

Community Outreach Project

Backpacks for Homeless

Introduction

Prior to introducing this project, I connected and collaborated with a [local warming shelter](#) and the Salvation Army and organized field trips for my class to tour.

Depending on the distance between the two, you may have one or two field trips to plan. I was fortunate to have an all-day trip where we visited the Warming Center in the morning, and then the Salvation Army in the afternoon. Personalize this to how it fits for you and your colleagues.

I have the class watch “[Pursuit of Happyness](#)” to highlight the different walks of life each person has, and that homelessness is not what it is often stereotyped to be. Can’t watch the whole movie? These clips should be a good start:

Pursuit of Happyness 1	Pursuit of Happyness 2	Socktober	Cardboard Stories
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Pre-Trip

Using the [anchor video](#), I introduce the “Backpacks for Homeless” Community Outreach Project. With winter approaching, I utilize a month to organize and reach out to local organizations to see if they would like to contribute. I lead the class discussion with the chart below to gauge what items we can all bring from home, and what items we need to reach out to obtain. Other videos that I use:

Food	Clothing	Hygiene Items	Winter Items
Canned Goods Non-perishables <i>*Popular food items. Not “back of the cupboard” items.</i>	Sweatshirts Sweatpants Socks Shoes	Toothpaste Toothbrush	Gloves Hand/feet warmers Blankets Mittens Scarves Hats

Your list can (and perhaps will) look differently depending on your student’s access to the items mentioned above. Typically I spend the first week organizing specific items to be donated to create an organized method of gathering items.

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First Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sweatshirts Sweatpants Snow Pants	Non-perishable food items Bottled water	Hygiene items <i>* Feminine products highly encouraged *</i>	Winter items	<i>*Highlight specific areas of need after 4 days of giving.</i>

* If you find that your group has a lot of food, but lacking hygiene items, this is what I would focus Friday on. Communicating with families to evaluate if they have any specific items that they can obtain and donate.

I try to reduce the time of “in-house” donation so that it doesn’t drag and engagement is lost. After a week of gathering items, have the class evaluate what you have, and then begin to plan ways to reach out to organizations for donations.

I also offer an additional opportunity for families/small groups to try to get organizations to donate fabric so we could make tie blankets to put inside our backpacks as well.

Week 1	“In-house” donations
Week 2	Reach out to friends, family, and organizations for donations
Week 3	Gather additional donation items, compile together, pack backpacks full of items
Week 4	Field trip, drop off donations

During Trip (Backpack Drop-Off, Tour)

A lot of the field trip experience depends on the size of your class, and preference on the size of each tour with the organization that you are collaborating with. In my experience, we would get to the Salvation Army and first drop off our backpacks. We would then go upstairs into the chapel area so all of us could meet in one room.

Because our class size was fairly large (55-65 students), we divided them into several smaller groups. Nick (Community Outreach Coordinator) organized 4 other employees to provide tours to specific

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groups. The groups that were not on tour would stay inside of the chapel, where they would listen to a presentation from Nick.

He highlighted the history behind the Salvation Army, and how the organization as a whole serves community members in the greater La Crosse area. Once his presentation was over, I would project my computer screen and we would have a whole-class activity.

You can do this several different ways. The best way to make the trip as engaging as possible while also being impactful and informative, I played the [Poverty Simulation](#) activity with my entire group. If certain tours would come in mid-activity, they would jump in and participate.

Post-Trip

To ensure that my students fully grasped the concept of the poverty simulation activity, we did it together as a whole the next class period. This was impactful because of their exposure to the Salvation Army, so they got a first-hand experience of what some of our community members are currently going through.

Then we would go through the field trip reflection (next page), and process what we found to be the most impactful.

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Field Trip Reflection

Use the eleven sentence paragraph framework to complete your field trip reflection.

Title of Field Trip

Date of trip

Lead:

Topic Sentence (1 sentence)

Include:

- Who went on the trip?
- Where did we go?
- When did we go?
- What did we do?
- Why did we go on the field trip?

Fact/Concrete Detail: (What is one thing you learned?) (1 sentence)

Support/Information Sentence: (1 sentence)

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Concluding Sentence:

Restate the field trip and justify your rating of the field trip on a 5 point scale.

(5 being the best) (1 sentence)