

Junior Achievement of Arizona: Sowing Seeds for Economic Success

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The Queen Creek Unified School District is teaming up with Junior Achievement of Arizona, a nonprofit organization that educates students in economics and finance. Through workshops and interactive experiences, Queen Creek students are gaining the skills necessary to thrive in our expanding global economy.

Ever wonder why they don't teach kids in school how to manage personal finances, pay taxes or set up a retirement plan? Junior Achievement of Arizona (JAAZ) is an educational organization that reaches out to young minds and exposes them to the inevitable skills they'll need to develop as adults, giving them an edge when they head out into the "real world." Several Queen Creek elementary and middle schools have joined the program, sowing the seeds and making the investment in their students for future success.

"We want to give them an experience they'll remember that will create a pipeline to a more educated society," says Dr. Tiffannie Sechrist, Director of Career and Technical Education in the Queen Creek Unified School District (QCUSD).



JAAZ offers two workshops: JA BizTown is geared toward elementary-aged children, while JA FinancePark is meant for middle school and high school students. A tiny town built specifically for students, JA BizTown simulates working as an employee on a business team, selling goods and services, opening bank accounts, managing personal finances and more. JA FinancePark takes those fundamental skills a step further by teaching students how to make sound decisions about their finances and overall lives (like whether that 2,000-sq.-ft. home is within their monetary means).

Fifth and 8th graders in QCUSD will be participating in these programs, with 5th graders attending BizTown and 8th graders going to FinancePark, says Dr. Sechrist. On Sept. 15, students from Queen Creek Elementary will attend BizTown as the first of the JAAZ field trip series. Other trips are lined up for November and December.

Before going to BizTown, students are assigned job titles and work with their regular teachers in the classroom to prepare for the trip. Students attending FinancePark are assigned a "fake life," Dr. Sechrist says. "How many kids do you have? Where should you shop for their clothes?"

"We're at almost 1,000 students--just the size is exciting, that all of these students are able to do this," Dr. Sechrist says. "Any real-world relevance we can provide to our students, I jump at it."

The following QCUSD schools are participating in the JAAZ BizTown and FinancePark experiences:

Queen Creek Elementary

Newell Barney Middle School

Queen Creek Middle School

Jack Barnes Elementary

Gateway Polytechnic Academy

Frances Brandon Pickett Elementary

Desert Mountain Elementary

For more information about Junior Achievement of Arizona, visit jaaz.org