

## **2014 Jaffarian Award application - Perry Meridian Middle School Library**

### **Narrative**

1. *Describe the program or program series, and how the school library and librarian were involved. If the program is ongoing, use the information on programming and activities from the previous school year (2012-2013) only.*
  - *Include the title of the program or program series.*
  - *Explain the humanities theme or topic emphasized in the program.*
  - *Explain why you chose this program.*
  - *Describe in detail the program or program series.*
  - *Describe the planning process and collaborative relationships involved.*

Our students also needed experiential knowledge of their community resources; therefore, we coordinated a field-trip to the Indiana State Library and the Indiana Historical Society. Most students were unfamiliar with both, which made this trip especially powerful. This one experience single-handedly expanded how students thought of information retrieval, learning, and their community. During the field-trip, students received formal training from genealogy experts on using ancestry.com and researched their birth date using historical newspapers on microfilm. During a companion visit with the Indiana Historical Society, students learned from historians and preservationists through hands-on activities how to preserve family documents and interpret historical photos.

Active family engagement in students' learning was key to the unit's success. Students made valuable memories by interviewing family members and caregivers. After receiving training and practice conducting interviews, students led simple personal history interviews of their mother and father. In a later phase of the unit

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From the beginning of this unit, students actively engaged in higher-order thinking tasks. Students were taught and then expected to analyze websites for validity, construct an email to the Indiana State librarians, conduct multiple interviews, reflect on their learning, write an original family narrative, and construct a unique project using nearly any resource available to them. Students maintained a comprehensive research journal and developed a personal, customized research objective and learning plan. Examples of in-depth final projects include videos, scrapbooks, student-created family cookbooks, foods and clothing from students' country of origin, demonstrations of unique family hobbies, songs, poems, and three-dimensional tri-fold poster boards decorated with original family treasures.

Methods to measure student success were incorporated into each lesson and all phases of the unit. From purposefully guided and monitored student conversations where teachers gauged comprehension and involvement to exit slips at the end of each instructional class period, students were held accountable for completing tasks and staying engaged in the lessons and activities. Using both informal and formal methods, educators evaluated students on a regular basis. Students who were at risk to falling behind or needed skills reinforced were provided one-on-one instructional time. The teachers' efforts to help students meet learning benchmarks throughout the project were more than successful, which was evident at the Project Fair where, uncharacteristically, nearly every student was present to display a unique project created entirely on their own.

Students' families and extended families were integral from beginning to end. Students' interviews kept families informed and involved, as did teachers' communication with parents. Parents were kept up-to-date on activities through teachers' blog updates, letters home, emails, and personal interactions. It was important to have family members present to chaperone our field trip and to help the Project Fair go off without a hitch. Additionally, teachers from other disciplines, administrators, our school PTSA, and experts from 5789(t)-2.53536( )-0.478208(r)2.3690.3678(s)57. ar un eiana StatH3.15789( )-2.53597(p)-0.957028(s)-1.74528

- *Provide evidence of a curriculum component for clas*

Integral to the unit's philosophy was the sharing of knowledge, experience, and solutions. Consider the value of being engaged in a grade level of nearly 500 students going through the same experiences together. This allowed for students to work together to problem solve some situations. Everything was hands-on, real world learning. The project incorporated active participation, development of relationships with family, and working collaboratively to learn and grow. As skills developed, they were integral to developing their independent plan and sharing what they learned with the community, through presentations and displays.

Through the media specialists' lessons, we provided opportunities for young people to sample a variety of experiences that were foundational to opening their minds to the endless possibilities for personal growth and independent experiences. As students gained knowledge and experience with concepts, they gained confidence and investigated independently to expand their knowing and doing of personal interest particular to their family. Once a student had a basic understanding and some core skills developed, they concluded with personal and aesthetic grown through an independent learning plan. Students produce something tangible based on what they did and learned.

4. *Describe how this program might be replicated.*

- *Provide examples of how this program or program series might be replicated.*

backgrounds, and overall understanding of the depth

Students were pushed out of their comfort zone and asked to think and do in ways like never before. The Ask-A-Librarian was for most their first experience writing professional emails. Students formally interviewed family and friends outside of school to gain information about their family history. Guided learning concluded with students capable of using their new information literacy skills to develop a personal project plan and share at a community Project Fair. Lessons were segmented in a unique way to allow students time to process information, organize inside and outside of the classroom, and reflect on experiences and skills gained. Classroom teachers' differentiated instruction by teaching intervening lessons in the classroom to supplement the media specialists' lessons.

In order for the project to run more smoothly in the future, a few minor changes are needed. Throughout the process, we didn't appropriately anticipate how little students knew about themselves or their families. Activities such as locating birthplace on a map or spelling family names took longer than projected. Our students unique living situations prevented them from, or limited their interest in, interviewing particular family members. We made it clear from the onset our compassion and flexibility, but a few situations slipped through. In the future we must be more vigilant and attune to body language in order to work with certain students privately to develop alternatives. As is sometimes the case, a student's personal goal was sometimes unfeasible. Creating the project he envisioned at the beginning of the planning process was sometimes a painful and devastating experience. Educators need to work to develop better coping mechanisms so that students can believe that failure is learning and something from which to work. Finally, educators were so focused on helping students that we missed many photo opportunities. There were so many wonderful moments so important to us educators. We wish we had more of those keepsake moments captured in photographs.

Student and family engagement through the process was unlike anything we had ever experienced. This unit was so robust and rewarding for staff, students and families and the real-world applications of community engagement were beyond anything we'd tried in the past. The Project Fair was an exciting evening for everyone. The crowd was beyond our wildest dreams. The success in learning and sharing was phenomenal. For many of our students, something clicked and the learning switch kicked on. With our students who historically weren't engaged in the classroom, they suddenly completed a school task for the first time. It was exciting to see these students find value and meaning in themselves, the project, and their family.

Moving the unit beyond the school walls, incorporating community resources, and involving families took our students, classroom teachers and media specialist to the higher level of digital and community citizenship.