

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:
PREPARING STUDENTS TO FACE THE CHALLENGES
OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

*A generous heart, kind speech, and a life of service
and compassion are the things which renew humanity.*
Buddha 563-483 BC

The Social Studies Department of the Lincoln Public Schools has supported the inclusion of civic engagement and the experience of community service learning within the Social Studies curriculum in grades 6, 7, and 8 for many years. Starting in 2009-2010 we propose the formal inclusion of a mission statement to exemplify this commitment. The Lincoln Public Schools Curriculum Standards are consistent with the Massachusetts Frameworks and are reflected within the Big Ideas, Key Outcomes, and the Learning Expectations for History and Social Studies.

Our goal is to engage middle school students, teachers and leaders within the Lincoln Public School community in a sustained effort to explore, understand and respond to current issues faced by our local, national, and world community: conservation in local and national communities, climate change, homelessness and hunger, population growth, literacy and the economic challenges faced by both developed and developing nations.

Our proposal below includes a mission statement, a conference, and community service learning opportunities that are embedded within the curriculum to encourage students to study, understand and reflect upon the issues of local, national and global citizenship.

MISSION STATEMENT

As teachers and leaders of social studies in the Lincoln Public Schools, our mission lies in not only educating students to meet the framework set by Massachusetts state standards but also to foster the growth of empathy and responsibility for others through the work of volunteerism, citizenship, and community activism. Now, more than ever, implementing service learning initiatives has become paramount to a world in which both human and environmental conditions require the immediate attention and assistance from global citizens - our students, who are our future leaders. Students in the Lincoln Public Schools will:

- recognize the importance of the role of individuals as citizens in our nation and the world and use democratic principals to work cooperatively to solve problems and achieve positive outcomes
- believe that one person's efforts can make a difference and that many people working together toward a common goal may achieve an even greater change
- display moral and civic virtues by having the skills, knowledge and desire for the welfare of others, social responsibility, acceptance, and respect for individuals and the cultural communities from which they come
- learn from their experience of helping others
- understand the interdependence of local, national and global communities

- appreciate cultural, racial, economic and social diversity

CONFERENCE

In order to introduce students and teachers to the opportunities and responsibilities of Civic Engagement and Community Service Learning, all middle school students in grades 6, 7 and 8 (351 students) on both campuses and their teachers will participate in a conference in the fall of 2009. This conference will involve a keynote speaker and a variety of workshops such as but not limited to The Food Project, Water for People, Project Bread, Sudanese Educational Fund, Oxfam, Hanscom AFB Family Services and Free the Children. During the workshops, students will explore and become exposed to a wide variety of initiatives in which they could become involved during the 2009-2010 school year and beyond. An LSF Grant has been written to fund this initiative.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

Middle school students deepen their academic learning through significant experiences, which are clearly connected to their studies. Community service learning offers opportunities for students to make strong links between what is learned in school and what is important in their world. Over the past several years, students in the Lincoln district have learned about a range of issues and then volunteered and/or raised funds for many initiatives such as Kiva (a micro financing organization), homeless shelters, The Sudanese Education Fund, The Freedman's Bureau Project, Bikes Not Bombs, Pennies for Patients, Heifer International, and Veterans of America groups. Volunteering has included opportunities to write letters, do research, make presentations, create projects, write articles for school newspaper, and undertake focused field experiences to places like a homeless shelter or soup kitchen.

The initiative proposed for the 2009-2010 school year builds on these previous projects and expands the opportunities for learning. First, students will have a wide exposure to issues and problems through the fall conference. Then, with teacher support and guidance, students will work as a class or in teams to develop a deeper understanding of a selected issue. Integrated into their study will be the development of a project that will involve them in some kind of activism. Though sponsored and embedded in the middle school Social Studies curriculum, some projects may integrate with two or more subject areas. These projects will require students to strengthen their understanding of an issue or concern through active involvement. Then, students will anchor their learning by making connections between their active experiences and their studies through a final reflection and/or presentation.