

## **The Learn Shop, Inc.**

**By Anne Marill**

Our school conducts an annual school supply and clothing collection for those in need.

### Best practices:

- We were made aware of the need for school supplies through The Learn Shop, Inc. who requested these items for distribution to people in need in the urban and rural areas of our local community, the state of Maryland, throughout the United States and the world. This project was so successful that in June 2000 the school collected 49 boxes of supplies and clothing and received television and local newspaper attention for our tremendous accomplishments. In the 2000-2001 school year, we had three different collection efforts spearheaded by the enthusiastic participation of our June 2000 core group as well as new recruits. In April, 2001 (during our spring vacation), a team of students washed, dried, sorted, folded, counted, boxed and labeled 31 boxes of usable unclaimed clothing. These boxes were given to The Learn Shop, Inc. for distribution. At the end of the 2000-2001 school year, we collected usable (recyclable) school supplies during our end of year locker clean out. This collection yielded 15 boxes of school supplies that were given to The Learn Shop, Inc. for distribution.
- These activities are a natural outgrowth of the Montgomery County 7th grade English unit on Belonging.
- Throughout this project, students continuously reflected on the benefits of this project to themselves, the recipients of the supplies and the community at large. Student-to-student interaction precipitated awareness that surplus items within our school could be used to alleviate shortages in other communities and ours. Students learned that giving time and energy to help others could be a very rewarding experience. The students involved in this project provided a service to the community, which created a sense of belonging and contributing to their community for the students.
- A collection crew circulated throughout the school during our end of the year locker clean out accumulating usable (recyclable) school supplies. They spent countless hours sorting, counting, boxing and labeling these supplies. When we became aware of the many unclaimed clothing items in the school's lost and found, we asked The Learn Shop, Inc. if we could add these items to our contribution. The Learn Shop, Inc. gladly accepted our offer, which added another responsibility to the student crew. The crew then washed, dried, sorted, folded, counted, boxed and labeled all usable unclaimed clothing.
- The Learn Shop Inc. was our primary partner.
- In order to plan our initial project, I established and assembled a core group of interested students and explained The Learn Shop, Inc.'s request. As a result of our meeting, the students took the responsibility for publicizing the event, creating the collection containers and setting the stage for a successful school wide service-learning project.
- Students learned about the need for school supplies and clothing locally, nationally and internationally. They also learned specifically about the needs and life of young people in Kenya, a location where a special school chest of supplies was sent by our school.

