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Grade 4-6: Universal Children's Day "A Little Bit Goes A Long Way"

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School:

Anderson Mill Elementary

The Purpose and Essential Questions:

As a teacher, my primary purpose for this project was to show students that they could make an impact on worldwide goals at a community level. In order to do this, I had my students read the book "Zoom" by Istvan Banyai. After reading this picture book, I asked the children how it changed the way they looked at things. After we discovered that we didn't know any International Days, I asked the children how it made them feel. Both of these questions paved the way for wonderful classroom discussions.

The primary purpose for the students was to see the world from a different perspective through reflection, research and action. Their passion for this project gave them inspiration to show others that even the little things that we do in our community can make a big difference. That is why they created the slogan, "A Little Bit Goes a Long Way."

The Story:

At the beginning of the school year, I asked my class to create a list of days that people celebrate. They came up with a long list. Then I asked them if they knew any international days. To their surprise, they could not come up with any. Through research, we learned that the United Nations created "International Observances." For our project, we decided to celebrate observances that could benefit our community. As an International Baccalaureate school we aim "to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect."

With this in mind, we formed committees and celebrated International Literacy, Peace and Habitat Day. While planning for Children's Day, we discovered that the U.S. is one of only two countries which does not formally recognize Universal Children's Day on Nov. 20th. This discovery became our central focus. Students used technology to raise awareness about children's needs around the world and promote community involvement by developing an inspirational video, wiki, blog, newsletter, and a book.

Their project caught the attention of two municipalities -- Austin and Round Rock. Both city councils issued proclamations making Nov. 20 Universal Children's Day in their respective cities.

Service-Learning Theme(s) and Community Need**Service-Learning Themes:**

Environment

Literacy and Mentoring

Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty

Safe and Strong Communities

Community Need:

Many of the International Days that the children celebrated helped serve a variety of purposes. For International Literacy Day, they decided to read books to students in the Pre-K, 1st and 2nd grades. They got the entire school involved in International Peace Day by creating a Peace Tree and a Human Peace Sign in order to promote peace around the world.

Ultimately, their service-learning outreach created awareness about children's issues around the world and promoted action in our own community. With the declarance of Universal Children's Day in our local cities, it is likely that they will impact children for many years to come.

Community Partners:

We formed partnerships with the Cities of Austin and Round Rock. The Texas Center for Service Learning and Learn and Serve Texas strongly supported our efforts as well. We hope to create additional partnerships in the future.

Place of Impact:

School

Local Community

School Setting, Grade Level and Duration**School Setting:**

Suburban

Urban

Grade Level:

4-6 (Upper Elementary)

Target Population:

All Students

Duration:

More than 9 weeks

Connection to Curriculum

Academic Subjects:

Art

Life Skills

Math

Social Studies

Speech and Communication

Technology

State Standards:

TX

Subject:

English/Language Arts

Definition:

Memoir, Persuasive Essay & Text (5.19A,5.12A)

Expository Analysis 5.11A-D

Personal Writing/Memoir- 5.17A

Subject:

Social Studies/History

Definition:

5.6A apply geographic tools

5.6B translate geographic data into a variety of formats: raw data to graphs and maps

5.7A describe regions that result from patterns of human activity: political, population, and economic

Subject:

Math

Definition:

TEKS: 2A Statistics, 5.9 , 5.13A , 5.13B , 5.13C

Subject:

Technology

Definition:

Students created a blog, wiki and video using a variety of technology tools.

Content Areas of major themes of study:

(no text provided by teacher)

Skills being introduced or developed:

Sequencing, Public speaking, Persuasive writing, Analyzing text, Letter-writing, Technology and digital media (blogging, wiki)

Books, Media, Websites, and other Resources:

Books:

Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

Investigation:

In order to gain knowledge on International Observances, students read literature, articles, online blogs and watched educational videos. Additionally, they analyzed international statistics and compared that data to our local community. They also surveyed 3-5 graders on their international awareness related to children's rights.

Reflection:

During the investigation process, students communicated their results through charts, graphs, reflective papers and classroom discussions.

Preparation and Planning:

In order to prepare, we tried to do as much research as possible. We also made a list of the most effective ways to communicate our message. We decided that by forming a partnership, writing letters to community leaders, designing a shirt, creating a blog, wiki, video and newsletter, we would successfully achieve our main objectives.

Partnerships: Before they drafted the letters, we discussed the importance of Universal Children's Day and why people in our community should be involved.

Blog: Students created questions that require children from our school and citizens in our community to reflect on the major issues.

Wiki: Students looked at other wiki's and decided on an appealing template that would promote their message.

Video: Students voted on a video theme, combining a reflection vault, creative display of facts and inspirational music.

Shirts: Students designed a template for a shirt that they would wear while promoting Universal Children's Day.

Newsletter: The students created their own newsletter called the International Informer. In it, they decided to write about Children's Rights and other issues around our school and the world.

Reflection:

Students decided to divide leadership responsibilities for the projects above. Each group made presentations and we discussed the impact as a class. Classmates would give constructive ideas to one another which made the process more effective.

Action:

Students spread awareness in our community by creating a blog, wiki, video, newsletter, survey, and by establishing partnerships and educating public officials. They also created a book that they read throughout the school. Students also designed shirts that promoted their Service-Learning message, which is to create Universal Children's Day awareness. They wore the shirts when they read to classrooms, as well as events that occur during Universal Children's Day.

Reflection:

Throughout each experience, we held classroom discussions and wrote in reflective journals.

Public Relations:

The students' research and activities for Universal Children's Day caught the attention of the cities of Austin and Round Rock and both city councils will issue proclamations making Nov. 20 Universal Children's Day in their respective cities. The students were invited to the Austin City Council Meeting on Thursday, Nov. 19 to receive Austin's proclamation. The City of Round Rock and Mayor Alan McGraw will present the proclamation to students at Anderson Mill Elementary on Friday, Nov. 20.

The children also received an honorary certificate from Texas Governor Rick Perry. Anderson Mill Elementary and the Round Rock School District featured our project on their websites. We hope that others will continue to recognize the impact that our project made.

Assessment and Evaluation:

The students were assessed on a daily basis. Since our project emphasized a variety of important academic areas, (such as persuasive essays, graphs, reading comprehension) it was important for them to demonstrate their expertise in each area.

Also, since students were assigned to committees, it was their responsibility to report back to the class and communicate their progress, thus involving everyone in the evaluation process.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

This project showed me that children are truly capable of anything that they put their minds to. I found that classroom discussions and reflection resulted in more student buy-in and motivation to take the project to another level.

I would like to lead future students in a similar experiences. We can improve our plans even more by inviting guest speakers and putting even more emphasis on academic areas that the children struggle with.

About the Teacher:

Scott Ganske, a 5th grade teacher at Anderson Mill Elementary School, in Austin, Texas, is the creator of this Service-Learning Project. He is in his 8th year as a teacher and has a Masters Degree in Public Administration. Scott was heavily involved in service-learning throughout high school and college. He used these experiences to integrate effective service-learning as a teacher in Tempe, Arizona and Austin, Texas. He credits the school he teaches at and the Round Rock School District for their amazing commitment to service-learning. His experience at the 2009 Texas Center For Service Learning Institute motivated Scott exponentially. He hopes that future classes will continue this project at his school and other schools around the district and state.

About the School:

Anderson Mill Elementary is an International Baccalaureate school located in Austin, Texas. They are part of the Round Rock School District. They are a Title I School that serves a population of around 400 students.

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[2] http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=144105&title=Universal_Children_s_Day