

Tilghman Pride

By Lisa Kline

My most memorable service-learning experience was creating a welcome sign at the start of our community. Tilghman Elementary school is located on an island. The sign that you saw as you entered our town was an ordinary State Highway sign that said, "Tilghman Is." My students wanted to promote greater community pride, so they decide to advocate for and create a much more inviting identifying sign for our island.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)?

Because our town is a tourist spot, we thought we needed a large sign to welcome visitors to our town and identify our community. Students spoke during a county council meeting to get permission to erect the sign. They created invitations for the ribbon cutting ceremony and prepared refreshments. They want people in our area to take pride in our community.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)?

The curricular objectives that were met during this project were as follows:

- identify the purpose, audience, and setting for a presentation,
- compose to inform using a variety of organizational structures,
- use electronic resources to refine text,
- prepare the final product for presentation.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project?

Students had several opportunities to reflect throughout this project. We had several conversations about the importance of the sign to our community and the first impression visitors would have about our town.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project?

Students took responsibility over the project by actually sketching the design for the sign (workboat with name) and creating a welcoming message. They interviewed community members about their feelings on the sign. They spoke to the marina owner about having permission to put the sign on his property. Many students worked with the sign maker after school to put the letters on the sign.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc)?

We established several partnerships with businesses in our community. First, students had to develop a relationship with local business owners to get them to support our idea for a sign. They also established a partnership with a local restaurant owner, who allowed us to use his restaurant to serve refreshments after the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project?

I planned this service-learning project by working directly with a parent from my school and several other community members. Together each one of us used our expertise and we planned each step of this project.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

I prepared my students for this service-learning project by having several discussions about how outsiders viewed our community. We had a guest speaker come in and discuss the history of Tilghman Island. Many students discovered that the people we talked about were their great-grandparents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles.