



# **STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET**

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**SCHOOL:** Brooklawn Middle School

**ACTIVITY:** BROOKLAWN'S INTENSE GAMES (B.I.G. NIGHT)

**DATE(S):** November 18-19, 2010

**CATEGORY:** Social/School Spirit

**ADVISOR NAME:** Lou Miller

**ADVISOR E-MAIL:** lmill@njasc.org

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## **PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THIS PROJECT:**

Brooklawn's Intense Games (also called B.I.G. Night) is a competitive and cooperative activity involving parents, teachers, and students competing in five fun and challenging team-building events. Descriptions of the actual events can be found on our website at [www.BrooklawnSA.org](http://www.BrooklawnSA.org). Teams of about 20 students each compete against each other in these events, while two adult teams of about 30 parents and teachers each compete against an alumni team of about 30 high school and college students who attended Brooklawn in years past. There are no prizes or incentives, just the honor of being the student or adult team champions.

Now in its twelfth year, B.I.G. Night grew out of our first NJASC Standards of Excellence experience with Phillipsburg Middle School in 1998-1999. After participating in their "Totally Awesome Games" we liked it so much that we just had to create a similar program at Brooklawn, adapting it to suit our own student population. On November 19, 1999 we held our first Brooklawn's Intense Games, which turned out to be such a success that the following year we had to expand this event to two nights of competition, which it has been ever since...

## **DESCRIBE THE PLANNING & EXECUTION OF THIS PROJECT:**

At the Fall Pep Rally in October we showcase the Crazy Cup Relay, one of the traditional events at B.I.G. Night. Students from each grade volunteer to participate in this event – but only if they are not already involved in the Pep Rally - to give everyone a chance to become an active part of it. After only one short practice after school the day before, the three volunteer teams compete in front of the entire school. Over the years, this has become the most exciting part of the Fall Pep Rally!

Soon afterward, we send out registration forms for Brooklawn's Intense Games through e-mail to all students and post them at our website. The registration forms have check offs for parents that want to volunteer or compete on either of the Parent/Faculty teams. To ensure that we have a good number of alumni competing each night, we send forms to Parsippany Hills High School and contact former Brooklawn council members attending other high schools, such as Morris Catholic or St. Elizabeth's, to get forms out to their schools as well. We do not charge anyone to participate - we only charge admission for spectators coming to watch the games each night.

We order shirts of different colors for each team and Mr. Miller randomly assigns students to the teams, balancing them by boy-girl and grade level as best as possible. The only choice students have is to pick the night they compete. Since one of the goals of Brooklawn's Intense Games is to have everyone to meet new friends and get to know them by working together to accomplish a common goal, we **DO NOT** allow students to select their own teams or indicate who they would like to be on a team with.

Each member of our Executive Board serves as a Team Captains, responsible for organizing their team effort during a single practice session and for keeping their team in order during the actual night of competition. The Captains meet well before B.I.G. Night to review the event rules and to discuss what it takes to be an effective Captain and leader. Being a Captain is not only a lot of fun, it is also a great leadership experience in which a lot of skills learned at LTC are put to the test.

B.I.G. Night is held on the Thursday and Friday before Thanksgiving, between sport seasons to get as many students as possible to compete. The teams that compete on B.I.G. Thursday practice on Tuesday night, and the

teams that compete on B.I.G. Friday practice on Wednesday night. At each practice, the team members get to know each other and work together, getting only one chance to try each event. At 6:15 on each B.I.G. Night, everyone meets in our cafetorium to get their shirts, decorate themselves, and organize their teams. The Captains take attendance and meet with the Advisor to go over any last minute absences and line-up changes. At 7:00, the teams march into the gym, and the games begin.

#### **DESCRIBE THE BENEFIT OF THIS PROJECT BENEFIT TO SCHOOL AND/OR COMMUNITY:**

This event brings together our school community like no other. For the past twelve years over 400 students, parents, faculty, and alumni return to Brooklawn each November to take part in the Intense Games. We even have alumni that are out of high school (and college) come back to participate - which for a Middle School event is practically unheard of. Our PTSA considers B.I.G. Night important enough that they FULLY FUND the cost of shirts for all participants, which is nearly \$3500 each year, and many of their members also serve as volunteers to help with the logistics of running this event such as being timers, judges, ticket sellers, etc.

This event helps all segments of our school community to bond and work together. Parents and teachers work and play together on one of two adult teams, helping to build positive and constructive relationships that last well beyond this event. Students meet and become friends with fellow students that they otherwise might just pass in the hallways. Student Council Executive members gain an experience through which they can apply skills from LTC in a fun environment, and become better leaders as a result. B.I.G. Night also benefits a worthy cause each year, as all ticket proceeds become part of our annual State Charity donation. Typically we raise about \$1500-2000 from this event each year.

#### **EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS PROJECT, REFLECTING ON ANY POSSIBLE CHANGES YOU MIGHT CONSIDER:**

B.I.G. Night has been a tremendous success - we have won Top Ten awards from NJASC, and it was recognized as a National Spotlight Project by NASC in 2006. It has also been the subject of two articles in Leadership for Student Activities magazine, a national publication of NASC. We have also "paid it forward" - going to other schools, such as Roosevelt Intermediate School in Westfield, and helping them to start similar events in the same way that Phillipsburg's "Totally Awesome Games" gave us the idea back in 1998. Our advisor, Mr. Miller, has also spoken about B.I.G. Night several times at NASC National Conferences, spreading the idea throughout the country.

Each year, we do review the actual events used in B.I.G. Night to see whether they need to be tweaked or changed. We currently have about ten different events that we rotate in and out, so that each year's games are a little different and returning participants do not get bored. Some events, such as the "Crazy Cups" race, are traditional and eagerly looked forward to each year, but we try and mix it up with some of the others. We are always on the lookout for new events, which have come from physical education teachers, internet resources, and sometimes ideas that come from our own students.