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## Striving for Excellence with Junior Achievement and Crestar Mt. Washington Elementary School Baltimore, MD

Detra Gray is seen taking a walk to the Mt. Washington market with her daughter Olivia and Olivia's classmate, Amber. They return with the ingredients for making lemonade. The teacher, teacher's assistant, and other parent volunteers are now busy guiding excited kindergartners along an assembly line as the class prepares lemonade to sell to other classes. As a volunteer consultant for the Junior Achievement Elementary School Program, Detra Gray is teaching these youngsters about the roles individuals play in the economy as workers and consumers.

The Junior Achievement Elementary Program is an innovative business and economics program for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Participants learn about everything from economic concepts to zoning regulations. Each theme helps students to understand how they can contribute to society as workers, citizens, and consumers.

The success of this program depended on collaboration with local businesses (consultants from Crestar Bank) and parent volunteers. Each consultant was encouraged to visit the class before presenting his or her first lesson. This gave the consultant a chance to meet the students and tell them a little about what they would be doing during subsequent visits. In turn, the teacher (who was meeting the consultant and working with the program for the first time) had an opportunity to prepare the students for the program.

Through our business partnership with Crestar Bank, we received a grant for \$4,200 to fund this endeavor. This provided \$300.00 per 30 students in 14 homerooms. The funds were used to support the necessary training for community and parent volunteers, teachers, and to supply classroom materials.

The concepts and skills taught in Junior Achievement's Elementary program correlate with our school improvement goals to meet state proficiency standards as measured by the Maryland School performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) for students in grades 3 and 5 in social studies, reading, language, mathematics, and science. There is clear alignment between Baltimore City Public Schools elementary social studies curriculum goals and the learning concepts and skills that were addressed during the Junior Achievement Program classes. The program also supports the school improvement goals to increase parent involvement, to expand relationships with the business community, and to improve school climate.

We conducted a survey of parents, consultants (business and community volunteers), students, the principal, and teachers, and it was found that all stakeholders valued the real-life applications of the program. We discovered that the curriculum was appropriate for urban children, for both genders, and for a diverse array of ethnic groups. We also discovered that the consultants needed better training and the teachers needed to be

involved in the training. For example, consultants wanted help on classroom management, and teachers asked for ways to integrate the program into the general curriculum. The parents, teachers, and students were very impressed about how the Junior Achievement Elementary Program showed the relevance of education to the workplace. One of the teachers at Mt. Washington eagerly voiced her opinion about the Junior Achievement Elementary Program with the following comment: "My experience with the program reinforced my belief that children can benefit from knowledge about real world issues. I have been able to incorporate the program subject matter into both math and science instruction. Also, the parent instructor was very enthusiastic."

We were extremely pleased with the level of commitment from the staff, community, and our business partners and realize that the decision to implement the Junior Achievement Elementary Program at Mt. Washington has been one of our *best practices* yet.

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