

Public Achievement Evaluation 2003/2004

Summary of a focused analysis of three Public Achievement sites

Introduction

In 2004, a focused evaluation of three Public Achievement sites was conducted. The purpose of the evaluation was to better understand the impact Public Achievement (PA) is having on the following sites:

1. Andersen Elementary School,
2. Humboldt High School,
3. Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) in partnership with Inter-District Downtown School (IDDS) and Volunteers of America (VOA).

There were three aims of the evaluation: to assess the integration of Public Achievement in the school; to determine the impact that Public Achievement has on the classroom and teacher; and, to assess the community connections resulting from the work in Public Achievement. Three qualitative methods were used to gather information: field observation, interviews and focus groups. Each site has its own unique history with Public Achievement and has integrated it in different ways. The evaluation sought to tell the story of Public Achievement, convey information and illuminate findings so that sites can use the results to strengthen the work in Public Achievement.

Findings

This document is a brief summary of findings across the three sites. Individual reports were written for each site. For more detailed information about the reports, please contact Elaine Eschenbacher at eeschenbacher@hhh.umn.edu.

Generalized findings under aims

Aim one: To assess the integration of Public Achievement in the school.

The degree of integration depends on a number of different factors such as the history of Public Achievement at the school, administrative support for PA, and teacher's use of PA in the classroom. Staff and faculty at all three sites believe that PA supports the mission of the school. The more this is made explicit, the more integrated PA appears.

Aim two: To determine the impact that Public Achievement has on the classroom and the teacher.

Teachers are excited about using Public Achievement in the classroom. The degree of understanding and integration of PA varies from site to site, but all parties see the value and want to do a better job with classroom integration.

Teachers at each site were eager to use the Center for Democracy and Citizenship's new *Democracy in the Classroom* curriculum.

Participation in PA has stimulated teachers to think about new ways to teach other classes (outside of PA). At each site, teachers talked about ways they are borrowing PA skills and concepts and using them in other classes.

Teachers within each school look to each other as resources to share and build upon what they know and to try new ideas with PA. They acknowledged that this takes extra time but that it is important in order to make it a better experience for the young people.

Aim three: To assess the community connections resulting from the work in Public Achievement.

Through PA, the sites have established important relationships in the community. These community connections are highly valued by the schools. School staff talked about the importance of maintaining the relationships.

Teachers and staff want the young people in PA to have experiences outside of the school, to interact with neighborhood residents and engage in projects that take them out into the community.

Teachers, staff and students talked about PA as a way to make public work visible to the community.

Implications of evaluation: Goals to consider in planning for improvements.

- Strive to make PA a sustainable part of the school.
- Assess the degree of integration in the classroom. Evaluate how PA is being used and incorporate changes as needed.
- Tie PA to the standards.
- Identify ways in which teachers are using PA outside of the scheduled PA class and share this with other teachers doing PA.
- Identify the challenges of carrying out PA at each site and address these challenges with administration or appropriate stakeholders.
- Identify the best practices and share these with the Center and the PA network.
- Make explicit how PA supports the mission of the school.
- Use the resources provided by the Center to evaluate and plan for upcoming years (see Year End Evaluation Packet in the “practice” section of the PA website).