



## *Best Practices Case Study*

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Editor's note: The Confidence in Kansas Public Education Task Force sponsors the Friends of Education Awards. To recognize exemplary partner development, Kansas Partners in Education sponsors the Partner Activity award category. Each nominee is a business, company, or agency that has provided an on-going partner activity over an extended period of time (minimum of three years), by means of volunteer time, services, finances or other types of support, in amount that exceeds typical collaboration from a private or public institution. This case study provides information about a 2008 Partner Activity nominee and is an educational service to KSPE members, their organizations, and prospective partners.

## Cici's Pizza helps Topeka Public Schools

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Cici's Pizza is a champion when it comes to supporting Topeka area schools. Contributions include incentive programs such as free meals for students who do well in school, donations for school fundraisers, and fundraising nights where a portion of proceeds go to a particular school.

Cici's Pizza's is committed to educating students about the world of work. For example, Cici's has been working with French Middle School for the past five years. In the beginning, school counselor Beth Robinett contacted store manager Cyle Ossiander and asked if Cici's might be willing to support the school character education program. Cyle quickly responded yes. When the first ten character winners went to Cici's for their reward, Cici's staff discussed the importance of good character is in the workplace, and in life. Employees talked with students about their restaurant, gave them a very informative tour, and allowed the students to make their own pizza. This has become a tradition at French. Cici's now honors 30 students a month in this program.

Store manager Ossiander also provides eighth grade French Middle School students the opportunity to participate in a hands-on work experience with Cici's. Over 250 students participate in the Cici's Work Zone program. Students receive Cici's shirts and hats, and

for one and a half hours every Wednesday for four weeks, they go to CiCi's and rotate through three jobs. One group makes pizza. Another group learns to bus dishes. The third group keeps the salad bar and buffet stocked and takes specialty orders. Wednesday is senior citizen's day and the older customers enjoy seeing the students. The activity provides many lessons for intergenerational learning. At the end of each workday, students enjoy a pizza they made and discuss their performance with Cici's staff. At the end of the Work Zone program, students confirm they are much better prepared to get a job.

Cici's also annually contributes lunch at the "From Farm to You" program. The program is designed to help second-grade students in Shawnee County understand the importance of agriculture. Children learn about the various types of agriculture needed to make a pizza - from wheat to vegetables to dairy products.

Cici's helps schools with fund-raisers. McEachron Elementary Principal Vic Williams says, "Cici's pizza has a great kid friendly and family environment. That's why our PTO chose to use them as one of our school fundraiser nights. They are always easy to work with and very friendly." Many TPS schools work with Cici's on fundraiser nights.

By promoting education through the Work Zone program, rewarding students for exhibiting good character, providing incentives for students to do well in school and helping schools raise needed funds, Cici's truly is friend and partner in education.

Of Cici's contributions to Topeka schools, Cyle Ossiander says, "I don't know why more people don't donate and partner with schools. You get rewarded for what you give."

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