

2017 - Golden Bell Promise Programs Award : Entry
12325

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Title of Initiative:

Maricopa Unified School District Blended Learning Program

School:

Maricopa Wells Middle School, Desert Wind Middle School, Santa Rosa Elementary School

District:

Maricopa Unified School District

County:

Pinal

Name(s) to appear on award :

First: Last:

Erin Bell

Jennifer Cameron

Nicole Cantrell

Rebecca Drury

Jackie Hahn

Janell Hudson

Kyrie Hughes

Shannon Hull

Amy Hunt

Brittany Parsons

Robyn Rice

Jennifer Szoltysik

Joe Szoltysik

Laura Tietz

Jennifer Titus

Kasey Turik

Jacque Witte

Mindy Zanini-Ma

Implementation date:

08/06/2012

Submitter's name:

Chestnut Steve

Submitter's Email:

Submitter's phone:

Business Address

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44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway
Maricopa, Arizona 85138
United States

[Map It](#)

Category:

Elementary (Pre-K through grade 8)

Initiative Summary (150 words):

The Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board approved a new “blended learning program” for the 2012-13 school year for fifty students in grades 6-8. The original program was located at Maricopa Wells Middle School (MWMS). In blended learning classrooms students experience personalized learning. Much of their academic work is done on a personal laptop completing teacher-made lessons and using online curriculum materials. Students receive large and small group instruction with an emphasis on project based learning. Since 2012-13 the program has increased in size at MWMS to 180 students and six teachers. Desert Wind Middle School (DWMS) has an almost identical program with 135 students and four teachers, so there are now 315 middle school students enrolled. In addition, all classrooms at Santa Rosa Elementary School (SRES) in grades 3, 4, and 5 serve 169 students in blended classrooms. Total students in grades 3-8 enrolled in blended learning is 484.

Describe the audience for this initiative:

The audience for Blended Learning is students in grades 3-8 at three of nine MUSD schools. Parents at both middle schools (grades 6-8) can choose a blended placement or a traditional placement for students. At SRES all classrooms in grades 3-5 are blended learning classrooms with a one-to-one student/laptop ratio.

Duration of initiative:

- Check this box if the initiative has been in operation for at least one year.

Describe how this initiative has improved student growth and success and provide data that reflects this accomplishment.

Student voice is an important part of the blended learning classroom and students are allowed to make decisions about their personalized learning path. Students are expected to master the state standards and to become innovative thinkers by engaging in real-world problems. By incorporating project-based learning strategies, students develop important skills that prepare them for success.

One of the best examples of how MUSD Blended Learning has provided student growth and success has been involvement in the national Future City Competition. Middle school blended learning students began participating in this competition in 2013. In the 2017 Arizona State Regional Future Competition held at Arizona State University, sixteen teams represented MUSD blended learning from MWMS and DWMS. These teams received 16 of the 34 awards that were possible to receive at the competition. A team from MWMS placed second in state overall and a team from DWMS placed third. At the 2016 competition, eight different MUSD teams won a total of seventeen different awards. Many of these awards also came with a monetary prize. A blended learning team from MWMS placed second in state overall and a team from DWMS

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placed third in state overall. In 2015 a blended learning team from MWMS was state champion and advanced to the national competition in Washington, D.C. That team won two national awards.

At the 2017 Arizona State Regional Future City competition three teams won the “Walton Sustainable Community Award.” The team was asked to attend a VIP dinner at the Arizona State University “Sustainability Solutions Showcase” at the Desert Botanical Gardens in February. They were asked to present their Future City project to honored guests, including Dr. Michael Crow, president of ASU, and Rob Walton. Rob Walton, retired chairman of the board of Walmart. Mr. Walton also serves as chair of the Environment Program Committee of the Walton Family Foundation. In 2016, two DWMS Future City teams won two of the five Walton Sustainable Community Awards and presented at the “Sustainability Solutions Showcase.” In addition, Future City teams were invited to this event in 2014, and 2015.

Provide evidence of how this initiative demonstrates creativity and innovation to make learning more interesting and effective.

One thing that makes blended learning creative and innovative is the classroom environment. The classroom is designed for 21st century learning and provides an environment of collaboration that allows students to network with peers. This type of learning has been shown in research to increase the academic achievement of students. The older students in the blended learning classrooms mentor the younger students in both academic and social skills. The students learn to rely on peers and social networks for support which leads to more autonomous learners.

Blended learning students from DWMS and MWMS have also demonstrated creativity and innovation by participating in the November, 2016 Shark Tank competition sponsored by Maricopa High School. Students competed against teams from the high school. At the competition students had the opportunity to present their ideas for an original business or product to community business leaders. Students made presentations about their original product or business that solved a problem or filled a need. They also had to have a marketing strategy and a marketing presentation. Middle school blended learning students had one team place in the top five finishers and an additional three individual students placed in the top five. One of the DWMS blended learning students won the Entrepreneur Scholarship worth \$1,000. Several other middle school blended learning students won an honorable mention award. Middle School blended learning students plan to participate in this event again in November, 2017.

Another example of blended learning students utilizing creativity and innovation was the inaugural 2017 Copa Shorts Film Festival competition for students and adults on February 17-19, 2017 at Ultra Star Multi-tainment Center in Maricopa. Middle school blended learning teachers decided to have their students create films and screenplays for this competition. To prepare students for this competition, the Copa Shorts Film Festival offered a three-hour workshop on the making of short films and movies presented by professional film director/producer Tony Estrada on September 9, 2016. Additional information on screenwriting was also provided to students. The MUSD Curriculum Department paid for the cost of each entry. In 2016, all middle school blended learning students created films or screenplays and they

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submitted 27 short films and 9 short screenplays to the competition. Three films were accepted into the festival and were shown on the big screen at the Maricopa Ultra Star Theater. Middle School blended learning students plan to participate in this event again in 2018.

Explain how this initiative has increased student achievement.

First, one example of the high level of student achievement in middle school blended learning classrooms was the percentage of students passing the 2017 AZMerit tests compared to district and state percentages. The blended learning scores were significantly above the district average on all six tests and equal to or above the state average on five of the six tests. The percentage of DWMS and MWMS blended learning students passing the 2017 AZMerit Math and English/Language Arts tests compared to the rest of MUSD students in that grade and the State of Arizona were:

- Grade 6 Math – 31%, MUSD – 26%, Arizona – 31%
- Grade 6 ELA – 55%, MUSD – 30%, Arizona – 42%
- Grade 7 Math – 46%, MUSD – 17%, Arizona – 34%
- Grade 7 ELA – 66%, MUSD – 30%, Arizona – 44%
- Grade 8 Math – 21%, MUSD – 7%, Arizona – 27%
- Grade 8 ELA – 42%, MUSD – 23%, Arizona – 34%

Second, another example of the high level of achievement in middle school blended learning classrooms was the percentage of Algebra I students passing the 2017 AZMerit tests compared to the all MUSD middle school Algebra I students and total state percentages. The blended learning Algebra I scores were significantly above the district and state averages. The percentage of DWMS and MWMS blended learning students passing the 2017 AZMerit Algebra I tests compared to the rest of MUSD students taking Algebra I and the State of Arizona were:

- Blended Learning Algebra I – 87%
- All MUSD Algebra I middle school students – 64%
- All Arizona (includes high school) – 39%

Finally, one of the goals for students in the blended learning programs is for them to become life-long learners so they can achieve in multiple areas. For example, all blended learning students in grades 3-8 learn 21st-century workplace skills. On a daily basis students use collaboration and communication to solve real-world problems in a project-based environment. Technology is fully integrated into every lesson, and students learn how to interact with technology in a meaningful way. In grades 6-8, the 21st Century skills that blended learning students learn include green screen video technology, website creation, app creation, and 3-D printing design. The students also develop presentation skills that allow them to be successful in project based competitions.

Explain the role of district leadership in supporting this initiative.

The Governing Board and district administrators were involved with the planning of the first blended learning classrooms in 2011-12. Beginning with the inaugural year in 2012-13 and every school year since then, the Governing Board and district administrators have been involved in the approval of expenditures needed for additional laptops, wireless networking, and site licenses. District office staff facilitated the lottery system for middle school student placement in the first year of the program and continues to facilitate that process each year.

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In 2013-14, as a result of increasing demand, the program was expanded to include grade five at SRES. District administrators assisted with the necessary additional equipment purchases.

That same year, MUSD received a \$560,000 grant from the Ak-Chin Indian Community to expand the wireless network to all schools in the district. Prior to 2013-14 only MHS had access to wireless. Once the Governing Board accepted the grant, district administrators facilitated the installation of the wireless build-out at the eight remaining schools. One of the purposes of the build-out was to facilitate the future expansion of blending learning at each school.

In 2014-15 the decision was made to replicate the blended learning program at the other middle school (DWMS) and to increase the enrollment at each middle school to 75 students. A blended learning class was also added at SRES at grade four. In 2015-16 at SRES, a blended learning class was added at grade six.

In 2016-17 blended learning at each middle school doubled in size to 175 students (350 total) with four blended learning teachers at each school. At DWMS the “four pod classroom” design of the school worked well for the blended learning project-based format and the school had an extra four pod area that could be used for expansion. The Governing Board authorized some necessary minor remodeling for this program expansion. At MWMS expansion could not be facilitated as easily. As a result, the decision was made to move the MWMS blended program into the library. The Governing Board approved the expenditures to relocate and remodel the library and to provide new non-traditional classroom furniture for the blended classrooms at MWMS.

For 2017-18 two additional sixth grade blended learning classrooms were added at MWMS, bringing the total to six blended classrooms at the school. The Governing Board also approved the expenditures to provide new non-traditional classroom furniture for the blended classrooms at DWMS.

Acknowledgement One:

- By checking this box, I hereby certify that the Superintendent of this district, identified above, is aware of this submittal.

Acknowledgement Two:

- By checking this box, first-place winners understand they will be invited to present at one of the 50-minute breakout sessions on Thursday afternoon, following the Golden Bell Promise Programs Award Luncheon at the ASBA-ASA Annual Conference.

Name of Superintendent:

Steve Chestnut