

## Kids Sew for Kids

By Ava Mendelson

Kids Sew for Kids is a service-learning project that is infused into a Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) eighth grade program that incorporates sewing skills. Students develop sewing skills as part of the curriculum and then use their skills to complete service projects. Students survey the community, sew various items for people who are sick or children in need in the area, and reflect upon their work. Projects include clothing, stuffed animals, beanie babies, and drawstring bags to mention just a few. [Best practices:](#)

- There are many children in need in our community and by sewing items for them we hope we are helping. Local camps for cancer call and ask us to sew drawstring bags for their campers. The Pioneer Clubs ask us to sew Hug-A-Bears that are sent to the local hospital and police. As the program has grown, more local groups are calling us to ask for specific help. We have also provided help outside of our local community and helped kids across the U.S. with some of our projects like Happy Hats.
- Sewing skills are part of the FACS curriculum. When the students complete their sewing projects for as part of a service activity they are accomplishing two goals at the same time.
- Students are asked to reflect on their projects throughout the unit. They not only judge their own sewing skills, but also look at the significance of their contribution. The receiving agency generally comes and speaks with students at some point during the project.
- Students are responsible for all steps in the sewing process. Some students initiate projects and complete all plans for it. For example students decided to sew fabric Halloween goody bags which they donated, and delivered to local Head Start programs.
- Fabric stores are sometimes willing to donate items or discount things for projects. We entered a Washington Post contest and won tickets to an ice show which we used as the celebration part of the project. The community Pioneer Club works closely with the program as well.
- Planning ahead is essential. Once projects are selected sewing supplies must be available for students to use. Also, planning for guest speakers who can discuss the issue area our project is addressing, videos, etc. help make the project more meaningful for students.
- Our projects always include the steps of preparation, action, and reflection. Students need to understand what they are doing as well as why they are doing it. They need background information on the project which can be provided through guest speakers, videos, readings, discussions, etc. We try to help students develop an understanding of the complexity of the issue they are trying to address and how their efforts will help meet a real community need.