

Going Grocery Shopping

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"Going Grocery Shopping" was created so that the students that need to take the Maryland Functional Math Test (MFMT) could realize that the objectives of the test are problems that the students will have to solve in everyday life. Our seventh grades complete the project at the beginning of the year and it includes problems that pertain to about half of the objectives on the MFMT. Items that are "purchased" by the students are later donated to the Advocates for Homeless Families at the completion of the project. [Best practices:](#)

- After I visited the Advocate for Homeless Families office one summer, I realized that they were in need of many items to give to families that could not afford to purchase them on their own. Most of the products that they needed could not be bought with food stamps. I brought this to the attention of the seventh graders at my school and they really wanted to help. These students donated over 400 items to give to the organization. The Advocates for Homeless Families distributed the items to families who were trying to get back on their feet after being homeless.
- While shopping, the students had to spend as close to \$50 as possible without going over. They had a worksheet to fill out while finding the items on their shopping list. On the worksheet, students had to record the unit price of the items and how much it would cost for more than one item. They had coupons and sale items that they had to calculate towards the total cost, find the tax, final cost, and make change. All of these topics cover 10 out of the 30 objectives in the MFMT. Many of those topics, in addition to finding the best buy between two items, are also a part of the seventh grade curriculum. Not only did they get a chance to practice solving those types of problems, they were able to practice completing an activity that they will all have to do at some time in their life, grocery shopping. Before the students were even able to enter the "grocery store" that we created, they had to complete other math-related activities that covered curriculum and MFMT objectives. While preparing for the project, the students answered questions about local, state, and national homelessness by reading bar graphs, line graphs, circle graphs, and charts.
- The very first reflection the students did was on the day after I introduced the project. They had to write a journal entry explaining how they would feel and what they would do if they were on their own (no parents) and homeless. In addition, at the end of every class we reviewed what we learned in class and had an open discussion. On the last day of the project, the students wrote a reflection journal explaining how they felt about the project and how they felt about helping the homeless. After reading the reflections, I saw that many of the students realized how lucky they were.
- The students worked in groups throughout the whole project. The groups were made aware of the work that they had to do. From there, the groups were responsible for getting the work done and for turning it in on time. The students were also graded on the accuracy of the worksheet that they completed while in the "grocery store," so they were responsible for taking the time to fill it out correctly.
- The school created a partnership with the Advocates for Homeless Families organization. We helped them by donating needed items, and they helped us by sending a member of their organization to talk with the students. I hope that every year we do this project that we can work with the Advocates for Homeless Families.
- I spent months planning for this project. After spending time working out the kinks in the outline, I spent many hours on the internet looking for information on homelessness in the United States, in Maryland, and in Frederick County. Then I

spent many hours on the phone finalizing plans with the Advocates for Homeless Families. Finally, I spent a few weeks before the project began coordinating the project with another seventh grade math teacher. We wanted to make sure that we were doing the same activities on the same days and that all of the projects' accessories were perfectly constructed. It also took us a few days to construct our "grocery store" in one of the empty classrooms.

- One of the main skills that the students learned throughout this project was teamwork. This is because they worked in predetermined teams during the whole project. They also enhanced many of the math skills that they were taught over the years. This included adding and multiplying decimals. Some of the new math skills that they learned through this project were finding the percentage of a number and how to find the best buy. This project helped many students be successful on the MFMT. In addition, as noted above, students learned about homelessness and how to help agencies address this problem in their community.

