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Western Michigan University Everyone Counts Learning Community

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Western Michigan University Everyone Counts Learning Community

Partners with organizations within the community to build awareness and understanding



Community Partners

Kalamazoo Valley Museum



"The RACE exhibit explores three themes: the everyday experience of race, the contemporary challenges and common ideas about race, and the history of the idea of race in the United States," (Race Initiative of Southwest Michigan).



Kalamazoo Community Foundation

"The Kalamazoo Community Foundation enhances the quality of life for all in the greater Kalamazoo area through community leadership and the stewardship of permanently endowed funds," (Kalamazoo Community Foundation).

"Some of the most innovative and effective ideas for change emerge from small and informal groups of people within a community. However, these groups may not always be familiar with the methods of obtaining funds to turn ideas into reality.

BetterTogether/Kalamazoo reaches out to individuals, as well as to small, grassroots neighborhood groups through its **Good Neighbor Grants** program to support their efforts on behalf of the community. **Good Neighbor Grants** place resources for change in the hands of those closest to the issues that need to be addressed," (Kalamazoo Community Foundation).

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, Census 2000 data reveals:

(2010 data for Michigan not yet available)

Geographic area: Michigan	Number	Percent
Total Population	9,938,444	100.0%
White Population	7,966,053	80.2%
Geographic area: Kalamazoo County, Michigan	Number	Percent
Total Population	238,603	100.0%
White Population	201,784	84.6%
Geographic area: Schoolcraft Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan	Number	Percent
Total Population	7,260	100.0%
White Population	7,039	97.0%
Geographic area: Schoolcraft Village, Michigan	Number	Percent
Total Population	1,587	100.0%
White Population	1,525	96.1%

Need for Education

Schoolcraft Middle School is a primarily homogenous population. The students and teachers are disadvantaged because during school hours, they have little interaction with people from backgrounds other than their own, both in a socioeconomic and a race/ethnicity capacity. There is no formalized plan to assist in narrowing this experience gap. The diversity program does not become available to students until high school. Awareness and education in diversity needs to be an ongoing experience beginning much younger than high school ages. The students in the middle school have little visible support in recognizing, honoring, and appreciating diversity. Moreover, upon graduating from Schoolcraft Community Schools, these students will enter higher education institutes or the workforce with a weak skill set in interacting with others in the diverse globalized environment they will find upon leaving the small community of Schoolcraft.



Brandi, Marena and Betsy :
(3 of the 91 sixth grade attendees from Schoolcraft Middle School)



Mr. Clark, 6th grade social studies teacher discussing an exhibit with Betsy and other 6th graders.

The Photography of Wing Young Huie



Group of 6th graders and chaperones viewing the photo exhibit

Schoolcraft Community Schools

To assist in the education of 111 participants (including 91 students, 5 teachers, and 15 chaperones from Schoolcraft Middle School, Tiffany White used her Everyone Counts Learning Community as a resource to build a furthered awareness and understanding to the community. The partnership included WMU, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Schoolcraft Community Schools, Voices United and community chaperones.

Kalamazoo Community Foundation provided a \$1,000 Good Neighbor Grant to Schoolcraft Community Schools for buses and drivers, pre and post lesson facilitators, a Voices United facilitated conversation, and copies of teacher resources (Educator's Guide) for future student lessons.

Zarinah El-Amin Naeem 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 facilitated 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 to 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, Demarra Gardner, a Voices 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.

Lessons learned via community collaboration

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 adults 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 parental/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 this experience simple for them, encouraging future endeavors. There were three parent/guardians who were heavily involved. There were 15 chaperones that saw what a community can do when it pulls together to attain a common goal. Four people 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, students were very open about themselves and their parents. They were given ways to respectfully address biases presented by their parents.

Westminster Presbyterian Youth

Mary Anderson also had an opportunity to support a group of youth visiting the RACE exhibit during her participation in the Everyone Counts Learning Community. Mary is a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church where she often helps out with youth activities. When she learned the Youth Group leaders were considering taking the middle school and high school youth to see the RACE exhibit, she volunteered to assist in coordinating this important learning experience.

Fifteen middle school and high school youth were accompanied to the Exhibit by 5 adult leaders. Although some of the youth had also visited the exhibit with school, they were interested and engaged in learning. After visiting the exhibit, the youth and their leaders met with Demarra Gardner and 3 youth facilitators from Voices United. Ms Gardner and the youth facilitators helped the Westminster Youth and their leaders talk about their experiences at the exhibit and think more about experiences of race and racism in their own lives.

The powerful impact of this experience can be seen in some of the reflections shared by Westminster Youth and their leaders two months after they visited the exhibit:

"I remember feeling that there was all this information I didn't know was out there."

"The discussion with the high school leaders was helpful to discuss the ideas presented in the exhibit. The history of race was presented in a way the younger members were taught/learned things they had not realized happened."

"Memories of distinct exhibits are fuzzy, but I do remember feeling that so many of the civil rights issues happened so recently – as in , since I was born (which was 1963). Also, growing up in Michigan, in a predominantly White, upper middle class neighborhood, I was totally unaware (oblivious) to such issues. I was also very intrigued by the photos on the wall of people from various ethnic backgrounds."

"When I went through the RACE exhibit, I distinctly remember the wealth distribution part of the exhibit. I was really surprised at how it was distributed, how the White people had the most money and how everyone else a significant less amount. I guess I just didn't realize how much money some had and some didn't."

"I thought that the fact that there is still a large income difference between races really surprising. Also I thought the matching picture with voice was interesting, especially our pre-exhibit generalization (stereotype) of the voices belonging to which races."

"Before the race exhibit, I knew that racism was wrong, but I didn't realize the ultimate goal of anti-discrimination efforts . . . After the RACE exhibit, I shared what I learned about the RACE exhibit with at least 3 of my friends. Before the race exhibit, I didn't realize how many disparities there were (and still are) because of race. I now realize what RACE is really about.. [I give] thanks for coming to Kalamazoo RACE exhibit. "

Poster Resources

Kalamazoo Community Foundation. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.kalfound.org/resultpage.cfm?urlto=page20726.cfm%3F1%3D1&oldreturnto=index.cfm&oldreturntoname=Home&criteria=good%20neighbor&page=11&pageend=20&maxresults=19&clearcriteria=good%20neighbor>

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Schoolcraft Middle School. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.schoolcraftschools.org/pdf/middle_handbook.pdf

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