

Mitchell Elementary



Go Bobcats!

Esteemed Citizenship Counts,

Every principal aspires for students to engage in learning experiences that enable them to transform into young historians. How can we make the curriculum come alive? How can we embed rigorous and high-concept learning standards into relevant community service learning that ignites students' passions? How can we tap into our students' natural curiosity and guide them toward a global perspective? Are there quality supports "out there" that are willing to collaborate with educators?

With Citizenship Counts, we found all of the above. More importantly, our students and school community witnessed firsthand, the power of citizenship. Imagine the exuberant joy and bursting pride as our Mitchell Students greeted citizen candidates to our modest but heartfelt Naturalization Ceremony in our school gymnasium. The culmination of their arduous learning, ceremony planning and design, and earnest endeavors all came to fruition after a meaningful and purposeful journey.

That journey started with a simple idea: Why do people choose to be citizens of the United States? After engaging in learning experiences regarding immigration in the early 1900's, the students started to wonder about patterns and trends regarding explicit choices that immigrants make. Because a large number of them are children of immigrants, our students wanted to conduct a "deep dive" into the subject of immigration and citizenship.

Our dedicated and talented Middle School Social Studies teacher, Mr. Cory Schiffern, researched and encountered Citizenship Counts. And everything changed. With the helpful guidance from the Citizenship Counts representative, Mr. Schiffern was able to blend national and state learning standards with the curriculum. Students engaged in various dynamic lessons that enabled them to understand various perspectives and choices.

When Mr. Schiffern and our students eagerly sought to host the Naturalization Ceremony, the community service learning that our 8th grade students conduct each year was transformed. They developed plans, contacted the media, wrote press releases, shared poetry, and designed every detail of the Ceremony. The entire school was alive with an electric buzz about a "Ceremony" that the 8th grade students were hosting. Soon, teachers were inviting the students to present to their learners. With an exuberance that I've rarely seen, our students printed programs and decorated our gymnasium. They agreed to wear their very best and greeted our guests, citizen candidates and their family members, to their humble home, our school. It was the crowning achievement for the entire learning unit.

I have only high praise and admiration for Citizenship Counts. Learning has been transformed at our school and I am forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Luis R. Soria, Former Principal

Ellen Mitchell Elementary School
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