

Charity for Change

SUMMER GIVER PROGRAM EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

This evaluation will assess the effectiveness of Charity for Change's Summer Program. It is well-known in the educational field that teaching and modeling social-emotional learning impacts behavior. Studies have shown that teaching and modeling social-emotional behavior, such as giving, positively influences student motivation, character, self-efficacy, engagement, and academic success (Blum, 2005; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011; Weissberg & Cascarion, 2013). We have found no other program that integrates giving into a character education or social emotional learning curriculum.

Charity for Change: Giver Program

Charity for Change is a Florida based 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to teaching children about giving, volunteering and positive character traits through its Giver Program. With an emphasis on student achievement, character development and community engagement, the Charity for Change Giver Program was designed to instill the spirit of giving in children through charity interaction presented in a fun, interactive and relevant learning environment. All children participating in the Giver Program, regardless of socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to develop the awareness that they have the capacity to give and help others and be contributing members of their community. Each component of the Program applies the charity theme to the character development curriculum.

Charity for Change offers three different programs: an in-school program, afterschool program, and summer program. All three programs bring STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and SEL (Social Emotional Learning) to life with a comprehensive approach that includes animated math games, word puzzles, character role-playing puppet shows, kinesthetic activities, visits from charities, volunteer projects, incentive

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prizes, and an interactive mascot. Weekly, the class logs onto the Charity for Change animated website and plays a math game called, "Counting for Charity." With each correct answer, the students earn dollars for their charities from donor support and community sponsors. The Program mascots, Giver and U2Can, encourage the students and lead the "Giver Shiver" wiggle dance with them at the end of the game. The students also participate in word games and puzzles with prizes, and kinesthetic activities further reinforcing the positive character traits and charity theme.

The in-school program is 29-weeks and is delivered as five charity sessions with each session having a different charity theme and monthly character traits. The afterschool and summer programs are set up in a similar fashion, however, in a condensed format to fit the needs of the individual school program. For example, the summer program takes place over the course of six weeks. Each week, a character trait is introduced. The traits include kindness, cooperation, self-control, tolerance, responsibility, and integrity/honesty. Just like the in-school year program, students interact on the Charity for Change website engaging in math activities, math games, and character trait activities.

The Need for Social-Emotional Learning and Giving

Direct instruction of Social-Emotional Learning is critical. The positive effects of such programs include increased self-efficacy, empathy, self-esteem, and sense of responsibility while decreasing negative behaviors such academic failure, truancy, behavior incidences, and dropping out of school (Blum, 2005; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Dary & Pickeral, 2013; Durlak et al, 2011; Vesterlund, 2006; Wagner, 2012). "Schools of character see dramatic transformations; pro-social

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behaviors such as cooperation, respect, and compassion replace negative behaviors such as violence, disrespect, apathy and underachievement” (Character, 2016).

Like academics, teaching social-emotional behavior involves direct instruction, modeling, time for practice, and a home-school connection (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011). Implementing behavior change often starts with the use of tangible rewards and moves into the realm of recognition and giving as students experience a variety of benefits related to social-emotional behavior. Research-based strategies for implementing behavior change include role-play practice, direct instruction of social skills, and giving back to the community through volunteering, service learning, or monetary donations (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Center for Social and Emotional Education, 2010; Durlak et al, 2011).

Many people do not have a sense of non-profits being part of the community fabric (Aknin, Sandstrom, Dunn, Norton, 2011; Anik, Aknin, Norton, & Dunn, 2010). Unless giving has been valued and modeled at home, many students have not had the experience of identifying with a charity they believe in to help others (Aknin et al, 2011; Anik et al, 2010). One of the key benefits of giving is increased happiness (Vesterlund, 2006). In addition, there is a strong connection between giving and volunteer experiences and later civic involvement within a community (Wagner, 2012). Giving can be modeled effectively with the strong likelihood that the behavior will transfer for the students in other settings (Lee, et. al., 2010).

Pro-Social Instruction in Low Socioeconomic Schools

While social-emotional instruction is beneficial for all students, there is an imperative need in low socioeconomic schools. These schools are known to have higher statistics in the

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same areas that social-emotional instruction targets. These include the areas of academic achievement (United States Department of Education, 2010); social relationships (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013); and general social skills (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). This in turn positively impacts a student's overall character, self-esteem, and citizenship skills.

Summer Instruction

Summer learning loss, more informally known as the summer slide, is the phenomenon in which students lose academic skills over the summer break. On average, students lose between one to two months' of academic skills over the summer, depending on the student and the skill in question (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996; Huggins, 2013; McCoombs et al., 2011). This is mostly seen in the area of mathematics where the average students lose two months of grade equivalency in computation skills. (Huggins, 2013; McCoombs et al., 2011; NSLA, 2016). For low income students, this summer loss can be upwards of three months, with nine weeks being the average (NSLA, 2016).

The effect of summer learning loss is significant with an impact on the achievement gap and graduation rates. As two to three months of summer learning loss adds up over the course of a student's elementary school career, it can leave low-income students two and a half to three years behind their peers, especially in math (NSLA, 2016). This, in turn, has a large impact on the achievement gap between lower and higher income students. Even more, "summer learning shortfall experienced by low-income children over the elementary grades has consequences that reverberate throughout the children's schooling and can impact whether a child ultimately earns a high school diploma and continues on to college" (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007).

Because of this loss of learning, schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to be involved in summer programs. "Summer learning programs can mitigate summer

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learning losses and even lead to achievement gains” (McCombs, et al., 2011). For the summer program to be effective, it must include the following factors: regular attendance, small class sizes, parent involvement, high quality instructors, alignment to the school curriculum, and tracking of effectiveness (McCoombs et al., 2001). With these systems in place, not only will summer learning loss be combated, but “longitudinal studies conclude that the effects of summer learning programs endure for at least two years after the student has engaged in the summer program” (McCoombs et al., 2001).

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Purpose of Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of the Charity for Change Summer Giver Program. The organization identified several student goals for the program. They are:

- A. Reduce loss of math problem-solving competencies over the summer for at-risk children (low-socioeconomic status)
- B. Improve knowledge of character and citizenship skills
- C. Increase student charitable behavior
- D. Increase student awareness of the role of charity in the community

Evaluation Questions

Based on the goals of the Charity for Change Summer Program, the following three questions were developed for this program evaluation.

- A. Did the student participant increase or maintain their math level, based on the given pre/post math assessment?

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- B. Did the student participants increase their knowledge of character traits, based on the given pre/post character traits assessment?
- C. Did the student participants increase their awareness of charity and giving?

Participants and Setting

The setting of this study was two elementary schools in a south Florida school district during summer break of 2016. Students' participation in the summer program was voluntary and the Summer Giver Program was provided free of charge as a result of underwriting obtained by Charity for Change. While the large school district is diverse, the specific community where these two schools are located has a high poverty level. The two schools have 99% population that is considered "economically disadvantaged." Table 1 shows the demographics for the two schools combined. While the demographics of the students in the summer program are not identified, it is indicative of the overall school population. The setting was specifically selected based on the literature that low income schools should offer quality summer programs to reduce the risk of learning loss (McCombs, et al., 2011).

Table 1
School Demographics

	School A	School B
White	Less than 1%	2%
African American	16%	16%
Latino	83%	81%
Other	Less than 1%	1%
Economically Disadvantaged	99%	99%
Limited English Proficiency	59%	34%

The participants of the study were 289 kindergarten, first, and second grade students who were voluntarily signed up for the summer program. There were 16 teachers who led the program in total, with eight at each school. The teachers were provided by the Guadalupe Center.

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The Guadalupe Center is a 501(c)(3) whose mission is to “break the cycle of poverty through education for the children of their community” (Guadalupe, n.d.). The Guadalupe Center was chosen because of their high success rate with implementing summer enrichment programs (Guadalupe, n.d.).

Data Collection Tools

There were two main forms of data collection for this program evaluation: math pre/post-test and character trait pre/post-test.

Math Pretest/Post-Test. On the first day of the program, a math pre-test was given to all students. Each grade level had their own assessment based on grade level standards. Each assessment included ten multiple choice questions. It was given to the whole group as the teacher read aloud each question and the test was displayed on a screen using a document camera. All students answered individually on their own copy. At the conclusion of the program, the post-test was given in the same manner.

Character Trait Pre/Post-Test. On the first day of the program, a character trait pre-test was given to all students. Each grade level took the same assessment based on the six character traits focused on in the program. It was given to the whole group as the teacher read aloud each question and the test was displayed on a screen using a document camera. All students answered individually on their own copy. At the conclusion of the program, the post-test was given in the same manner.

Procedures

Before the start of the summer program, the teachers were provided a face-to-face training about the Charity for Change summer program. The training included information on the

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character traits, using the website, goals of the program, and data collection needed. Teachers were also instructed on how to give the pre- and post-tests for accurate data collection.

On the first day of the summer program, teachers administered the math pre-test as well as the character knowledge pre-test. For both, a copy of the assessment was shown using a document camera and read out loud to students. Each student then answered individually on their own paper and pencil assessment.

Over the course of the summer session, teachers followed the basic protocol of the Charity for Change Summer Giver Program. The protocol was organized as follows: A character trait was introduced on Monday. Teachers were asked that each class complete at least three math questions per week with the students, three math activities from the menu on the interactive website to reinforce learning, and at least three character activities supporting an understanding of the character trait of the week.

On the last day of the summer session, students were once again administered the math and character traits tests. A copy of each assessment was shown using the document camera and read out loud to students. The students answered individually on a paper and pencil form. Teachers documented and reported each student's pre and post-test. The site administrator at each school compiled all students' pre- and post-scores, de-identified the students, and presented the results to the researchers for analysis.

RESULTS

The results section will show gains in math and character knowledge separately. Only students who took both the math pre- and post-test are included in the math results. Similarly, only students who took the character knowledge pre and post-test are included in those results. In

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total, 162 students' data was included in the math section. In total, 83 students' data was included in the character section.

A gain was measured by scoring at least one point higher on the post-test. As seen in Table 2, the majority of students made gains in both math and character knowledge. The percentage of gains made was consistent in both schools. Even more, there were similar results in the percentage of students making gains in math as the percentage of students make gains in character knowledge.

Table 2
Percentage of Students Making Gains

	Gains in Math	Gains in Character Knowledge
School A	67%	68%
School B	63%	67%
TOTAL	65%	67%

Math

The average number of points gained on each of the assessments was also analyzed. Table 3 shows the average test score change in math. Once again, the results were similar between the two schools, with an average point increase in math being 1.3 points. Where there is a large discrepancy is the grade level that made the highest point gains. At school A, the highest points gained was in Kindergarten; where as in school B, the highest points gained was in first grade.

Table 3
Average Test Score Change: Math

	School A	School B
Total	1.2 points	1.4 points
Kindergarten	2.5 points	0.4 points
First Grade	0.7 points	2.4 points
Second Grade	0.8 points	0.7 points

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Character Knowledge

Table 4 shows the average test score change in character knowledge. Once again, the results were similar between the two schools, with an average point increase in character knowledge being 1.7 points. Where there is a large discrepancy is the grade level that made the highest point gains. At school A, the highest points gained was in Kindergarten; where as in school B, the highest points gained was in first grade. These results were similar as the gains shown in math.

Table 4
Average Test Score Change: Character

	School A	School B
Total	1.9 points	1.6 points
Kindergarten	1.9 points	0.3 points
First Grade	N/A	2.9 points
Second Grade	N/A	0.6 points

Data was also collected and analyzed on student engagement in the Charity for Change web activities. These activities include answering math questions and playing puzzles. The information was used to show fidelity of the program. This has an impact on character trait knowledge, math skills, and understanding of charitable giving. As students participate in the program, they earn points. Those points turn in to dollars raised for the selected charity. Table 5 shows students engagement in the program, as well as the money raised.

Table 5
Points Earned for Active Engagement

	School A	School B	Total Points/Money
Total	3430 points	3990 points	7420/\$74.20
Kindergarten	1345 points	635 points	1980/\$19.80
First Grade	1330 points	1825 points	3155/\$31.55
Second Grade	755 points	1530 points	2285/\$22.85

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to measure of the effectiveness of the Charity for Change Summer Giver Program. The primary goals of the Program were focused on math knowledge, character trait knowledge, and charitable behaviors. This section will focus on answering the primary research questions.

The first research question asked, “Did the student participant increase their math knowledge based on the given pre/post math assessment? The results showed that the majority of students did increase their math knowledge during the six-week implementation of the program. On average, 65% of students increased their math knowledge by at least one point, with a 1.3 average point gain. An additional 14% of students maintained their math knowledge over the course of the six-week summer program. The percentage of students maintaining math knowledge is significant since average student loses two months of grade equivalency in the area of mathematics specifically, (Huggins, 2013; McCoombs et al., 2011). For low income students, this summer loss can be upwards of three months, with nine weeks being the average (NSLA, 2016).

The second research question focused on character knowledge. It stated, “Did the student participants increase their knowledge of character traits, based on the given pre/post character traits assessment? The results showed that students did increase their knowledge of character traits by 68%. The average points gained were 1.7 points. This is significant because of the impact the character learning is imperative to students who are economically disadvantaged. Understanding and application of character traits impacts achievement, social relationships, and social skills (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; United States Department of Education, 2010). As students learn and practice pro-social behaviors such as

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cooperation and respect, those characteristics replace negative behaviors such as violence, disrespect, apathy (Character, 2016).

Last, the third research question focused on student awareness of charitable giving. It asked, “Did the student participants increase their awareness of charity and giving?” Over the six weeks of the program, students learned about charities and their functions in the community. From this knowledge, students selected a charity to support. They raised money for their charities by engaging in curricula activities and remaining active in the program. Students earned points by answering math questions and completing puzzles. Those points turned into money earned for their charity. Students raised \$74.20 for their charities in total. This shows fidelity within the program and a high fidelity score indicates an increased awareness of giving.

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FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of the Charity for Change Summer Giver Program. The focus of the study was on increasing or maintaining math knowledge over the summer when there is often a summer loss; increasing character trait knowledge; and increasing awareness of charitable giving. The results of this program evaluation show that the Charity for Change Summer Giver Program had a positive impact on all three areas of focus.

By the Numbers: Math

- 65% of all students utilizing the Charity for Change summer program made gains in math.
- 79% of all students utilizing the Charity for Change summer program made gains or maintained in math.
- The average point increase in math scores was 1.3 points.

By the Numbers: Character Knowledge

- 67% of all students utilizing the Charity for Change summer program made gains in character knowledge.
 - 88% of all students utilizing the Charity for Change summer program made gains or maintained in character knowledge.
 - The average point increase in character knowledge scores was 1.6 points.
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