



Maryland State Department of Education
Sherry Unger Award Application
Service-Learning Project

Project Possible

Great Mills High School, St. Mary's County Public Schools,
Ms. Luanne Ruonavar & AP Government Classes, Ms.
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Primary Subject: Poverty

Grade Level: Tenth

Additional Subject Area Connections: Education and Public Policy

Project Title: Project Possible

Type(s) of Service: Direct, Indirect, and Advocacy

Project Description: Students will learn about the local and global impact of poverty with a concentration on education. With support from O Ambassadors and Free the Children, students will target poverty, education, sustainable development and health. In addition, students will raise funds to build a school in Latin America. Students will also target our county Shoes for Students fund.

Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:

- ◆ Partnership with TAP's Community Brotherhood, a local volunteer and charitable organization
- ◆ Coordinate and work a health fair for all students at our school through a partnership with St. Mary's Hospital
- ◆ Set up a free movie night for elementary school students
- ◆ Conduct a year-long food drive to support the food bank in Hughsville, MD
- ◆ Volunteer at an elderly facility (Cedar Lane)
- ◆ Participation in community volunteer experiences such as the May Madness Basketball Tournament, mentoring and delivering meals to low income families during holidays
- ◆ Coordinating and participating in the set up of the Project Possible Club
- ◆ Coordinating fundraising events throughout the year
- ◆ Speaking with local newspapers
- ◆ Writing activities centered around poverty, public policy and the four topics mentioned above (education, health, sustainable development, and poverty)
- ◆ Reflection of the experiences during the year

MSC Indicators Met

Government:

Indicator: The student will analyze economic, political, social issues and their effect on foreign policies of the United States (2.1.1)

2.B.1.f. Evaluate how international issues and interests affect national government policy.

2.B.1.g. Analyze the effect of trade and trade policy including: free trade agreements, embargoes, tariffs and economic sanctions on relationships with other countries.

Indicator: The student will evaluate the effectiveness of international alliances and organizations from the perspective of the United States (2.1.2).

2.C.1.a. Explain the various roles of the United Nations.

Indicator: The student will utilize the principles of economic costs and benefits and opportunity cost to analyze the effectiveness of government policy in achieving socio-economic goals (4.1.2).

4.A.1.e. Evaluate how the principles of economic costs, benefits, and opportunity cost are used to address public policy issues.

**Alignment with Maryland's
Best Practices of Service-Learning:**
Project Title

1. Meet a recognized community need (*e.g. What health, education, environment or public safety need was met? How did you determine there was a real need in this area? Who was helped by your project?*)

Students worked on educating fellow students about topics that have been an issue for teens in our area: alcohol, smoking, energy drinks and eating healthy. Students also worked toward an understanding of the impact of poverty on both education and the community as a whole. Students had the opportunity to volunteer many times throughout the year to help with poverty issues in our area.

When considering the need for this area, I looked at the kinds of services our community found useful. I also watched a program on TV about Oprah's relationship with Free the Children and how much they work toward helping developing countries try to lift themselves out of poverty. I also spoke with many services (Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, Social Services and Cedar Lane) and asked what needs they had.

Many people were and will be helped by this project. My students will have met their goal of \$8,000 for this year. The funds will go toward building a school in Latin America. This will help a whole village as students who are educated then make better choices and a whole society starts to turn around. Part of the funds will also go toward shoes for students in our county who cannot afford them. The students have also helped many other people in this county as we have logged over 1,000 hours volunteering in the community.

2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning (*How did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning?*)

This project helped students to understand how the community can become active and change the outcome of poverty. Students also gained an understanding of the impact of public policy and Congress on each one of us. Students had a chance to think about socio-economic goals and how countries work together through alliances and common interests to help other countries around the world. Students also learned how opportunity cost can have an effect and how difficult it is to make these determinations both for themselves and for our government, both local and national.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience (*What types of activities did students engage in to reflect on their project?*)

Students engaged in a pre-write about their thoughts on poverty. Students engaged in discussions and debates. Students will write final reflection papers about their experiences. Students will also be writing letters to the editor of the Enterprise.

4. Develop student responsibility (*How did students have opportunities to make decisions about the service-learning project and take on leadership?*)

I acted solely as a facilitator, allowing students to take total ownership of this project. Students formed their own club. They set up and voted in members. These students then coordinated most of the fundraising events. Other students had opportunities to coordinate and participate in the



various fundraising events as well. Student set up, met with the Principal, talked with administrators and other teachers, and participated in events. Students ensured flyers were out on time and counted incoming funds. All timetable and coordination was done by students. Finally, students ensured other students were constantly kept in the loop about what was happening. Many students took on leadership roles at various times during the year.

5. Establish community partnerships (*With what community partners did you collaborate? Non-profits, civic organizations, businesses that provided donations, etc.*)

We were supported by O Ambassadors and Free the Children
We collaborated with the following organizations.

- ◆ TAPs Community Brotherhood
- ◆ The St. Mary's County Food Bank
- ◆ Cedar Lane
- ◆ Other teachers and school groups, such as the National Honor Society and the Key Club
- ◆ Other schools through the mentoring program
- ◆ The Enterprise newspaper

6. Plan ahead for service-learning (*How did you prepare and plan for the project?*)

I began preparing over the summer. I contacted Oprah Winfrey's O Ambassador's and Free the Children program and signed up to get my students involved in raising money to build a school in Latin America. I coordinated with many services locally and internationally via e-mail. I received free resources from Free the Children for each of my students. I started the year with a plan of introduction to "hook" my students. This was a tough topic to sell in our county as we tend to look inward during rough times. I then set the monetary goal and presented it to my students. I let them name the club and then we began!

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service (*What did students learn through the experience?*)

I am very proud of my students! They have learned quite a lot during this experience. They learned to think not only locally but globally as well. They learned that poverty has many faces. They learned the ways education can lift an area out of poverty. They learned about Ecuador, a foreign country unknown to them until now. Most of all, my students learned they can create change and even if they set a very high goal, if everyone works together, it can be achieved. They learned they can make a difference and this was huge for some of them!

