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Grade 6-8: "Food for Thought" – Social Responsibilities Class – Hunger and Sustainability Project

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School:

Westland and Western View Middle Schools

The Purpose and Essential Questions:

Westland's Social Responsibilities Class studies about people throughout their life span and their roles and responsibilities as a family member, a community member and a member of the planet Earth. They were studying Hunger Issues (Oregon was listed #1 in Hunger) and they wanted to do more than the school food drive. Students observed food waste in the school's cafeteria and then designed a project "Food for Thought" to help feed those in need.

Student quote: *"We decided one way to get food to hungry people is to collect planned over cafeteria food and donate it to Gleaners, who then deliver it daily to the people in need."* They subsequently extended this project to other schools/districts throughout the state. Westland students influenced policy changes at the District, county, and state to allow leftover food to leave the school building. Students have presented this project to other schools and they have joined "Food for Thought." Food for Thought was presented at the state Green Schools Summit and there is hope that it will be statewide! Students learned that they can make a difference.

The Story:

Many of us see leftover food and think, "that's a lot of garbage!" Students from the Social Responsibilities Class at Westland Middle School in Corvallis, Oregon took their thoughts in a different direction and figured out how that leftover food could be used to help the hungry. These students noticed a problem, came up with an idea and followed through with a great plan!

The class was discussing the fact that Oregon was number 1 in food insecurity in our nation and they wanted to help with this problem. They decided one way to get food to hungry people was to collect "planned over" cafeteria food and donate it to someone in need (research led them to the Gleaners – a nonprofit organization built to help provide food for people with disabilities or people who did not have funds to purchase food).

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

Elders
Environment
Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty
Social Change
Special Needs and Disabilities

Community Need:

In 2004, Oregon was listed as the number 1 state in America in food insecurity. Hunger was/is a major concern in our state as well as homelessness. Students selected hunger as the community need that they wanted to work to change. They did a food drive but they wanted more. As a class we read the children's book December by Eve Bunting. The Social Responsibilities Class worked very hard to make a difference in their community.

Community Partners:

Linn-Benton Food Share - Students invited their manager to come speak to them about hunger in our community; they did a food drive for them after hearing all the statistics about the need for food. The class also went to the storage area and helped put food boxes together after delivering their food drive collection).

Corvallis School District Food Service Department, Gleaners, Benton County Health Department, State Health Department.

Place of Impact:

School
Local Community

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

Suburban

Grade Level:

6-8 (Middle School)

Target Population:

All Students

Duration:

More than 9 weeks

Connection to Curriculum

Academic Subjects:

Family and Consumer Sciences

State Standards:

OR

Subject:

Essential Skills

Definition:

(1) Listen actively and speak clearly and coherently; (2) Think critically and analytically; (3) Demonstrates personal management and teamwork skills.

Content Areas of major themes of study:

Social Responsibilities is a Family and Consumer Science Class that studies about people throughout the life span and their roles and responsibilities as a family member, a community member and a member of the planet Earth. They were studying hunger issues and they wanted to do more than the school food drive.

Skills being introduced or developed:

Phone Skills, Organizational Skills, People Skills, Writing Skills, Speaking Skills.

Books, Media, Websites, and other Resources:

December by Eve Bunting

Guest Speakers and their handout/documents on Hunger in the World, USA, Oregon, Benton County and Corvallis (there were many booklets and pamphlets with up-to-date information).

Career-Related Learning:

The "Food for Thought" Project was documented as a Career-Related Learning Experience (CRLE). The Corvallis School District encourages two CRLE's for each middle school student. Students 7th through 12th grade may use information from these experiences as they work on their Extended Application, an Oregon Graduation Requirement.

Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

Investigation:

Social Responsibilities is a Family and Consumer Science Class that studies about people throughout the life span and their roles and responsibilities as a family member, a community member and a member of the planet Earth. Students were studying hunger issues and they wanted to do more than a school food drive.

Reflection:

Students wrote in their journals the steps of this project and their individual work on making it a reality. Students also kept track individually of the professions (jobs/occupations) that they encountered as they progressed through the stages of this project. Students kept track of their hours spent on this project and they were able to apply those hours to the Presidential Service Award requirements.

Preparation and Planning:

Students contacted the Corvallis School District Food and Nutrition Manager and asked her to inform the Corvallis schools cafeterias about the "Food for Thought" Project. Then they contacted each school's Food Service Manager and asked them the following:

**What time would food need to be picked-up at their school cafeteria?*

**Would it need to be a daily pick-up or which days would food need to be picked-up?*

**When could the pick-up of food begin?*

Mary's River Gleaners Association was contacted by students to see if they could come to school and speak with the entire class. Also students made arrangements for a meeting with the cafeteria staff, the Food Service Manager, and the Gleaners on the same day that they were coming to our class. That way everything was set-up on the same day.

Reflection:

Oral reports back to the class and class discussion - Friday Journal Entry.

Action:

Students took the Gleaners to the school cafeteria and introduced them to the Food Service Manager and set up the beginning day of the food pick-up. They gave the cafeteria the food labels at this time. Each label included a pick-up time and instructions for the food to be refrigerated within two hours of pick up.

Reflection:

Students made periodic checks with the school Foods Service Manager. They checked in how the pick-up process was going and also if more labels were needed. They also inquired if anyone might have suggestions for improvement. Students reported back to class each week. There were periodic checks with the Gleaners to be sure that the project was going well and to see if they had suggestions for improvement.

Students made a tri-fold display board of the project and handouts on how to start a "Food for Thought " at another district.

Journal entry - each student completed an essay on the theme, "Steps I can take to help stamp out Hunger."

Public Relations:

The students presented their step-by-step plan at the Oregon Green Schools Summit for several years and they appeared in the *Oregon Green Schools Newsletter*.

Assessment and Evaluation:

Students kept a weekly journal that documented their active participation in the project. Each student wrote a one-page overview of the project and then joined teams of 6 and together sorted out Why - How - What they had done and ways they might share their project. These overviews, along with student write-ups and evaluations, were compiled and placed into a project notebook for future reference.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

I have learned over the years that service-learning is a method of teaching that provides an opportunity for ALL students to achieve. For example, students who that have attendance problems usually will be at school on the days that they have a service-learning project going. Students take the work that they do to a much higher level then what would be expected of them for just a grade; they do things that a teacher might never think of because the students own the project and the teacher is the "guide on the side."

About the Teacher:

I have been a service-learning practitioner since 1992 and recently retired from teaching. Service-learning came naturally to me because I think that service-learning is a way of connecting students to the real world and giving them control over their own education. I incorporated little parts of the methodology into my teaching as they came along but the main push was a grant that came across my desk one day. One of our school administrators saw it and recognized that the kind of teaching I was doing was exactly what the grant was asking to fund.

About the School:

I've been at Western View since January 1999 and our school has consistently been a melting pot of students from different economic and cultural backgrounds.

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