



3104 W. 25th Street,  
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Cleveland, Ohio 44109  
[seedsofliteracy.org](http://seedsofliteracy.org)



**Our Mission**

To provide personalized education that empowers adults to succeed in their communities: *One student, one tutor at a time*



CELEBRATING  
**STUDENT SUCCESS  
& STAKEHOLDER IMPACT**

**THRIVE!**

Our new signature event highlights Seeds of Literacy student achievement and recognizes one outstanding Seeds stakeholder. Enjoy a delicious lunch and inspiring student speakers in a classic Cleveland venue with free parking. All proceeds support student instruction at Seeds of Literacy.

This year's *Thrive!* launches our Cultivator Impact Award, given to an individual or organization who has generously contributed significant resources to help our students, and Seeds, grow and *Thrive!*

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9**  
**NOON - 2PM**  
**UNION CLUB OF CLEVELAND**  
1211 Euclid Ave. Cleveland, OH 44115

**INDIVIDUAL TICKETS \$55**  
*Sponsorship Opportunities Available*  
[WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG](http://WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG)



PRESENTATION OF THE 2018  
CULTIVATOR IMPACT AWARD  
**WILLIAM LITZLER**

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**Eating the Frog First: CONQUERING MATH**

*"I didn't want to make a career out of earning my GED," said 2018 graduate David Miller. "So I made it my job."*

Getting pumped to go back and earn a high school equivalency wasn't easy. He'd tried it twice before but never finished. Life got in the way.

Dave had dropped out of school after 6th grade to start working. For 35 years, he performed back-breaking manual labor in the steel mills. Eventually the steel mills began shutting down their furnaces, leaving him out of work.

It finally felt like a good time to go back to school. "But I thought about it again for a solid month before I psyched myself up to go," he admitted. "I knew if I was going to do it, I was going to do it 100%. And that meant having the right mindset."

Dave changed a lot in his life to increase his chances for success. He eliminated his social life, and dedicated himself to class, setting a schedule that had him attending 6 hours a day, 4 days a week. And he did not rest on weekends. "At least 20 hours studying Friday through Sunday. Sometimes I studied 9am - 9pm," he said.

**EATING THE FROG**

Students always ask about the best order in which to take the tests. For some, they want to get the subjects they find easiest out of the way, building their confidence and their momentum along the way. In fact, there are currently 16 students at Seeds East who have passed all subjects EXCEPT for Math.

Dave had a different approach. He ate the frog first.

*Eating the frog* is an expression that means doing the hardest thing first, the most challenging, the thing that scares you the most. For Dave, that was Math.

"I didn't want an uphill battle," he said. "So I started with the hardest part, knowing it would only get easier."

He spent 3 months studying full-time for the Math portion of the GED. "I went into attack mode. And I attacked Math."

**WHEN EACH QUIZ IS A STRUGGLE**

Despite the 24 hours a week he spent in tutoring, 20+ hours a week at home on the internet, attending extra sessions, and talking to those who had taken and passed the tests, Dave admitted that he still lacked confidence with Math.

"At no point did I feel comfortable," he said. "Each mastery quiz was a struggle. It was always a surprise when I passed. When I passed the practice test, I was convinced it was a mistake and I was not ready to take the real thing."

More than once, Dave argued with himself and pushed himself to continue. He knew he had to keep moving to finish Math — the hardest part — and the rest would be easier.

When the time finally came to take the official GED Math test, he waited anxiously for the results. A system glitch delayed Dave's results for several days, so he simply returned to class and asked for more math packets. "Of course I was convinced I'd failed," he said.

He was wrong. He passed.

Dave went on to tackle Science, Social Studies, and Reading Language Arts with the same strategies as he had used with Math. And he was right, it got easier.

Dave Miller was one of 57 graduates in 2018. He wore a cap and gown for the ceremony in June.

He's now an ambassador for Seeds, participating in a leadership program, talking to new students at Orientation, and attending community events to tell others about the program.

This fall, his job hunt will begin. "I did hard labor for decades, and now I want to find a job that doesn't kill my back," he said. He's working on his resume, and with a GED in hand, his options are no longer limited.



Dave recently shared his math strategies with students who were struggling. Read the complete article at [seedsofliteracy.org](http://seedsofliteracy.org).



## Dear Friends,

If you've been reading our blog and following us on social media, you've seen all the incredible things Seeds has been up to this summer.

A year ago, we took an important step by doubling our staff. It has paid off, as evidenced by our **record-setting graduation**, the **national research projects** that

are in the works, and a staff that continues to innovate. (Just check out our last issue of this newsletter!)

**Unfortunately, not all of the news I have to share is good.** We lost a major source of annual funding.

For the last four years, this particular funding was the primary support for our growing Seeds East location, located in an area of desperate need with **illiteracy rates from 85-95%**.

What's particularly puzzling about the State's decision (*detailed on the opposite page*) is that it was based on our PROGRAM MODEL, which happens to be award-winning, proven successful, and one that hasn't changed in 20 years.

Sending further mixed signals, Seeds was then selected as one of only 15 nonprofits in Ohio to be profiled for our good work by Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted.

Some organizations would have received this news and had the knee-jerk reaction to make changes, or worse, make cuts. Some organizations wouldn't have had a choice.

## FOUR NEW CLUBS

Seeds has launched a series of learning clubs — *one for every day of the week*. **Math Club, Writing Club, Book Club, and Computer Club** have provided a social component and positive reinforcement of what students learn one-to-one with tutors. Clubs are open to all students and tutors are encouraged to participate.

To the delight of participants, award-winning playwright **Eric Coble** met with the Book Club after members read *Ten Minutes from Cleveland*, his series of short plays. \*



## MEDIA DARLINGS

2018 Grad **Tyrell Chandler** captivated the host and audience with his journey from incarceration to education on the *PlayaT Hollywood In Da Hood Show*.

Grad **David Miller** (*cover*), appeared on WKYC's *Live on Lakeside* to discuss his journey from drop out to Student Recruiter.

VIEW BOTH ON [WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG](http://WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG). \*



My staff and I remain confident in the knowledge that our model works, and it works for people who simply did not succeed in other programs. We see it every day.

We doubled-down on our commitment to the success of one-to-one tutoring. We've proudly proclaimed that *different* is good and that each student's education should be as unique as they are—and should suit their unique needs, challenges, and schedules.

**We don't want to change what works. And our program works.**

But with that commitment, we know we must fill a very large annual funding gap. And we know we can't do it alone.

Seeds has always maintained a diverse funding stream, so while this loss hurts us, **it will not end us**. We immediately reached out to our largest foundation supporters seeking emergency funds, and asked all major donors to consider increasing their gifts.

I'm relieved to say that these supporters demonstrated how much they believe in Seeds, and in the very short term, we're going to be ok. Unfortunately, this is a three-year funding cycle for the State, so we won't have the opportunity to apply again until 2021 (at the earliest), and this loss will be acutely felt.

This means we need your support more than ever. **We don't want our students to feel any impact from our funding loss. They face enough challenges and worries in their lives — the security of Seeds shouldn't be one of them.**

I am proud of each and every one of our students — and I thank you, for you are the reason their success is possible.

*Bonnie Entler*

Bonnie Entler, Executive Director

## STUDENTS LEARN LEADERSHIP

In early April, Seeds of Literacy students, tutors, and staff participated in a leadership training through Value USA. During the training, students discussed what it means to be a leader and how they can become leaders to help Seeds grow.



The group's first project focused on community outreach and student recruitment. They worked with Bob McFeeley to attend community events, speak with new students during orientation, and act as tour guides during Seeds' Open House (9/26). For many, this was not only their first opportunity to experience public speaking, but it was also their first experience attending regular meetings that follow an agenda, complete with action items.

"Not only does this help Seeds, but this experience is a fantastic addition to any resume," McFeeley explained. "Plus, their stories inspire others! They are our best ambassadors." \*

## FROM THE COVER POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE



The Class of 2018 was Seeds' largest since the test changed in 2014 — with an incredible 57 graduates, some of whom passed their final subject *just hours* before graduation! Twenty attended the ceremony, which also celebrated the efforts of tutors and volunteers. Trustee, committee member, and long-time tutor **MARK YANOCHKO** received the **Outstanding Volunteer Award**. **JOHN BURKE** received the Arthur Zammikiel **Tutor of the Year Award** for embodiment of what it means to be an exceptional tutor. **Ohio Senator** for the 21st District, **SANDRA WILLIAMS**, gave the keynote address.\*

## NATIONAL RESEARCHERS WORK WITH SEEDS

### Motivational Texts

ProLiteracy and Syracuse University selected Seeds for a project to determine the impact of weekly encouraging text messages on student attendance. Following the first text, Seeds had 43 text conversations with students we might not have heard from otherwise! The study concludes in 2019.

### Knight Foundation

Seeds has continued its work with The Cleveland Foundation and the John S. & James L. Knight Foundation. The study has sponsored ads, interviews, and surveys to bridge informational gaps about adult literacy. For Cleveland Book Week and National Literacy Month in September, The Cleveland Foundation promoted and sponsored Open Houses at both Seeds locations, exposing more members of the community to Seeds of Literacy.\*



## State Stops Funding Seeds Despite Success

The State of Ohio STOPPED FUNDING Seeds of Literacy as of July 1, 2018 — reducing the organization's operating budget by a staggering 14%.

Since 2014, Seeds has received State funding through the ASPIRE program, administered by the Ohio Department of Higher Education. This funding supported Seeds East, located in Cleveland's Mt. Pleasant neighborhood where adult functional illiteracy rates are as high as 85%, and surrounding areas are above 90%.

"This news comes on the heels of **a year of outstanding outcomes for Seeds**," explains Development Director Jo Steigerwald. "Last fiscal year, we had a 138% increase in graduates from the prior year, and the highest number since the GED test changed to a computerized test in 2014. Students achieved 660 grade level increases, and 166 students passed a total of 244 sections of the official GED."

### THE RATIONALE

Despite these record-setting outcomes that clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Seeds of Literacy model, the State based their decision on two main points.

#### (1) Instructional Model: one-to-one vs. traditional classroom and ongoing enrollment vs. managed enrollment

- At Seeds, instruction is customized for each student using a one-to-one tutoring method, offering three tutoring class sessions, four days per week, with unlimited attendance opportunities, year-round. This structure is known as *open enrollment*.
- The State mandates *managed enrollment*: a classroom-style instruction method, with designated start and stop dates, such as an 8-week session that meets on Tuesdays from 2pm – 5 pm.

#### (2) Distance Education accessed by a computer

- 84% of Seeds students live at, or below, the poverty line and do not have reliable computer and internet access. This is evident as 65% of incoming Seeds students do not have *even the most basic computer skills*. Seeds includes digital literacy education as part of the curriculum, and has found that the students learn best with one-to-one, in-person instruction for computer skills.
- The State mandates that Seeds offer computer-based instruction that *replicate its curricula* as part of its distance education component, so students could work from home online. "But without computers, internet access, and basic instruction on how to use technology, our students would not benefit from this type of educational component," Steigerwald stated.

"Because these requirements don't make sense for our students and their success, we don't provide them," explained Steigerwald. "Interestingly, the State has known about our model since they first awarded the funding, and we've shared successful outcomes ever since."



### THE IMPACT

Since the decision was announced, Seeds has reached out to its long-time foundation supporters and small individual donor base.

"We are committed to staying true to our mission," Steigerwald stated. "And this means serving our students in the best way possible — *our proven method of one-to-one tutoring*."

**"You can help us continue to operate as we have, despite this loss of critical funding, by making a financial contribution,"** she continued. "Every donation means we can continue without sacrificing the method that is critical to the success of our students." \* **KKucera**

(Photo L to R) 2018 Graduate **Dionne Lobban**, **Jo Steigerwald** and Trustee **George Miller** accompanied Executive Director **Bonnie Entler** to the State House in Columbus to attempt to appeal the funding decision. **The decision was not reversed.**)