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Local Kids Join Forces to Creatively Impact Kids’ Physical Health and Education

*Student-Led Online Tutoring KID BY KID and DISTANT DANCERS*

*Partner with a Twist in Supporting Local Kids*

**San Diego, CA –** Over the past year with the mandate of social distancing, distance learning, and the many other institutional changes aimed at grappling with children’s education and health, an untapped resource – Kids – team up to teach timetables and the Two-Step. ‘Kid By Kid’, a non-profit founded in 2018 by Daxton Gutekunst, conducts weekly 1-on-1 free online tutoring to some of San Diego’s underserved communities comprising Immigrant, Refugee and ESL students. In September 2020, ‘Kid By Kid’ expanded its repertoire and reach with the partnership of ‘Distant Dancers’. The six-month alliance of these two student-led organizations is providing kids in the community with an academic lifeline, while also promoting mental and physical health through the prism of dance.

Gutekunst, a sophomore at The Bishop’s School, notes, “Since ‘Kid By Kid’s shift from in-person meetings in Spring 2020, demand has been tremendous with our online program reaching a milestone of 2500 tutoring hours. The coordination of so many 1-on-1 lessons is very telling as kids struggle to catch up, and keep up, academically.” Much has been written about mental and physical health during this time of distance learning: increased academic pressure, social and physical isolation, more screen time and less sleep cumulatively take an unhealthy toll on kids. When approached by ‘Distant Dancers’ in the Fall with their idea to integrate exercise and dance into ‘Kid By Kid’s tutoring platform, Gutekunst leaped at the idea to collaborate.

‘Distant Dancers’ founders Isabella Haack and Alena Callahan, two Juniors at Francis Parker School and lifelong dancers, were struck with the idea of creating a virtual dance class as the subject of their NHS Project, so that kids in the San Diego community could connect and unwind through dance despite the Pandemic. Haack notes, “With the recent transition to online school, we believe an exercise break is more important now than ever. We hope kids can take a break from the chaos of the world and focus on their mental and physical health through an artistic lens!”

Callahan adds, “Our greatest hope was to inspire at least one child to dance, and to spread some light and joy during these dark times. We have exceeded our own expectations having grown from no students at all - to having double-digits in each class with kids from across the San Diego community. More kids come each time so we added a second class!” Indeed, Distant Dancers keeps kids engaged and coming back with changing weekly themes for their group classes; Disney, Rock & Roll, Tik Tok to name a few. Distant Dancers’ nine student-instructors are well-versed in many styles of dance and are able to teach anything from ballet to hip hop to jazzy routines. Incorporation of stretching, Simon Says dance patterns, freeze dance, combinations, and even song-requests, allows instructors to adapt to kids’ needs by creating on-demand choreography based on the group.

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Kid By Kid and Distant Dancers work as follows:

* Parents of ‘Learners’ fill out a registration form, located on the ‘Kid By Kid’ website: https://www.kidbykid.org/become-a-learner; this includes the child’s particulars, subjects child needs help with, child interests, and any special needs or circumstances.
* Middle and High School student ‘Tutors’, mainly drawn from ‘Kid By Kid’ Service Clubs within individual schools, register and receive training via proprietary videos and open-source educational content: https://www.kidbykid.org/become-a-tutor
* The Kid By Kid Team conducts a one-on-one pairing process to best match Learner and Tutor experience and mutual interests. Once pairings are determined, ‘KidByKid.org’ coordinates communication, online lessons and the Learner’s parent or guardian is present during the tutoring session to facilitate the lesson / appointment.
* Any child wishing to directly register with Distant Dancers can join their FREE weekly classes @ 11:00am on Saturdays, following Kid By Kid lessons, as well as 4:00pm on Fridays by contacting them through email for the zoom link.

Parents of ‘Kid By Kid’ Learners are pleased with ‘Distant Dancers’ too, with comments like, “Emile says she and her brother enjoy seeing other kids and just dancing and having fun”, from Mrs. Zacarias. While Mrs. Catalan, mother of four, asks, “What other classes can the kids take? They like this program and they are asking me what other classes they can enjoy?” The back-to-back lessons on Saturday (Academic Tutoring then Dance Instruction) represents a block of constructive time that kids look forward to, and for that reason, so too do parents.

‘Distant Dancers’ Isabella Haack notes, “These kids inspire us. They dance simply because they enjoy it, and they remind us to not care about what anyone else thinks of you, but to simply do things that make you happy. They encourage us to try new things and put ourselves out there. We have learned so much by teaching them, and are so grateful to see their smiling faces every Saturday.” Alena Callahan adds, “I love when the kids dance along with us with not a care in the world. It’s really cool to have such a big influence, even if it’s just for 40 minutes a week.”

Their shared goal of helping kids – mind and body – is the foundation for this unique, student-led partnership: where the joy of learning and just having fun being kids permeates every lesson. Gutekunst says he has found San Diego’s Middle and High School students to be keenly aware of many of the obstacles challenging their community. “Combined with our desire to make a positive contribution to future outcomes within the world in which we live, we students represent a huge, untapped resource for change. It is this energy, motivation and level of optimism that power so many student-led organizations who realize, we too, can impact an outcome.” ‘Kid By Kid’ and ‘Distant Dancers’, a nice duet.

# *About Kid By Kid*

*Kid By Kid is kids helping kids. A 501(c)3 organization founded in 2018, KBK’s solution enables Middle and High School students (Tutor / Mentors) to provide life-changing academic opportunity, support, and assistance to under-served Elementary and Middle School-aged immigrant, refugee, and ESL students (Learners).*

**Distant Dancers** NHS Project: Young dancers connecting kids from different communities through online dance classes during the Pandemic.