



Maryland State Department of Education

Service-Learning **Fellow's Project**

Understanding Homelessness

*Erinn Ridney, James Hubert Blake High School,
Montgomery County*

Grade Level: 9-12

Primary Subject: Social Studies- Government

Additional Subject Area Connections:
Economics

Unit Title: Understanding Homelessness

Type(s) of Service: Indirect

Unit Description:

After researching the various social service needs in the DC area, the Student Government Association discovered a deficit of prepared food and decided to serve the hungry by making sandwiches for a local soup kitchen. After planning the event and coordinating the details, 100 students made over 750 sandwiches for DC Central Kitchen.

Throughout the entire project, the students who participated reflected on how their efforts were making a difference by providing something many go without; a meal. The project illustrated the teamwork and spirit to serve of Blake HS students.

DC Central Kitchen began its first phase of operations on January 20, 1989, redistributing the excess food from the Presidential Inauguration. The Kitchen is founded on the premise that when fighting poverty, one must fight to win by using every resource available. Be it food, money, or people, we at the Kitchen hate to see wasted potential. Since its inception, DC Central Kitchen has used the kitchen as a central location to recover unused food, prepare and deliver meals to partner social service agencies, train and employ homeless men and women for the food service industry, and intellectually engage volunteers.

Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:

Throughout this project, students were able to:

1. Research the extent of homelessness in our community by analyzing data.
2. Contact and establish a partnership with a DC Metro organization.
3. Communicate with the organization to develop an effective plan.
4. Create an efficient sandwich making assembly line while following proper health guidelines.
5. Package the food and deliver it to the agency.

Maryland Curriculum Standards Met

Government

1.A.1. The student will explain roles and analyze strategies individuals or groups may use to initiate change in governmental policy and institutions

1.A.1.J Describe the importance of being informed on civic issues, volunteering and public service

1A.1.B Explain how governments attempt to prioritize socio-economic goals in response to changing economic, social and political conditions

1.A.1.C Evaluate the role of government in providing public goods, such as national defense and public education

Maryland State Standards Met

Mathematics

1.1 The student will analyze a wide variety of patterns and functional relationships using the language of mathematics and appropriate technology.

Language Arts

1.C.3.B Read orally from familiar and unfamiliar text at a rate that is conversational and consistent.

1.C.3.C Read orally with appropriate expression by attending to sentence structure, punctuation cues, and pitch.

1.E.1.B Identify, build, and connect prior knowledge and personal experiences to text such as brainstorming careers and career requirements in preparation for reading about career choices.

1.E.1.C. Identify and explain the purpose for reading, such as using evidence from the text to justify a particular purpose.

4.A.5.A Revise writing for appropriateness, organization, content, style, and conventions, such as: Correct capitalization, Subject-verb agreement, End punctuation, Question formation, Verb selection, Elimination of redundant language, Semicolons, Object pronouns, Signal words, Active voice, Variation of sentence length and types, Alignment of supporting details to topic.

4.A.5.B. Use suitable traditional and electronic resources, such as an online dictionary or thesaurus, as well as peer and self-editing, to refine and edit text for effective and appropriate use of language and conventions.

Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *Understanding Homelessness*

1. **Meet a recognized community need**

As one of the identifiable leadership organizations at James Hubert Blake High School, the student government association (SGA) organizes a range of service projects throughout the year. When planning a project for the winter, the major needs of the DC Metro area were considered. After reviewing the service projects that school-sponsored clubs were planning, discovering statistics on hunger for the DC area, and participating in a lesson on homelessness from the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, the SGA decided to focus on the needs of people who are homeless. Astounded by the numbers of impacted individuals, a service-learning project was planned where sandwiches would be made for individuals in need in our area. This proved to be a population of which most of our students were not aware. Food for this group was identified as critically important need during the cold months of winter.

Persons who were homeless and hungry living in the DC area were helped by this SGA Blake High School project. More than 750 sandwiches were made for those coming to the DC Central Kitchen. This project eased the hunger of others while confirming high school students can address real needs in the community.

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

The SGA assumes a large leadership role in the school. Assessed indicators throughout the curriculum are used as a foundation for the service-learning projects. Statistics on homelessness and hunger in DC were analyzed to identify the greatest need. Using that data, information on the types of food that homeless shelters most need was collected. Research indicated that shelters were in most need of food stuffs like sandwiches. Sandwiches are easy to transport and distribute to those in need. The skills that were required and developed throughout the project were ones most often promoted in core high school classes. Written and oral communication skills were emphasized when food banks and shelters were contacted by students to share the project goals. Academic learning was enhanced by applying skills learned in the classroom to real-world situations in the community.

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

During the project, we reflected in a variety of ways. In preparation, students looked at data from the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless and did a simulation on homelessness using realistic budget data for Montgomery County. This allowed students to step inside the lives of those less fortunate individuals in our local area. While making the sandwiches, time was taken to consider the people we were serving, the quality of their lives and their hopes and dreams. This project reflected the spirit of concern and teamwork that exists at James Hubert Blake High School. In evaluating the project, we found it to have been an overwhelming success; therefore, a second sandwich making project was planned for the spring! We hoped to attract more students and were looking for additional ways students could serve individuals who are homeless in our community. Our goal is to make this project an annual school-wide event and to enlarge it to include information and workshops on the prevalence of homelessness in our area.

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

Students in the SGA and the Leadership class took on the majority of the responsibilities for planning and executing this project. Following discussion and research students chose the service project and the nonprofit organization, DC Central Kitchen. Students identified the types of sandwiches to be made and created the shopping list. They created signs identifying a process for setting-up and cleaning up. They purchased additional supplies in order to make full use of the time allowed. This was a student-directed and student-owned project.

Throughout the activity, students encouraged other students to get involved. As a result, involved students felt empowered and appreciated. They were serving and learning!

5. **Establish community partnerships**

In preparation for the service-learning activity, information about hunger and local food banks was explored. DC Central Kitchen in Washington DC is an organization that daily serves those in need. The SGA donated all of the food supplies and students contributed their time, talents and enthusiasm.



6. **Plan ahead for service-learning**

The SGA in conjunction with the Leadership class worked out the details: why to make the sandwiches, where to make the sandwiches, when to make the sandwiches, what sandwiches to make and how to deliver the sandwiches. The last day of final exam week in January (17th) was chosen as the action day because students would have completed their exams. It was organized to allow as many students to participate as possible.

After planning the details, publicizing the event, and shopping for supplies, a goal of 500 sandwiches was set. The day of the project the cafeteria was set up awaiting the students, with a hope that 20-30 students would participate. When 100 students came through the cafeteria doors to get involved, we were very surprised and happy. Donning gloves and rolling up their sleeves, 800 sandwiches were made by Blake High School students for the consumers of DC Central Kitchen. Students went out to purchase more supplies because they wanted to continue! It was a wonderful display of students and faculty working together to help those in need. Overall, the project was a success. The DC Central Kitchen staff was appreciative of our efforts and they assured us that many people would have some food that day as a result of our project. In terms of support, the students came out full force to help in the project and we instilled a sense of community as students of all grades and backgrounds happily worked so others would have a meal.

7. **Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service**

Students gained a huge reward from this experience. Not only did they learn firsthand the value of teamwork but they also were able to see how hard work and determination can reap great benefits for themselves and others. The smiles on their faces as they stood by their boxes of sandwiches spoke volumes about how worthwhile this experience was for them. They gained the experience and skills necessary to plan a project from start to finish using analytical and evaluative techniques. Students also utilized interpersonal skills to communicate in writing and over the phone with organizations. Overall, they developed the ability to plan, effectively communicate and promote a project from start to finish while demonstrating initiative, cooperation, leadership, teamwork, and full participation.

Procedures with Resources:

Understanding Homelessness

These procedures represent an example of a service-learning lesson on this specific topic, but can be changed to meet individual classroom interests or varying community needs. You are encouraged to adapt this unit 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 leadership with students while focusing on their immediate community. Use your community as a basis for the discussion.
2. Pre-assess students' knowledge of homelessness in their immediate area through a various activities including a sample budget exercise.
3. Distribute basic facts about homelessness in your community. Use the following [website for resources specific to Montgomery County, MD](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Homelessness/Numbers.html):
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Homelessness/Numbers.html>
4. Follow with a discussion and a research component, where students will contact local agencies to discover the best way to serve the community. We worked with [DC Central Kitchen](https://dcentralkitchen.org/): <https://dcentralkitchen.org/>
5. Set up your teams: Board of Directors, Operations, Financial, and Marketing. Assign students to each team and explain their roles. I usually have each team present to the class on their area of expertise before and after the project.
6. Each team is responsible for planning the specific function of the service-learning project. Operations will contact DC Central Kitchen to set-up pick-up times and go over regulations and needs. Financial will research the numbers behind homelessness and the amount of money a meal costs in our area. They will also work with Operations to devise a shopping list. Marketing will develop "How to Make a Sandwich" signs that map out the process for students involved as well as the proper guidelines. Marketing will also be responsible for alerting the media (school and local) as well as working to raise awareness of homelessness in the school community. The Board of Directors will oversee and work with school officials to secure a location for the sandwich making.

Additional Interdisciplinary Connections



Math: Creation of a Budget and/or graphing the differences in cost of living in various areas

Language Arts/Writing: Write persuasive letters to local officials about homelessness and ways government can help

Fine/Visual Arts: Create posters/PSA's about homelessness in the community

7. Purchase materials needed (including gloves, sandwich bags, tape for labeling, hairnets, etc)
8. Set-up stations in an organized fashion. Make sandwiches!!
9. Clean-up and package all sandwiches for pick-up or delivery.
10. Reflection activities include journal writing and analysis of the positive and negative aspects. In addition, we started planning for a next sandwich-making project in the spring. By beginning to plan, we learned from our experiences and created an even stronger project.
11. Reflect and evaluate the the effectiveness of the project by completing the Rubric for Assessing the Use of the Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning, located on the [Maryland Service-Learning website](http://www.mdservice-learning.org) (www.mdservice-learning.org).

Created: 12/12/08

Montgomery County



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