

Make-a-Difference Day Clothing Drive for Baltimore City Department of Social Services (Foster Children)



Northwest Middle School (Carroll County) Team B 7th graders (ILA class) organized a clothing drive for Baltimore City Foster Children. Activities included writing a business letter to local businesses requesting financial/clothing donations, taking notes during a presentation from Baltimore DSS, writing and performing commercials for in-house TV, making posters for placement throughout the school, creating a web page about the activity, reading a novel and a non-fiction article about foster children, managing the day-to-day collection and storage of clothing as it came in, sorting and packing over 6000 pieces of clothing by size, gender and season for presentation to Baltimore DSS, and loading the boxes and bags on to the truck for shipment.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)? Many times, DSS picks up a child in the middle of the night with only the clothes on his/her back. Sadly, many times they have no clothing to offer them in place of their dirty ones. There are from 5000 to 8000 children enrolled in the foster care system in Baltimore City at any time. Last month alone, they took in 147 new children. The need for clothing is great. Our goal was pretty simple: to gather at least 600 complete outfits of clothing for the social services agency to have on hand for their foster children. We far surpassed that, gathering over 6000 pieces of clothing, 178 pairs of shoes, and \$400.00 for underwear and socks. Originally, I had called the Carroll County DSS offering to collect duffel bags and suitcases for the foster children in our county. They referred me to Baltimore DSS as an area of greater need. In speaking to J.P. Gray there, it became evident that they needed clothes MUCH worse than they needed the bags in which to put the clothes. When I called back with my suggestion, the DSS representative on the phone started crying.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum and curricular objectives?

MSDE Reading Outcomes:

- 3: Compare and contrast information from different articles on the same topic
- 4: Draw inferences conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with text evidence and experience
- 11: Compare and contrast information with prior knowledge
- 19: Analyze characterization shown through thought, words, deeds, and speech patterns

- 23: Evaluate the influence of culture and historical era on themes and issues in literary text.

MSDE Writing Outcomes:

- 1: Create an organizing structure that is balanced throughout, moves smoothly between sentences and paragraphs, and has a clear theme or message for the reader.
- 6 : Improve the logic of the ideas, word choice, and transitions among paragraphs, passages and ideas by revising writing based on given or self-generated criteria and others' responses
- 8: Practical Writing: Write letters that 1-address audience needs, stated purpose, and context in a clear and efficient manner, 2-adhere to stated purpose
- 11: Persuasive Writing: Write to persuade an intended audience by selecting an appropriate form that 1-makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment, 2-supports arguments with detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning.
- 12: Use standard English conventions to communicate clearly, including . sentence structure. punctuation, grammar, usage
- 13: Use language fluently and appropriately for a variety of contexts (e.g. academic, every day.)
- 14: Use conventional spelling in their own writing.
- 15: Demonstrate effective listening to learn, process, and analyze the meaning of information
- 16: Communicate effectively in a variety of situations, with different audiences, purposes and formats

Activities:

- 1. Speaker J. P. Gray: Students will listen/take notes for two purposes: 1. Factual information necessary to plan clothing collection project 2. Data/information to support persuasive writing for letters and ad campaign Outcomes: (Writing; 15)
- 2. Read one of the following: The Great Gilly Hopkins or Lottery Rose, Bud, Not Buddy, or The Pinballs outside of class. (All concern teen or pre-teen foster children) Assessment: Paired journal entries: Students will select a quote from their book, respond to it, and share that response, dialogue-basis, with another student reading the same book. The receiving student will comment on that student's comments. Outcomes: Reading: 4, 19, 23; Writing: 4, 6, 13, 16 Read a factual article, "Ten Years to Find a Family", and discuss the connections to the novels and to the project. Reading: 3, 11
- 3. Write a persuasive business letter to a local business requesting a donation to the project Outcomes: Writing: 1, 6, 8, 11, 16, 12
- 4. Participate in one of the following activities: Write and perform a commercial for TV news Outcomes: Writing: 1, 11, 9, 12, 16, 3 Create a website reporting the activities going on in the project Outcomes: Writing: 1, 16, 12, 14, 3, 9
- 5. Create a poster (in groups) to advertise the project. Outcomes: Writing: 9, 11, 12, 16, 3

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project? Students reflected on the project through classroom discussion, and through the buddy journals, in which they were asked to make connections between the book they read, and the project they were working on.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students helped in the planning of the project, wrote letters to community businesses, planned and implemented the school-wide advertising campaign, managed the day-to-day collection and storage of clothing, packed and sorted the clothing, and loaded it on the truck.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, business that provided donations, etc.)? We worked with Baltimore City Department of Social Services to prepare for the project and as the recipient of the service. The Montessori School of Westminster contributed clothing left over from their consignment sale (2 van loads!). Local businesses (Baltimore Bank and Trust, Drs. Linthicum & Tate, EVAPCO,

McGregor Printing, and Catoctin Mountain Express) contributed more than \$400.00 for the purchase of underwear and socks. EVAPCO also contributed two truck loads of sorted clothing. Domino Pizza gave us a discount on the pizza (paid for by the children) during our "sorting party".

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? We planned and prepared through "town meetings" in the classroom during which we discussed options for the project's operations. For example, students made an active decision NOT to reward themselves or the homeroom with the most donations as they felt that this needed to be done for the purpose of giving, not receiving. Information gathering was done primarily through our speaker, J.P. Gray, who came out from Baltimore to explain the background of the foster children, the function of DSS, and the needs that they had.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? They developed skills in business letter and persuasive writing, public speaking, organization and planning.. They gained knowledge about a lifestyle of which they were not previously aware, and an appreciation for the quality of their lives. They also gained the positive knowledge of what it feels to do something for "the right reasons" (student statement in class).

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