



Changing Lives, Creating Futures:

Igniting a Movement of Philanthropy



 **OTTERCARES**


MindSpark[®]

pr**jectheart**

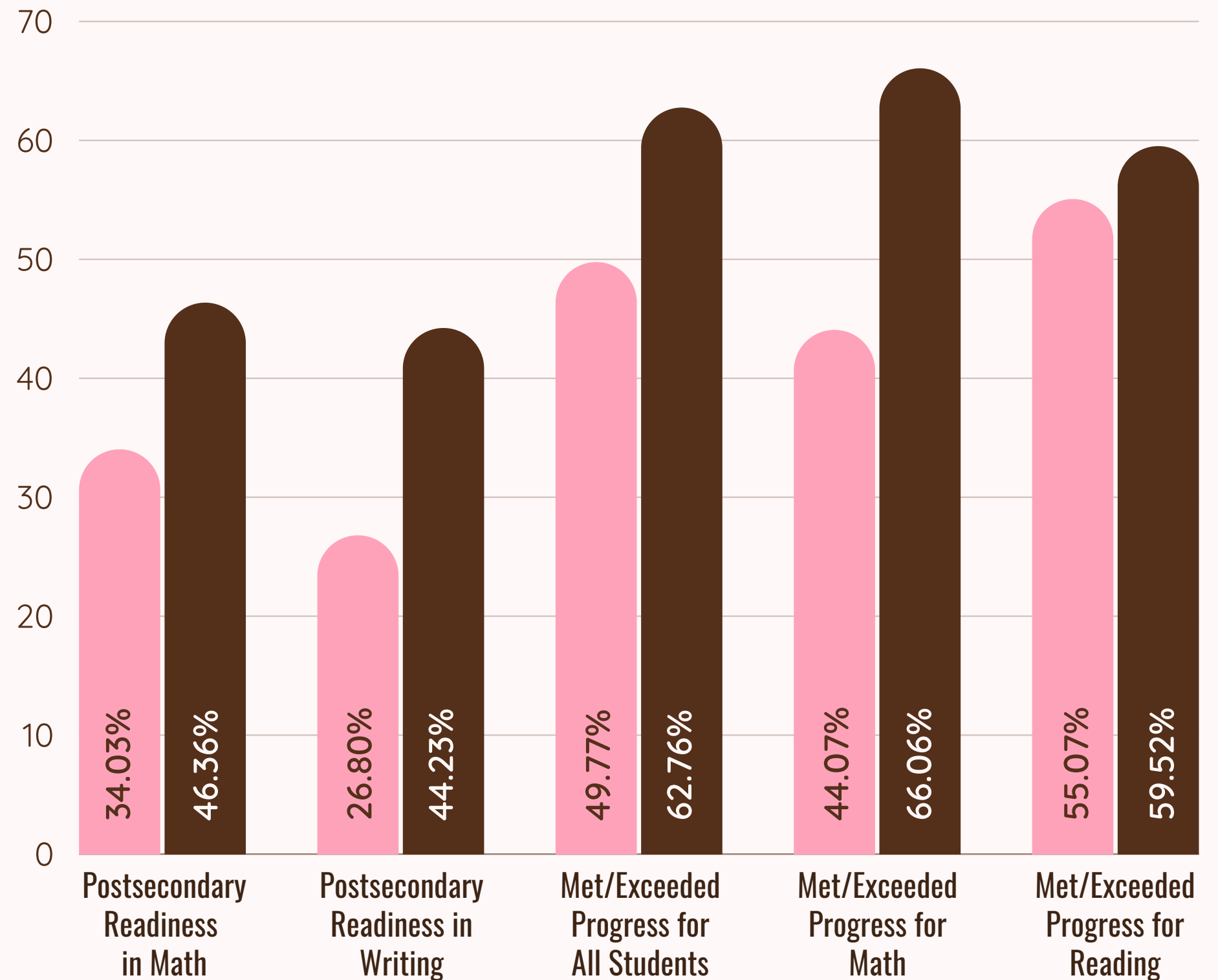
Student Engagement

Over the past 12 years, Gallup's surveys on student engagement unveiled worrying trends: only 47% reported feeling engaged in school, while 29% felt unengaged, and a troubling 24% claimed to be "actively disengaged." This is alarming as engagement closely ties to academic success.

Students in the top quartile of engagement significantly outperformed those in the bottom quartile, demonstrating the pivotal role of engagement in academic achievement.

School Engagement Quartiles and Student Academic Outcomes

■ Bottom Quartile (3.34-3.75)
 ■ Top Quartile (4.07-4.38)



Students' Commitment

A key reason for students' lack of engagement in their education is that they don't have an opportunity to study topics that ignite their passion. The Gallup polling found that students who "strongly" agreed with the statement "My school is committed to building the strengths of each student" were thirty times as likely to be engaged in school than students who strongly disagreed with that statement.

Engaged students are

2.5 X 

more likely to say that they get excellent grades and do well in school

and they are

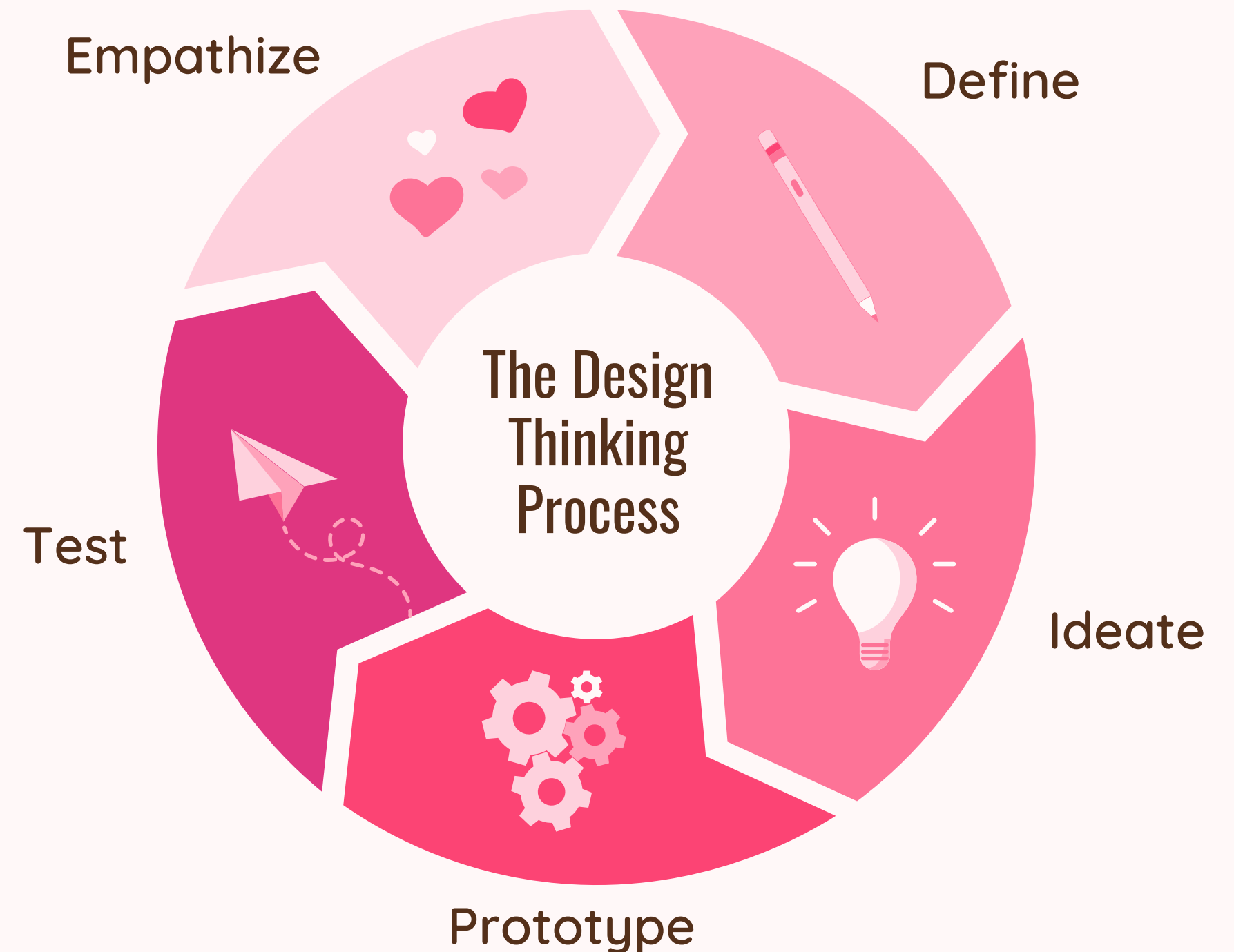
4.5 X 

more likely to be hopeful about the future than their actively disengaged peers.

Too often, students feel like their schools take a "one size fits all" approach to instruction that doesn't tap into their unique interests, gifts, or inclinations.

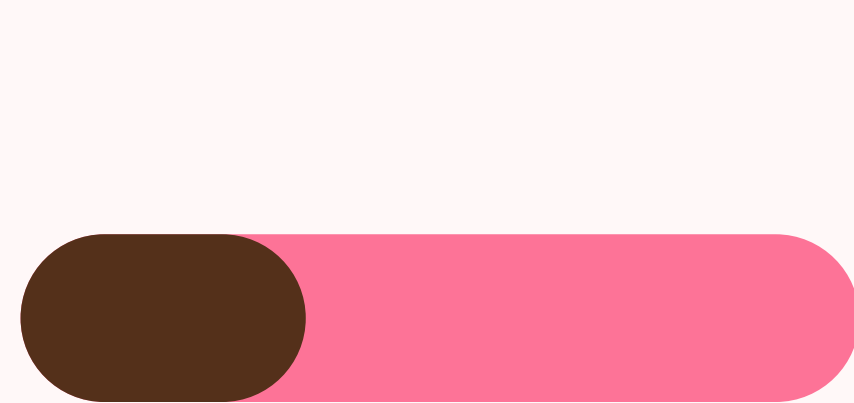
We're on a Mission to Change the World, One Classroom at a Time

Ottercares created Project Heart, their philanthropy education program that taps into every child's innate desire to give, while providing them with the tools and framework they need to be tomorrow's world-changers, today.

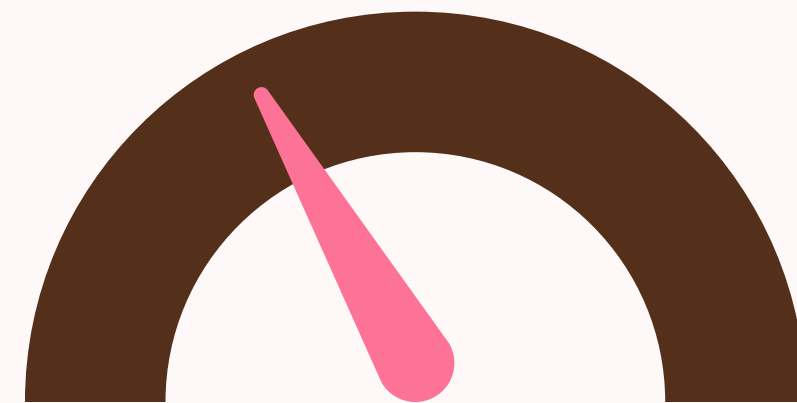


Philanthropic Education Leads to More Engagement

A study conducted in 2023 by The JAMA Network, shows that kids who engaged in community service were:



34% more likely to be in good health



35% less likely to have behavioral problems



40% more likely to be engaged in school when community service is integrated

Community service can help children identify interests, hobbies and passions.



The Outcomes

OtterCares and MindSpark embarked on a mission to revolutionize schools throughout Northern Colorado over the span of seven months, collaborating with four dedicated teams. Below are the outcomes of their endeavor:

- 1 **47** new partnerships were forged.
- 2 More than **305** individual students experienced positive effects.
- 3 A total of over **512** volunteer hours were contributed.
- 4 Over **\$4,500** was raised to support other non-profit organizations in the region.

"I cannot express enough appreciation to every person involved in this work! **I've never been so positively overwhelmed with support** and I look forward to maintaining these connections in the future! I am hoping there is an opportunity to engage in an EA 2.0!"

- Lauren Schafer, 5th Grade Educator at Riverview PK-



To increase student engagement and a sense of purpose we helped teams implement Project Heart to...

INPUTS



ACTIVITIES



OUTPUTS



OUTCOMES



IMPACTS

- Leveraged Project Heart tools/resources including gap audits, project planning, and design thinking.
- Developed community partnerships with FoCo Café, Animal Alliance, The Gardens on Spring Creek, Robotics for All, Food Bank of Larimer County, The Quarter Project, Plantiness, Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity, Homeward Alliance, and others.
- Took a gap audit to identify needs in the community and map local non-profits to each need.
- Unearthed workforce gaps in the non-profit sector and aligned career pathways for high demand fields.
- Provided expert sessions, field experiences, and community giveback opportunities with partner organizations.
- Served schools in Poudre School District, Thompson School District and students from, Global Leaders.
- 4 EA teams with 16 participants (4 students and 12 educators), impacted over 305 unique students.
- Designed and facilitated over 36 contact hours of professional learning and coaching.
- 5 educators received 2.0 graduate level credits from The School of Mines, increasing their earning potential.
- **100%** agreed that, "I am more confident in my abilities as a result of my participation in this learning program."
- **100%** agreed "That this learning will help me to positively impact my career advancement potential."
- **100%** agreed "This learning experience gave me the ability to establish new inclusive techniques to increase student access."
- Fostering occupational identities for students in non-profit fields, which in turn will lead to better job opportunities and a larger societal impact.
- Improved engagement, connectedness and belonging in school, a clear purpose and passion for learning, and a greater sense of empathy.

Riverview PK-8

The 5th grade team at Riverview PK-8 had students identify problems in their community they were interested in and pitched why they should solve them. They landed on 6 distinct projects including rescuing stray animals, increasing joy in assisted living homes, installing a buddy bench at their school, creating a clothing closet, creating backpacks of activities for children in long-term care at hospitals, and writing books for children in hospitals.

After implementing Project Heart, the following changes were observed among students at Riverview:

- A **9.8% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they believe they have the power to make positive change in their community.
- A significant **26.2% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they have made a positive change in their community.
- A **9% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they are more interested in the topics they are currently learning.



“Our students have grown so much in both their communication and collaboration skills.

We’ve seen a renowned sense of passion and empathy in our kids through these projects.

They’ve been able to highlight their personal strengths and interests and it’s been a gigantic pleasure to see our kids working in different ways than our standard academics. They have a sense of ownership in their projects they are proud of.”

- Riverview PK-8, 5th Grade Team

Global Leaders

The Global Leaders team was made up of 4 executive board students. Throughout this experience, they surveyed the community and identified gaps in their mobile markets such as feminine hygiene products, pet food, and diapers. They contacted local non-profits and were able to stock their mobile markets with these items. They also expanded the areas of distribution and produced a sustainability plan to ensure their mobile markets would continue past their graduation.



"Through this work, we have seen younger Global Leaders get more invested in our pantries and a HUGE increase in passion! **Project heart has helped us to understand the planning process for large projects that are on the community scale.** Before, we were sometimes intimidated by the thought of large-scale projects, but PH has been a great guide to get started on a project for the community! We have loved being part of this process and are grateful we had the opportunity!"

Boltz Middle School

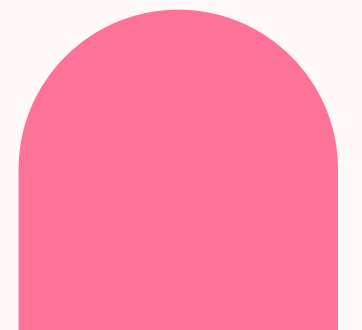
Recognizing a need within their student body, the Boltz Middle School team took action. With over 42% of their students coming from low-income backgrounds, the school realized that basic needs weren't always being met. In response, students spearheaded the creation of a school closet. This initiative provides essential items like food, clothing, and school supplies to students, their families, and the wider community.

After implementing Project Heart, the following changes were observed among students at Boltz:

- A **18.5% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they feel valued as an individual at their school.
- A **12.2% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they feel that the learning topics are relevant.
- A significant **25.9% increase** in the number of students who agreed that when someone else is excited, they tend to get excited too. This showcases their empathy for others.
- A **12.3% increase** in the number of students who agreed that they get a strong urge to help when they see someone who is upset.

"The biggest benefit of this work has been seeing leadership qualities flourish in our kids, as well as the collaboration amongst different groups, and the community connections that have been made. We have had to release some control and allow our students to drive this work which is sometimes hard to do, however, **we have been blown away by what they were able to accomplish!**"

- Boltz Middle School Team



Behavioral Health Pathway in Poudre School District

The PSD team was comprised of two educators who were tasked to create a new behavioral health pathway in the district. They welcomed high school students who began their service learning by engaging with middle school students in the district to identify their biggest issues related to mental health. By creating safe spaces for open communication, they facilitated discussions about anxiety, depression, and even suicide. Drawing on this student input, the PSD team then crafted lessons that not only equipped students with coping mechanisms but also empowered them to support their peers facing similar challenges.



"The biggest benefit of this work has been better understanding powerful work-based learning experiences that will be transformative for the continued work and growth of Behavioral Health in our community. We have learned a great deal about project creation and the multitude of steps and details that are important to consider as you scale your work. **This has been really meaningful for us,** we have appreciated the collaboration and loved getting to include students in this important work."

- Cassie Poncelow, PSD Educator



Data & Metrics

100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that this learning experience...

- strengthened their purpose for continuing this work.
- gave them a sense of belonging to a community of their peers.
- has shown them how to incorporate the voice of stakeholders, other than themselves, in this work.
- gave them the ability to partner with community members who will help sustain this work.
- ignited a sense of joy within themselves.

“I appreciated the opportunity to work with peers that I don’t normally get to collaborate with on a daily basis. It was cool to see how brought together our strengths from different content areas and **we were able to make a huge impact in our community.**”

- Morgan Griffith, Boltz Middle School



Next Steps

The next steps in our journey together will scale the work of Project Heart and in turn...

- Create sustainable solutions for local problems
- Increase student engagement and purpose in school
- Bridge the gap between schools and industry/non-profit partners to make learning more authentic and relevant
- Expose students to a variety of fields in the non-profit sector and beyond



"I cannot express enough appreciation to every person involved in this work! **I've never been so positively overwhelmed with support** and I look forward to maintaining these connections in the future! I am hoping there is an opportunity to engage in an EA 2.0!"

- Lauren Schafer, 5th Grade Educator at Riverview PK-8

Thank You



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