

Books for New Orleans

By Gregory Lynch

Early in 2006, an e-mail from Jodi Lavin at the Maryland State Department of education was sent requesting new and used books for the New Orleans Public Library which had been devastated by hurricane Katrina. The library planned to use the books to restock their shelves. Any extra books would be used for a book sale, with the proceeds benefiting the libraries. As the devastating effects of the hurricane's damage were continually aired in the broadcast news, many students felt sorrow and pain for the victims. Most students did not have an avenue to help and assist the victims of the catastrophe. The book collection presented an easy, personal way they could help. The posters, announcements and advertisements provided students with a constant reminder of the victims, and a small way to touch their lives. The students, faculty and staff collected over 300 books for the project.

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

Many of the people from the New Orleans area lost everything during the catastrophic events of the hurricane. Providing books for the community is one small way of assisting the citizens in establishing normality in their lives.

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 importance of reading is stressed throughout all curriculum areas. This project was a great way to get students to think about the availability of books in their life and the importance of reading for knowledge and fun.

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

Throughout the project, announcements were made telling the school the status of the book collection. The total number of collected books was posted on the school's homepage, and sent to the staff and parents in the school's newsletter.

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

The students made flyers and posted them throughout the school, informing the students about the collection. Other students volunteered to talk to their classes about the collection and a few students volunteered to write and deliver morning announcements concerning the collection.

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

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) sent the e-mail notifying the school about the need. The books were delivered to the Harford County Public Schools' Service Stars celebration on May 2006. MSDE representative Jodi Lavin received the books and arranged and paid for the postage of shipping them to New Orleans.

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

The students, teachers, and staff of Havre de Grace High School work continually on developing a community of caring and compassion for our brothers and sisters in need. Students are very responsive to meeting community needs, as demonstrated through their work of getting the word out about this project through posters, announcements, word of mouth, etc.

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

Students and faculty at Havre de Grace High School became aware of the need to give books to the people whose lives were affected by the devastation that Hurricane Katrina left behind. We learned that we may not be able to go to an area of crisis on our country, but there are still many ways to help people in need. The book collection presented an easy, personal way they could help.

