

---

**Project Name: WE the People**

School: Greendale Middle School

1. Provide a brief description/narrative of your project (include purpose/goals, a brief timeline, the “story”).

A few seventh graders had asked me if our class could participate in the WE The People program. WE The People...Project Citizen introduces students to and educates them in the methods and procedures used in our political process. The goal of the program is to develop students’ commitment to active citizenship and governance by providing the knowledge and skills required for effective participation, providing practical experience designed to foster a sense of competence and efficacy and developing an understanding of the importance of citizen participation. This program helps the students’ knowledge, enhances their skills and deepens their understanding of how “the people” –all of us-can work together to make communities better. This project started in September and it ended in May where the students presented their project at the capital (Madison).

2. What opportunities were available for youth leadership and voice?

This project was completely the students’ idea. A few students’ had approached me about participating in this program. The program is completely student-center, student-directed. I explained the project to them and gave them a timeline, but they decided how much they wanted to participate. I was just the supervisor that helped guide the students and made sure they were on the right track. I helped mediate the conversations and voting but the students are the ones that researched, wrote letters and made phone calls. They challenged themselves each and everyday making this project the great success it was.

3. What “community” need did this project address?

In the program, the students decide as a class what problem they would like to address in their community. The students really focused on the development of a public policy to deal with a specific problem in the community and the recommendation of that policy to the appropriate government or governmental agency. As a class, the students voted on working on cleaning up the wooded area between Canterbury elementary school and Greendale middle school. The students decided they would try to clean up the area in the woods so that students would stop drinking and smoking or even doing drugs in the woods. The students thought by getting the police involved and constructing disc-golf in the woods their would be more people in the woods, hopefully scaring off drug users and the woods would become a safe area where students could play disc-golf and walk to school without being scared.

4. How was your project linked to the curriculum and how did it further academic achievement of students?

The students study politics and government in their seventh grade social studies class. This project helps students see how everything they are learning is really applied in real-life. This project helped to make real-life connections for the students. It worked out great, we

talked about something in social studies class about how everyone has a voice and then the students had the opportunity to go out into their community and apply everything they had learned to a real-life situation.

5. How did participants have the opportunity for reflection?

The students had the opportunity to take a fieldtrip to the State Bar of Wisconsin, in Madison, Wisconsin. In Madison, the students presented their portfolios in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated. They presented in front of many different congressional men and women and even Elizabeth Burmaster. Each student received a certificate for participating and as a class; we received a ribbon and a plaque for coming in fifth place in the state. After the trip, as a class, we discussed the project and it seemed to be an amazing experience for all the students who were involved.

6. What were the materials, money, and “connections” needed to complete this project?

This project was done completely in the classroom, outside the school (walking distance—woods) and the computer lab. The only money that was needed was money for our poster board and mailing the poster board to Madison. The students wrote for grants to help finance the construction of the disc—golf.

7. Upon reflection, what are some revisions you would make should you attempt this project again?

When I do this project, again I would like to try to have all four of my classes involved. This year I piloted the program and only had one class participate. I am definitely recommending this project for other classrooms to try.

8. What were your key project successes?

The entire project was a success. The students were able to work together to identify a problem in the community; they studied a public policy and developed an action plan for implementing their policy. The students put all of their information together on a poster board and put together a three ring binder with all their information. They then presented in Madison where the students did a great job of presenting their information to the congressional men and women. Greendale middle school received fifth place in the entire state for their hard work and accomplishments. The students were very proud of their hard work and efforts. They did a great job working together as a class (teamwork). They showed tremendous amounts of maturity and growth throughout this entire project.

9. What were your key project challenges?

A challenge that we found while working on this project was trying to find money to pay for our disc-golf course. The students researched many companies and found out that it would cost about \$15,000 to construct a disc-golf course in the woods behind the school. The students then wrote for three different grants to try to help finance this project. At this time, we have not found out about the status of those grants. This challenge not once discouraged the students because they knew they did this entire project on their own. They learned that they have a voice even though they are children and they can do anything when they put their minds together and work together.

10. What lessons have you learned about trying to implement service learning in your classroom?

I learned that service learning is an amazing way to help student's make connections between school-curriculum and academic studies and real life experiences. I also learned that service learning is a way to show our students that they have a voice and they can make things happen in their community even though they are students. This service-learning project started from a few students wanting to try something new and blossomed into an amazing learning experience for twenty-nine seventh grades at Greendale Middle School.

Participants

Teacher(s)/Advisor(s) Name(s):

Marlo Dentice

Subjects/Grades Taught:

Social Studies / 7<sup>th</sup> grade

Additional Staff Involved:

Susan Bush

AmeriCorp Volunteer / GMS Math

School Name:

Greendale Middle School

Total Number of Students Involved in the Project (by grade levels K-5, 6-8, 9-12):

K-5: 00

6-8: 29

9-12: 00

Put an "x" next to any of the following populations you included, state number if applicable:

AmeriCorp Volunteer	x	Number: 1
SeniorCorp Volunteer		Number:
Community-based Organizations		Number:
Faith-based Organizations		Number:
Parent/Community Volunteers		Number:
Business Partners		Number: