



## ARIZONA CHARACTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION Mini-Grant Evaluation

**As part of your acceptance of an Arizona Character Education Foundation mini-grant, you agreed to submit a written report within 30 days after the completion of your project or the 2009-2010 fiscal year, whichever comes first. Failure to do so will jeopardize your school's ability to receive future grant funding. This report should include the following:**

Contact Name: Karen O'Keefe

School Name: Sunburst Elementary

School District: Washington Elementary School District

Address: 14218 N. 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Glendale, Arizona 85306

Telephone number: (602)896-6406

Email: karen.okeefe@wesdschools.org

**Project Description** *What was it you were hoping to accomplish as it relates to CHARACTER COUNTS!? Include information on the number of students impacted, a description of your implementation/integration process, your communications with your community at large, and how you're sustaining your project.*

Sunburst's mini-grant's main focus was upon parent involvement. We wanted our parents or families to truly understand the Character Counts program and be able to support our efforts at home. To that end, we planned events which brought the families to school and then provided separate activities for the parents and the students. Parents attended workshops about Character Counts and students saw a Character Counts presentation or played educational games while they waited for their parents.

Though the three family activities were different, we used the same process to organize the event, advertise the event to the community, and run the event. The mini grant coordinator would first schedule the event on the school and district calendars and then set up the event presentations. After the presentations were set, people to help with the event were recruited. Sunburst teachers were asked to help as well as very reliable community partners and volunteers. Once these people were in place, advertising for the event began by first placing it on the monthly Sunburst calendar that went home at the start of each month and then by including short articles about the upcoming event in the biweekly parent newsletters. One week before the event, a full page flier would go home with the students and the school's marquee would have the event posted. Students began hearing about the event one week before it was held on the announcements. Then a raffle ticket would go home the day before or the day of the event.

At each event, dinner or snack was served first. Then the students stayed where the food was served and the parents moved to the library. The parents signed in when they came to the library, received the parent bookmarks and other Character Counts information provided by the presenters. That presentation lasted 45 – 60 minutes long. Students were supervised during that time and, as was said before, either

watched a Character Counts presentation by Big Mouth or played educational games. At the end, raffle prizes were drawn.

Approximately, 230 people attended the first night family event, 30 people attended the second night event and only 12 people attended the afternoon family event. Sunburst newsletter articles were written about each family event. Articles were also submitted to the Arizona Republic for publication, but actual publication was never guaranteed.

Beside the family events, Sunburst also involved parents and community members in its first Character Counts Career Day. Teachers were first asked if they wanted to participate in the day. Then parents and community members were contacted and asked if they would be willing to present. When they responded positively, they were sent a possible outline for their presentation which included questions about the character traits they thought most important to their profession. 490 students saw three different presentations. Articles about the Career Day were submitted to the Sunburst newsletter as well as to the Arizona Republic.

Finally, Sunburst extended its implementation of the Character Counts program by concentrating on students doing random acts of kindness. A teacher coordinated the Kindness Wall. She explained the program to the teachers first. Then throughout the year, teachers nominated students for the Wall because of kind acts they displayed. Bricks were placed on the wall and the students received incentives funded by the Arizona Character Education Foundation and several other community partners. Each parent newsletter featured Kindness Wall students who were awarded multiple bricks or who had done something very special as in donating their hair to Locks of Love.

**Activities Planned** *Describe your activities including your objectives and outcomes.*

#### Family Events

Our first family event on January 27<sup>th</sup> was the best attended. BigMouth has presented at our school in the past and the students truly enjoy them. After a free barbecue supper sponsored by one of our community partners, students watched a BigMouth presentation in the cafeteria supervised by teachers, and parents attended a BigMouth parent workshop in the library. Parents learned about the origins of Character Counts and how they are truly their students' role models when it comes to character. The parents received several handouts about Character Counts, bookmarks, and parent Character Counts booklets. Educational board games were handed out as raffle prizes.

The second family event on April 1<sup>st</sup> was not as well attended as the first. Free pizza, salad, and drinks were served by Sunburst volunteers in the cafeteria to begin the night. Then students played educational bingo games such as addition bingo and sight word bingo. Community partners, retired teachers, and volunteers ran the different bingo games. The parents once again went to the library and again listened to Todd McIntyre of BigMouth. His presentation was a bit different this time as he explained more about the six pillars of good character. Parents once again received handouts and bookmarks. Raffle prizes of educational board games were again handed out.

The third family event was scheduled for a time right after school let out on May 6<sup>th</sup>. There had been two night activities already so we wanted to try a different time to see if we would reach a different group of people. We were hoping that people who usually picked up their students would stay for a one hour presentation. We offered free ice cream for the participants which we thought would bring in a lot of families. Unfortunately, only four families participated... Two teachers conducted the parent workshop while a volunteer played board games with the students in the back of the room. The parents who were there truly participated in the workshop this time as the presenters asked them to go through each character trait and explain how they go about teaching it at home. These activities were shared amongst the participants and then the newsletter article written about the event included the parents' suggestions. Their comments and suggestions showed that they did understand the concepts behind Character Counts which is the outcome we wanted!

## Character Counts Career Day

The first Sunburst Character Counts Career Day was held on May 14<sup>th</sup>. The intent was to have parents and community members talk about their careers and also talk about how certain character traits help them to be successful in those careers. There were fifteen presenters who saw a total of 490 students: a fireman, three policemen, a zookeeper, a sleep disorder specialist, a fitness manager, a costume designer, a hair stylist, a McDonald's manager, an auto body repair specialist, a dental hygienist a painter, a biologist and a grant writer. From student and teacher comments, the day was a huge success. The presenters also felt it was successful and asked to be contacted again. Ideas for other presenters next year also flowed into the coordinator after the first Career Day was done.

## Kindness Wall

The Kindness Wall was coordinated by a second grade teacher who had initially been on the Discipline Committee which chose Character Counts as a means to improve student behavior at school. During the first weeks of school, she handed out a packet of information to the teachers about the Wall, explaining that we would like to reward students who are caring towards others, students who display "random acts of kindness." The teacher packet included bricks on which the teachers wrote the nominees' names and why they were nominated. The coordinator would then fill out a certificate for the students and recognize them in class. The students would also receive a pencil and their bricks would go up on the Kindness Wall.

Word of the Kindness Wall spread throughout the community through the parent newsletters and through visitors to our school. Each newsletter had a "Kindness Korner" in which we highlighted students with multiple bricks or students who had done something very special as such donating their hair to Locks of Love. Because of these articles and because the Wall is displayed in the main hallway, people started contacting the school about sponsoring the wall. At the end of the school year, the District Office Prevention Department and the Metro Lions Club bought more pencils and certificates for the honored students. 135 students were honored during the school year.

**Evaluation** *How effective was your program/project in educating your students, school and/or community about CHARACTER COUNTS!? What did they learn? Include your evaluation design used to quantify your results. What can you do to make it better should you decide to do it again? What went right? What went wrong?*

## Project Evaluation

The Sunburst mini grant indicated that the program would be evaluated using the end-of-the year discipline statistics and Second Step test results. It stated that at the end of our first year of Character Counts implementation our discipline referrals dropped from 652 to 434. Our 2009-2010 second year goal was to see a 10% decrease in referrals, possibly due to the different components funded with the grant – parent workshops, Career Day, and the Kindness Wall. We did achieve that goal! In fact, there were only 291 referrals, a 32% decrease instead of a 10% decrease! This is not to say that the grant components actually caused the additional decrease, but they may have had an effect.

Second Step test results also showed a favorable result. Of the students who took both the pre and post tests in second grade – fifth grade, an average of 81% increased their post test scores over their pre test scores. That indicates that students learned through their Second Step program and through Character Counts to make better choices and to think about alternate ways to solve problems.

In order to evaluate the Kindness Wall, we were hoping to pull discipline referral counts per teacher and compare those counts to the number of Kindness Wall nominees per teacher. The referrals could not be compiled in that manner, but they could be compiled per grade level. The comparison did not, however, did not establish a clear-cut correlation between the Wall and the referrals. For instance, the grade level which nominated the most students for the Kindness Wall had the second highest referral rate. The

grade level with the highest referral rate, though, only nominated five students for the Wall so that does provide "food for thought."

Originally district student and parent survey results were to be included in this evaluation. The results of those surveys are not back as of today.

What went right? What went wrong?

Character Counts is an excellent program which we can teach at school and reinforce in many ways. The goal of having our families reinforce what we teach at school, whether it be good character or reading or math, is a lofty one. It would be so helpful to us and to the students, but parents/families are busy. Coming to school at night to learn about character is not always easy for them as many try to juggle two jobs or take two students to soccer and one to guitar lessons. Offering them free food helped the first family night, but it did not help the second family night. Offering it at a different time other than at night did not work either... We need to find a time that would work well for everyone and that, too, is a lofty goal!

There must also be support from the staff. Before any grant like this is written, staff members need to be consulted and actually signed up to help. This did not happen this time around and it was extremely difficult to find any help at all.

**Budget Detail** *List your expenses including a description, cost and how it was used in your activities.*

#### BigMouth Presentations

BigMouth presented to our students at the first family night event on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Money from PTO paid for that presentation. Todd McIntyre of BigMouth conducted the parent workshop that night in the library. Money from the Arizona Character Education Foundation mini grant funded his part of the night.

\$250.00

#### Target Purchase Order

Raffle prizes were given away at the end of the each family night. Educational games were purchased at Target for those prizes.

\$185.00

#### Costco Purchase Order

Meals and snacks were purchased for the family nights as well as paper goods on which to serve the meals and snacks. For the first family night, water was purchased for the participants as the rest of the meal was sponsored by Pure Heart Christian Fellowship. For the second family night, we purchased all the food (pizza, salad, salad dressing) and all the paper goods.

\$200.00

Positive Promotions

Pencils for the Kindness Wall honorees were purchased through Positive Promotions as well as the parent bookmarks which had many parenting tips on them. These bookmarks were handed out after each family event.

\$115.00

TOTAL: \$750.00

**Documentation**      See the following pages.