

Drug Education - Game of Life **A Eureka City Service-Learning Project**

Grade Level: 6th and 8th

Service Areas: Education, Health, Human and Social Needs, Environment

Academic Area: Visual Performing Arts, English Language Arts, Health Education

Duration of Service: Short term (2-6 sessions)

Degree of complexity: Medium

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Introduction and Description of the Lesson

Fortuna Middle School is located in the semi-rural district of Humboldt County. The total student enrollment is approximately 367 students, with an average class size of 26 students.

Following a teacher-led presentation on the short and long-term health effects of substance abuse, eighth-grade science students brainstormed methods to study the various effects of drugs. They identified situations and environments where a student might encounter drugs. The students decided to develop board games that incorporated the effects of drug abuse and presented scenarios of what to do if a student encounters drugs. The students discussed the importance of early education on the effects of drugs and decided to teach the sixth-grade students how to play their new drug education Game of Life board games. The eighth-graders also created a PowerPoint presentation that explained the project in its entirety. Lastly, the PowerPoint project was copied onto compact disks so the service-learning activity could be shared with other teachers and students.

The students incorporated the language arts content standards through the design and production of the board games. This service-learning activity also included the health education content standards for middle schools in the following manner:

- Study the role legal and illegal drugs play in high-risk situations
- Learn to recognize where students may be put at risk for drug use
- Analyze the long-term health effects of substance abuse
- Promote positive behavior among peers within their community

After creating their board games, the eighth-graders explained what they learned about short-term and long-term effects of substance abuse to the sixth-grade classes. The

eighth-graders followed up the discussion by teaching the sixth-graders how to play the board games and coached them on avoidance strategies.

Instructional Process

Preparation

Prior to this activity the eighth-grade students would have studied the systems of the human body in their health class and would have had some preliminary discussions of how legal and illegal drugs affect the human body.

The health teacher discussed the long- and short-term effects of drug abuse with the eighth graders and followed up with a brainstorming session that listed social situations that could lead to use of illegal drugs (including peer pressure), individuals who could provide a positive influence, and individuals who could provide a negative influence. Students took notes in their health notebooks and used the information to design and produce the drug education board games.

Prior arrangements were made with the sixth-grade teachers to allow the eighth-graders time to explain the purpose of the games and actually play the board games with the sixth grade students. The eighth-graders were given directions on how to make a PowerPoint presentation on the whole service-learning lesson from making the board games to presenting to and playing the games with the sixth graders.

California State Academic Content Standards

Eighth-grade English-Language Arts: Sentence Structure, Capitalization, Spelling 1.1, 1.5, 1.6, Formal Presentations 2.4, 2.5

Action

The students formed groups of four or five and decided on one board game design for their group. Each student group wrote out individual game cards based on lecture notes from their health notebooks, lists of influential people, and different social situations. Students had the freedom to use their creativity, own life experiences in questionable situations, and knowledge of board games to create the design of their own game.

Each student group created a board game with game cards made from colored construction paper. Each group played its game several times to ensure the game played out successfully. After the game tactics and rules were set and the cards were approved for content and grammar, the game boards and cards were laminated. The students used a large Round Table pizza box for a game box and decorated the top to match their game board design.

The student teams then traded board games with the other teams and played each other's games. This exchange offered all the students a chance to learn the rules of each board game plus read about issues and strategies they may not have included in their own game.

When the eighth graders were familiar with all the games, they met with the sixth graders and gave an oral presentation of the short- and long-term effects of substance abuse. The eighth graders explained the purpose of the board games and then played the actual games with the sixth graders.

Reflection

The eighth graders initially discussed among themselves the value of the board game project and the benefit of teaching the games to the sixth graders. Then the teacher led a discussion with the eighth graders on the topics below:

- How the lesson went
- What they believe the sixth-graders learned from the lesson
- What they, the eighth graders, learned from the project
- Whether this knowledge is valuable to them as students who will be going on to high school in a few months

The eighth-graders used their health notebooks for reflective writing following the teacher-led discussion on the issues mentioned above.

Student Assessment

Every student who worked on a game board and made positive contributions to the completion of the project, as evaluated by the teacher, received a Health grade of 100 percent. The teacher supervised each step of the project. The board and game cards were reviewed for grammar, spelling, accuracy of facts on the effects of drugs, and realistic social scenarios.

The sixth-grade teachers and the Health teacher informally evaluated the eighth-grade students on their presentations and interactions with the sixth grade classes while playing the board games.

Students worked in pairs and were graded on their PowerPoint presentation using a rubric, which deducted 5 or 10 percent from a score of 100 percent based on the type of error made. After the evaluation of their PowerPoint project, students were allowed to correct all their errors and have the project re-evaluated to receive 100 percent for an error-free project. The best projects were then burned to CDs and made available to teachers interested in doing this project with their classes.

Project Evaluation and Expansion

The primary methods used to evaluate the success of the project were based on the level of interaction, knowledge, and enthusiasm the eighth graders expressed during class discussions and the production of the board games. Finally, the positive feedback from the sixth grade teachers further enhanced the success of the activity.

The board games provided a successful method for the eighth graders to engage the sixth graders in the purpose of the activity.

[Editor's note: A cycle of peer instruction could continue with the sixth grade students who received the instruction this year. Now seventh graders, the students could update the board games from the previous year and play the games with the new sixth graders].

Celebration and Public Recognition

Upon completion of the entire drug education project, the eighth grade teacher wrote an article that explained the aspects of the project and submitted it to local newspapers. The PowerPoint presentations created by the students are available to interested teachers. Samples of the finished board games were given to the pizza parlor that donated the boxes.

A bulletin board outlining the project was put up in the school hallway. The board included pictures and explanations of the service-learning activity and encouraged fellow students, teachers, staff, and visitors to review the PowerPoint CDs.

Materials and Staff Development Needs

- Colored construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Computer and clip art
- Large pizza boxes
- Colored pens
- Clear contact paper
- Game pieces
- Railroad board
- Photos of making the games
- Staff knowledge of PowerPoint
- Access to laminator

Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability

Classroom materials were used in making the game boxes, and the local Round Table restaurant donated the pizza boxes. The school supplied blank CDs, and discretionary classroom funds were used to purchase and develop film that allowed photographs of the board games to be included in the PowerPoint project.