

Case Portrait of the Service-Learning Program in Neptune Middle School (NMS)

I. Overview

Location: Kissimmee, Osceola County

Type and age of school: A traditional middle school (grades 6-8) that opened in 1989

Size of school: 1,525 students (2006-07); 1,600 projected for 2007-08

Name of program: SMILES, ETC! (Students Mentoring, Instructing, Learning, Evaluating, and Serving Expands Throughout the County!)

Web site: <http://www.nms.osceola.k12.fl.us/>



II. Origins

A. Impetus/need

- A teacher, Ms. Kim Beekman, who was interested in service-learning, and Ms. Judith Zieg, Principal (Assistant Principal at that time) attended the Florida Service-Learning Institute in 1996.
- Ms. Cindy Mohen was the Curriculum Resource teacher and Honor Society coordinator at that time. Prior to 1997, she had worked with the Honor Society for eight years and had a strong commitment to service, but no prior exposure to service learning. She attended the Florida Service Learning Institute in 1997 and thereafter. This helped her determine how to tie service more closely to the curriculum and how to approach service learning with teachers and grade-level teams.
- Neptune Middle School is located between the small cities of Kissimmee and St. Cloud. The area encompasses a diverse community that includes a retirement area, with varied human and environmental needs as a result of the local tourism industry.

B. Initial Phase (1997-1998)

- Ms. Mohen oversaw the development of SMILES and the school's Youth Service-Learning Council program. Some service-learning projects were initiated.
- 6-8th grade students were involved in 9 projects.

C. Next Major Development (1998-2007)

- 9-12 academic teaching teams; 110-150 students in grades 6-8; 5 teachers coordinating the service-learning program.
- From 2000, expanded the service-learning program to other schools in the district with the help of the Youth Service-Learning Council (e.g., grants and leadership training), and mandated service learning as a part of the school program.

D. Recent Development

- In 2007-08, there are 12 service-learning teams at NMS. One or two teachers leads each team project. Each team is involved in at least one service-learning project. Some projects and teams overlap.

E. Funding History and Program Support

- **Principal Involvement and Support:** Ms. Zieg, was Assistant Principal at NMS in 1997 and became Principal in 1999. She was involved in initiating the program by writing grants and providing resources to teachers for service learning. She retired in November 2007.
- Ms. Mohen was the Curriculum Resource teacher when she began work on SMILES. She is now Assistant Principal and Service-Learning Coordinator at NMS. She has assumed Ms. Zieg's program role and responsibilities, and is looking for someone else at NMS to pick up many of her program responsibilities.
- **Outside grant funding from Florida Learn & Serve:** 1997-2002.
- **Outside grant funding from 21st Century Community Learning Center:** 2002-2007 (district-wide grant).
- **Program and project contributions:** Council on Aging, Meals On Wheels, St. Cloud Food Pantry, Give Kids the World, Osceola Childrens' Home, Kissimmee International Hostel, Gatorland of Florida, Kissimmee Audubon Society, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (formerly the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission).



Ms. Judith Zieg and Ms. Cindy Mohen

III. Operating Features

List of Major Program Features

- **Youth Service-Learning Council**: Started from the beginning of SMILES; 20 students, including a combination of honor students (60%) and potential dropout students (40%); roles include developing the application, scoring criteria, and application forms; reviewing and scoring applications; selecting Service-Learning projects to be funded; monitoring the progress of projects; and seeking additional funding.
- **Service-Learning class**: The class was begun by Ms. Mohen during NMS's second cycle of Florida Learn & Serve grants (2000-01). This class evolved as an elective to fit the NMS master schedule, including a leadership class for 20 students.
- **Major Subjects**: All subjects.
- **Extra-Curricular Clubs and Activities**: After-school program has facilitated the service-learning program, and clubs are involved.
- **Other Program Features**: Class Assistants are trained to work with teachers, teams, and individual students; an At-Your-Service program involves students trained to provide needed services within the school.
- **List of Major Projects**: Pioneer Center, Enterprise Village, Mini-Mall, Gatorland, Reading For Pleasure, Picture the Possibilities, Makinson Island, Neptune Noteables, Fine Arts Showcase, Council on Aging, Living Literature, Comfort Caps, A Flutter of Color, Recycling, Seahawk Court, Give Kids the World, Animal Shelter, and PALS.
- **Major School/Program Awards and Recognition for Service Learning**: Florida Silver Award for Community Service in 1997-present; Service Award by the Walt Disney Company for Community Service Learning Projects in 2000; National Service-Learning Leader School in 2000 (1 of 60 schools awarded this honor); Service-Learning Award - Florida Middle School Winner in 2002; Disney Helping Hand Award for 2004-05 and 2005-06.

Description of Project A:

- **Name of project**: Comfort Caps
- **Teacher and students involved**: Melissa Aaron; 6-8th graders
- **Subject area and after-school club**: Art (about 50% of these students) and after-school programs (about 20 students sign up per day)
- **Service sites used and nature of the service activities**: Focus on disadvantaged and handicapped groups, and people in the hospital; students sew fabric dolls and teddy bears, and make comfort caps for children and adults who have cancer
- **Uses of reflection**: Talk about the condition of the people

- **Student outcomes:** Service-learning project makes kids proud of themselves and raises their self-esteem.
- **Recognition or celebration:** At year-end, service learning is showcased at SAC Appreciation event.

Description of Project B:

- **Name of project:** Give Kids the World
- **Teachers and students involved:** Donna Robinson, ESE Resource Compliance Specialist; Honor Society students
- **After-school club:** Honor Society, in which students are required to do a minimum of 20 hours of service. Some log more than 100 hours of service.
- **Service sites used and nature of the service activities:** Read to kids, help elderly people shop for groceries, raise money, tutor, decorate villas at holiday time for terminally ill children and families, serve meals at the Council on Aging and campus cleanup
- **Uses of reflection:** Keep record of service activity and hours
- **Student outcomes:** Become more responsible and develop leadership qualities (become leaders in classroom)
- **Recognition or celebration:** Honor Society induction ceremony showcases the service activities.

Description of Project C:

- **Name of project:** Pioneer Center
- **Teacher and students involved:** Judith Dunham; 7th graders
- **Subject area:** Social Studies
- **Service sites used and nature of the service activities:** Osceola Historical Center; candle and soap demonstrations, and planting flowers
- **Uses of reflection:** Read about early history as assignment (before activity) and write what they learn (after come back), and display their products for Parent Night
- **Inclusion of Service in the Grading Plan for that Class:** 1.5-2 hour service in the morning once a week for 6 weeks (team-based activity), not tied to grades
- **Student outcomes:** Excitement for learning, intergenerational connection (respect for elders at the Center and elders respect for them), knowledge of the culture of their community, and appreciation for modern technology
- **Recognition or celebration:** Team award ceremonies

Description of Project D:

- **Name of project:** Picture the Possibilities
- **Teachers and students involved:** Sherry Mikol; 6th graders
- **Subject areas and after-school club:** Language Arts, Reading, and Picture the Possibilities
- **Service sites used and nature of the service activities:** Make greeting cards, Christmas cards (around 300), birthday cards, and visit Give Kids the World on Thursdays to make cards.
- **Uses of reflection:** Discuss what they learned and how to do it better, write directions on how to make cards, trained parents in card-making and conducted service with them
- **Inclusion of Service in the Grading Plan for that Class:** 2 out of 20 assignments/grades (10%)
- **Student outcomes:** Learned to think about others not just about themselves, became more willing to act, to consider to do service for life as a commitment, and to be more involved by teaching others
- **Recognition or celebration:** Team awards assembly



Ms. Sherry Mikol

IV. Program Benefits and Impacts

A. Longer-term impacts on/benefits to participating students

- The learning patterns, attitudes, behaviors, and attendance have improved for participating students. Students in Youth Council serve as role models for their peers.
- Participating students develop their self-esteem. “Many of the benefits center around the students’ feeling of self-esteem that they can do something that is helpful to others or need in the community.” (Ms. Judy Zieg, Principal)
- The relationship with teachers and participating students are crucial and developed.
- Students have made presentations at Florida Service-Learning Institutes and at the National Dropout Prevention Conference.
- Some graduated students come back to be involved in projects (to teach students).

B. Major impacts on/benefits to coordinator, teachers, and other school personnel

- Ms. Mohen made presentations and conducted training for teachers at NMS every year except 2006-07 due to changes in personnel.
- Over 2006-07, Ms. Mohen served as Assistant Principal and taught the service-learning class. She founded it difficult to do both due to the demands of each on her time.

- Students at NMS work with teachers in other Osceola County schools to write service-learning grants. Part of the impetus for this came from the NMS teachers who moved to other schools and the NMS students who graduated and moved on to high schools, all of whom wanted to be able to continue Service-Learning. Another impetus for this at the high school level was the Bright Futures Scholarship, requiring a certain number of logged service hours.
- Service learning has become a tradition within NMS.
- With decline in outside funding and limits in what the school budget will support, there has been some decline in enthusiasm for service learning.
- Raise teacher's expectation in class (i.e., think like students are able to do).

C. Major impacts on/benefits to service sites and other community partners

- The number of business partnerships increased.
- Parents and community involvement increased. For example, students involved with the History Center project have wanted to take their families to the Center to show them what they did.

V. For Further Information

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