2005

Gang Prevention Service-Learning Project

Cesar Chavez Foundation

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National Youth Leadership Initiative
Los Angeles Unified School District

School: Jefferson High School  Local Dist: H
Title of Project: Gang Prevention Service-Learning Project
Community Need Identified: Gang Prevention

Standards Connections: 11.2 Students analyze the relationship among the rise of industrialization, large scale rural-to urban migration, and massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Teachers Involved: Allison Glick Neagle 11th grade U.S. History
Mari Franco 11th grade U.S. History

Partner Organizations: Los Angeles Academy Middle School
Homeboy Industries
Gilbert Sanchez

Service Group: Middle school students, 6-7th grade
Number Served: 400 middle school students
Number Engaged: 70 high school students

Project Description:

11th grade U.S. History students have determined that 6-7th grade youth are the age group susceptible to joining gangs. The Jefferson High School youth worked on an assembly program to educate middle school students at Los Angeles Academy about the realities of gang life and the alternatives that exist to avoid future gang affiliation and involvement. Skits, speakers, pamphlets, collages, surveys, and small groups discussions were used to promote gang prevention.

“The personal stories made me realize the real dangers of gangs.”
- Middle School Student
Responsibilities:  Teachers oversee project, supplies acquisition, academic standards connections, assignments, scheduling, and transportation logistics (tasks can be shared with other teachers and administrators)

Students complete assignments, participate in discussions, and organize service components

Costs:  Guest Speakers – Honorarium $250
Collage Supplies: Butcher Paper, construction paper, glue, scissors, magazines, access to Internet, tape, disposable cameras, markers, pens, colored pencils.
Bus Transportation: $300 and above

Step 1

Community Needs Assessment/Presentation of Cesar Chavez

Step 2

Setting the Context

After the issue of Gangs is identified, it is important to present information to students so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the topic and its historical connections in order to brainstorm effective service activities. The most enriching presentations are by former gang members who have experienced gang activity and are aware of effective gang prevention strategies that may assist students in identifying their service activity. These presentations can be arranged with a local gang prevention agency. Local gang prevention agencies in Los Angeles include Homeboy Industries, Barrios Unidos, Homies Unidos, FACES, and NO GUNS (see appendix for contact information).

Standards Connection

The topic of gangs has an excellent standards connection to CA standard 11.2 relating to the 19th Century American urban immigrant experience. This has been popularly portrayed in Martin Scorsese’s motion picture, “Gangs of New York” in 2002. Specific resources on gangs covering this time period are difficult to find and may require extensive research. A documentary video produced by the History Channel, “Time Machine: Street Gangs: A Secret History,” presents a thorough historical examination of gangs in American history, the history of White, Black, Latino, and Asian ethnic gangs, and contemporary gang issues. A second documentary video also produced by the History Channel, “In Search of History: Five Points Gangs,” provides in-depth history of the Five Points Gangs in New York of the 19th Century, the focus in the movie, “Gangs of New York.” A
History Channel website also provides additional historical data of life in 19th Century New York City and gang activity in the Five Points area that enrich the study of this historical period. (http://www.historytelevision.ca/monthlyFeatures/gangsNY/)

**Journal Topics**

1. What are the differences and similarities of today’s street gangs compared to gangs in the 19th Century?
2. What conditions in New York City gave rise to street gangs in the 19th century? What types of conditions do street gangs arise from today? How are these conditions similar or different?
3. What are possible solutions to ending gang activity? What type of project would you recommend the class to work on? Why would the project be effective?

**Cesar Chavez Connections**

- Cesar Chavez lived his life by the value of nonviolence and never viewed violence as a solution in the farm worker movement for respect and dignity. Cesar used peaceful tactics such as fasts, strikes, boycotts, and pilgrimages to achieve the goals of the United Farm Workers union. His example demonstrates that conflict can be resolved through nonviolent means to arrive at meaningful solutions. Gangs and gang members often resort to senseless acts of violence to settle conflict, which often lead to fatal consequences for those involved and innocent bystanders. In 1968, Cesar Chavez fasted for 25 days to affirm his commitment and that of the farm worker movement to non-violence.

**Cesar Chavez Values**

- Non-Violence: Invoking non-violence as the most powerful tool for achieving social/economic justice and equality; action that requires boldness and courage versus meekness and passivity. Students in this project are advocating non-violence through gang prevention.

- Preference to Help the Most Needy – A concerted effort to support programs that reach the most needy, dispossessed, the most forgotten people in society no matter how difficult the challenge that choice may bring. In this project students are integrating this value by working with youth who are at the age level most susceptible to joining gangs.

**Step 3**
Plan Project

Discuss the Journal Entries from Step 2. Write down the possible projects that students identified in their Journal entry on the classroom board. Different project ideas can be combined that may enhance the project. Discuss the feasibility of each idea and the effectiveness of the project in addressing the topic. Identify the best project idea with the class.

Teacher Logistics

- Contact local middle school administration and present the project idea.
- Fax or email a copy of the schedule of events along with logistical requests. Reserve appropriate facilities (auditorium, classroom, or meeting room) and proper equipment (microphones, stage, stage lights)
- Set up bus transportation for students
- Obtain necessary student trip forms

Student Activities

The gang prevention project consists of four components --- skit performance, speakers, and small group dialogues. The skit performance allows for high school students to use their creativity to portray their message in a fashion that is educational, dynamic and engaging. The speakers’ component can include high school students who may be able to talk about personal experiences, or representatives from gang prevention agencies who are former gang members and can underscore the issue of gang prevention and the real-life consequences of gang violence. The small group dialogues is a time for more personal interaction with the middle school students which involves creating manageable groups of middle school students with high school youth facilitating a dialogue on the topic of gang prevention. The collage component presents imagery and messages relating to gangs that can help high school students in their discussions with middle school students.

Skit Performance

Students develop a skit based on the idea of gang prevention. Students must identify themes to incorporate, an overall message, and assign roles for each student. One student is responsible for writing the script for the skit and ensures each performer receives a written part of the script. Another student would serve as narrator for the skit between scenes or to clarify scenes to ensure that the audience has a clear understanding of the sequence of events.

Once the skit is developed they should rehearse the skit within the group and perform for their entire class on the 3rd and 4th day to solicit comments, concerns
and suggestions. Students must also take inventory of stage props they will need from the school or that may require purchasing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time allowed:</th>
<th>4 days, 4 hours minimum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students:</td>
<td>Maximum of 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources required:</td>
<td>stage area, microphone, or items students identify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Speakers**

Speakers should be contacted from a local gang prevention agency, which may or may not be the same speaker(s) that presented in “setting the context.” The speakers should be aware that their audience would be a younger crowd of middle school students. Teachers should identify students in the class who may have experiences they can speak to that may highlight the message of gang prevention and have a significant impression on the middle school students.

**Small Groups**

Students in this committee structure the dialogue between high school students and middle school students. Students must keep in mind the goals of the small group dialogue with the middle school students. They should develop strategies to facilitate and encourage participation by all middle school students. In the Cesar Chavez Gang Prevention Project, student facilitators begin with personal introductions and a small icebreaker. Second, students distribute a survey to assess opinions and awareness of gangs to serve as a basis for future dialogue. The facilitators base the dialogue on feedback from middle school students about the skit, speakers, and answers to the survey. The main planning activities for these small groups include survey construction and an activity plan. Preparation for the small groups can be concluded in 2 to 3 days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time allowed</th>
<th>2 days, 2 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Paper and pencils for middle school students</td>
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</tbody>
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**Collage Committee**

Students in this committee create visuals that illustrate the program message and realities and consequences of gang activity. This can be done as a large visual or smaller visuals that can be used as a basis for discussion in the small groups. Students can gather pictures from the internet, magazines, take pictures themselves, and incorporate artwork. In the Cesar Chavez Gang Prevention Project, students used photos portraying 19th century gangs, contemporary ethnic gangs, girls involvement in gangs, art, and consequences of gang activity (prison, death, paralysis). Students in the project used the motto, “Are gangs
worth it?” which can also serve a basis for discussion to reference elements in the collage. The collage can be completed in 2 to 3 days.

Time allowed 2 days, 2 hours
Number of students 15
Resources Butcher Paper, construction paper, glue, scissors, magazines, access to internet, tape, disposable cameras, markers, pens, colored pencils.

Day-to-Day Planning Guide

Day 1: Students separated into groups

**Small groups committee:**
- Survey construction: students bring back answers to a take home journal of questions to ask middle school students.
- Students review all questions on classroom board and narrow down top 10 questions.

**Skit Committee**
- Brainstorming themes, message, and scenes, actors, props, and times
- Note taker

**Pamphlet**
- Brainstorming
- Identify community resources
- Identify brochure format, look at examples of other brochures

Report back at end of class

Day 2

**Small groups committee**
- Type up survey, translate to Spanish, and make copies
- Test surveys with each other for clarity
- Organize how the students will be grouped (size, number of facilitators)
- Organize agenda for group, roles of facilitators, brainstorm icebreakers

**Skit Committee**
- Continue developing script and scenes
- Begin skit rehearsal

**Pamphlet**
- Identify brochure themes
- Internet Research
• Call gang prevention agencies for assistance

Report back at end of class

Day 3

Small Groups committee transitions to collage committee
• Finalize any pending small groups content
• Begin brainstorming ideas and messaging for collage
• Use internet, magazines.
• Identify students to take pictures and develop pictures for day 4
• Identify artists to incorporate artwork

Skit Committee
• Finalize script
• Rehearse script

Pamphlet
• Begin integrating data into brochure
• Identify images to include

Report back at end of class

Day 4

Collage
• Begin and complete collage

Skit Committee
• Rehearse skit before entire class
• Solicit comments and suggestions

Pamphlet
• Complete pamphlet and make copies

Report back at end of class

Service Day

Students travel to local middle school to perform service. A two-hour block is sufficient time for the service project. The following is a sample schedule of activities for the day of service.

Cesar Chavez Gang Prevention Project
(2 minutes) Introduction to event
(10-15 minutes) skit performed
(40 minutes) speakers from gang prevention agency (or high school youth)
(10 minutes) question and answer from audience to speakers
(35 minutes) small group discussion and survey distribution

The following is a sample agenda for small group discussions

**Small Groups:**
(5 minutes) introductions and icebreaker
(10 minutes) distribute survey to students to fill out individually
(10 minutes) feedback from skit and speakers
(10 minutes) discuss survey questions among group

**Reflection**

Same-Day Service Reflection: The gang prevention project is a very exciting experience for the high school students during the service day and they will have much to share, which should be captured right away in a reflection exercise. An informal discussion with the high school students can be held immediately after the service activity with some guiding questions.

Day after Service Reflection: Assign a journal entry reflection on their service activity. After the journal activity, hold a structured reflection activity where students read some of their journals and provide other guiding questions.

**Journal Entry**
1. How effective do you believe the service was?
2. Did you enjoy it?
3. How effective was the project in demonstrating Cesar Chavez’s value of non-violence?
4. Share any other thoughts and feelings about the service activity.

**Sample In-Class Questions for Reflection Activity:**

- How effective do you believe the service was?
- How do you feel about your role in the project?
- Did the class work together well as a team?
- How could the service be improved?
- What did you learn by performing the service activity?
- How successful was the project in tackling the issue of gang violence?
• What are your ideas of how communities, organizations, or government can effectively prevent gang violence based on your experience?
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