1994

Sixth Graders Assist Seniors with Letter Writing and Physical Therapy

Mary Hunter

SIXTH GRADERS ASSIST SENIORS WITH LETTER WRITING AND PHYSICAL THERAPY

Michigan

by Mary Hunter

Contact Information:

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School:

J. F. Kennedy Elementary
610 E. Parkdale Ave.
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Grade Level:

6th Grade

Academic Focus:

Language Arts
Mathematics
Science
Social Studies/Citizenship
Health/Physical Education
Arts
Computer

School/Community Profile

The City of Manistee has a population of about 7,500 and a minority population of 11%.

Project Description

Sixty students from two 6th grade classes take turns every Friday, visiting with the residents at the Medical Care Facility. Fifteen students are driven over by one parent volunteer and one of the team teachers for a one and one half hour visit. The students interact with the residents in several settings. Some visit bedridden patients and read to them or write letters for them. Activities involving physical therapy are played in the day room. BINGO became a favorite activity most Fridays. In June, all students involved joined the residents for a picnic lunch, and performed a musical program.

Timeline

September - June.

Project Scheduling

Two student groups alternate visiting facility every other Friday for 1 1/2 hours.

Additional Funding

Not needed.

Safety/Liability

Parents signed permission slips allowing students to visit the Medical Care Facility.

Equipment Needed

Paper and pencils for writing letters, construction paper and various art supplies for cards made throughout the year and given to the residents.

Educational Strategies

Performance-based Education
Students demonstrate life skills such as cooperation, initiative, patience, caring, friendship while building their own self-esteem.

Cooperative Learning
Students had to work in small groups with each other and residents to accomplish specific tasks.

Interdisciplinary Approach
Science/Language Arts/Math/Spelling skills were needed to accomplish the various tasks.

Whole Language Approach
The entire project is whole language because each procedure and project is discussed and reflected upon.

Academic Outcomes

Language Arts
Students write a friendly letter using correct grammar and sentence structure. Students use skills of interviewing to collect data to write an oral history.

Mathematics
Students use division skills to distribute refreshments to residents. Students use math skills to accomplish set goals within allotted time frames.

Science
Students understand and explain the effects of aging on the human body and what interventions can be used to delay the effects.

Social Studies/Citizenship
Students demonstrate life skills.
Students write an oral history which they give to their resident.

Health/Physical Education
Students demonstrate understanding of and participate in some physical therapy activities with the residents.

Arts
Students create seasonal cards including art and poetry for the residents. Students will organize and perform a musical program for the staff and residents.

Computer
Students use computers to type out their oral histories.

Personal Growth Outcomes

Students learn about and use life skills while at the Medical Care Facility. Project helps students develop a caring for their community and the people in it. This project gave students a chance to give back to the community. It also builds self-esteem for the students and helps them feel successful.

Community Involvement

Parent volunteers drove the students to the Medical Care facility, then waited while students were visiting, and drove them back to school.

Reflection Activities

Journaling, oral discussion, problem-solving, role-playing.

School-to-work Transition
A local reporter came and spoke to the students about writing articles for a newspaper. She discussed with the students what information is needed to write a good article. This reporter wrote an article about the students visits to the Medical Care Facility based on discussions she had with the students while visiting the class.

Key Findings

Learning disabled students "bloomed" in this situation. They seemed to have more confidence and were more comfortable working with and talking with residents.

Students formed lasting friendships with residents and made visits on non-school time.

Means of Assessment

Journaling, conferencing with teachers, participation. Also, quality and use of correct punctuation and grammar in the oral histories and letter-writing.

Hurdles Encountered

Hurdle
Students not wanting to participate.

Solution
Students required to visit at least twice, after which they could choose to continue visits or stay in class with other teachers.

Hurdle
Students interacting with each other rather than residents.

Solution
Class discussions and role-playing.

Hurdle
Parent volunteers not always available.

Solution
We borrowed other teachers' vans to transport students. We made multiple trips to get all the students to the care facility. More than one member of the teaching team was needed to go on the trip when parent volunteers were not available.

Celebration

A closure activity was planned—lunch with residents that included skits and music performed by students for staff and residents.

Evaluation

Three instructors talked with each other and staff at the Medical Care Facility on how we could improve the project.