



School Year Success

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“Prepare to get schooled, LCPS!” I don’t think we realized the truth of this social media warning to the schools way back on the first day of the 2018-19 school year. The Morven Park Center for Civic Impact (MPCCI) team is always very optimistic and excited about the number of students we will reach, how our program will operate, and our adaptability in facing inevitable challenges, but this school year was unlike any other we’ve experienced!

The Numbers

Our expectations were blown away from the very start! Each year, lessons are scheduled when teachers contact us, and we add them to the calendar as we go along. We knew this school year would be different when our calendar was almost filled by October. We booked our final class in January because there weren’t any more dates available through the end of the school year! In the past, we’ve been able to schedule classes with only a few weeks’ notice, but this year we had to begin placing classes on a waitlist and even started scheduling lessons for the 2019-20 school year!



If you’re planning on seeing us in your classroom next year, you might want to call now! 😊

This surge in interest resulted in MPCCI being on track to reach over **8,000 LCPS students** in the 2018-19 school year...a 25% increase over the previous school year. Did I mention that our education program is run by a very small staff of two full-time and three part-time educators? We were actually thankful for some of those mid-year snow days that gave us a little extra preparation time!

Student Achievements

Not only was the success of our programs measured by the quantity of students, but also by the quality of what those students produced. Last October, we released the results of an evaluation project that measured the effectiveness of MPCCI’s project-based learning initiatives at the 3rd, 8th, and 12th grade levels.

The results of the study demonstrated that students were gaining authentic real-world experiences by taking part in our educational programming. We found they were not only achieving the classroom standards outlined by the curriculum but were also gaining a better understanding of their potential impact as community members. Those results led to a collective high-five in our office!

Equally exciting was the amazing work the students were putting into their projects. At the 12th grade level we ask students to research their local, regional, or state government and identify a problem or issue they want to address. They are then instructed to contact and collaborate with government leaders to implement solutions.

I wish I had the space to tell you about all the students who had great success and even exceeded their own expectations of what they could achieve during the project, but here are a few examples:

- Additional water bottle refill stations were added to a high school.
- Students planned to raise money to plant five trees at their school and ended up receiving 100 donated trees.
- Plans for road and traffic changes were presented to county supervisors for future consideration.
- At the February Loudoun County School Board meeting, two students presented their projects and talked about their experience with the MPCCI program.

Seeing our students have so much success in making positive changes in their communities reaffirms that Loudoun County students who participate in MPCCI lessons will go on to be active and confident leaders.

Changes and Next Steps

With the successes described above, you might think that MPCCI is a well-oiled machine that doesn't encounter many problems, but what we've found is that as our programs grow in popularity we encounter challenges that aren't always expected. Each time we facilitate a program at the Park or in the classroom, we have a conversation about how well the program is working and discuss whether any changes need to be made.

In March, we began reevaluating the overall impact of a program that we previously felt was solid and had run smoothly for three years. This year, we decided it needed to be updated and reworked to better match the educational needs of the students. Knowing that we had to begin teaching this program in the spring, we quickly revised the lesson and ordered new supplies, and we feel that it's now much more effective.

This is how educators operate. We must be willing to accept when things are no longer working, and we must adapt to the needs of the classroom. This flexibility to face changes head-on makes our lessons and programming even better.

MPCCI is not going to stop growing and changing. This year we added a new 10th grade lesson to our offerings and we plan to add 4th, 5th, and 9th grade lessons in the coming years. Additionally, we would like to extend some of our lessons to provide more project-based learning options for teachers to bring to their classrooms.

Thank you to all the teachers and students who made this year such a resounding success! As we enter into the summer season, we will be planning out our busy calendars and anticipating the excitement of the coming school year! To support Morven Park and our robust civics curriculum, visit MorvenPark.org/Donate.