



Maryland State Department of Education
Service-Learning
Special Education Unit
Helping Critically Ill Children
and Their Families

Primary Subject: Reading/Language Arts **Grade Level:** 6th – 12th (Alt-MSA)

Additional Subject Area Connections: Art, Math, Social Studies, Health, and Science

Unit Title: Helping Critically Ill Children and Their Families

Type(s) of Service: Direct (optional), Indirect, and/or Advocacy

Students participating in service-learning projects have a wide range of abilities, challenges, and needs. Teachers and parents may provide a greater amount of guidance and assistance before, during, and at project completion. Procedures and steps described in the unit may be enhanced, modified, or excluded, as dictated by the needs of the students. Various assistive technologies may be used to meet the individual needs of students in order to complete the project.

Unit Description: This interdisciplinary and inclusive unit deals with organizations that support critically ill children and their families and can be used in any grade level in middle or high school. Depending upon the level of the students, this unit could be a joint project between general and special education students or special education students and a school organization, such as Student Government Association, either at the same site or separate sites. The students will assess the needs of these particular organizations during the initial stage of the process. This service-learning project will combine persuasive writing in language arts, research in health and science, creation of a budget in math, and a variety of projects in art class to benefit these organizations. For example, in 2009, students collected pajamas, and sorted them by size, folded, rolled, tied, and labeled them for distribution.

Maryland State Curriculum Indicators

Reading/ Language Arts:

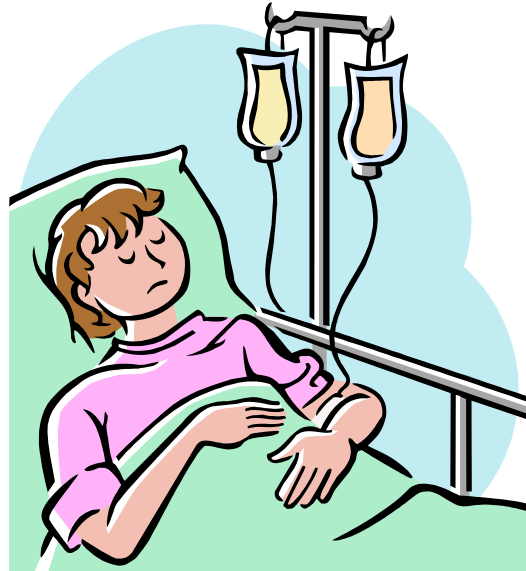
- 4.A.1 Compose texts using the prewriting and drafting strategies of effective writers and speakers.
- 4.A.2 Compose oral, written, and visual presentations that express personal ideas, inform, and persuade.
- 4.A.3 Compose texts using the revising and editing strategies of effective writers and speakers.
- 4.A.4 Identify how language choices in writing and speaking affect thoughts and feelings.
- 4.A.5 Assess the effectiveness of choice of details, organizational pattern, word choice, syntax, use of figurative language, and rhetorical devices in the student's own composing. (writing persuasive letters)
- 4.A.6 Evaluate textual changes in a work and explain how these changes alter tone, clarify meaning, address a particular audience, or fulfill a purpose.
- 4.A.7 Locate, retrieve, and use information from various sources to accomplish a purpose.
- 5.A.2 Apply knowledge of grammar concepts and skills to control oral and written language.
- 5.B.2 Comprehend and apply Standard English usage in oral and written language.
- 5.C.2 Apply standard English punctuation and capitalization in written language.
- 5.D.2 Apply conventional spelling in written language.

Addition Indicators Follow

Potential Service-Learning Donations:

Organizations need numerous items to support critically ill children and their families (*indirect*). **The critical first step of the project is to contact the organizations you want to help and ask them specifically what they need.** Many times they need food and kitchen supplies. Other potential needs might include:

- Game boards
- Children's books (new or written and illustrated by students)
- Bookmarks
- Posters
- Decorative gift bags
- Stuffed bears or hearts
- Coloring books (illustrated by students)
- Creating My Legacy (children fill in the blanks)
- Movie rental gift cards in \$5 increments
- Pizza delivery restaurant gift cards in \$10 increments
- Microwave popcorn
- Department and grocery store gift cards in \$10 increments or smaller (Target, Wal-Mart, Giant, Food Lion, Safeway, etc.)
- Pajamas
- Linens
- Plastic gloves
- Toiletries
- Paper and plastic ware
- Adaptive equipment and utensils
- Luggage/tote bags



Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *Helping Critically Ill Children and Their Families*

1. **Meet a recognized community need**

Many families are overwhelmed by the emotional and financial stress of having a critically ill child. Students will complete activities to benefit these families such as creating hard cover books and related board games to give to critically ill children, and collecting items needed by the organization for their families. Another activity is making birthday bags/fun kits for the siblings of these children to help make them feel special.

2. **Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning**

A variety of curriculum needs are met through student research into the rising cost of health care in America, completion of story books for younger children, and persuasive letters written to local organizations to solicit fundraising to cover any costs associated with the project. Students practice skills in communication, functional math, functional reading, money handling, and categorization.

3. **Reflect throughout the service-learning experience**

Students will complete daily entries in their sketch books that detail their experiences in composing and completing their books. Students are responsible for choosing a book topic, completing the project, and writing a persuasive letter to a local organization. Teachers may take photos of students as they proceed through each step of the project and display them on the wall or in a poster.

4. **Develop student responsibility (Students have opportunities to make decisions about the service-learning project.)**

Students will work together in committees to procure the funds necessary to complete the project and decide which activities will be accomplished.

5. **Establish community partnerships**

Students will contact the organization to determine current needs and then contact local businesses in the area for donations for the project.



6. Plan ahead for service-learning

Students will view the “Learn and Serve” video as an opening activity. This video shows students working together to make their city a better place to live. This video will give students ideas of how to plan and carry out a project. A first step should be contacting the organization to identify its current pressing needs. This unit would be about 1-3 months in length. Take into account the school calendar (testing, breaks, holidays, etc.), so as not to lose momentum with the project.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

Students will have opportunities to use the school media center for print sources. They will learn how to write business letters and ask for donations from businesses. They will also have access to art materials and an opportunity to apply art skills in their projects. Students will gain citizenship skills through engaging in and discussing civic action. The students will be acknowledged through service-learning participation certificates.

Maryland State Curriculum Indicators

Visual Arts:

1.2 Interpret and communicate the meaning of art works.

1.2.b Create narrative art works from observation, memory, and imagination that show setting, characters, action, and differing points of view.

2.1 Compare and explain how works of art from various cultures communicate feelings, ideas, and universal themes.

2.1.b Compare images and forms that explore universal themes about human experiences from different times and places.

Math:

1.B.1 Write, simplify, and evaluate expressions.

1.B.1.a Write an algebraic expression to represent unknown quantities.

Procedures with Resources: *Helping Critically Ill Children and Their Families*

These procedures represent activities/outcomes that could be incorporated into service-learning lessons on this specific topic, but can also be changed to meet individual classroom interests or varying community needs. You are encouraged to adapt these procedures to fit your unique classroom and community and to solicit student input in planning and decision making.

1. Introduce the service-learning project by discussing service-learning and citizenship with students and engaging in activities to explore those themes. A resource to support this topic can be found at http://www.servicelearning.org/lisa/bring_learning/fullvideo.php.

2. Read biographies or articles about people with critical illnesses and discuss the impact of illnesses on individuals, families, and society. Subjects for biographies include: Lou Gehrig, Michael J. Fox, Lance Armstrong, Montel Williams, Sheryl Crow, Mattie Stepanek, Dr. Ben Carson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jonas Salk, and Helen Keller. Some organizations (The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society) have a video or DVD that explains the illness in a simple way.

3. In the computer lab, visit the organizations online, not only to learn about them, but also to learn about their needs and the populations that they serve. Before starting the action phase of the project, student should clarify the precise needs of the organization they plan to serve. Some examples of organizations include: Local hospitals; Casey Cares (www.caseycaresfoundation.org); Star Light Star Bright (www.starlightstarbright.com); The Children's Inn at the National Institute of Health (www.childrensinn.org); Believe in Tomorrow (www.believeintomorrow.org); The Cool Kids Campaign (www.belangerfederico.org/cool-kids-campaign/index.shtml); the Children's Center, Mount Washington Pediatric Center; Johns Hopkins Children's Center

Additional Interdisciplinary Connections



- **Math** – Create a budget.
- **Social Studies** – Students can research state of insurance for critically ill children in U.S. and other countries.
- **Health** – Students can study treatments and lifestyles of those with critical illnesses.
- **Science** – Students can study causes of chronic illnesses.
- **Foreign Language** – Students can write letters to local businesses and foundations in a language other than English.

(<http://www.hopkinschildrens.org/>); Children's Hospital (www.childrensnational.org); American Red Cross (www.redcross.org); Make-A-Wish Foundation (www.wish.org); and the Ronald McDonald Foundation (www.rmhc.greaterdc.org and www.rmhbaltimore.com).

4. Form committees and duty lists: (i.e. Donation Committee, Project Committee, Supplies Committee, Research Committee, Transportation Committee, and Liaison Committee.
5. Choose committee chairs or co-chairs.
6. Meet with committee chairs or co-chairs weekly.
7. In math class, engage in math tasks (charts, graphs, etc.) related to critical illnesses. Visit websites for additional information concerning health care costs.
8. Write persuasive letters in language arts class to obtain donations from local businesses and foundations. The Donation Committee can find a list of likely businesses and foundations, addresses, email addresses, and contacts. Students can stuff the envelopes and put the labels on them for mailing.
9. Create a wide variety of projects in art class to fill a birthday bag or fun kit. The Project Committee decides which projects will be completed, how many bags will be needed for siblings of critically ill children and critically ill children, and keeps track of project creations to ensure the proper number are created. The Supplies Committee decides what supplies will be needed for the projects, and keeps track of the supplies used throughout the project.
10. Decorate and fill bags with projects and donations.
11. The Liaison Committee delivers the goods to the local organization and maintains contact with the organization to identify new needs, which could be met to make it an ongoing service-learning project.
12. Write thank you notes to local businesses and foundations for donations.
13. Reflection ideas include creating a storyboard of the process, re-assign any remaining funds (extra \$1,000, analyze strengths and weaknesses, decide where to allocate money), peer edit sketchbooks and keeping a running dialogue going about the project.

14. Reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of the project by completing the *Rubric for Assessing the Use of the Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* which can be found at www.mdservice-learning.org.

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