

Flight 93 Memorials

By Kristen Carter

At a time when we were all overcome with emotion as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks on our country, the eighth grade students at Milton M. Somers Middle School, under the direction of Mr. Richard Ivanac and Ms. Shawn Watters, decided to create two memorials for Flight 93. This project became the avenue through which students were able to deal with their feelings in a positive way and served as a means of honoring those who lost their lives that fateful day. Ultimately, it also enabled us to display our unity as a country and the pride we all share for this great nation. The idea for this project took hold when the students in several classes began to express their feelings and views about the loss of friends and family members who were killed or injured in the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon on September 11th.

While Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the site of the crash of Flight 93, may differ in some ways from LaPlata, Maryland, we shared the same feelings of sadness and disbelief over the terrible tragedy which had occurred.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)?

The objective of the project was to promote community healing in the face of a national tragedy and to emphasize national pride. It is important for students to understand the importance of reaching out and giving back. Our LaPlata community, although very different from Shanksville, Pennsylvania, could easily identify with the pain and heartache experienced as a result of losing friends/family.

The memorial was created to promote healing for the community of Shanksville, Pennsylvania; all people visiting the Flight 93 Memorial; and our local community and the students who created the memorial.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)?

The project involved several elements of art and required the use of multiple step problem solving in order to achieve our goal of creating an aesthetically pleasing memorial. The students gained a greater understanding of the events of 9-11 and many learned about Flight 93 for the first time. Through the use of team work, the students made decisions, delegated responsibilities, and learned to make compromises.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project?

Students did self reflections, brainstormed ideas, and then brought these ideas to fruition. Student work/ideas were collected and photos were taken throughout each step of the process. Ultimately, 27 students worked together to create one work of art for this project.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project?

As the project began to take shape, the student groups began to delegate responsibilities to various teams based on their expertise, talents, and strengths. Students constantly checked up on each other and held each other accountable. They offered each other constructive criticism. New ideas were always submitted and agreed upon as an entire group.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc.)?

We partnered with the US Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and the Flight 93 Memorial Committee.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project?

Mr. Ivanac visited the site in December of 2006 and discussed the possibility of the class creating a memorial with the park ranger stationed at the site. He also discussed the idea with the supervisor of the Flight 93 Memorial Committee as well. He then researched the events of 9-11 with the class and discussed other national memorials and the significance and impact of these memorials. The students then designed the memorials and identified the materials that would be needed to complete the project.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

The students learned more about one of the biggest events to ever occur in US History. They established connections between Washington DC and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The project instilled the importance of reaching out to those in need of comfort and giving back to others. Students learned that they could have a big impact on a community or even the nation with something as simple (in the beginning) as an art project. The students developed their skills in team work, public speaking, and advanced their knowledge in art as they created and presented the memorials to the Flight 93 Memorial Committee.

