

Lawrence Funderburke Youth Organization
César Chávez Intermediate School
Sacramento City Unified School District
Sacramento, California

Program Evaluation

Beginning in September, 2001, the Lawrence Funderburke Youth Organization implemented its highly successful, *Are You a Positive One or a Negative Zero* program, at César Chávez Intermediate School. With generous donations from Wells Fargo Bank and others, Mr. Funderburke and principal Norm Tanaka believed that the students at Chávez could benefit both academically and socially from participating in this after school program. The goals were fivefold:

1. Develop skills to promote self-esteem.
2. Increase academic levels.
3. Expose youth to positive influences from selected people and environments.
4. Develop positive peer relationships through youth interaction with adult guidance.
5. Decrease negative attitudes toward school.

Under the direction of Jodi Borderieux, fifteen students from Chávez, in grades four through six participated in classroom instruction, listened to guest speakers and took field trips. The students were required to keep journals documenting their experiences. Classroom teachers were asked to fill out Progress Reports on the Positive One students on a weekly basis. Mr. Tanaka tracked students' academic progress using national standardized tests and Open Court Assessment for Reading. He tracked their behavioral progress with the weekly Progress Reports, Office Referral Reports and comments from teachers. Finally, the comments from the students themselves illustrate how they benefited from the program.

Skill development to promote self-esteem included interacting with peers, interacting with adults, presenting information and taking leadership roles in group situations. Most of the students demonstrated more self-confidence, but for some, this development is measured in small gains. For example, one boy who was pointed out as being shy and withdrawn before becoming a Positive One student, now takes the initiative in groups and no longer stands against the wall looking down during group activities.

In the area of increasing academic levels, the results were impressive. On three measures of reading, seven students improved on all three; seven students improved on two and one student improved on one. Prior to the program 6% of the Positive One students read on grade level; after the program, 57% of them read on grade level. This compares with the overall population of Chávez that had 40% of the students reading on grade level at the end of the school year.

In an effort to provide students with positive influences, one of the most enjoyable experiences for the students involved the “Slamson Skit.” Using the team mascot from the Sacramento Kings, students were shown how to make the right choices about drugs, using time wisely and completing homework based on the principles and values taught in the Positive One program. Guest speakers who related real-life successes and field trips to a university are two other examples of providing positive influences for the Positive One students.

Developing satisfying peer relationships is as important for children as it is for adults. The most dramatic gains that students made, according to Mr. Tanaka, was in the area of behavior. Prior to the program, seven of the Positive One students had referrals for behavior problems, including one with eleven referrals and who also had an individual behavior contract listing five separate behavior problems. After six months of participating in the program, only three students had a referral for a single behavior problem, and four had no referrals for behavior problems. The student with eleven referrals was one of those four. Mr. Tanaka states, “I have never seen anything like it.”

Finally, the program’s efforts to affect the negative attitudes that many students have toward school elicited remarkable results. In interviews with the students, many recalled specific lessons such as “Four Quarters” which prompted the students to think of themselves as an investment. It uses an analogy of inflation to demonstrate that remaining static will decrease their value just as a static monetary investment will decrease its value. One girl proudly stated that she knew how to “write a check and balance the checkbook because I learned how in this class and it was fun.”

Parental feedback mirrored teacher’s comments. They report that their children’s behavior at home has improved, that they talk more about school and relate their achievements in class and in the Positive One program. The parents are happy with the results and hope the program continues.

Mr. Tanaka’s overall assessment of the success of the program lies in its emphasis on relationships with teachers. “This is a program that has found a way to become more involved with teachers.” When asked if the teachers objected to filling out reports each week, which was extra work for them, he replied that no teacher objected. He stated that they were impressed with Mr. Funderburke’s commitment to the students and the program, and that is what fueled their commitment and involvement. Although the participants received rewards for participating, such as clothing and attending Kings’ basketball games and meeting the players, he reports that the students constantly ask when Mr. and Mrs. Funderburke are returning to the school, but they never ask what reward they are going to get.

Mr. Tanaka also states that student improvement is related to the focus and intensity of the program, but also cites the motivational speeches by Mr. Funderburke and others as having a lasting effect on the students. It is clear that the involvement of the teachers, staff, Mr. Tanaka and the Funderburkes, as well as the well-planned program

initiatives, are responsible for the gains the students made and the overall success of the program.

STATISTICS

César Chávez Intermediate School houses grades 4, 5 and 6. Demographically, the 387 students break down as follows:

37% Hispanic, 22% Southeast Asian, 20% African American, 7% white, 14% other

Positive One students included:

7 fourth graders

5 fifth graders

3 sixth graders

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FLUENCY COMPREHENSION VOCABULARY

% of Positive One
Students Showing
Improvement:

100%

79%

64%

% of All Students
in Chávez
Excluding Positive
One Students

% Showing

Improvement:

76%

72%

62%

% of Positive One Students Reading on Grade Level:

Before Program

After Program

6%

57%

% of All Students in Chávez Excluding Positive One Students Reading on Grade Level at End of Year:

40%