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Librarian Tops Challenge

Educator Wins For Project Geared Toward State Test

By [Jenny Jones](#)



Margo Jantzi, librarian at Cub Run Elementary School and former Mountain View Elementary challenge teacher, won a state economic education award for her lesson about civil rights leader César Chávez.

Photos by Pete Marovich

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PENN LAIRD - While he's considered one of the greatest civil rights leaders in American history, many people today may not know about César Chávez.

But now, Virginia public school students must learn about Chávez to meet the requirements of the recently revised History and Social Science Standards of Learning.

That's why Margo Jantzi chose Chávez as the central figure of an economics education project for her Mountain View Elementary School second-grade challenge class to conduct last year.

The project, "The Vision of César Chávez: Sí Se Puede," was named the best instructional unit for kindergarteners through fifth-graders in this year's Virginia State Economics Challenge program. Jantzi will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and will be recognized at an awards ceremony in Richmond on Nov. 21.

"The reason I probably won at the state level is because it's going to be part of the Standards of Learning," Jantzi said. "Teachers are going to be scrambling" to find resources about Chávez.

Learning About Chávez's Legacy

Jantzi started the project by collecting books about Chávez, which students read to get a better understanding of his historical significance.

Through the books, students learned Chávez's story: Chávez was a second-generation Mexican-American who, at age 10, became a migrant farm worker after his family lost its farm during the Great Depression.

Chávez dropped out of school after the eighth grade and became a full-time migrant worker to help support his family. He and other migrant workers experienced injustices and hardships on the job.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, Chávez became a community organizer, conducting drives against racial and economic discrimination. Then, in the 1960s, Chávez created the first successful farm workers association, which brought about the 1975 California Agriculture Labor Relations Act to protect farm workers.

"César knew migrant farmers needed a voice because they were voiceless," said Jantzi, who is now the librarian at Cub Run Elementary School. "He went after peaceful ways to help farmers."

After learning about Chávez's achievements, students began thinking about an economic project they could do to carry on his vision and honor. They agreed to produce and sell a musical instrument to raise money for a local agency that assists immigrants, Jantzi said.

After conducting a market survey to determine what type of musical instrument would have the most appeal, students decided to make rain sticks. The class sent a letter to Staples, which donated mailing tubes to make the sticks, Jantzi said.

Students then conducted quality control by experimenting with different types of fillers to get the perfect rain sound. They settled on pistachio shells, rice and navy beans, she said.

Students decorated the tubes and conducted another survey to figure out how to price the rain sticks. With the data they collected, students determined \$5 was a fair price.

They sold several dozen sticks and earned a profit of about \$125, which they gave to New Bridges, a local nonprofit that brings immigrant and native-born communities together, Jantzi said.

"This community is still dealing with diversity and these students learned it well by applying economics," she said. "They were feeling in charge of" the project.

Sarah Finley, executive director of the Virginia Council for Economic Education, said the award selection committee was impressed with the strong economic and interdisciplinary components of Jantzi's project.

The committee, Finley said, thought the project was "really engaging" and a "good learning experience."

Jantzi said she's honored to win the award and plans to use the money she won to purchase a

new Apple laptop.

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