Introduction

School–Based Civic Engagement

The School–Based Civic Engagement (SBCE) class is the third part of the Spectator to Citizen Sequence offered by DU's Center for Community Engagement to advance Scholarship and Learning (CCESL). This sequence focuses on helping students develop a set of public skills and a civic knowledge base to allow them to actively participate in the public life of their communities. Through this course, students examine and learn about the role universities and communities should play in the education process. All students participated in the Day of Action by hosting demonstrations for the elementary school students and administering the parent and student surveys. Additionally, SBCE students had the opportunity to sit in on campus tours, the parent panel, and engage with the youth over lunch.

7th Annual Day of Action

The Day of Action is a campus–community partnership that provides elementary students and their families a day long college experience. The Day of Action was started by a DU undergraduate alumnus, who wanted to teach his kindergarten class about college and inspire historically underrepresented youth to go to college. After partnering with CCESL for the first Day of Action in May 2013, it has become an annual event since. The motto for the event is “College? For Certain!”

Goals for Day of Action

The goals for the Day of Action are to provide students and their families the opportunity to explore the DU campus, learn more about college, and participate in hands on demonstrations for both the students and their parents.

Elementary Schools Involved

The following Denver Public Schools participated in the Day of Action: Munroe Elementary School, Garden Place Academy, and Barnum Elementary.
Day of Action Feedback

Parent Survey Results:

This year, three schools attended the Day of Action Summit, but surveys were only collected from two schools—Garden Place Elementary and Munroe Elementary. Overall, most students and parents expressed high satisfaction with the event. Among the surveyed parents, 100% said they would recommend Day of Action and indicated the following things:

- Day of Action met their expectations,
- Day of Action helped promote future interest in college
- Day of Action helped them learn more about college
- Day of Action volunteers were enthusiastic

Enjoying a number of activities on Driscoll Green in the sun
Parents were asked to rate Day of Action on a 10-point scale across a number of categories. Average ratings were as following:

- Rating of Demonstrations: 9.5
- Rating of tour: 9.8
- Rating of Day of Action: 9.9
The graphs below indicate the percentage of surveyed parents that indicated each rank on a 10 point scale.
When asked what their favorite Day of Action activities were, surveyed parents responded with the following things:

- Demonstrations
- Tour
- Panel
- Everything
- Spanish-class

When asked for suggestions for topics and events for next year, surveyed parents offered the following suggestions:

- Occupations
- Clubs
- Information
- Financial-aid
- Dorms
- Activities
- Classes
- Everything

**Student Survey Results:**

Students were also surveyed about their satisfaction with the event. Among surveyed students, 38.2% attended Garden Place Elementary and 61.8% attended Munroe. The breakdown of surveyed students by grade level follows below.
Overall, students expressed high satisfaction with the day.

When asked about their favorite activities, surveyed students responded with the following:
When asked to describe Day of Action, surveyed students offered the following responses:

Interesting
Super
Exciting
day
Excellent
Fantastic
lots
fun
information
Marvelous
Fun

When asked what they wanted change or see next year, surveyed students mentioned the following suggestions:

Writing
Campus
Dancing
Business-classes
Law-school
Giant-beach-ball
Art
Vet-school
Nothing
Hospital
Sand
Dorms
Soccer
Library
Science
History-one-DU
New-things
Connecting
Law-school
Nothing
Dorms
Strengths

- Demonstrations were engaging
- Guides connected with their students
- Parent panels were very productive

The Day of Action provided an excellent opportunity for young students to learn about college and all it has to offer. The demonstrations attended by students and their families were playful and engaged the participants for the full twenty-minute duration. One main reason that these sessions were successful was their use of interactive activities to make students and their families feel included. Throughout the day, the guides were very helpful in directing participants and translating for those in their group who did not speak English. There always seemed to be support for the Spanish-speaking audience. Additionally, many guides seemed like they were able to connect with their groups in a meaningful way. From an outside observer, it seemed like students and families were comfortable asking these guides questions throughout the day. Although the demonstrations were the focal point of the event, the openness of the guides and demonstrators was paramount for having a successful Day of Action.
Areas for Improvement

- Lack of participation in surveys
- Schedule was unclear to participants
- Lunch was disorganized for the children

The most difficult part of the day for the DU demonstrators from the School-Based Civic Engagement class was distributing the surveys. We were tasked with distribution at the end of the day when the participants returned from their campus tours. Volunteers intended to hand out our surveys during the closing ceremony, but it seemed as if the parents and students were not informed that they would be asked to complete a survey. Many parents actually left before the closing ceremony which made volunteers question if participants had an extensive understanding of the day’s schedule. Lastly, lunch time seemed to have been a lengthy and disorganized period for the students. Though this was a crucial period for the parents because their panels were beneficial, there might be a better way to occupy the students’ time. These young students raced around on the lawn and their activities were not clearly organized which made it much more challenging to provide supervision.

Our recommendations fall into three categories:

1. Recommendations related to preparation for the day
2. Recommendations related to the structure of the day
3. Recommendations related to the content of the day

1. Students in the CCESL course were interested in being more involved in the planning of the event. We recognize that collaborations between several campus entities can be very challenging, so we as students can ensure that everyone is on the same page before the event takes place. As our class is partially dedicated to the execution of this event, we really want to make sure that our participation and interest is fully taken into account. The planning committee should know that we are present to support them before and during the Day of Action. We were also interested in seeing the advertising materials distributed to schools to entice students and their parents to attend this event. This information would help us better understand the expectations of the audience coming in to the day.
2. Though overall we felt that the event ran smoothly, there are several areas for improvement in terms of the day’s structure and logistics. As different groups came to our presentations, it was clear that some of the guides had more of an opportunity to connect with their students than others. We think it would be beneficial to start the day with an activity just between the guides and their group to develop a meaningful connection here. Next, we had a few suggestions for the lunch period. While we know that the lunch had to be lengthier to give time for the parent panels, this period did seem to be too long for the students. We think that there could be more structured games during this outside period instead of simply a free-for-all. These games could include hide-and-seek or tag, and CCESL volunteers could help organize the activities. This will help more young students get involved and provide a meaningful task to volunteers who want to be engaged for the entire day. Next, we think that the tour could be modified. The order provided for the tour guides had them going back and forth all across campus. Additionally, students were more interested in going inside the buildings rather than just marking them off on their bingo sheet. It would be beneficial to adjust the order of the tour and possibly provide the opportunity to enter one of the academic buildings. Students seemed to be especially interested in visiting a dorm, so this would be a great addition to the day. Lastly, we think that the surveys should be administered in a way that gives students and parents an adequate amount of time to complete them. The surveys were administered this year at the very end and participants rushed through their answers. Instead, there could be a designated moment in the schedule that all participants recognize as the moment to work on their survey responses.

3. Our last recommendations relate to the content of the Day of Action. Volunteers in the past have stated that they love when the opening speaker is a guest outside of DU who can bring energy and charisma to the start and conclusion of the day. This would be a beneficial addition instead of having the day’s organizers also introduce their event. Additionally, we heard from some students that they didn’t fully understand the purpose of the day. We believe that some of the sessions should be tailored more to inspiring student interest in university life rather than just occupying students for this 20 minute period. One way to ensure that students get the most out of their day is to create a cohesive set of sessions rather than letting organizers develop their own
ideas. Volunteers could then sign up for specific sessions or session topics. These sessions should be based on the last year’s student and parent survey results as well as on the values of DU and the event as a whole. This would ensure that the sessions seem more cohesive. Additionally, we also thought that these demonstrations could encompass academic success and skills that students could implement in their lives now instead of only focusing on issues in the distant future. Such sessions could include tips on how to be organized or advice on how to ask for help. We want to be certain that these students walk away from the day having learned something that will impact their lives in a positive way.

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