



OtterCares + Project Heart: Bamford Elementary IMPACT REPORT

Successful Philanthropic Education = Service-Learning x Empathy x Innovation x Sustainable Action

PHILANTHROPY

- 1: goodwill to fellow members of the human race especially: active effort to promote human welfare
 - 2a: an act or gift done or made for humanitarian purposes
 - b: an organization distributing or supported by funds set aside for humanitarian purposes
- (Merriam-Webster)

“We all have 3Ts - time, talent, and treasure - that we can use to give back to help people and nonprofits in our communities. Because everyone has 3Ts, anyone can be a philanthropist.” -OtterCares Foundation

Project Heart is an educational resource for teachers to customize their pedagogical instruction, educational standards, and classroom activities around philanthropy and service learning. This begins with the premise of education as a redeemable system where students help contribute to community betterment by serving people outside the classroom. MindSpark’s future-ready capabilities unleash student talents through successful philanthropic education, galvanized through a strategic partnership with OtterCares Foundation and Bamford Elementary School. This co-designed experience is a result of the relationship forged between MindSpark and OtterCares and uses the multiplicative factors of service learning, empathy, innovation, and sustainable action.

Bamford Elementary School is part of the Poudre School District in northern Colorado serving 52 schools and over 30,000 students. The District is rated #10 out of 176 in Colorado with a 17:1 student-teacher ratio, and expenses per student totaling \$10,779. The surrounding Fort Collins-Loveland community is an urban corridor with a 2020 census population of 76,378 people, out of which 5.7%, or approximately 4,354 individuals, are considered below the poverty line.

Experts in child development agree that philanthropy and its characteristics are learned skills, developmental milestones that are imperative for a child’s formative years. Charitable activities should be embedded in learning, not solely focused on financial situations, and executed through empathy. Additionally, philanthropic service-learning for children has been shown to predict altruistic, generous, positive, and persevering behaviors later in life (Kade, 2019).



I believe it's our obligation to teach kids to think outside of themselves and teach them that they can change the world. And it's been really fun with this process, what we're doing right now with the Pack Pantry... one of the quotes from kids are, 'It taught me how to not only think about myself but think about how I can help others.' And to watch that spark when a kid realizes that they can do something to help someone else – they just light up! I feel really good about the kids we're going to send out into the world.

-Alissa Poduska, Principal at Bamford Elementary

None of this happens without a purposeful effort on the behalf of teachers and administrators, and none of it becomes sustainable without partnerships, including with parents, other school district professionals, and nonprofits, such as MindSpark Learning and OtterCares. MindSpark re-engineers mindsets through positively disruptive experiences, bringing true value to teachers and their educational and community ecosystems.

98%

of participants agreed that this experience added value to their profession. This value stems from MindSpark's stated goal of creating sustained transformation to ignite growth mindsets well beyond the immediate experience provided to educators.

When asked about the most beneficial aspects of their professional learning, participants reported:

- "They made use of the time for great knowledge growth and made an engaging development session."
- "The facilitators are always so energetic and organized and knowledgeable. They are great at keeping everyone engaged in the process."
- "It gave a better idea of where we are going to start with students in this learning. It was engaging and not just sitting and getting information."



SERVICE-LEARNING

a form of experiential learning where students apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address genuine community needs. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)

Elementary education is a crucial developmental period where teaching professionals can proliferate passions for subjects without stereotypical scripts regarding one's capacity for achievement to be based on gender, ethnicity, or race (Master, Meltzoff, & Cheryan, 2021). MindSpark takes service-learning to the next level by leveraging a network of peers dedicated to trailblazing extraordinary blueprints for transformative action that applies to all students and their surrounding communities.

When a student is presented with no cognitive limitations, they can take on any perspective they wish and begin the creative process of identifying their passions as a conduit for assisting others. This helps to foster a sense of belonging, which is described as more crucial to human survival and thriving than our needs for shelter or food (Sehmi, 2021). Arguably, this becomes much easier to translate into the classroom once learning professionals have done it for themselves first.

Teaching service-learning and philanthropy at the elementary school-level presents unique challenges, considering a population with little access to monetary funds or independent travel, as examples. Still, when a humanitarian focused pedagogy is strategically implemented, students have the fortune of understanding where those service opportunities and activities exist and can begin to engage in civic action for the betterment of society (Morris, 2018).

OtterCares and MindSpark worked together to disrupt the traditional educational model and show teachers how classroom learning can extend to creating community good. Teachers went through their own mini-service learning experience before they, in turn, engaged their students in service-learning. Teachers also learned how to reach out to community partners, market a cause, and instill within their students a need to serve their community and the people around them. MindSpark's impact-first method activated a sense of belonging in participants to encourage a similar responsiveness in their students, because our first-hand experiences help instill knowledge and the courage to spark relevant application in others.

100%

of participants strongly agreed that this experience gave them a sense of belonging to a community of peers. This stems from MindSpark's stated goal of forging partnerships that aid in furthering the transformative work of our learning experiences.

Building a community of belonging through this experience resulted in the following feedback:

- "This gave us a great starting point for how to get this process started!"
- "It was so great hearing from community partners in person. Thank you for encouraging us to organize this!"
- "I loved having the opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues around ways to implement project learning into my classroom and we already have some great ideas!"



EMPATHY

1: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner
also: the capacity for this

2: the imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it (Merriam-Webster)

At its core, philanthropic education makes learning authentic and valuable outside the four walls of a school building, especially when augmented through empathy. In the traditional public school academic model, schoolwork is relegated to the classroom and for the classroom. This type of learning is inauthentic and results in the expectation of a grade to signify competency or intelligence. MindSpark breaks that model and shows that students as young as kindergarten can learn and make a difference in their community if they are trusted and instructed well.

Through Project Heart, students have been able to experience empathy, setting goals, collaborating, and problem solving. I think this will be a huge foundation for our school moving forward to have those essential skills evident, within not just one classroom, but in the entire building. It's super powerful.

–Kelsey Dubois, 3rd Grade Teacher at Bamford

By ridding learning of its traditional silos, isolated academic experiences are minimized for both students and teachers as they realize an ability to learn and apply formal education as a means for fostering good in this world. Teachers were amazed by the solutions their students created through the empathetic design process and the increased engagement that resulted, knowing what they were learning was meaningful. Also, student learning took a tangible form, using a school Pack Pantry to give to those most in need. The Pack Pantry unleashed students' collective capabilities, setting the tone to leave systems better than how they were found.

To see the teachers go from questioning, 'How are we going to do this?' and 'How is this going to work?' to 'Have you seen what our kids have done?!' The poise, the seriousness, and the pride that they showed presenting their work – it's amazing!

– Tressa Evans, Assistant Principal at Bamford Elementary

INNOVATION

1: a new idea, method, or device: NOVELTY

2: the introduction of something new (Merriam-Webster)

Our younger generation has the capability to understand and model how to extract the wonderful opportunities that exist all around us and instill passionate, actionable generosity in ways we may have never thought of as adult learners (Fox, 2020). These collaborations, especially when instituted early on, help to foster self-awareness, self-reflection, civility, and a strong compassionate spirit (Dupaix & Anderson, 2021). In fact, our future generations can be a fruitful reminder of how powerful our impact can be when we fully harness innovation and creativity to practice philanthropic education in our communities. Instituting philanthropic educational experiences, such as Project Heart, as a strategic resource truly does have the ability to transform entire schools and the surrounding community members.

Partnerships are crucial for successful networks to address the transformation and expansion of institutional goals (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005). Our educators realized that while the work is substantial, this is the kind of school-based process that currently remains as elusive as the yeti. Educators are learning to partner with the community, leverage businesses, and create working relationships with parents as community stakeholders that are high-impact and innovative, something few school districts do. Addressing this experience gap provides educators with the confidence to face work challenges and help others outside of education do the same.



100%

of participants agreed or strongly agreed that this experience gave them the confidence to tackle challenges in their work. This metric aligns with MindSpark's stated goal of ongoing recruitment and retention efforts for educators who engage with our services.



95%

of participants agreed that this learning experience gave them the ability to help others outside of education learn about these impactful topics. This metric is part of MSL's goals for ensuring all individuals are included and supported to succeed, as well as igniting the kinetic energy that flows into surrounding communities, ensuring impacts outside of education systems.

When asked what the most meaningful part of their experience was, participants shared:

- "Good info on several topics I didn't have a lot of knowledge about."
- "Delegation! We came up with a great way to delegate while also including parents into this process."
- "Coming up with next steps! We have a great outline for the rest of our project, and we feel really good about it! We also reached out to some potential community partners."

SUSTAINABLE

1: capable of being sustained

2a: of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged

b: of or relating to a lifestyle involving the use of sustainable methods (Merriam-Webster)

Through MindSpark's instruction, educators were able to identify a community issue and then charge their students with learning its importance. This sustained transformation is a crucial part of MindSpark's philanthropic education model. It is in the DNA of all the human-centric experiences we offer, and integral to the success of cross-sector partnerships that stand the test of time.

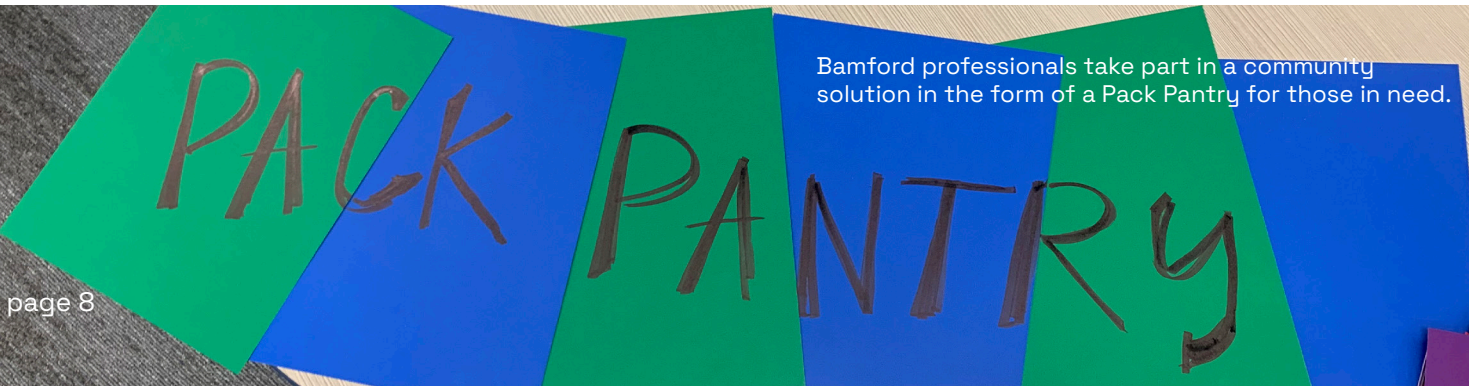
The Bamford Elementary School Pack Pantry allows students and individuals to receive supplies such as canned food and other hygiene items like toothbrushes, while keeping their dignity. Those who are without can find what they need in the Pack Pantry with no questions asked. An example of something the students learned while developing the Pack Pantry was differentiating between wants and needs. Other lessons included how to ask for help when you need it, and the overall importance of helping those who might not have what we have. Best of all, these lessons and new ideas can be applied immediately and into the future.

One challenge related to the Pantry was to help students authentically empathize with other people's needs. As one participant noted, "We wanted to just dive in and try it. Be mindful of what's within their capabilities and not undervalue the contributions they can make." As an example, a "naked" doll represented this idea to help students understand and visualize how contributing to a pantry translates to fulfilling important needs, such as clothing and shelter.

One little girl was saying, 'You know, it just made me realize that I don't need any more stuff, and I should be grateful for the things I already have.' It's so emotional and so amazing for them to have that realization. It's been really surprising to hear that they have learned so much from just this one project.

—Kelsey Dubois

Sustainability is made even more viable through teamwork, where pathways are replicated and scaled, while remaining hyper-localized and adaptive to the needs of our crucial stakeholders. MindSpark's innovative professional learning techniques disrupt the status quo and foster conscious leadership experiences where catalytic reflection ensures enduring change. With amazing partners like OtterCares, the pathways we open upskill entire education systems through the functions of service learning, empathy, innovation, and sustained action. Project Heart becomes the conduit of these functions, unleashing human capacity, authentic learning, and wellbeing for all involved.



Bamford professionals take part in a community solution in the form of a Pack Pantry for those in need.

95%

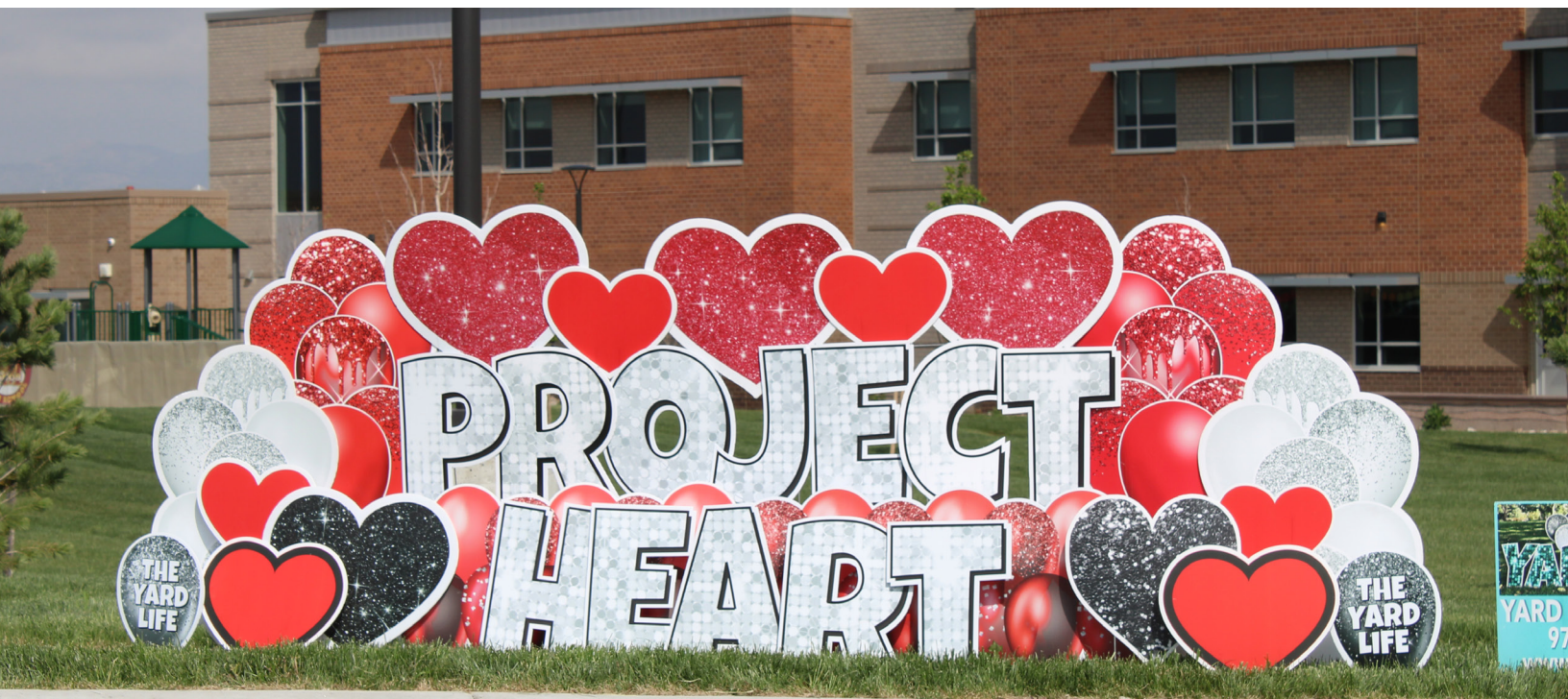
of participants agreed that this experience gave them the ability to partner with community members to help sustain this work. This metric is guided by MSL's goal to forge strategic partnerships in every learning experience we offer.

100%

of participants agreed that this experience provided them with useful tools to help them feel more qualified doing this work. At MindSpark, we use this data to support our goal of helping educational retention by focusing on this motivational aspect of workplace psychology.

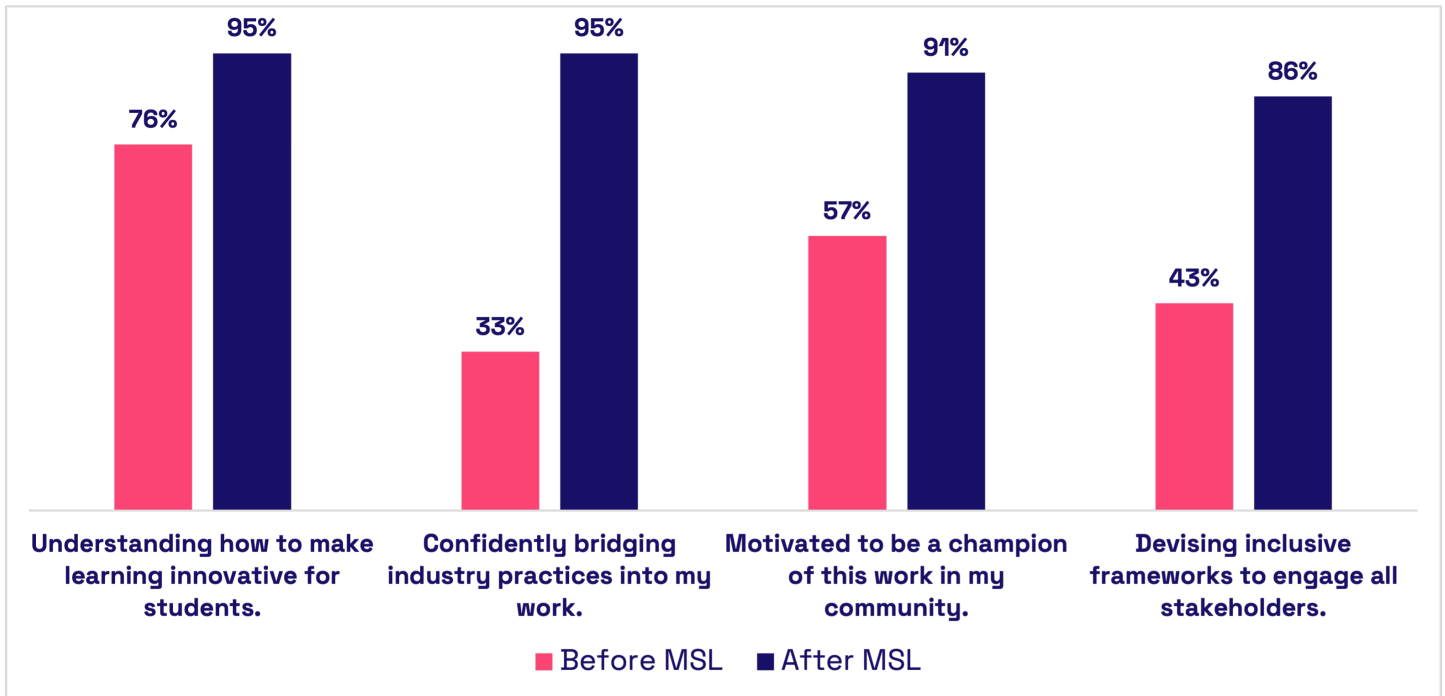
Here's what participants said about their favorite parts of the MSL facilitation process:

- "Engaging and valuable – Loved that we could apply what we learned right in the moment and get work done!"
- "I love that they valued our time, movement and creative ways to get us collaborating and thinking about how to make an impact on community with our students!"
- "The progression was logical and easy to follow. Each activity was great for our work and can be taken back into the classroom."



The Power of MindSpark's Experiential Contributions

Bamford participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the following metrics showed profound growth in all four impactful areas as a result of their experience with MindSpark, dramatically increasing percentages from to 19 to 62 points.



7

**PD's
executed**

25

**educators
participated**

750

**potential students
benefited**



Using the district's 30% report of students on free and reduced lunch,
Bamford's Pack Pantry has the potential to help 225 families with food needs.



Philanthropic education has the capacity to fully engage students in their learning. Research shows that over the course of one school year, a fully engaged student with no learning loss has a lifetime benefit of earning **9% more in personal income** than those who are not engaged.



Using the current average income for a U.S. citizen in 2022 (\$63,214), this would represent an **additional minimum \$5,690 in income** for each student reached at Bamford, for a total of **\$4,267,500 in economic impact**.



If each of the 28 schools in the Loveland area had a similar effect, the economic impact for this area alone would equate to **\$119,490,000**, representing nearly a quarter of Loveland's largest corporation's annual revenue.



If each of these students focused on positively affecting 6 individuals below the poverty line in the surrounding Loveland area, **they would effectively touch the lives of every community member in this category**.

A photograph of a school sign for Bamford Elementary. The sign is made of large, white, 3D block letters mounted on a green brick wall. Above and below the sign are rows of light-colored wooden blocks.

**BAMFORD
ELEMENTARY**



For **91% of participants**, this was their first experience with MindSpark Learning.



Bamford participants brought a cumulative teaching experience totaling **215 years of educational service**, and an average of **8.6 years per educator**.



Participants reported a total of **48 partnerships forged** as a result of this learning experience.

If these partnerships were strategically developed to fill the gap in education expenses with the least support, moving the needle by only 1% each, support for all “other expenses” would increase from 3% to 51%.



Participants also reported an average of **3 recommendations each** for MindSpark’s services, helping to ignite a passion for philanthropy in the Loveland area and beyond. 75 potential disruptors earning an average annual income of \$65,866, for a total of \$4,939,950. **Using a conservative average of 5% for charitable giving, this totals \$246,998 for potential philanthropic use in the community**, representing over one-fifth of Loveland’s economic development expenditures for 2020.

The guidance we were given by MSL was imperative. I think having that guidance has allowed us to become ‘this’ as a Bamford family... Those components that MindSpark brought to us each month when we met was critical, and because OtterCares was able to provide that for us and help us with that support... We couldn’t have done it otherwise.

–Tressa Evans

MindSpark’s intermediary position offers the soul of a nonprofit meshed with the DNA of a startup to upskill entire districts and their regions through an inspiring learning continuum. In the case of our amazing partnership with OtterCares and Bamford Elementary, MindSpark’s philanthropic learning model sparks human capacity through an experience-based differentiation, with both immediate and lasting effects. This becomes especially profound when our youth become unfettered with transformed mindsets capable of producing human betterment, well-being, and kinetic flourishing for themselves, their schools, and their communities. We are immensely proud to have created a highly effective cognitive model of positive transformation, where we disrupt fixed mindsets, coax supported disequilibrium, activate human capacity, and unleash impact.