There's a new store in Nome

Let Us Buy is the name of a new school store created and run by special education students at Nome-Beltz High School. Let Us Buy started as a conversation in October of 2016 between Jill Peters, Nome Special Education Teacher, and Amy Parker, Fairbanks DVR counselor.



Liam Hukill, store manager, and Raichel Sahlin model the shirts they designed for Let Us Buy

Jill took the idea of a school store back to her students, who quickly jumped at the possibility and the idea became reality in no time. Jill's students were participating in a work readiness class at the time and the opportunity to experience a hands-on class project excited the students.

The first step was to get permission from the school's principal. The class worked on a business plan that included location, products, and pricing. Each student participated in presenting a part of the business plan to school officials in what Jill called a "mini-Shark Tank."


Jason making change at Let Us Buy

Once the students received permission to open a store, the real work began. Each student had to apply and interview for a position in the store. Liam Hukill was hired as store manager. Other students took positions in sales, as buyers, or inventory control.

The students had to research the products they were going to sell: snacks, school supplies, and spirit wear. They also had to figure out how to order and price the products in order to ensure the store made a profit and remained sustainable.

Amy Parker, the DVR counselor serving Nome, supplied start-up funding for this student led enterprise using DVR's Pre-Employment Transitions Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS funds are designated for projects that help prepare students with disabilities to transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment.


Let Us Buy staff - Jonathan, Monica, Eddie, Steven, Liam, Nick, Raichel and teacher Jill Peters

Let Us Buy opened in April of this year and made a profit of $850 during its first 5 weeks in operation. However, it is not the money or work readiness skills the students are learning that has made the biggest impact. According to Jill, "There is nothing more rewarding than to see my students feeling pride, ownership and responsibility. And I love that it's the Special Education students that are doing something really cool that everyone wishes they could be a part of! You should see their excitement every time someone buys something they picked out."

You can find out more about DVR's Pre-Employment Transition Services at: http://labor.alaska.gov/dvr/transition.htm