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Grade 9 with Grade 3 Partners: Pennies for Peace - Using Common Cents to Create Global Change in The Middle East

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School:

Mineola High School

The Purpose and Essential Questions:

Do we (teachers and students) have a responsibility to advocate for people in other countries? How does the learning environment affect students? OR What are the qualities of a good school? Can helping children in Pakistan have an effect on people in the United States? How can we in the U.S. support education and economic opportunity for children in the Middle East? What qualities make a person a hero?

The Story:

After reading *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and several articles relating to education in the Middle East, ninth grade students wanted to give children across the globe better educational opportunities. Students agreed that Mortenson's actions made him a hero and they were eager to take their own heroic action like him. They decided to work to collect money for Mortenson's organization, Pennies for Peace, which raises funds for schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since elementary school students were the first to donate money to Mortenson's cause, the ninth graders planned for a day of teaching third graders in our district about the educational needs of children in the Middle East. Their hope was that the third graders would join them in fundraising. The day of the third graders' visit included reading and learning about schools in the Middle East, teaching about Pennies for Peace, decorating containers to collect the change, and having an authentic tea party. The ninth graders were extremely proud of their efforts and the third graders left inspired. Two weeks later, the third grade teachers called to say that their students had a surprise for us. Imagine how thrilled we were when the third graders presented us with a huge jar of change that totaled \$514. One of the third grade boys was excited because this amount was so close to \$600, enough to pay a teacher's salary for a year. Of course, this made the ninth graders eager to raise the additional money to get to \$600 — and we did!

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

Literacy and Mentoring

Social Change

Community Need:

At first, when asked to help students in the Middle East, the ninth grade students responded by asking, "Don't we have people in America who need help?" Therefore, the first need that had to be addressed in this service learning experience was helping students who may never have left the state, let alone the country, see the connections between the improved quality of life of people halfway around the globe and life of people halfway across the classroom. This meant breaking down stereotypes of the Middle East and particularly madrasas. It is worth noting that this service learning experience began in September 2009, a fitting time since many students and teachers alike were begrudgingly returning to school. Rather than complaining about having to wake up early or turn in homework, it was hoped that students would appreciate school if they read about other children who did not have a school of their own. The most important needs that were addressed through this project were showing the ninth grade students in the U.S. that they could be agents of change and an inspiration to younger students, and of course, promoting safe schools in the Middle East.

Community Partners:

Pennies for Peace, and third grade students (and their teachers)

Place of Impact:

School

Global

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

Suburban

Grade Level:

K-3 (Early Elementary)

9-12 (High School)

Target Population:

All Students

Duration:

1-4 weeks

Connection to Curriculum

Academic Subjects:

Art

English Language Arts

Math

Music

Social Studies

Speech and Communication

Vocational Education

State Standards:

NY

Subject:

ELA

Definition:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas, discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

Subject:

ELA

Definition:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression. Students will read and listen to oral, written and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Subject:

ELA

Definition:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Subject:

ELA

Definition:

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

Content Areas of major themes of studies

Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

Investigation:

Julie G. and Brittany G. commented on the experience of teaching. Julie wrote, "Even though the third graders didn't read the memoir, they got to see a picture book [Listen to the Wind] about other people's lives and how they can help, which they did!" Brittany wrote, "I feel that in their future these kids will continue to want to make a difference." More than seeing themselves as agents of change, Julie and Brittany recognized the exponential power to help others see themselves as change agents. Catia perfectly summarized the effect this project had on her. "This project has made me feel like I changed a small part of the world, and by taking a few steps at a time, I can change an even bigger part of the world."

Reflection:

Discussion and written feedback to cookie experiment, chapters, and articles based on prompts/questions.

Preparation and Planning:

Ninth graders participated in a Personal Inventory (from The Complete Guide to Service Learning by C. B. Kaye) and brainstormed the types of skills needed for the group that would read Listen to the Wind, the children's version of Three Cups of Tea, and the group that would teach about Pennies for Peace and fundraising. Based on the skills students listed, they decided which group they should join. The students organized lesson plans including an aim, a motivating activity, a handout, and a summarizing activity. They also designed a schedule for the day that included a tour of the high school, viewing a video from the Pennies for Peace website, and a tea party.

Reflection:

The ninth graders reviewed their lessons and a timeline for the day with the third grade teachers and revised the lessons based on the teachers' feedback. Almost every student had too much built into their lesson plan for the amount of time they would be working with the students.

Action:

The day of the third graders' visit included reading and learning about schools in the Middle East, teaching about Pennies for Peace, decorating containers to collect the change, giving a tour of the high school, and comparing the amenities in our district with the lack of amenities in The Middle East. We also had an authentic tea party - being that a key theme of Mortensen's book was how sharing tea builds relationships.

Reflection:

Students had to "think on their feet" regarding the timing of the day. The school tour had to be shortened because the third graders needed more time than expected to complete the creation of their coin containers. This led to valuable class discussions on time management.

Reflection:

Students completed the Four Square Reflection Tool from The Complete Guide to Service Learning. They also answered the following questions: 1. What is a unique memory that you...

Public Relations:

This service experience was featured in a service learning documentary produced by Media Relations, an article on service learning in Principal Leadership, and will be part of an upcoming chapter in a textbook on service learning as critical pedagogy.

Assessment and Evaluation:

Students' work was evaluated through rubrics developed by the teacher and students. The drafts of their lesson plans were evaluated by the third grade teachers. The best assessment of their work is the results it yielded! They inspired third graders to raise enough money to fund a teacher for a year!

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

The incorporation of outside adults was very effective in this endeavor. Students were eager to present themselves in a professional manner to the documentary film-maker who covered this experience and the third grade teacher who provided them with feedback on their lessons. In the future, I intend to bring in more "experts" for my students. A change I will make for next year is to allot more time for the third graders' visit (probably 2 1/2 hours). My advice for teachers who want to replicate this experience is to be sure to get the young adult version of Three Cups of Tea. It is better edited than the original and much more reader-friendly.

About the Teacher:

Maureen Connolly has been an English teacher at Mineola High School on Long Island, NY for the past 12 years. She is also an adjunct professor of Education at Molloy College and serves on the Long Island Regional Service Learning Network. While Maureen credits her passion for service to her mother, a music teacher who often coordinated trips for her pupils to perform at a local nursing home, she credits her love of literature and teaching to her grandmother, a professor of English at Hunter College and her grandfather, a salesman for Macmillan. Maureen has developed many service learning activities and experiences that link community outreach, character education, and literature. She has been a part of the Learn to Serve with Character Research Project headed by New York State and has been honored with the LEAD Award from St. John's University and with the Long Island Teacher of the Month Award sponsored by News 12 and Hofstra University. Maureen has also been recognized by Intergenerational Strategies for her commitment to linking youth and senior citizens. She has presented at regional and national and international service learning conferences.

About the School:

Mineola High School has been a proud supporter of service learning for over 25 years. We have a Student Service Center that features over 17 outreach programs that include service opportunities in house and in the local community. We are funded by a Learn and Serve America Grant that helps us to serve the elderly, children, immigrant populations, people who are hungry and homeless, and students with disabilities. We also reach out on a national and international level. Service is so important to our school and our district that it is included in our mission statement: "The Mission of the Mineola Union Free School District is to inspire each student to be a life-long learner, pursue excellence, exhibit strength of character and contribute positively to a global society." Please visit us at www.mineola.k12.ny.us [2]

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- [1] <http://www.penniesforpeace.org>
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