

TASTE OF SUCCESS
“BUDGET CHALLENGE”
APRIL 2ND, 2009

PRESENTED BY
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Program Description

“Budget Challenge” was a branch program designed to provide financial literacy for high school age students. It involved collaboration with a number of entities: Junior Achievement of So. CA, who developed the curriculum; our AAUW SFV Branch, which provided the mentors; two Los Angeles Unified School Board members, who provided transportation and logistical support; one private nonprofit educational organization that provided funding; and one Los Angeles City Councilperson, who also provided funding.

The daylong workshop involved 83 high school students from four Valley schools: Panorama, Kennedy, Reseda, and El Camino. Students were bused to Finance Park, the venue built within Junior Achievement’s headquarters, especially designed to provide a hands on experience for students of all ages to come to grips with practical everyday budgeting.

The students were given real life situations---married/single, profession, income, children, etc. and instructed how to go about crafting a monthly balanced budget. They couldn’t spend more than their monthly income and were encouraged to build in savings. This exercise turned out to be quite an educational experience for all those involved, including the AAUW volunteers who mentored the students as they went about securing housing, insurance, food, transportation, utilities, etc.

Outcome

To say that the day proved enlightening is an understatement. Everyone came away feeling the challenge was well worth the effort. The students now have a new sense of awareness of what it takes to manage a household and a new respect for what it means to be an adult; the teachers discovered a wonderful resource in Finance Park to share with their colleagues; and the volunteers felt that they had an impact on teaching skills that would benefit the students throughout their lives. AAUW was meeting its “challenge” of providing students with the tools to achieve economic security.

“How to” information

The program was six months in the planning and implementation but could be done in much less time upon replication once the basic format has been established. The essential ingredient is working with an organization such as Junior Achievement, which has established “Finance Parks” in different areas of the U.S. Next it is essential to secure funding so that students are not required to pay to participate in the program. Funding, which in this instance amounted to \$1000.00, not only covered the “tuition” but also the lunch that was provided for the students and volunteers. Local civic and governmental sources as well as nonprofit educational groups should be identified for possible funding. It was also essential to collaborate with local school board members who have access to high school administrators and teachers and helped with the recruitment of students as well as transportation to and from the event.

Tips for Success

Collaboration is the key to making this program a success. It promotes AAUW’s mission in the community and helps to increase our visibility. Contacts are made with local elected officials, schools, teachers and service-based organizations. Much of the planning can be done via email but some one-to-one meetings are needed especially if working with new participants. Media and press involvement are also essential and we were able to get the local school-based cable station to film the day’s events as well as get an article with pictures in the E-newsletter of one of the school board members. This office also issued a press release about “Budget Challenge.” One of the school board members as well as a representative from the City Councilmember’s office welcomed the students.

Contact Information

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