinking
- Problem-Solving

Responsibilities:

- Monitor Progress
- Plan Future Events
- Meet Project Deadlines

Expected Benefits

The Community Awareness Team expected many benefits to stem from the campaign, including:



Fostered Excitement for Reading Among the Next Generation



Increased Awareness of the Importance of Youth Reading



Children Obtain the Necessary Skills for a Successful Future

Risk Management

Potential Issues

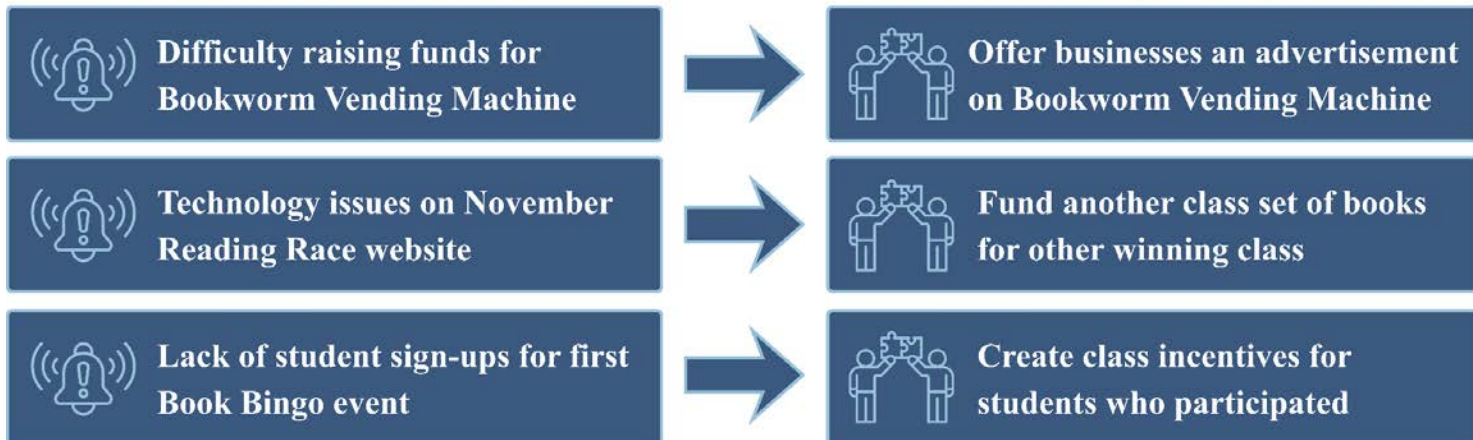
Resolutions

R	Lack of Event Participants	Prepared and Marketed Events Ahead of Time
E	Struggling to Gear Children's Excitement	Developed Fun and Engaging Ideas for Events
A	Failing to Raise Desired Funds for Student Resources	Partnered with the Alexandria Education Foundation
D	Falling Short of Fundraising Targets	Hosted Fundraising Activities Throughout Community

Monitoring and Controlling

ISSUE ENCOUNTERED

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



During the campaign, the Community Awareness Team encountered multiple problems that needed to be resolved to execute each activity successfully. *The Team had to quickly and efficiently resolve the issues that arose without disrupting the events' schedule or goals.* Below are the tools used to resolve issues during the *Chapters for a Change* campaign.



Recommendations for Future Projects



Closing the Project

The success and effectiveness of the *Chapters for a Change* project came from the use of the project management cycle. Because of their dedication and teamwork, The Team raised funds for reading initiatives and successfully engaged half of the Alexandria community through their events, meetings, and advertisements. Throughout the campaign, The Team worked with 15 businesses to meet their goals and strengthen community support. *Overall, the Chapters for a Change project allowed The Team to support those with limited reading resources, build excitement about reading locally, and increase awareness of the importance of reading throughout the Alexandria area, making a meaningful impact on the community.*

Campaign Results



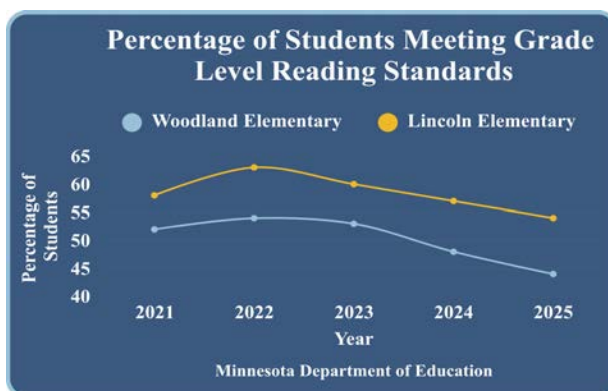
II. Initiating

A. Statement of the Problem

Literacy is one of life's most essential skills; it is inescapable. *According to an interview with Alexandria Area High School Literacy Coach Haley Kalina, "Reading unlocks all future learning and is the true foundation for education."* Despite its critical importance in the educational process, reading proficiency rates are dropping sharply nationwide, and about 21% of adults in the U.S. cannot read *above a 5th-grade level (Above and Beyond)*. While 21% is a high percentage, rates continue to rise, raising concern across the country, especially in the *Chapters for a Change* Team's hometown, *Alexandria, Minnesota*.

1. Alexandria Test Scores

A growing concern within the Alexandria community is the rapid decline in reading test scores. Academic performance has been steadily declining over the past several years, prompting significant concern among educators, parents, and administrators alike. *An example of this can be seen at Woodland Elementary School, an elementary school in the area, where the percentage of students meeting reading proficiency standards dropped from 53.1% in 2023 to a concerning 43.1% by 2025.* This alarming downward trend is also evident at Discovery Middle School, the sole middle school in the Alexandria School District, which reported a reading proficiency rate of only 50% (Minnesota Department of Education). *These statistics further highlight that children in the Alexandria area are falling behind in reading education, posing a serious problem within the local community that requires urgent attention.*



2. Low Excitement Surrounding Reading

When speaking with elementary students in the Alexandria area, a recurring theme was the overall negative perception of reading. Many students no longer enjoy reading. *In a survey conducted by The Team among more than 100 elementary students, 70.2% said they would rather use their phones or play video games than read a book.* Reading cannot compete with the instant gratification of scrolling through reels, watching videos, or playing games, making it difficult to get children excited about it. Reading can't be left behind; there is no way to avoid it. *According to Forbes, Only 14% of 13-year-olds read for fun almost every day, a 50% drop in the last decade.* These students, who do not find reading exciting, exhibit a noticeable vocabulary gap when speaking and struggle to achieve the same academic success as their peers. Throughout their school years, these children constantly try to keep up with their classmates, setting them up for failure from a young age. *This cycle of disengagement can lead to long-term academic challenges, highlighting the importance of fostering a love for reading early on.*



3. Lack of Parental Resources

Some parents in the Alexandria area struggle to afford the resources necessary for their children's education, limiting access to reading materials for less fortunate children. Restricted access to books and other reading resources is directly linked to lower literacy rates among children, causing those from less fortunate backgrounds to quickly fall behind their classmates in reading skills. *By the time children reach three years of age, a 30-million-word gap exists between children from the wealthiest and poorest families (NAEYC).* This word gap significantly impacts children's ability to succeed in school, making it challenging for them to pass exams and keep pace with their peers. *The Team views this as a significant issue because the affected children cannot address it.*



B. Project Scope

Purpose

In recent years, the Alexandria, Minnesota community has seen a concerning decline in test scores and literacy rates, leading to widespread reading challenges among children. *Chapters for a Change* was created to address this urgent need by inspiring a love of reading and helping students overcome barriers, whether stemming from a lack of motivation or limited access to books and resources. The Team partners with the Douglas County Library, whose mission closely aligns with their commitment to strengthening literacy. Together, they will work to ensure that children who lack necessary resources are supported in meeting reading standards. *Through community events, outreach efforts, and family support initiatives, the campaign raises awareness about literacy struggles while fostering excitement about reading among the next generation. Ultimately, Chapters for a Change is dedicated to equipping children with one of life's most essential skills: reading with confidence and success.*

Rationale

The *Chapters for a Change* Team has recognized the importance of literacy in their community. *“Visiting the library during my childhood sparked an early passion for reading,” stated Communications Officer Erin Cross.* Developing a love for reading at an early age has led The Team to remain passionate about reading throughout their lives. As a result of the *Chapters for a Change* Team’s appreciation for reading, they have chosen to bring that same excitement to their community.

“
The average American visited a library 5.4 times in the year 2009, but only 3.9 times in 2019.
American Enterprise Institute
 ”
Reflecting on their childhoods, it's hard to imagine a life without the library, a bedtime story from parents, or renting books from the third-grade classroom. The Team recognized the significant impact that literature had on their childhoods and understood that the next generation of children should not be deprived of that same impact. Each member of the *Chapters for a Change* Team feels a deep connection to reading, having spent a large portion of their childhoods reading with their families, visiting the library, and growing their reading skills. Looking at the upcoming generation, reading participation has declined significantly.

Expected Benefits

The *Chapters for a Change* Team plans to collaborate with local libraries, public schools, and other community organizations to host events that promote reading among children. *Hosting these events will help provide the Alexandria community with numerous benefits, such as fostering excitement about reading throughout the next generation and educating the local community about the importance of reading among youth.* Fostering excitement around reading is vital because it encourages children to read and helps them expand their literacy skills without it feeling like a chore. This greatly benefits the affected children by helping them develop the reading skills they need for their future. *Additionally, this will significantly assist children in their careers, as it is an everyday tool for writing, professionalism, and other workplace necessities.* By bringing these events and activities into the community, The Team will reach the majority of kids in their district and beyond. In doing so, they aim to encourage children to read and spark community enthusiasm among all ages. *By raising awareness and bringing excitement to reading, the lives of children in the Alexandria area will be directly impacted. The Chapters for a Change Team will make valuable connections within the community and rekindle local youth's love of reading.*



**Excite Children
Towards Reading**



**Educate
Community**



**Direct Impact on Local
Children's Lives**

By raising awareness and bringing excitement to reading, the lives of children in the Alexandria area will be directly impacted. The Chapters for a Change Team will make valuable connections within the community and rekindle local youth's love of reading.

III. Planning and Organizing

A. Project Goals

The *Chapters for a Change* campaign goals are divided into overall, primary, and secondary goals.

Overall Goal



Inform Alexandria residents about literacy issues

Primary Goal



Offer support and resources for Alexandria area

Secondary Goal



Expand reading opportunities for community

★ Overall Goal: Inform Alexandria residents about literacy issues

The *Chapters for a Change* Team's overall goal is to inform Alexandria residents about literacy issues. *The Team will emphasize the importance of youth reading and help parents understand that, at an elementary age, reading is one of the most crucial skills to develop. By informing residents about the problem and its causes, the Alexandria area is more likely to create change.* Some people are aware of reading struggles in the community; however, most residents of Alexandria are unaware of the reading struggles students face. The Team aims to raise awareness across the Alexandria community. The amount of awareness raised will be evaluated by the number of individuals reached throughout the campaign. *The Team aims to reach 8,000 individuals, roughly ½ of Alexandria's population.* The activities in the *Reach Community* portion of the *Chapters for a Change* campaign will be focused on achieving this goal.

★ Primary Goal: Offer support and resources for Alexandria area

The *Chapters for a Change* Team's primary goal is to offer support and resources to the Alexandria area. *In the Alexandria area, 24% of students lack access to proper literacy resources and materials (U.S. News & World Report).* The Team will work with the Alexandria Education Foundation to provide innovative resources for schools, such as a Bookworm Vending Machine, costing approximately \$10,000. *The Team aims to place one Bookworm Vending Machine at a local school and secure donations from local businesses to cover the cost. The success of this goal will be measured by the amount of money raised for a Bookworm Vending Machine.* Additionally, The Team aims to donate 750 books during the *Chapters for a Change* campaign. These donations will be made throughout four literacy-based events. The activities in the *Aid Local Students* and *Donate to Community* sections of the *Chapters for a Change* campaign will focus on achieving this goal.

★ Secondary Goal: Expand reading opportunities for community

The *Chapters for a Change* Team's secondary goal is to expand reading opportunities for the community. By offering more literacy activities in the community, the local population will have more opportunities to experience the excitement of reading. The *Chapters for a Change* Team aims to bring innovative events to the area to spark new excitement for reading, rather than continuing with current ideas and activities for students and families. By doing so, The Team hopes to introduce new ideas and reach new residents in the Alexandria area. The Team will do so through various activities involving the Douglas County Library and other partnering businesses. *The success of this goal will be measured by the number of people who participate in the hosted activities. The Chapters for a Change Team hopes to reach 250 people through their events.* The activities in the *Excite Children* portion of the *Chapters for a Change* campaign will be focused on achieving this goal.

B. Human Resource Management Plan

The *Chapters for a Change* members know that success starts with a strong team. Through various personality assessments and many hours of brainstorming, they have assembled a campaign team with a diverse set of skills to help them succeed. *The determined positions include a Marketing Manager, Communications Officer, and a Project Manager.*



Ava Anderson's most significant contributions to The Team include her meticulousness, creative mindset, and organizational skills. She uses her traits to create presentations for meetings, graphics for The Team's paper, and to ensure that marketing reaches the correct audience. Ava has clear priorities, a practical mindset, and comes with a structured approach. Her traits make her an exceptional marketing manager.



Erin Cross's strengths include communication, public speaking, and networking. Erin's outstanding abilities contribute to The Team by coordinating meetings, planning schedules, reaching out to community members, and leading events. She is quick to take action and pays close attention to details. The Team can always rely on her. As the communications officer, she has strong written and oral skills.



Lennon Justice's most considerable strengths include his leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Lennon uses his unique abilities to monitor project progress, meetings, and project deadlines. He also uses his significant characteristics to handle unexpected challenges or delays during the campaign. Lennon is an excellent communicator, enthusiastic, and positive, making him a strong project manager.

C. Schedule

I. Milestone

The Community Awareness Team continued the *Chapters for a Change* campaign to address the issues discussed previously. The **READ** acronym stands for *Reach Community, Excite Children, Aid Local Students, and Donate to Community*. Activities associated with achieving these objectives are milestones towards accomplishing the project goals. Each milestone includes activities that align with the acronym and connect back to the ultimate goal of raising awareness. By reaching these milestones, The Team better understood the success of the Community Awareness project. *These objectives allowed The Team to successfully plan each event, produce resources for the project, and gather results within our community.*



Reach
Community



Excite
Children



Aid Local
Students



Donate to
Community



Reach Community

The first objective of the *Chapters for a Change* Team is to **Reach Community**. *This portion focuses on reaching as many individuals as possible throughout the campaign.* The Team hopes to reach as many people in the community as possible to increase overall awareness of the literacy-based struggles in Alexandria. To enhance community engagement, The Team plans to host a series of events for all children and families at the Douglas County Library, organize public readings at various locations throughout the area, and collaborate closely with the Alexandria Public School District to involve both students and their parents. By implementing these key activities, they aim to connect with as many Alexandria residents as possible. *Achieving this goal is crucial to the Chapters for a Change project, as it helps raise community awareness that literacy is not only a fundamental skill for everyone's lives and futures, but also a necessity across all walks of life.*



Excite Children

The second objective of the *Chapters for a Change* Team is to **Excite Children**. *This portion focuses on building excitement among local children about reading throughout the campaign.* The Team aims to inspire enthusiasm for reading among everyone, with a particular focus on children. The Community Awareness Team will connect with students in the local area and leave a lasting, positive impression that shapes their attitudes toward reading in a beneficial way. To achieve this, their primary event was the November Reading Race, which effectively engaged students in reading. Additionally, they collaborated with the local library to host a variety of engaging activities, such as Book Bingo and bookmark-making. These events are designed to add fun to reading and make it an enjoyable experience for all children within their community. *Throughout this section, all of The Team's initiatives consistently emphasize helping children develop a positive perspective on reading and fostering a love for books and learning.*



Aid Local Students

The third objective of the *Chapters for a Change* Team is to **Aid Local Students**. *This section focuses on providing resources to students in the Alexandria School District.* The Team collaborated with the Alexandria Education Foundation, an organization dedicated to introducing innovative ideas and initiatives to enhance the school district. Together, they will partner to install a Bookworm Vending Machine at one of the district's elementary schools. The introduction of a book vending machine is a significant milestone for The Team, as it brings them closer to achieving their overarching goals. This initiative excites children, provides easier access to reading resources, and benefits the community by ensuring that every individual at the school can use the Bookworm Vending Machine. Lastly, The Team will engage with students by creating bookmarks to encourage their love of reading. *All of these activities are united by a central purpose: To support students in the local school district and equip them with the resources they need for a successful educational experience, with an emphasis on fostering literacy and reading skills.*

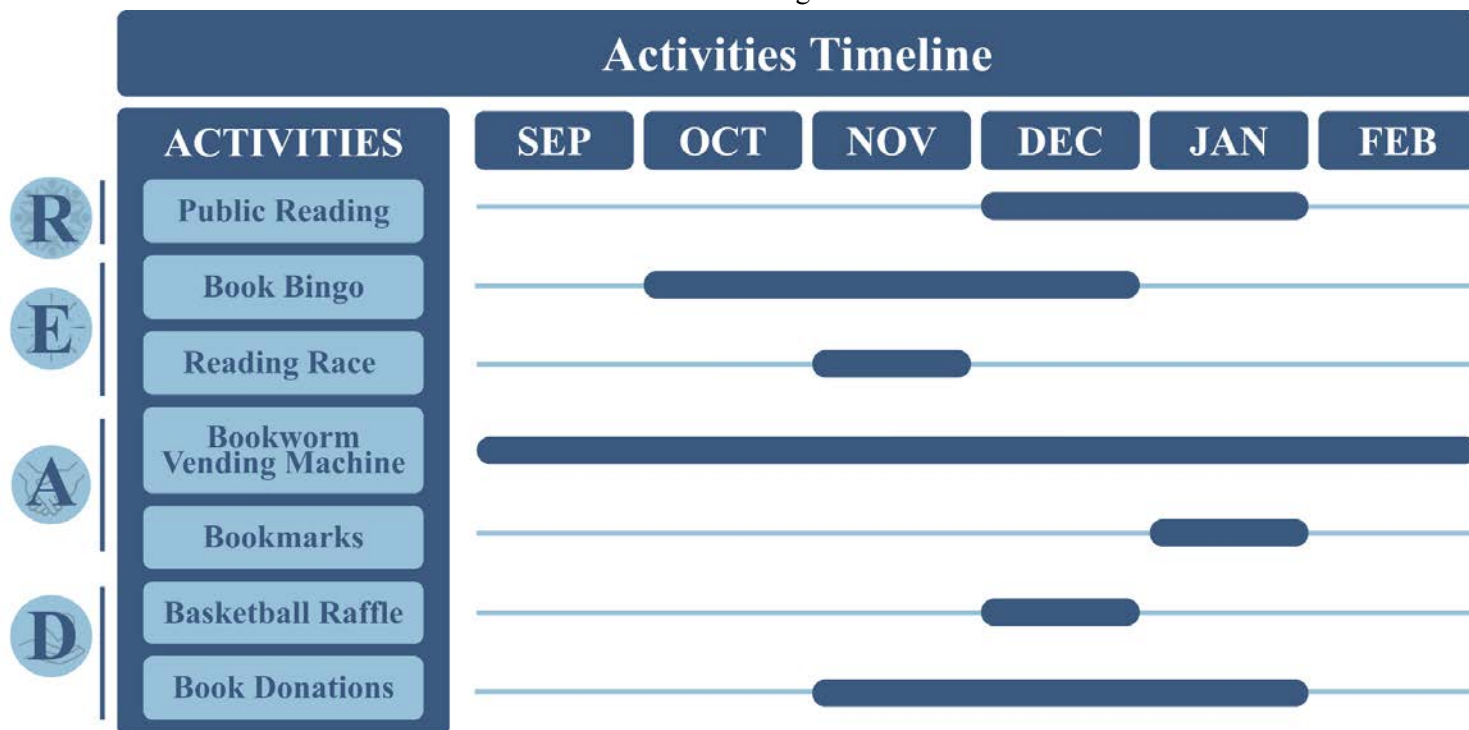


Donate to Community

The fourth objective of the *Chapters for a Change* Team is to **Donate to the Community**. *This portion focuses on donating to local Alexandria residents who may not be able to afford adequate literacy resources.* The Team will donate books to their community. They will gather books for donation through social media posts, community members, and assistance from the school district, encouraging Alexandria residents to contribute. The *Chapters for a Change* Team will also raise funds for books by hosting raffles at Alexandria Area High School basketball games and meeting with local businesses, actively engaging the community in supporting the cause. The collected funds and books will be distributed through various channels, including the Alexandria School District and community events such as book bingo. *These generous donations are expected to make a meaningful difference in the community by helping individuals who want to read gain access to the materials they need, thereby supporting their reading goals and fostering a love of learning within the Alexandria community.*

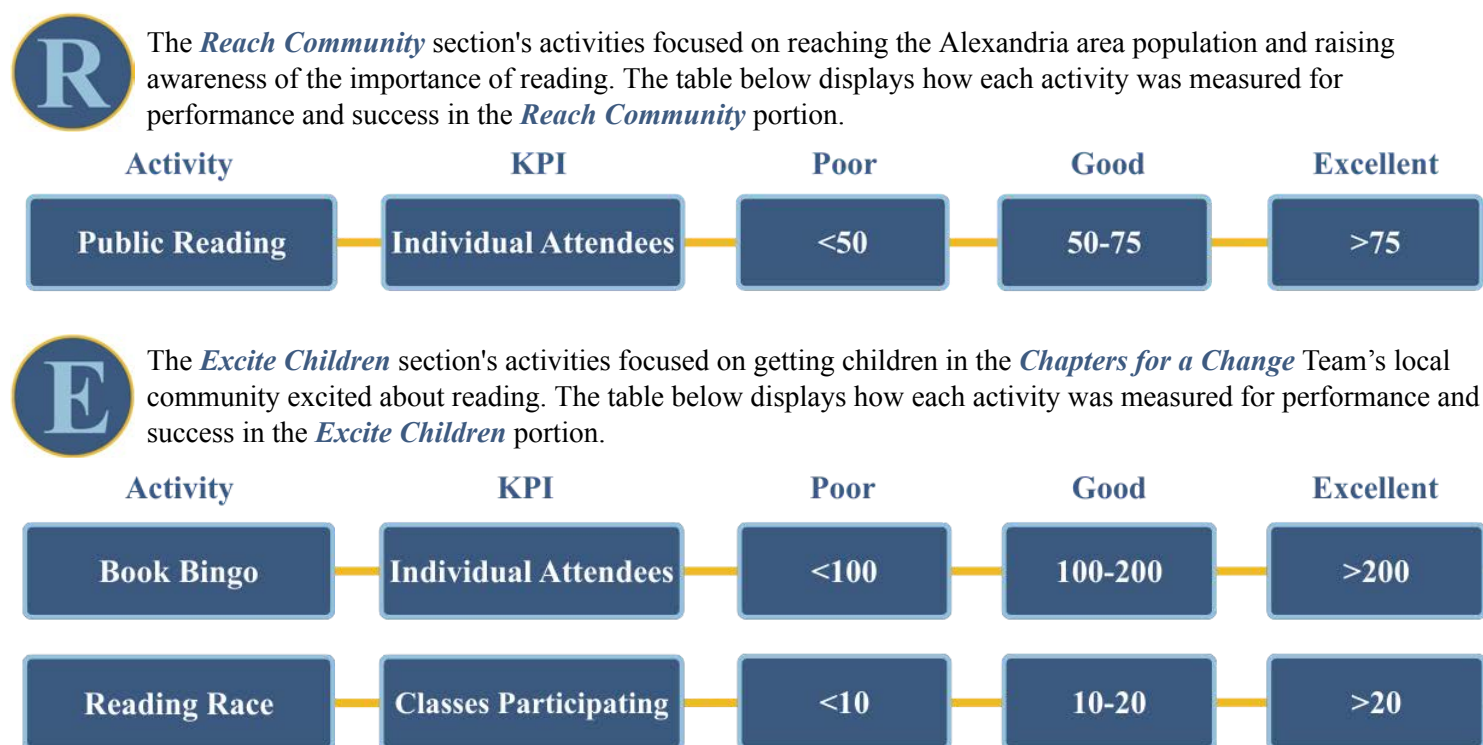
II. Timeline to Reach Each Milestone

The Team followed a firm timeline to ensure that the project progressed effectively and efficiently. *A Gantt Chart greatly helped keep The Team organized during the Chapters for a Change project.* The graphic below shows the campaign's timeline and demonstrates the activities needed to meet The Team's goals.



D. Quality Management Plan

To ensure the project's success, The Team utilized key performance indicators (KPIs). These allowed The Team to properly monitor the quality and success of each activity that they held. Below is a chart showing the KPIs for each event and how each KPI measures each event's success.





The *Aid Local Students* section's activities focused on providing students in the Alexandria School District with appropriate reading resources. The table below displays how each activity was measured for performance and success in the *Aid Local Students* portion.

Activity	KPI	Poor	Good	Excellent
Bookmarks	Number Distributed	<35	35-60	>60
Bookworm Vending Machine	Funds Raised	<\$5,000	\$5,000-\$10,000	>\$10,000



The *Donate to Community* section's activities focused on raising funds and donating reading resources in the Alexandria community. The table below displays how each activity was measured for performance and success in the *Donate to Community* portion.

Activity	KPI	Poor	Good	Excellent
Basketball Raffle	Funds Raised	<\$150	\$150-\$300	>\$300
Book Donations	Books Donated	<500	500-750	>750

E. Risk Management Plan

A risk management plan was implemented, enabling The Team to identify and resolve issues that arose throughout the campaign. Identifying potential risks and challenges and addressing them before they occurred allowed The Team to stay on track and complete activities promptly.



Potential Issues

Lack of Participation



Potential Impacts

- Reduced amount of local population reached through activities
- Less awareness within the community of literacy needs
- Missed learning experiences for the community

Resolutions

- Schedule a time and location for events at least one month in advance
- Market events toward differentiating demographics
- Make events as engaging as possible for all participants



Potential Issue

Struggling to Gear Children's Excitement



Potential Impacts

- Missed opportunities for growth
- Difficulty getting children excited about reading after a poor experience at an event
- Events are not exciting enough for the audience

Resolutions

- Guarantee prizes and an enjoyable experience for all
- Ensure events are enjoyable for all kinds of participants (Different ages, genders, schools, etc.)
- Promote events through the school district to reach students

A

Potential Issue

Failing to Raise Desired Funds for Alexandria Student Resources



Potential Impacts

- Limited ability to reach project goals
- Reduced amount of support for students
- Missed opportunities to reach children with reading

Resolutions

- Partner with local bookstores and libraries to gather funds
- Host events where people can donate reading resources
- Work and meet with the Alexandria Education Foundation to form fundraising ideas

D

Potential Issue

Falling Short of Fundraising Targets



Potential Impacts

- Reduced number of individuals the *Chapters for a Change* Team can support
- Weakens the overall impact of the project within the community
- Limits the ability to provide resources

Resolutions

- Host raffles to raise funds
- Increase outreach to local businesses for sponsorships
- Partner with strong and local organizations
- Host fundraising events with clear messaging

F. Proposed Project Budget

To keep track of the funds raised and spent, The Team used a proposed project budget. During the campaign, local businesses contributed by donating money and providing space for events. *The Chapters for a Change Team was overwhelmed with gratitude for the local businesses that assisted them, whose support was crucial to the project's success.* Each business listed on the right side of the proposed budget contributed to The Team's success.

All expenses were covered due to the generosity of the Alexandria Community.

Bingo for Books	Total: \$3,210.00
Books	\$3,200.00
Bingo Cards	\$10.00

November Reading Race	Total: \$797.88
Initial Prize - Cookies for each Class (13 Classes)	\$130.00
Grand Prize - Books	\$667.88

Basketball Game Raffle	Total: \$500.00
Raffle Prizes	\$500.00

Bookworm Vending Machine	Total: \$10,000.00
Bookworm Vending Machine	\$10,000.00

Proposed Project Budget Grand Total	Total: \$14,507.88
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IV. Execution

R

Reach Community

R.1 Public Reading

The Team organized public readings throughout the *Chapters for a Change* campaign at the Douglas County Library and local elementary schools. The Team conducted public readings during events to boost participation and reach as many people as possible. Public readings were performed twice. Once, during *Bookmarks (A.2)*, and another time when giving the winners of the *November Reading Race (E.2)* their prizes. The top class in each grade received brand-new books at the end of the reading race. The Team read a small portion of the book with each class to ensure kids were excited about the books and to give students a reason to continue reading. The Team also read aloud during the *Bookmarks (A.2)* activity. While children made bookmarks at the library, a member of The Team would read a book aloud from the library's collection. Reading at *Bookmarks (A.2)* made the event educational and enjoyable for all attendees. *Overall, public reading was a great success for the Chapters for a Change campaign.*



E

Excite Children

E.1.1 Book Bingo: Douglas County Library

The *Chapters for a Change* Team aimed to build enthusiasm and increase interest in reading. The Team decided to arrange Book Bingo events, where children could play bingo to win books. The Community Awareness Team hosted two Book Bingo Events, the first being at the Douglas County Library. *The Team did this not only to get children excited about reading, but also to provide resources for children who may not be able to afford books.* To promote the event, The Team posted flyers



through online communication channels and popular stores in the Alexandria Area, attracting many individuals. The Team also posted on social media, asking the community to donate books for this event. Social media marketing gathered hundreds of books to give away at Book Bingo. To boost participation, The Team created a social media post on the Douglas County Library's account. It was also marketed to the 25 elementary classrooms competing in the *November Reading Race (E.2)* as an incentive to earn more points for their class. *The first Book Bingo was a success, with roughly 300 books donated and over 90 participants.*

E.1.2 Book Bingo: Woodland Elementary School

The Team's second book bingo event was held at Woodland Elementary School in the Alexandria School District. The Team has a close connection with the faculty at Woodland Elementary School, which made it easy to coordinate a time and place for Book Bingo at the school's Christmas party, where *more than 150 students and families attended.* Due to the



marketing strategies used across the elementary school, the event attracted 170 families to the Book Bingo throughout the evening. Not only was excitement sparked among students and parents, but The Team also *donated over 500 books* throughout the event. To ensure all kids could receive a book, The Team allowed children who did not win one during a bingo round to pick one before the end of the night. *The two Book Bingo events were a tremendous success, as all students in attendance were excited about reading. The events reached more than 500 Alexandria residents, including children and parents, and allowed The Team to donate more than 800 books to the Alexandria community.*



E.2 November Reading Race

Throughout November, the *Chapters for a Change* Team conducted a district-wide reading race for grades three through five, *called the "November Reading Race."* *The primary objective of this event was to utilize incentives to enhance students' reading habits.* Before the race, The Team distributed a survey to all elementary students to gather opinions on

reading, hoping to see strong interest. *After reviewing the survey results, 32% of students reported that they either disliked or felt neutral about reading. The Team was determined to make an impact.* The next step was to inform students and teachers. The Team sent out an educational video promoting the reading race and the *Library Book Bingo (E.1)*. One teacher stated that the video “skyrocketed students’ excitement for the race and reading in general.” Over the course of three weeks, students read and completed weekly reading logs created by The Team. The reading logs were carefully designed and sent out each week. At the end of each week, The Team spent several hours adding reading totals for each class and logging them on a website The Team created for students to view and track their progress. To congratulate the students for participating, The Team set a class goal of roughly 5,000 minutes, depending on class size. 13 classes met the checkpoint and were given an initial prize of cookies for their class. The top class in each grade received a grand prize: a class party and a brand new book for every student to take home. The Community Awareness Team faced website issues near the end of the race, and two fifth-grade classes appeared to have won. To make up for the inconvenience, The Team worked together and decided to purchase a set of books for each of the winning fifth-grade classes. *To fund these rewards, The Team met with local businesses, Alexandria Industries, and Cherry Street Books, to cover the cost of four class sets of books, totaling \$667.88.*



Because of the community’s generous donations and discounts, The Team incurred no cost. The last step of this project was to determine whether reading excitement changed. To do so, The Team sent out a follow-up survey to teachers and students. The Team received very positive responses, with one teacher saying, “My student has always loved reading, but had always preferred that we read to her. The reading race has completely changed that - and she is reading without being asked or reminded.”

“My student has always loved reading, but had always preferred that we read to her. The reading race has completely changed that - and she is reading without being asked or reminded.

Lori Hochhalter (3rd Grade Teacher)

The survey also showed that excitement around reading had improved drastically. From the beginning of the race through the end, the number of students who reported liking reading increased by 26.1%, making the November Reading Race a massive success for The Team. *Throughout the November Reading Race activity, the Community Awareness Team reached 611 students across 25 classes, raised over \$800 for prizes, donated 82 brand-new books, and, most importantly, made a positive impact on the next generation of readers in their community.*

A Aid Local Students

A.1 Bookmarks

The *Chapters for a Change* Team sought an alternative way to provide reading resources for students in their community. The Team wanted to ensure it would excite students about reading, so they planned an event for children to make bookmarks. By hosting this event, The Team gave children a reason to read by providing a bookmark they would want to use. The Team met with the Douglas County Library to schedule the event. The library generously provided all the resources needed for bookmarks, making the event swift and successful. *Although the event was small, it allowed for the creation of a deep, meaningful connection. During this event, members of The Team engaged with the children and shared the impact of reading from their youth, as well as read nostalgic books from the Chapters for a Change Team’s childhood to the 31 students in attendance.* The Team had a great event thanks to keen communication and collaboration with community members. *This event not only promoted literacy but also fostered a love for reading among the children in attendance. The Team recommends repeating these activities because of their connection to younger children and the insight they provide into what truly motivates elementary-age students to read on their own.*



A.2 Bookworm Vending Machine

The Team aimed to make a significant impact on children's perspectives on reading within the Alexandria School District.



The first step of creating a substantial effect on children's reading perspectives was to meet with the Alexandria Education Foundation. The Team scheduled a meeting with Claire Anderson, a representative from the Foundation. By doing so, The Team came up with the idea of bringing a Bookworm Vending Machine to an elementary school in the district. *A Bookworm Vending Machine is a vending machine that dispenses brand-new books to kids who do good deeds at school.* When students do good deeds, they receive a gold coin from a staff member, which they can use to retrieve a book from the vending machine. Bookworm Vending Machines cost roughly \$10,000, so The Team got right to work, reaching out to local businesses to schedule meetings with representatives to raise funds for the Bookworm Vending Machine. Many companies that The Team met with were generous with their donations, allowing them to raise thousands of dollars for a Bookworm Vending Machine. During the fundraising process, The Team received news that an anonymous donor was willing to cover half the cost of the vending machine, as long as it was installed in the

elementary school of their choice within the Alexandria school district. This donation enabled The Team to fundraise at least the amount required for one Bookworm Vending Machine and to begin generating funds for another for a different elementary school in the Alexandria School District. *The Chapters for a Change Team has been overwhelmed by their community's support during the fundraising efforts for the Bookworm Vending Machine, having raised the full \$10,000.*

D Donate to Community

D.1 Books and Basketball Raffle

The *Chapters for a Change* Team hosted a Books-and-Basketball Raffle during a highly anticipated boys-and-girls doubleheader, drawing a large audience. The Team gathered donations from the community to create a variety of prize baskets for the raffle. Local businesses in the Alexandria area, including Hook and Slice, The Dashery, Kindred People, Bazara, The Garden Bar on 6th, Ollie Birch, Pike & Pint, and Creative Touch Boutique, contributed raffle prizes. The raffle ticket prices were carefully created to attract the most buyers. The tickets were sold for one ticket at \$5, three tickets at \$10, or seven tickets at \$15. Community members were encouraged to buy as many as they wanted. The winners were announced during halftime of the second game, and the event and campaign were advertised numerous times by the game announcers. *The Books and Basketball Raffle reached more than 3,000 people, raffled \$500.00 worth of prizes, and raised \$205.00. The money raised from the raffle went directly toward the funding of a Bookworm Vending Machine.*



D.2 Book Donations

The *Chapters for a Change* Team worked with the community to gather gently used books for donation at all of their events.



Book Donations was not a singular event but rather occurred throughout the campaign. The Team collected several books for donation in their community through various channels, including social media, family and friends, and their own events. Community members who attended any of the *Chapters for a Change* events were encouraged to bring books that they were willing to donate. The books were collected and donated back to the community through various events hosted by The Team. Also, every student in the winning class in each grade during the *November Reading Race (E.2)* was awarded a brand new book. The Team used funds from local businesses to purchase brand-new books, and thanks to the kindness of Cherry Street Books, a local bookstore, The Team received a generous discount to help cover the cost. *With the help of the Alexandria community and local businesses, the Chapters for a Change Team successfully donated 1,072 books during their campaign.*

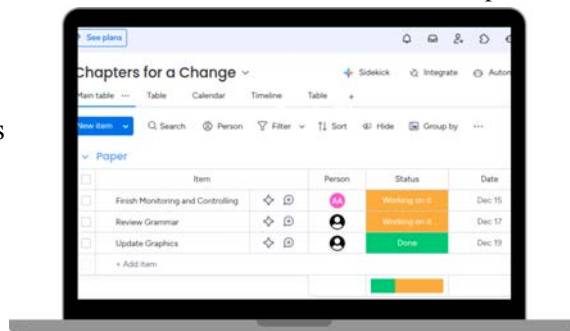
V. Monitoring and Controlling

A. Monitoring

To ensure success throughout the *Chapters for a Change* Campaign, it became essential for The Team to exercise comprehensive oversight of the project from start to finish. This was accomplished by carefully monitoring and controlling all aspects of the campaign through tools such as timelines, executive status reports, and Gantt charts. *These tools enabled The Team to keep the schedule, budget, and overall project quality on track with established key metrics.*

Schedule

In the early stages of the project, The Team acknowledged that structure and careful planning were essential for success. *The Community Awareness Team utilized a work operating system called Monday.com to assign tasks and set due dates.* Each member of The Team could view the task chart and calendar on their own device and update their status. Each task item could be classified as “Done,” “Working On It,” or “Stuck.” Members were then notified if their teammate needed help completing an item. This ensured that the project stayed organized and on track. The app displayed tables, calendars, and timelines, which established organization. Each member could fill the calendar with meetings, activities, and project deadlines. Monday.com sent frequent emails reminding members to complete tasks. *By utilizing a centralized, shared platform, The Team maintained open communication, stayed informed, and minimized the risk of issues that could delay or derail the project.* Regular updates and team check-ins were also held to promptly address emerging challenges, further enhancing the project's efficiency and cohesion.



Budget

Success in the *Chapters for Change* project did not depend on high expenses. When needed, The Team met with various local businesses not only to receive support but also to build lasting relationships within the community. The Team worked with generous local businesses, including *Geneva Capital, Bell Bank, and Pemberton Law*, to fund the high expense of the Bookworm Vending Machine. At the same time, support from *Cherry Street Books* and *Alexandria Industries* allowed The Team to provide four classes with brand-new books for each student. The Community Awareness Team also worked with local retail stores and restaurants to gather prizes for the Books and Basketball Raffle. The raffle baskets were filled with gift cards, apparel, and other items donated from *The Dashery, Kindred People, Bazara, The Garden Bar on 6th, Ollie Birch, Pike & Pint, Hook and Slice, and Creative Touch Boutique*. Shown in the Event Fundraising Tracker below are cash and in-kind donations for each activity that required funding, as well as the total amount funded for each activity.

Table 2: Event Fundraising Tracker

Activity	Donated Items	In-Kind Donations	Cash Donations	Total Amount Raised
Books & Basketball Raffle	Raffle Baskets	\$125.00	\$375.00	\$500.00
Bookworm Vending Machine Funding	Bookworm Vending Machine	-	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
November Reading Race	Winning Class Books	-	\$667.88	\$667.88
	Cookies	-	\$130.00	\$130.00
Book Bingo	Books (Library Book Bingo)	\$1,200.00	-	\$1,200.00
	Books (Elementary School Book Bingo)	\$2,000.00	-	\$2,000.00
Total:				\$14,497.88

Project Quality

To ensure a top-quality Community Awareness project was produced, the *Chapters for a Change* Team utilized various resources. The most beneficial tool The Team used was weekly status reports with local DECA leaders. *Regular monitoring of progress, timelines, and performance enabled The Team to identify challenges early, ensure tasks were completed in accordance with established standards, and maintain accountability among Team members.* Along with status reports, The Team found it crucial to identify risks, manage issues early, and prevent problems. To ensure changes did not negatively impact the project’s scope, timeline, or quality, The Team implemented a change control process to evaluate and approve any necessary adjustments before moving forward. *In addition, The Team met with the board members of the Alexandria DECA Foundation and with local DECA advisors and presidents to gather feedback on the project.* At the meetings, The Team asked questions about how to make the project successful and ensure it aligned with its goals. This allowed The Team to refine plans and evaluate risks, thereby supporting a higher-quality outcome. *Weekly status reports, board meetings, and a change-control process were essential to the campaign's overall quality.*

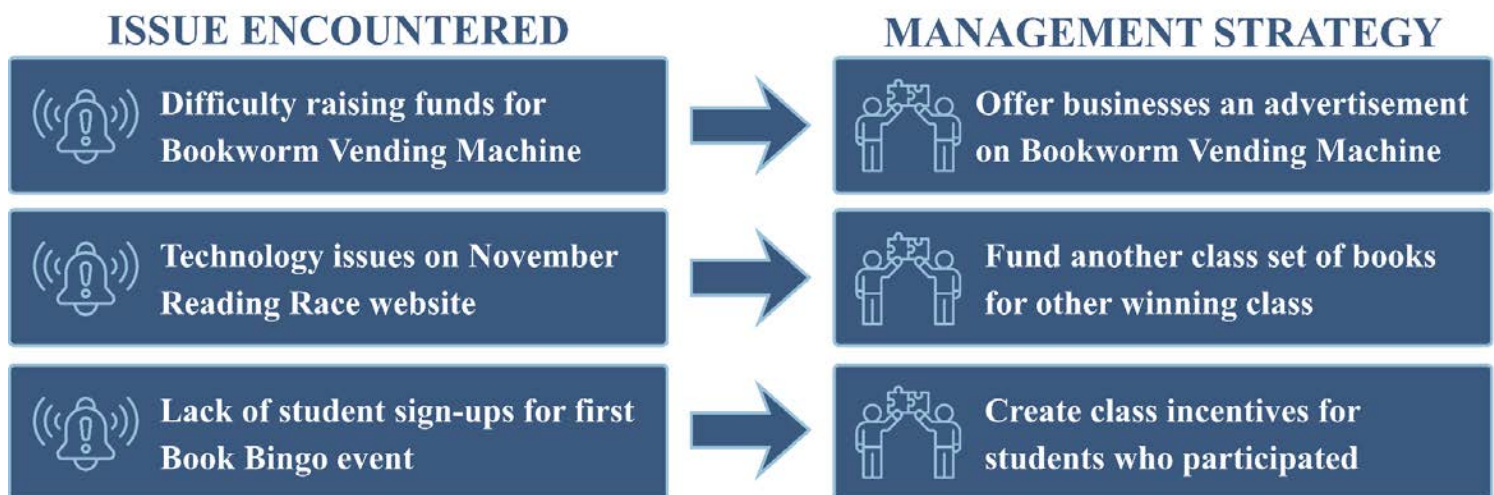


Change Control Process



B. Controlling

Throughout the *Chapters for a Change* Campaign, The Team effectively applied the control phase of the project management cycle to manage challenges, adapt strategies, and successfully achieve their set goals. Problems the Community Awareness Team encountered and resolved included difficulty raising funds for the Bookworm Vending Machine, technical issues on the November Reading Race website, and low student sign-ups for the first Book Bingo event.



VI. Closing the Project

A. Evaluation of Key Metrics

Evaluating the key metrics was essential to measuring the success of each event. Each event is considered successful if its KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) fall into the “good” or “excellent” categories. The chart below illustrates the success of each event, as measured by its selected KPI.

Activity	KPI	Poor	Good	Excellent	Evaluation
Public Reading	Individual Attendees	<50	50-75	>75	Excellent: 84 Attendees
Book Bingo	Individual Attendees	<100	100-200	>200	Excellent: 261 Attendees
Reading Race	Classes Participating	<10	10-20	>20	Excellent: 25 Classes
Bookmarks	Number Distributed	<35	35-60	>60	Poor: 31 Distributed
Bookworm Vending Machine	Funds Raised	<\$5,000	\$5,000-\$10,000	>\$10,000	Excellent: \$10,000 Raised
Basketball Raffle	Funds Raised	<\$150	\$150-\$300	>\$300	Good: \$205 Raised
Book Donations	Books Donated	<500	500-750	>750	Excellent: 1,072 Books

B. Lessons Learned

As the *Chapters for a Change* Team worked through the project, they encountered various challenges. The Team was able to face these challenges head-on thanks to the project management cycle and the helpful advice from their peers, DECA presidents, and DECA advisors.



Initiating: Throughout the initiating phase of the *Chapters for a Change* project, The Team gained a deeper understanding of the importance of effective communication in their work. Through numerous meetings, events, and preparation activities, The Team found that clear communication is vital to success between members and community partners. Communications Officer Erin Cross took responsibility for managing most of the Team's communications, ensuring they were well organized and streamlined. *By maintaining effective communication, The Team saved numerous hours that would otherwise have been spent gathering supplies, collecting information, and scheduling already-coordinated meetings.*





Planning and Organizing: Throughout the planning and organizing section of the *Chapters for a Change* project, The Team learned the importance of reaching out to those who feel a deep connection to the cause. *By collaborating with companies, individuals, and other organizations that felt a special connection to literacy, The Team made events feel even more heartfelt.* Because The Team worked with those who shared a similar passion for the mission, generous donations of money, time, resources, and advice were received. Additionally, meaningful relationships with several individuals were developed because they were willing to share their stories.

Execution: Throughout the execution section of the *Chapters for a Change* project, The Team recognized the importance of working together to create meaningful, well-run events. *By working together, The Team used their diverse knowledge, skills, and connections to create events the community could enjoy.* The Team found that by using their various skills together, they were able to run well-executed events and accomplish things they otherwise would not have been able to. The Team also learned that small events can go a long way. *For example, making bookmarks was a much smaller-scale event, but children loved it, and it allowed all members of The Team to connect with their community and have great one-on-one conversations with attendees.*



Monitoring and Controlling: Throughout the monitoring and controlling section of the *Chapters for a Change* project, The Team learned the importance of tracking the budget and timeline to stay on schedule. They realized how important it was to track every dollar spent, earned, or raised to maintain the project budget. *By doing so, The Team was able to stay on track and avoid spending or raising any excess money.* They also found the importance of following a specific timeline. By staying up to date on which events and preparations needed to be completed by a particular day, The Team ensured they would not fall behind on their tasks. *In doing so, they stayed on track with their campaign timeline, which also helped keep The Team organized and prepared for all upcoming events.*

C. Recommendations for Future Projects

Plan and Prepare Early

To stay ahead of events, meetings, and preparations, the *Chapters for a Change* Team recommends starting event planning as early as possible. The Team found that the events they held at the beginning of the project were better planned, better prepared, and better marketed than those held toward the end of the project, due to the longer preparation time for their earlier events. The *Chapters for a Change* Team also recommends starting early to help maintain a good balance between DECA, school, and personal life. With each member involved in sports and enrolled in multiple college courses, it was vital to get a head start to ensure balance. By having events at the beginning of the project, when schoolwork is lighter, maintaining a balanced life becomes much easier.



Ask Questions



The *Chapters for a Change* Team recommends asking many questions, speaking with experts, and gathering advice from others who have done similar activities or projects. The Team found that by asking good questions, they could run well-coordinated events and attract large turnouts. The Team also found that speaking with experts helped them better understand the community's issues and the best ways to address them. By gathering information from those with a higher level of understanding, they were best prepared for their events and ensured the community's enjoyment.

Organize a Middle School Book Bingo

Looking back on the *Chapters for a Change* project, the team regrets not organizing an event at Discovery Middle School, the only middle school in the Alexandria School District. Hosting a Book Bingo event at Discovery Middle School would have allowed The Team to reach more students and increase excitement for reading, introducing roughly 875 more students to the importance of reading. If The Team had had enough time to plan this event after coming up with the idea, they would have attempted to execute it; however, due to the lack of time remaining in the campaign, this was not possible. *The Team highly recommends that any future literacy-based projects organize this event, given its ability to reach so many people so easily and to make an impact on middle school readers in Alexandria.*



VII. Bibliography

Project Consultants	Paper Consultants	Internet Sites
• Claire Anderson: Alexandria Education Foundation Board Director • Tim Busch: Bell Bank Senior Vice President • Eric Hartmann: DECA Advisor • Megan Jacob: DECA Advisor • Krista Justice: Woodland Elementary Teacher • Ben Kvidt: Alexandria Area High School Activities Director • Lea Meyer: Ollie Birch Owner • Jon Olson: Alexandria Industries Chief Financial Officer • Emily Reigner: Cherry Street Books Owner • Mike Tripp: Geneva Capital Director of Portfolio • Mark Watkins: Geneva Capital Owner • Sarah Wethern: Douglas County Library Children's Director	• Brynn Cross: Former AAHS DECA Cabinet Member • Lillian Dutton: AAHS DECA President • Jacob Loween: AAHS DECA President • Ning Zhang: AAHS DECA President	• Above and Beyond • American Enterprise Institute • Forbes • Minnesota Department of Education • National Association for the Education of Young Children • Reading is Fundamental • Science Daily • U.S. News & World Report

VIII. Appendix

After successfully closing the *Chapters for a Change* project, the Team met with Claire Anderson and the board of directors of the Alexandria Education Foundation. *They personally expressed their gratitude and thanked The Team for all of their hard work and efforts.* Later, Claire Anderson, an Alexandria Education Foundation board member, sent The Team a heartfelt and thankful email.

Dear Lennon, Ava, and Erin,

On behalf of the Alexandria Education Foundation, I wanted to send a quick but sincere thank you to all three of you for your fundraising efforts for the Bookworm Vending Machine. What you accomplished is truly impressive, and everyone involved with our foundation is incredibly grateful.

It was clear from the start that your group was not just fundraising because you had to. You were organized, communicative, and truly committed to making it happen. Raising the full amount yourselves took real effort and teamwork, and you should be proud of that. Not every group follows through the way you did.

The best part is knowing that students will benefit from this for a long time. Every book that comes out of that machine will be a reminder of what you chose to do for your community. That's a pretty special impact.

Thank you again for your time, energy, and professionalism throughout the process. It was a pleasure working with you, and I hope you carry this same drive into your futures, where I am sure you will all find success.

Claire Anderson, YST Coordinator



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