



Houses to Help

Denise Eichel

**Lettie Marshall Dent Elementary School (2nd and 5th grades), St. Mary's County
d_eichel@yahoo.com, 301-472-4500**

Students completed a performance task entitled "Houses to Help". In this task they read for information and to perform a task. The final product (gingerbread houses) was then created based on the directions given and these products were auctioned off to raise money for families in need during the holiday season. This project raised more than \$870!

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? There are many families in our community who are in need of assistance during the holiday season. Many of the families are members of the school community and the staff at our school is aware of those in need. These families may need help buying food, warm clothing, or small presents for each other. We helped out by adopting a family for the holiday and raising money to purchase items they needed.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? The following Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLOs) were met through this service-learning activity: Reading: Students will demonstrate their ability to read to perform a task by examining, constructing, and extending meaning from investigations or other sets of directions. Math: Students will identify and apply systems of measurement. Students will use reasoning to solve problems in mathematics, be able to communicate the processes used and the solution(s) while making connections within mathematics, to other disciplines, and to the real world.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Students had a chance to reflect at the end of the service-learning project through the following means: a. Self-evaluation b. Reflection journal c. Response from teacher

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students had the chance to decide what to buy with the money that was raised from the gingerbread house auction. Students designed their own gingerbread houses for sale at the auction.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? We worked with the Department of Social Services to adopt our family. Local stores and parents donated the materials to create the gingerbread house.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Collaboration between the 2nd and 5th grade students and teachers was a big part of the planning for this service-learning project. Teachers created a time line for how long the project should take and an inventory list of materials needed. Teachers designed the performance task based on the MLO's.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students developed the knowledge of the need for helping others through this project and through reading the book "Silver Packages". Students developed the skills of reading directions, prioritizing, evaluating, persuasion and decision making through this project.