

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

School Culture

Social Emotional Learning

More Than a Fundraiser

Implementation Description

In the fall of 2021, Wilmington School of the Arts (WSA) Community Collaborative Network hosted a fundraiser to meet practical needs for their school. Rather, than utilizing traditional fundraising strategies, the school used this opportunity to create a service mindset in their students. The fundraiser had two goals: to raise money for a new front awning and a school sign at the new location and to create a culture of kindness. While the financial portion of the fundraiser was successful, the biggest positive outcome was how the acts of kindness mindset became a part of the school culture and has continued throughout the year.

Working with a company called [Raise Craze](#), the school's fundraiser focuses on students raising money by engaging in acts of kindness. Using this on-line tool, teachers logged students' acts of kindness throughout the school day. The teachers observed students showing kindness in a variety of ways. Some students picked up trash around the school after lunch, while others made sure to hold the door open for a student behind them. Students were saying kind words to one another or giving a hug when a friend seemed like they needed one. Acts of kindness allow students autonomy to select activities that align with their interests, which is an effective strategy for maintaining momentum during fundraising. (Schmidt, n.d.)

Hey friends! Jack is participating in a really sweet fundraiser where he will be paying it forward with Acts of Kindness both at home and school over the next two weeks. I had the pleasure of spending the day with him yesterday at Wilmington School of the Arts and my heart is so full. It truly is a special, unique and important part of our community. Please take a look, donate if you are able to, and share.



November 9, 2022

While the projects ended up being fully funded, the most incredible part of the fundraiser was hearing stories of acts of kindness overflowing into the student's home lives. When parents helped their children set up their Raise Craze account, students were able to choose from a list of acts of kindness to work towards at home. Students chose things such as cleaning out closets to donate items or helping siblings with various tasks.

About This School

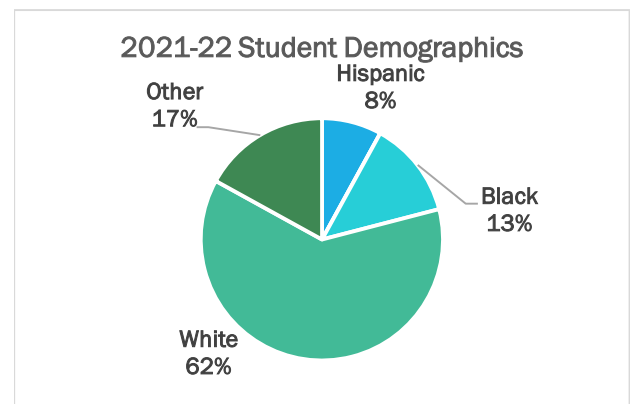
Wilmington School of the Arts

We believe that students achieve the greatest results when they have the freedom to discover and explore their creative interests. Our students will participate in a robust arts program and a rigorous academic experience that is mutually supportive in developing students' self-confidence, creative expression, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Year School Opened: 2020-21

Grant Awarded: 2019-20

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-2



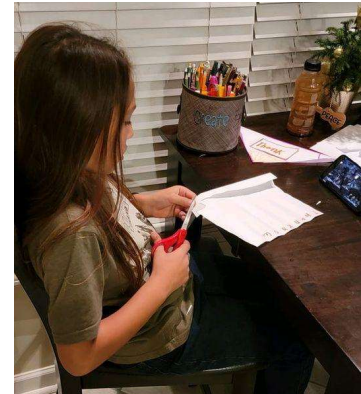
% ED Student Population: 52.5%

Urbanicity: Urban / Wilmington, NC

Persons in Poverty (New Hanover County)⁴: 10.2%

Some chose community service projects, such as making gift bags filled with toiletries and snacks for the homeless, collecting canned goods for the food bank, and drawing placemats for Meals on Wheels. Others spread joy by helping an elderly neighbor put up holiday lights, providing snacks to community workers, and decorating kindness rocks for the town. Both parents and teachers were impressed with the students' creativity and courage in choosing meaningful ways to demonstrate kindness.

When parents logged their child's acts of kindness using the Raise Craze site, friends and family could sponsor these acts with a donation to the school. All students participated at school, and 53 students registered to participate outside of school. In an effort to keep students engaged, the school offered fun rewards, such as a pajama day, a dance party and a pizza party each time the class reached a particular milestone. This commitment allowed for a successful fundraiser, but more importantly, it allowed students to focus on serving, rather than selling. Research shows that kindness is contagious, and children who learn to treat others with respect in their school community carry these same values outside the classroom and in other aspects of their lives. (Coulombe & Zuccaro, 2021)



Results

WSA raised \$5,835 which was over double their goal of \$2,500. Additionally, students completed 770 logged acts of kindness, which surpassed their goal of 525.

Teachers and parents have noted students' increased empathy towards others, and an increased intentionality to demonstrate kindness each day.

Challenges

A little less than half of our student population participated in logging acts outside of school. We are continuing to work on more out-of-school engagement with these kinds of activities moving forward by incorporating them into our school communication platform (Classtag) and also by organizing events within the community to promote and serve toward the non-financial goal of the activities—whether it be promoting kindness, or encouraging giving back to the community.

Future Modifications

A similar fundraiser based on acts of kindness can be used in the future as needs arise. We will adjust and add to the next fundraiser by taking into consideration the challenges we encountered.

Critical Components

Getting Started

Using an on-line platform such as Raise Craze was beneficial so families and school staff could all be involved in supporting student's acts of kindness. It also made it a simpler transition for families and staff to share within their own circles (via social media, text, or email).

Ongoing Supports

Support from parents and the school community are important in order to keep students engaged and excited about the project. Visuals also played a large part in engagement—there was a ‘thermometer’ on the outside window that was colored in as we neared (and then surpassed) our goal, as well as a display at the front of the school with students’ names and their individual acts of kindness.

Equity Connections

Data suggests that educationally disadvantaged students tend to have higher rates of anxiety, stress, suicide, and other mental health challenges (US Dept of Ed). In traditional fundraising situations, educationally disadvantaged students may be limited in their ability to participate. However, WSA’s approach to fundraising engaged students, regardless of their financial contributions. Additionally, the focus on acts of kindness creates a habit of wellness, which has been shown to improve the health of children, especially for at-risk students.

Research

1. Schmidt, W. (n.d.) “*How to Engage High School Student Fundraisers*”. Classy Blog. Accessed on June 28, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.classy.org/blog/high-school-student-fundraisers/>
2. Coulombe, M.; Zuccaro, E. (March 16, 2021). “*A Culture of Kindness in Early Childhood Classrooms*”. Edutopia. Accessed on June 28, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/culture-kindness-early-childhood-classrooms>
3. U.S. Department of Education. (2021). “*Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs*”. Accessed June 29,2022. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/students/supporting-child-student-social-emotional-behavioral-mental-health.pdf>
4. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>