What happens to a dream deferred? Dreams don’t get deferred in the classrooms of Anna Martinez Williams and Melanie Moffat.

Anna and Melanie, two Advanced Placement (AP) educators at Utah’s Park City High School (PCHS) are outside the box thinkers, and advocates for outside the box academic excellence, particularly for Latinx and ESL students. They’re the brain trust behind the PCHS DREAM BIG program; a program that has increased the enrollment of Latinx and ESL students in critical and competitive high school courses and rewritten the script on the abilities of and opportunities provided for bilingual youth.

There are those that feel students who struggle with English cannot excel in AP courses; a mentality leading to inherent disenfranchisement, limiting lower income students’ access and chances for acceptance to top colleges and universities. Anna and Melanie are thinking much bigger than that. They refuse to let their students be intimidated by complex courses nor let their status as English as a Second Language (ESL) deter them from achieving at their highest potential.

When Melanie noticed that enrollment of Latinx students was low and basically non-existent in Park City High’s AP courses, she made a first-hand commitment to address the problem. Pairing up with Anna, the two created a program and successful outreach and educational model that has caught statewide attention in Utah, and can hopefully be implemented nationwide.

DREAM BIG is an eight-week summer program, created and led by the two educators and proud NEA members, designed to enhance learning for students by giving them access to the academic language and study skills necessary to be successful in college-prep classes at PCH, as well as the ability to apply those skills to college coursework. DREAM BIG also provides students with the social and emotional stability needed to be successful in the courses they will be enrolled in. DREAM BIG prepares students for entrance exams to institutions of higher education as well, such as the ACT exam. The highlight of DREAM BIG is the overnight college field trip that students enrolled are able to take, to effectively see themselves as college students, in the dorms and on an actual college campus. DREAM BIG has had a significant impact on the academic achievement of Latinx and ESL students at PCHS and they have the date to prove it. As one example, in 2016 there were no Latinx students enrolled in AP Science at PCHS, yet in 2020 the school proudly shares an 86% enrollment of Latinx students in the course.

In all of their efforts Anna and Melanie, active members in their local Park City Education Association, have shown their passion for teaching and their commitment to the most marginalized of students. A former student of DREAM BIG, now a student at Utah State University, said this of Williams and Moffat “…they make us feel loved, capable, intelligent, valued and dignified. It was through my interactions with [them] that I first discovered that being bilingual was an asset and not a deficit.”