



Maryland State Department of Education
Service-Learning Unit
My Place in History

Primary Subject: Reading & Language Arts

Grade Level: 7th

Additional Subject Area Connections: Visual Arts

Unit Title: My Place in History

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

Unit Description: Language Arts Non-Fiction/Biography Unit: Senior citizens are often untapped resources of knowledge and history in our communities. They are also often isolated from the general community due to senior citizen housing and communities. This unit is designed to provide companionship for the senior citizens while helping the students learn more about point of view and perspective. Students will compare a senior's perspective with the perspective of a historical figure they have read about in a biography. The students will read a biography and interview a senior. They will use their notes to write a biographical article and create artwork about the senior and the senior's place in history. Seniors will then be mailed their biographies and invited to an art gallery where select biographies will be read.

Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:

- Spend time with senior citizens, interview them and create biographies based on their lives to present to them and their families. (*direct*)
- Continue to visit the seniors in their community and invite them to school functions. (*direct*)
- Become pen pals with the seniors. (*indirect*)
- Write to legislature in support of policies benefiting senior citizens. (*advocacy*)

VSC Indicators Met

Reading and Language Arts:

Reading and Language Arts:

- 1.E.1 Apply comprehension skills through exposure to a variety of texts, including traditional print and electronic texts.
- 1.E.2 Use strategies to prepare for reading (before reading).
- 1.E.3 Use strategies to make meaning from text (during reading)
- 1.E.4 Use strategies to demonstrate understanding of the text (after reading).
- 2.A.1 Apply comprehension skills by selecting, reading, and interpreting a variety of print and electronic informational texts.
- 2.A.2 Analyze text features to facilitate understanding of informational texts.
- 2.A.3 Apply knowledge of organizational patterns of informational text to facilitate understanding.
- 2.A.4 Analyze important ideas and messages in informational texts.
- 2.A.5 Analyze purposeful use of language.
- 2.A.6 Read critically to evaluate informational text.

Additional VSC met follow

Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *My Place in History*

1. **Meet a recognized community need**

Many schools have either assisted living or nursing home centers in close proximity. Senior citizens who are residents of these centers often feel isolated from the general community. This is an opportunity for students and senior citizens to meet and share information about historical events that they may have participated in or witnessed, thereby providing companionship for seniors. Students will develop friendships and understanding of senior citizens through interviewing and interacting with them.

2. **Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning**

A variety of curriculum needs are met through reading a biography and recording information about the senior citizen's experiences. Students will work in groups of three to interview and provide companionship to the senior citizens. They will present the information gathered through the interview by creating works of art that illustrate their personal experiences. This exhibit would be either displayed in the school or the senior center. Students will also write persuasive letters to local legislators about legislation in support of senior citizens.



3. **Reflect throughout the service-learning experience**

Students will complete daily journals that detail their experiences interviewing senior citizens, creating art pieces, and completing their persuasive letter to the legislator.

4. **Develop student responsibility (Students have opportunities to make decisions about the service-learning project.)**

Students are responsible for choosing their research topic, completing their project, and completing a work of art that could be displayed in the school or senior center. Committees:

- Liaison committee is responsible for contacting the senior center with the survey and generating a list of topics that would interest senior citizens. They would also be in charge of grouping seniors and students by topic. They would also arrange for transportation of the seniors to the school.

- Interview committee is responsible for generating a list of topics that students would be interested in discussing. They would also be responsible for generating lists of interview questions that the groups could use.
- Events committee is responsible for planning the event. This would include drawing a floor plan, making a list of required materials, finding a conducive location where students and seniors could meet in groups of three, designing decorations, planning for greeting of seniors, procuring refreshments and packaged food donations, preparing the location that includes the other students.

5. Establish community partnerships

Local assisted living or nursing home centers or veteran organizations.

6. Plan ahead for service-learning

Students will view the “Learn and Serve” video as an opening activity. This video shows students working together to make their city a better place to live. This video can give students ideas of how to plan for “My Place in History” project. This unit would be about 6-8 weeks in length. Planning and scheduling would be started at the beginning of the year.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

Students will learn about the components of biography before beginning the interview process. They will also learn about how to interact with senior citizens by reading “Growing Older” by John Langone. This book discusses myths and misconceptions about aging.

Additional VSC Indicators Met

Reading and Language Arts:

4.A.1 Compose texts using the prewriting and drafting strategies of effective writers and speakers.

4.A.2 Compose oral, written, and visual presentations that express personal ideas, inform, and persuade.

4.A.3 Compose texts using the revising and editing strategies of effective writers and speakers.

4.A.4 Identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thoughts and feelings.

4.A.5 Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student’s own composing.

4.A.6 Evaluate textual changes in a work and explain how these changes alter tone, clarify meaning, address a particular audience, or fulfill a purpose.

4.A.7 Locate, retrieve, and use information from various sources to accomplish a purpose.

5.A.2 Apply knowledge of grammar concepts and skills to control oral and written language.

5.B.2 Comprehend and apply standard English usage in oral and written language.

5.C.2 Apply standard English punctuation and capitalization in written language.

5.D.2 Apply conventional spelling in written language.

6.A.1 Apply and demonstrate listening skills appropriately in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes.

Visual Arts:

1.2.b Create narrative art works from observation, memory, and imagination that show settings, characters, and action.

2.2.b Plan artworks that use symbolic images and forms to convey selected beliefs, customs, or values

Procedures with Resources: *My Place in History*

These procedures represent an example of a service-learning lesson on this specific topic, but can be changed to meet individual classroom interests or varying community needs. You are encouraged to adapt this unit to fit your unique classroom and community and to solicit student input in planning and decision making.

1. Introduce the service-learning project by discussing service-learning and citizenship with students and engaging in activities to explore those themes. A resource to support this topic can be found at www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring_learning/.
2. Read a biography or autobiography of a person who has some historical significance. Students should be allowed to interpret “historical significance” as they want so long as they can justify their decision. Be sure to check the availability of biographies in your school or local library. See your librarian for a list of your school’s resources.



3. Form committees. Choose chairs or co-chairs. Recommended committees include liaison committee, event committee, and interview committee.
4. The liaison committee writes letters to local seniors to request an interview and a list of topics they are comfortable or eager to discuss. The interview committee should organize a list of needed or requested topics from students to include with the

letter so that the seniors are aware of the students’ needs and interests. When the replies from the survey letters arrive, the liaison committee is also responsible for forming groups of 2-3 students according to topic to interview seniors. To prepare students for interacting with seniors the following books can be used: *Butterfly Boy* by Virginia Krall, *Happy Birthday Mr. Kang* by Susan L. Roth, *Edwina Victorious* by Susan Bonners, and *Growing Older* by John Langone.

5. The event committee is responsible for planning the meeting/event. Draw a floor plan. Write a list of required materials. Find a location conducive to interviewing seniors by groups of 2-3 students. Design decorations, plan for greeting of seniors, procure refreshments and packaged food donations, and prepare the location by involving the other students.
6. The interview committee is responsible for writing a list of potential interview questions on each topic. A representative for each topic should be part of the committee. The interview questions lists should consist of some general questions to ask all seniors and many specific questions about the various topics and the seniors' experience in relation to the topics.
7. Hold the event. All students are responsible for the decoration, maintenance, and clean up of the location, but the event committee is in charge. Take a photo of each group with their senior. Groups of 2-3 students will interview a senior. Each student is responsible for keeping notes, asking the questions on the sheet, and conversing with the senior.
8. Use notes from interviews to write a biographical article on the senior and the senior's place in history/ their historical event. Students will need to write the article based on their notes from the interview. Absent students can use photocopied versions of another student's notes. A template can be provided, but each student needs to write a one page article with the picture of the group taken at the event.
9. Compile the biographies and donate copies to the school library, the senior, and the senior's family.
10. Create frames in art class for the group photo with the senior. Students will frame their photo and send it to the senior with their thank you note and biography.

Additional Interdisciplinary Connections



Social Studies – Students can interview a senior who has a place in another country's history. Students can study the treatment and cultural value of seniors around the world.

Health – Students can study nutritional concerns of senior citizens and provide a nutritious meal or snack.
Physical Education – Students can learn and teach armchair exercises. Students can arrange a senior citizen prom.

Math – Graph statistics on the population of your region by age.

Foreign Language – Students can invite seniors who speak other languages to visit the class.

11. Write thank you letters to the participating seniors. Each student will compose an individual letter to the senior and include the one page biography.
12. Reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of the project by completing the *Rubric for Assessing the Use of the Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* which can be found at www.mdservice-learning.org.

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