



Maryland State Department of Education

Service-Learning **Fellow Project**

The Japan Fund

Digital Harbor High School, Baltimore City
Schools, Technology Classes, Ilanit Benor,
ldbenor01@bcps.k12.md.us

Primary Subject: Raising Funds for Damaged Schools and homes in Japan

Grade Level: 10th – 11th Grade

Additional Subject Area Connections:

Project Title: The Japan Fund

Type(s) of Service: Indirect

Project Description: In the spring of 2011 when Japan was hit by the devastating tsunami, many students expressed great sadness for what the Japanese people were going through. They felt very helpless as they saw news reports about the homes, orphanages, and schools that were destroyed and the people that were injured. They felt an even greater sense of injustice when they saw that so many people were unwilling to help the Japanese people because of their perceived socioeconomic status. One student remarked, “Why should we help Japan – they are rich?” Another student responded, “That could have been us – everyone needs help.” The students banded together and raised more than \$600 to donate to Japan.

Maryland State Curriculum Indicators

Technology Education:

- 1. Develop an understanding of the relationships among technologies and the connections between technology and other fields of study.*
- 2. Develop an understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and political effects of technology.*

Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:

There is much potential for action experiences. As the time goes by and rebuilding begins, the students can be a part of the rebuilding experience through fundraising. Also, the donation of goods can help relieve some of the long term needs of the Japanese people affected by the tsunami. A very worthwhile endeavor could be to begin a partnership program that would include corresponding with students in Japan to better understand their needs.

Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *The Japan Fund*

1. Meet a recognized community need

The students at Digital harbor High School contributed money so that Japanese orphanages and schools destroyed by the tsunami could be rebuilt. Digital Harbor High School raised more than \$600 for this cause.

2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning

My students learn how to use technology so they are prepared to use it in school courses, their home life, and in their future careers. As part of their preparation for this project, they created signs and flyers using desktop publishing programs. They wrote speeches and descriptive passages using Microsoft Word. When we reached the phase of the project where they took action, they created spreadsheets and charts in Excel to record contributions and organize where they needed to revisit for additional donations.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience

Before, during, and after the project, we would have "fireside" chats to discuss our progress. The students shared their feelings about visiting classes and asking for money. They talked about how difficult it was to convey the intensity of their feelings about Japan to other people. There were emotional moments when they shared how they wished that they could directly hand the money over to the Japanese people. They also talked about how important what they were doing was and how much money they were raising.



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

Every day, I handed the students envelopes. They were responsible for collecting the money and recorded it in a spreadsheet format. I encouraged them to keep their information as organized as possible because they were responsible to the students that contributed the money and for the service-learning hours the students were earning.

5. Establish community partnerships

The Digital harbor Advisory Board, a group made up of representatives from the community, business, and education, donated money to our Japan Fund after a lovely presentation by our students.

6. Plan ahead for service-learning

Much preparation went into this experience. After we found out about the tragedy in Japan, we researched Japan both as a culture and as a physical location. I needed to help the children see why Japan was prone to this type of weather phenomena. It was also very important to me to instill in the students not just a desire to help one country through a tragedy, but to get them to think about long term goals. I'd like the students that helped out with the campaign and the donators to see the value of a lifetime commitment to service. After all, if not now, when?

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

I showed the students videos of news reports of the effects of the Tsunami. I showed them pictures of some of the many destroyed schools and orphanages that were now piles of rubble. One very moving picture was the wall of a children's school half destroyed. The wall had pictures of children at play painted upon it. We also looked at before-and-after aerial shots of 20 locations in Japan. I encouraged them to research Japan and devastating storms throughout history and the damage that was done and human lives lost or disrupted. We discussed the importance of civic action and personal responsibility.



Division of Student, Family, and School Support
Youth Development Branch
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-767-0358
www.mdservice-learning.org
www.marylandpublicschools.org