

Middle School Students Serve Those in Need

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Subject Area: Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science

Grade Level: 6

Middle school students address poverty in their community. The plans assume service-learning is new to the students. So, the lessons are designed to guide the students through their first service-learning experience. Students will gain the skills, awareness and confidence to initiate future projects both in and out of school. Students read "A Christmas Carol" as part of their semester-long integrated Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science course, and design a project to help single mothers and their children. However, the project could easily be implemented entirely in Language Arts or divided among the four major disciplines.

Preparation: While reading "A Christmas Carol" the students will focus on the theme of poverty. Preparation activities will include defining community, defining service-learning, and identifying needs in the community. They will complete a vocabulary contract based on the words in their service-learning unit, and will also complete a packet of activities of higher level thinking skills to tie into curriculum of the four major disciplines.

Action: In this project students provide short term assistance to needy single mothers of infants. The students form a partnership with a local agency to determine what the mothers and babies need. As students collect items they hang a "Helping Hand" with their name on it onto the "Giving Tree" to promote a sense of community spirit. The baby items are distributed to the mothers either directly or indirectly. This project can be adapted to help any poor family with young children.

Reflection: Students will keep a portfolio of all the activities to be done during the unit. They will analyze the service they have done and what they have learned about themselves and others. The reflection will also include a celebration of the students' hard work!