Western Michigan University Everyone Counts Learning Community

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Schoolcraft Community Schools

Schoolcraft Middle School Mission Statement according to the Student Handbook, “Schoolcraft Middle School will prepare productive, respectful, problem-solvers for their next educational endeavor. We will accomplish this by delivering a challenging, integrated curriculum in a positive environment by a skilled staff.” (p.1).

Collected From The U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 data reveals:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Michigan</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>9,939,444</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Population</td>
<td>7,886,056</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
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</table>

Kalamazoo County, Michigan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Kalamazoo County, Michigan</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>238,603</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Population</td>
<td>191,784</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
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Kalamazoo Community Foundation provided a $1,000 Good Neighbor Grant to Schoolcraft Community Schools for buses and drivers, pre and post lesson facilitators, a WMU United Scarfaced conversation, and copies of teacher resources (Educator’s Guide) for future student lessons.

Zainali El-Amin Nwae from WMU’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion provided exhibit brochures and posters. One brochure was sent home with each sixth grade student. Posters were hung in the halls of the middle school.

An information sheet was sent home with the Schoolcraft sixth-grade students to assure parents and guardians had an opportunity to discuss the topic of Race before the students participated in the pre-lesson. The students wrote a pre-writing to learn if perceptions were affected by attending the exhibit and learning from scarfaced conversations. The pre-lesson was facilitated by two WMU students trained by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for this purpose.

The students, teachers and chaperones split into two groups at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. One group attended the Race exhibit on the second floor while the other group attended the photo exhibit on the first floor. The students in the Race exhibit were provided with a sheet of questions that directed them in specific exhibits that would be of particular interest to their age group. The sheet of questions was developed by Kathy Taylor, sixth grade math teacher. The group that attended the photo exhibit were allowed time to view and consider each photo. Once each student had an opportunity to view the photos, they were asked to stand in front of their favorite photo. Teachers and chaperones circulated throughout the exhibit to ask the students questions about why the photo exhibit was a favorite. After one hour, the groups switched locations.

The students brought their lunches and ate them at the museum. After lunch, the students were provided a post-lesson. It consisted of a facilitated conversation by the same two WMU students who were trained by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for this purpose.

The following week, Demara Gardner, a WMU United Facilitator, came to Schoolcraft Middle School and met with the sixth-grade students to provide a facilitated conversation. The purpose of waiting a week was so that the students had time to process what they had seen at the exhibit. The students were also asked to write a post-writing assignment.

Having fifteen parents/guardians who took the time to chaperone the visit to Kalamazoo Valley Museum’s Race Exhibit was an invaluable part of the project. Not only did the adult gain knowledge along with the students as they guided the children through the exhibits, but it also showed the students that this topic is important enough for adults to take time to invest in the students in this regard.

The Schoolcraft Middle School newsletter that is sent home to all parents/guardians noted that this event would not have been possible without the parent/guardian involvement and the community support. There were five teachers who assisted in the project by collaborating in team meetings. These teachers learned that grant writing and project funding is attainable for them to enhance learning within their district. They had never written a grant proposal, and Good Neighbor Grant being a grass-roots effort made the experience simple for them, encouraging future endeavours. There were three parent/guardians who were heavily involved. There were 15 chaperones that saw what a community can do and pull together as a common goal. Four parents who are affiliated with WMU realized what their efforts within their communities can do to reach others, creating a ripple effect in the community.

During the pre-lesson, the students were very open about themselves and their parents. They were given ways to respectfully address biases presented by their parents.

Lessons learned via community collaboration

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