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# Grade 6-8: Honoring the Veterans of WWI (and supporting the redesignation of the current local memorial on the Mall in Washington, DC)

By *admin*

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**School:**

Creekwood Middle School

**The Purpose and Essential Questions:**

Without powerful lobbyists or veterans left to help promote a national memorial on the Mall in Washington, students can learn and honor history by raising funds and bringing attention to the situation.

Many of our students will visit Washington in their lifetimes. This involvement really makes that monument have deeper meaning. They can experience that knowledge that collectively they had made a contribution and the personal satisfaction of "making a difference."

The opportunity to research their own family history through genealogy charts generated conversations that usually don't occur between middle school students and their parents and relatives. Sometimes we all wait too late to have these conversations. Stories were shared and connections were made. Many were placed on a school blog set up for that purpose.

Students had opportunities for public speaking, created flyers for distribution in the community, created artwork and performed music of the era in a celebratory final patriotic assembly.

**The Story:**

After seeing the story of a Michigan photographer's quest to photograph all living soldiers of WWI, I became aware that it is the one war not represented with a monument on the Mall in DC. Mr. DeJonge's exhibit of 11 veterans was dedicated at the Pentagon in May of 2008, and he became the representative for Mr. Buckles, the last surviving American doughboy. Mr. Buckles hoped school children would get involved in honoring all his fellow veterans with a memorial on the Mall. We were fortunate to contact Mr. DeJonge and be the first school to host the exhibit to bring attention to the cause. Students were involved in learning about all aspects of the war, served as docents at the exhibit, carried the message to the community, raised funds, looked into their own genealogy, and followed current legislation proposed by our own Congressman, Ted Poe.

## Service-Learning Theme(s) and Community Need

**Service-Learning Themes:**

Elders

Immigration

**Community Need:**

Once our request to bring a photography exhibit featuring all eleven living soldiers of WWI to the Civic Center was granted, we contacted all veteran organizations. Many attended and were grateful for the students' sincere efforts to honor the soldiers and to see the exhibit. The public at large saw the work of the Creekwood Middle School students; they also saw the work contributed by students from several other district schools. High school students read love letters from the war: some had presentations on influenza, and others on the stages of the war. The ROTC Color Guard presented the colors. It was a moving and important connection to the community showing the positive work being done by students across several of our schools. Congressman Ted Poe spoke at the Civic Center. His work is an inspiration to the community as well.

**Community Partners:**

Chamber of Commerce, VFW, YMCA, Alspaugh Hardware, HEB grocers

**Place of Impact:**

School

Local Community

National

## School Setting, Grade Level and Duration

**School Setting:**

Suburban

**Grade Level:**

6-8 (Middle School)

**Target Population:**

All Students

**Duration:**

1-4 weeks

## Connection to Curriculum

### Academic Subjects:

English Language Arts

Math

Science

### State Standards:

TX

### Subject:

Science

### Definition:

Science: TEKS 7.14 A,B,C: (A) describe and predict the impact of different catastrophic events on the earth; (B) analyze effects of regional erosional deposition and weathering; (C) make inferences and draw conclusions about effects of human activity on earth's renewable, non-renewable, and inexhaustible resources.

### Content Areas of major themes of study:

Language Arts: poetry, propaganda, and linking effects of the war to 8th grade unit on the Holocaust.

History: Europe during the war, posters of WWI, reasons for entering the war, following legislation on the bill.

Science: weathering and erosion of the current local monument, camouflage, buoyancy, influenza, genealogy.

Math: economic impact, rationing and counting troops, statistics of the war

Electives: art, photography and music of the era, building display case, technology classes developed flyers.

### Skills being introduced or developed:

Public speaking, research, and graphic arts skills were all emphasized and developed in many of the curricular connections.

### Books, Media, Websites, and other Resources:

See our website @ [www.humbleisd.net/cms](http://www.humbleisd.net/cms) [1]

If you click on Service-Learning projects many of the resources are listed there.

Encyclopedia Britannica's website [www.studentnewsnet.org](http://www.studentnewsnet.org) [2] has wonderful resources and

a link to our story CBS: Race Against Time: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/05>

[/26/earlyshow/main4127438.shtml?source=related\\_storyInteractive](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/05/26/earlyshow/main4127438.shtml?source=related_storyInteractive) [3] World War One Atlas:

<http://www.greatwarmap.com/> [4]

Main causes of World War One:

[http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video\\_id=720&title=WWI\\_Causes](http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=720&title=WWI_Causes) [5]

National World War One Museum:

<http://www.secondstory.com/portfolio/lists/project/national-world-war-i-museum/overview> [6]

The Last Battle by David DeJonge:

<http://www.photobiz.com/slideshowbiz/slideshow.cfm?slideshowID=29422&photographerID=6584> [7]

## Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

### **Investigation:**

Contacting: David DeJonge; WWI Memorial Foundation; Representative Poe.

Contacting our service-learning board to see if grant money was available to bring the exhibit to our school district.

### **Reflection:**

Students viewed the CBS Early Show broadcast highlighting the DeJonge exhibit, Mr. Buckles-our last doughboy, and heard of the lack of a national WWI Memorial on the Mall in Washington DC. All students saw this in their advisories and articulated their thoughts and feelings about participation.

### **Preparation and Planning:**

A large committee of teachers, S-L board members, principals, and PTA members was established representing all areas that would need to be addressed. We considered timing, needs, venues and decided to move forward. Subcommittees were formed around curriculum integration, exhibit display, student publicity, media kit publicity, fundraising, websites, letter writing to special groups, t-shirts & backpack tags, PTA support and transportation. Because we would be the first stop on a national tour of the exhibit, the initial planning required adult leadership and decisions. As the plans moved forward, students helped in displays, publicity, donations, letter writing, and being the 'voice' of the project as docents and community spokespersons.

### **Reflection:**

Every Monday afternoon a member of each committee met to report on progress and problems. An informal consensus was reached for each point. Our late arrival on Thursday afforded us the time by department to reflect on the curriculum connections by grade level. Student reflection occurred at this stage primarily through discussion.

### **Action:**

By late January the students had received enough background information through the classroom, student CCN broadcasts and student newspaper articles to lead the donation effort through back pack tag sales, pay-to-play collections and the classroom coin jar competition between classes. They did the collecting, counting and reporting updates daily on the student announcements. Curriculum connections began in the classrooms on Monday. The exhibit was set up and viewing began on Wednesday. All students toured the exhibit. The docents skillfully presented the veterans' stories. Fundraising went on all week. A patriotic assembly was held with scouts presenting the colors, boys' choirs singing songs of the era, and a student reading of "On Flanders Field." The entire student body wore project t-shirts; 6th in white, 7th in blue and 8th in red. Congressman Poe spoke, Mr. DeJonge spoke, and then we were all able to sing "Happy Birthday" to 108-year-old Mr. Buckles over Mr. DeJonge's iPhone.

### **Reflection:**

In student interviews following the assembly, students were very touched by the events in which they'd participated. The gym was a 'sea' of red, white and blue. They were committed

## Public Relations:

There were several nice moments throughout the project when the media covered events. This helped us publicize the project to get support, and it also spread the word about the service-learning concept and the students' good work.

Local Observer newspaper article: [http://www.hcnonline.com/articles/2009/02/10/kingwood\\_observer/news/07koveteran.txt](http://www.hcnonline.com/articles/2009/02/10/kingwood_observer/news/07koveteran.txt) [13]

ABC Houston news coverage: <http://abclocal.go.com/ktrk/video?id=6641555> [14]

CMS Assembly: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NWsfrxqvAo> [15]

Congressman Ted Poe's Speech: <http://poe.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=111615> [16]

## Assessment and Evaluation:

As a result of the \$16,300.00 collected to support the maintenance of the monument we were invited to travel to West Virginia to personally present Mr. Buckles with the check. Because of the strong parent and student involvement in the project, three parents and three students made the trip at their own expense because it had been such a meaningful experience. Many students found a WWI connection in their families; one noted she learned she was eligible for DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) and learned what that meant! I believe the lasting impact of this project is yet to be measured as students grow up and at some point in their lives they visit the monument. Many did just that with families this past summer. This project united the entire student body and staff.

## Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

The committee continued to meet to evaluate and to develop what is now "The Creekwood Plan" for Mr. DeJonge to take to other schools that might want to replicate the project and add student support for a national monument to the veterans of WWI.

Sixteen of us, adults and students, attended the service-learning conference this summer in Austin, TX. We have just gathered a volunteer service-learning student representative from each of the 52 advisories. They will meet to plan phase II of the WWI project and select a local service-learning project as well. The students will have a chance to meet with Cathryn Berger Kaye in late October 2009 to be inspired and trained as to how to move forward in a more student-led project.

The lessons learned in this particular project were that by its very scope, the sensitivity of time, the need to book venues and rent trucks, etc, began as a teacher planned project. However, as time passed the students became more and more involved and indicated time and again, they wanted to continue. This year two-thirds of the student body had that common experience. They will be the leaders of Phase II and teachers will simply help them facilitate their plan.

We have a history of service-learning at Creekwood over the last few years and are developing a culture of service-minded students. Last year the 8th grade led "Nothing But Nets" against malaria and the 6th grade did "Help Lauren Learn." We always discover that when you connect students to a cause, the learning that takes place is remarkable and lasting.

The WWI Memorial Project left an indelible mark on the school. It can be seen in the faces of those on the pictures taken throughout the event, the words of those in the student interviews, and the actions of those now coming forward to lead the next project. The 8th graders who traveled to West Virginia demonstrated their heartfelt commitment to the cause by going. They will continue to lead this to the high school. Our current advisory representatives want to take this to their elementary schools. A member of our Board of Education has challenged the principals of the other schools in the district to take up the cause.

Our principal's favorite story to tell is that of a parent attending the Civic Center exhibit. His son previously had never come home telling what was going on at school until WWI Week. The parent said, "I had to come see what had suddenly gotten his attention in school."

### About the Teacher:

I'm a science teacher with 22 years in the district, actually a retire/rehire teacher. Service-learning is part of my nature having seen the impact during an early effort of students painting storm drains and circulating their flyers to the neighborhood telling what things are not safe to put down the storm drains. We are very fortunate to have a very active and helpful service-learning board in the district. When we began taking on projects with a bigger scope and those that could involve students from other campuses, they became our best support and guidance.

### About the School:

Creekwood Middle School is a suburban school in a nice community with many supportive parents and an active PTA. The staff is very congenial and talented and willing to collaborate. Mr. Winicki, our principal, supports and encourages these types of involvements for the students. We are fortunate to have a late arrival scheduled on Thursday mornings that accommodates department and grade level planning. The talents of so many staff members were instrumental in leading the students in this project.

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### Links:

- [1] <http://www.humbleisd.net/cms>
- [2] <http://www.studentnewsnet.org>
- [3] [http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/05/26/earlyshow/main4127438.shtml?source=related\\_storyInteractive](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/05/26/earlyshow/main4127438.shtml?source=related_storyInteractive)
- [4] <http://www.greatwarmap.com/>
- [5] [http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video\\_id=720&title=WWI\\_Causes](http://www.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=720&title=WWI_Causes)
- [6] <http://www.secondstory.com/portfolio/lists/project/national-world-war-i-museum/overview>
- [7] <http://www.photobiz.com/slideshowbiz/slideshow.cfm?slideshowID=29422&photographerID=6584>
- [8] <http://www.teachertube.com/googleSearch.php?cx=012339422634307447803:h-vlw-wg9yy&cof=FORID:11&ie=UTF-8&safe=high&q=trench warfare in WWI>
- [9] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/>
- [10] <http://www.teachertube.com/viewProfile.php?user=angq25>
- [11] <http://worldhistory.pppst.com/ww1.html>
- [12] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/hq/timeline.shtml>
- [13] [http://www.hcnonline.com/articles/2009/02/10/kingwood\\_observer/news/07koveteran.txt](http://www.hcnonline.com/articles/2009/02/10/kingwood_observer/news/07koveteran.txt)

[14] <http://abclocal.go.com/ktrk/video?id=6641555>

[15] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NWsfrxqvAo>

[16] <http://poe.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=111615>