

Storytellers Serving Others

Created by Beth Ohlsson

Frederick County Public Schools
Subject Area: English or Theater Arts
Grade Level: 8-12

This service-learning program is infused into the eighth grade theater arts curriculum, specifically the unit on storytelling. The project extends and gives purpose to the performance objectives in the curriculum. Because of the nature of live performance, any performance-based unit can be adapted into a service-learning project by addressing a needy population. This particular service project is based on a partnership that was developed by the teacher and the Education Coordinator from *Headstart*. Although the initial project was teacher designed, the students may develop further projects that promote literacy. One event per term is ideal, although the project can be considered complete after the storytelling.

Preparation: In order to prepare completely, lessons include the role of theater in society, an introduction to service-learning, and a study of the Headstart population. The Headstart staff can train the students and assist them with the planning of the event. Stories are then transformed into story maps and analyzed for plot structure. Tapes and performances of storytellers provide a model for student performances. Stories are rehearsed and showcased for evaluation. After students are selected to perform, age-appropriate games that reinforce the stories are created from poster board and markers. Groups of students are then assigned to a Headstart Center so that the ratio of middle school students to Headstart children is one to one.

Action: Students travel to Headstart to perform their stories, share the games and have lunch with the children. There is also free play after lunch so that the middle school students can interact with the Headstart children one on one. Other events have included hosting the Headstart children at our school and performing plays about letters and numbers, an Easter Egg Hunt, and a field day as a celebration near the end of the year.

Reflection: Students participate in reflection on a daily basis through discussion, writing and drawing.

