



COLLIER EDUCATOR GRANT "STAND UP FOR JUSTICE"

Sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Collier County

A monetary grant will be made to the educator whose lesson(s) and/or activity(s) is selected as best meeting the criteria below. The purpose of this grant is to honor Collier County elementary, middle, and high school educators who strive to counter the prevailing tendency within today's popular culture for students to deride or denigrate others based upon difference. The lesson(s) or activity(s) should have as its major objective the purpose of instilling the positive character trait of "respect for others" in students. All applicants must have created lessons and/or activities of their own design or have successfully made adaptations from other programs and should be able to show evidence of a positive nature as a result of implementation. Successful applicants will be contacted and asked to submit a copy of the lesson(s) or activity(s) from the current school year, a description of its implementation, and evidence of its effectiveness. Applicants may include Collier County elementary, middle, and high school teachers, guidance counselors, school librarians, administrators, psychologists, and media specialists. Students, parents, colleagues, and community members are encouraged to nominate an educator. Self-nominations are also encouraged and accepted.

Applicant's name: **Rose Gonzalez**

Applicant's email: **gonzar12@collierschools.com**

Number of years teaching: **19 years TOTAL – 2 years- Teacher; 17 years School Counselor**

Grade or subject taught: **School Counselor for grades 6-7-8-**

School: **East Naples Middle School**

School Address: **4100 Estey Avenue, Naples, Florida 34104**

Phone (daytime): **239-377-3618** Phone (evening): **239-537-3717**

On a separate page(s) with the name of the applicant on each page, please briefly:

- Describe the precipitating events that motivated you to initiate these lessons or activities.
- Describe the lesson(s) or activity(s); and if adapted from another source please reference.
- Explain how the lesson(s) or activity(s) teach students the importance of respecting others no matter what religious, racial, cultural, or other differences exist.
- Explain how it helped them counter bigotry and bullying and prepared them to stand up for justice.

If your application is selected as a finalist, you may be asked to provide evidence/proof of effectiveness such as but not limited to: a questionnaire, interviews, documented anecdotal conversations and/or observations, and etc.

Please complete the following if you have encouraged someone other than yourself to apply:

Your name: _____

Your email: _____

Your address: _____

Phone (daytime): _____ Phone (evening): _____

Your relationship to applicant: _____

Submit the completed form in writing, by email, or video format no later than February 15, 2017, to: Beth Povlow, Educator Grant Coordinator

C/o JCRC, Jewish Federation of Collier County
2500 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Suite #2201, Naples, FL 34109

Rose Gonzalez
East Naples Middle School
2016-2017

COLLIER EDUCATOR GRANT "STAND UP FOR JUSTICE"
The KINDNESS Project

- Describe the precipitating events that motivated you to initiate these lessons or activities:

My passion, **KINDNESS**, began to grow since my childhood. This passion was the energy that created the school wide program that I developed for my school. I can recall vividly that as a child I witnessed prejudice, discrimination and injustices all around me. My parents were immigrants to this country before I was born. The stories of hardship that my parents shared with my sister and I, embedded my curiosity for wondering why people were not nice to other people, who may seem different. My world was filled with a plethora of people from other cultures, religions and ethnicities. My Father was born in Poland and migrated to Cuba as a child. My Mother's parents migrated from the Ukraine to Cuba, so you can begin to see the variety of traditions, customs and languages that I was surrounded with. These differences were what I knew to be my normal, I did not know that it wasn't everyone's "normal".

It was during elementary school when I started to notice that not everyone was as welcoming as I was. I saw and heard negative comments, gestures and actions towards people who might be considered by the majority, to be dissimilar to them. While this was difficult for me to comprehend, I realize that I would take those "seemingly different" peers under my wing and stand a little taller as I would call them my friend. As years went by, I recognize that I was the advocate for someone without a voice and the protector of their feelings.

So, this leads me to where I am today. As a school counselor, I see so many students whose hearts are broken by words, who are picked on by bullies and its effect on their academics. Why aren't we talking more about Emotional Intelligence with our students, along with their math, technology, science, and language arts? With the emphasis on test scores and outcomes, when is there time for teaching respect, compassion, empathy, acceptance and tolerance? The reality: there isn't any time!

Creating a school wide program was my way of intertwining a conversation about kindness, gratitude, empathy, caring for our peers, while working on their academics. Everyone deserves equal opportunities in education, but in all fairness, are we short-changing students by not including these conversations in ALL schools? I believe we are not giving them a well-rounded education without it.

The vision for my project is in its growing stages, as it will take time to ingrain a new philosophy into any community. I believe that if we continue to talk about kindness it could become a natural part of our students' daily life. Then, in the big picture, everyone will benefit from this project; the students, teachers and staff, and our surrounding community.

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2016-2017

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The KINDNESS Project

- Describe the lesson(s) or activity(s): and if adapted from another source please reference.

I spent a great deal of time designing original banners, signs and cards that were specifically created for my school. I was a fashion designer for over 23 years, so I incorporated my creative talents into this project. I will attach photos of them to this essay.

During the previous summer (2015), I decided to create a kindness initiative for my school. I spent months researching, reading pertinent articles, designing, and creating lessons and activities that would be unique to my school. I developed PowerPoints for teachers to be able to use in their classrooms whenever they were able to tie kindness into one of their academic courses or related arts courses. What I learned in my research is that a "kindness" movement is occurring across many continents! I believe that due to crises and violence throughout the world, attention was brought to what would be the antithesis of this... kindness. Educational researchers also seemed to have made a connection with kindness being the antithesis of bullying. The beginning of a movement was created; the end of anti-bullying programs and the beginning of the kindness movement. I knew that my school would be the first school in our county that would have a school wide KINDNESS program!

I prepared other PowerPoints to be shown on our school Television broadcast. Another activity which I created, to be done through the Journalism classes, involved the interviewing skills that they students were learning about. They then proceeded to create their own short films based on interviewing our students sharing their stories of kindness.

I also created another creative project with our Reading Coach who has been doing a Poetry Café, during the student's lunch schedule. I prepared three top prizes to be given to the best poems created by our students about kindness. I also created another contest that tied in with our Theater program. Each grade level would create a skit that demonstrates the elements of kindness; including gratefulness, gratitude, compassion, empathy and sympathy. The top three skits of each grade level will be awarded prizes and they will share their skits with our school.

The art department and the Science department, also have creative contests that I specifically created for their department. The art department is creating drawings that reflect kindness and the Science department is doing a project with the research that has been done with the science of kindness. I prepared a power point for the science teachers to use that is a collection of scientific facts about kindness and how it affects our bodies.

There is also a school wide program where all students have access to KINDNESS CARDS, (which I designed specifically for our school). They can get them through their teachers and give them out to their peers. When they see one of their peers preformed an act of kindness, they can give them a KINDNESS CARD and the student can place the card (with their name on it) into a Kindness Jar and receive a reward, given out monthly.

I designed cards in English and cards that express "Be Kind" in three languages. Our school is very diverse and many of our students speak other languages, Spanish and French Creole.

Our school has monthly award ceremonies which acknowledges all types of recognitions'; from academic, athletic to Kindness. Teachers nominate students that they feel have exhibited kindness and they receive a certificate, as well as a reward.

As you can see, I created many activities and contests that would involve all students and keep the conversation about kindness very active.

I have many more activities that I created and I will add them to this essay for your review. Every activity had an original twist that would work for my school and our students. The program could be easily adapted to any school.

I also am very proud to say that I have arranged, through the Collier Drug Free Coalition, an upcoming assembly done for each one of our grade levels, 6th, 7th, and 8th with two former NFL football stars. Their program includes being drug free but will emphasize the importance of KINDNESS and refusing to accept bullying as a normal part of a school day. My theme is "It's COOL to be KIND"! At the end of the last school year, I conducted focus groups with students and I asked them for input on the kindness program. They strongly spoke up about two areas that they heard other students talk about. First, that being kind was NOT cool and secondly, that students were saying, "why should I be kind, what am I getting in return"? Finally, after getting over the initial shock of both comments, I accepted that it was me who needed to adjust to their perception. This is when I knew I needed to bring in someone that in the students' image was going to have credibility on this subject. WHO better than celebrity NFL players who sincerely think that it is cool to be kind!

Rose Gonzalez
East Naples Middle School
2016-2017

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The KINDNESS Project

- Explain how the lesson(s) or activity(s) teach students the importance of respecting others no matter what religious, racial, cultural, or other differences exist.

Our school has a very diverse demographic community. We are a mix of cultures, languages, religions and racial diversity. We are also a Title I school, which includes all levels of socio economic status. Each one of my lessons and/or activities speaks to all students regardless of differences. One of the words most associated with all the kindness lessons is the word, respect. Without mutual respect, there can be no building blocks to stand on. We have zero tolerance for any display of disrespect for each other.

My lessons describe everyone as equal and everyone having the same heart and emotions as everyone else. My passion is displayed as identical for every student and my lessons place everyone on a uniform playing field.

As you read about my lessons and activities, you could see that the explanation of what kindness is, can exist in all humans; regardless of color, religion, culture and economic standing. Kindness and the chemical changes that occur in the brain, is the same in all of us. By explaining the science of kindness, students can see that these chemical changes occurs in every human being, regardless of what they look like on the outside.

Please see the attached lessons and activities that I created and you will be able to see how all students are involved in all activities.

Rose Gonzalez
East Naples Middle School
2016-2017

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- Explain how it helped them counter bigotry and bullying and prepared them to stand for justice.

The most powerful impression we made was by defining the meaning of kindness to the students. Then, we explained the scientific breakdown that occurs in the brain when an act of kindness is performed. This showed everyone that this chemical reaction occurs in everyone, regardless of their color, religion or race. The chemical reaction occurs in the brain of not only the person doing the act of kindness, but the person receiving the act and any witness to the act. Every one of our students have learned about the connection between science and kindness and that we are all created the same.

Every one of the activities that are related to the Kindness Project created a "food for thought" opportunity. The power point that was presented in every classroom spoke about the difference between "nice" and "kind" and examples of each. Students thought about examples that they received and that they gave to others.

From the research that I read for this project I learned that kindness is like any other academic subject. Like mathematics, reading, music or any skill in sports, kindness is something that must be taught; demonstrated in lessons, and practiced in order for the learned behavior to become second nature.

In every single classroom at East Naples Middle School there is a poster that I created as part of the kindness initiative that says, "You are entering a kindness zone". There also are signs at the entrances of the school that say the same. This statement is a reminder to everyone that kindness is what we expect, nothing less will be tolerated. All we have to do is to point to the poster and remind the students where they are; they are in a kindness zone.

Our school is 76.31% economically needy which entitled us to be a Title 1 school. Our demographics are varied with the following racial breakdown: White -26.22%; Black – 16.04%; Hispanic – 54.68%; Asian – 1.35%; Multiracial - 1.53%; Indian - .18%. We also have a mix of languages: English – 37.21%; Spanish – 50.35%; Haitian Creole – 9.82%; other – 2.61%. With the varied mix of students that we have at our school, students have learned tolerance, acceptance and they have learned to be advocates for themselves as well as for others. I know that the kindness project made a difference at our school and I am extremely proud that it was my contribution to their education.