

2008-2009 Building Bridges Impact Summary

Building Bridges brought sixty schools, nursing homes, senior housing, youth groups, and churches together to help bridge the generations between young and old in the 2008-2009 school year. Over 2,650 youth (from kindergarten to university students) and seniors participated in the program through a variety of intergenerational projects.

A total of 262 students responded to the evaluations. The results show that Building Bridges provided opportunities for generations to share and learn from each other. Building Bridges not only helped youth learn to have respect for older adults and developed affection, concern, caring, and appreciation for older adults, but also increased older adult's social interaction.

Program Impact Highlights

- Students show more appreciation, caring, compassion, empathy, and respect for the elderly. They learned life experiences and histories and interacted better with the elderly.
- Students who had frequent and regular interactions by writing and visiting showed better writing skills and understood older people better.
- 85% of respondents felt they showed how they care about older people and were happy to share with them and 81.3% of respondents learned how they respect older people. Eighty-four percent of respondents rated Building Bridges as an excellent program.
- Students who attended the aging awareness training showed an overwhelming knowledge increase on

growing older, the aging process, and interaction with them. They developed positive attitudes toward growing old and learned to communicate with the elderly better.

- As a result of the program, students related their experience more with their family and future. They think more about their parents, grandparents, careers, and when they grow older what they would like to do.
- Building Bridges helped lift some older adult's spirits who participated in the program regularly. They were happy to share their life stories and were eager for students to visit again.
- Home bound seniors who received cards, crafts, and letters from young children or students were happy to hear from youth which meant a lot to those who did not have family around.

Comments from Participants and Partners

- *I felt like I was doing something special for someone besides myself.*
- *I felt like Building Bridges helped me care more about older people and how they feel about us.*
- *Building Bridges helped me think about older people differently.*
- *I thought it was great for our students and the connection with the residents and loved that the residents responded so well to the kids and would encourage the program to continue.*

- *This is an excellent program! My students were sad when the program was over. They looked forward to receiving letters during the program and motivated some students to write.*
- *I felt Building Bridges was a success. It was a great writing experience. The students truly thought of good ways to share with the seniors at the nursing home.*
- *Building Bridges helps students to be able to communicate with seniors. I like that the children were able to show the character of caring for others through the cards. I disliked the fact our children did not get to go to the nursing home this year.*
- *I feel it is an excellent program because it not only teaches the children how important people of all ages are but how to reach out to them.*
- *I think the Building Bridges program was an experience for children to learn how to act and relate to people that are different.*
- *This is a great program because I believe it's really important for children to learn at an early age to care about others.*
- *I feel the program was beneficial for the children. It made them accountable having a schedule to meet, challenged them to think and be resourceful in their creations of drawings, letters and cards and display their talents during the talent show.*
- *I think the children learned respect from the elders. Also appreciated them more.*
- *I felt that it is a good program and I am glad our school could be a part of it this year.*
- *I felt it was an excellent opportunity for second graders to show compassion,*
- *Building Bridges is a good way to get the children involved with the elderly. I felt it was a success because of the dedication the students showed to the residents while they were here.*
- *I would like to keep Building Bridges. It helps a lot of people understand each other and learn.*
- *I liked the program because the younger people were able to communicate with the older people.*
- *Our residents shared a special bond with the youth, hearing life stories and just spending time with them here at Carmel. We really enjoyed the special projects children made. The program has helped our residents maintain bonds with the youth of our community, and the youth do appreciate them.*

For more information, contact

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