

Stuffed Bears for Young Patients at Peninsula Regional Medical Center's Emergency Department By Cheryl Doughty

Family and Consumer Sciences students created hundreds of hand made stuffed bears for the young patients in the Peninsula Regional Medical Center's Emergency Department. Students acquired and used skills in computer graphing, public relations, child development, textile manufacturing technology, business management and teamwork to create a product that brought comfort to many ill and injured children.

Best Practice 1: *Meet a recognized need in the community*

When a child needs to go to an emergency room, there is often no time for the caregiver to pack a favorite toy. The visit to the emergency room is usually a long and anxious time for the child and his or her attending caregiver. The emergency staff's primary role is to provide the appropriate physical care to the child, but this is a difficult task with an anxious patient. With the donation of the handmade bears, the medical staff can now present the bear to the ill or injured child, creating a diversion and a communication tool.

Best Practice 2: *Achieve curricular objectives through service - learning*

The students were enrolled in a technology course, Introduction to Health and Human Services Technology. The primary curricular objective met by participation in this service-learning project was: *Students will utilize the manufacturing process and the principles of continuous improvement, in order to produce a product that meets the needs of a family member.*

Best Practice 3: *Reflect throughout the service-learning experience*

Students reflected on the purpose and process of the service-learning project in several ways. Students participated in group discussions each week to follow the Plan Do Study Act process of continuous improvement. A subgroup of students developed and administered a survey to monitor attitudes and achievements during the project time. After the delivery of the bears, a plus/delta discussion was held with the whole class to determine what parts of the process was rewarding or worthwhile, and what parts of the process could be changed to improve it.

Best Practice 4: *Develop student responsibility*

Students were responsible for many aspects of the process. Students were involved in choosing the community need they wished to serve. One of the first tasks of the whole class was to create a business manufacturing plan with stakeholder input. The project was designed to be completed with a team approach and students were given the opportunity to "apply" for the team that best suited their needs. They could choose between the public relations / communications team, the sewing machine manufacturing team, the hand work manufacturing team, the creativity / embroidery team, or the resource management team. The public relations team was responsible for documentation of the project for the stakeholders. The resource management team was responsible for management of supplies and tracking attendance and cost of resources.

Best Practice 5: *Establish community partnerships*

Our community partner was Peninsula Regional Medical Center.

Best Practice 6: *Plan ahead for service-learning*

My planning included making contact with the community organizations to explore ideas that would meet the needs of my students and curriculum, as well as meet the needs of the organization. I had to acquire funding and the resources needed, such as fabric. I then had to plan the basic process of the teams and the steps toward completion. I was also responsible for presenting the basic plan choices to the students, and facilitating their ability to complete the project.

Part of my preparation for the students was to develop "want ads" for the students to use in their selection of a team. I used an "empathy challenge" to motivate them to explore the personal side of how a person served by the agency might feel and what they might need. I proposed, "You are a three year old, who fell off of the jungle gym at school and need stitches in the emergency room. How do you feel? What or who do you need? How will you feel if someone meets your need?"

Best Practice 7: *Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service*

Students acquired and used skills in computer graphing, public relations, child development, textile manufacturing technology, business management and teamwork to create a product that brought comfort to many ill and injured children. As the classes competed to produce the most bears, they learned about efficiency of resources, calculating costs, recognizing quality in a textile product, and working together to use the strengths of everyone to meet a common goal. Because these skills were learned in the context of service-learning, the students learned that their individual talents and skills can be used to improve the lives of others in need.