



Hunger Assembly: Putting Into Practice What We Learned

By Deanne McBeath



Deanne McBeath is program facilitator of iEARN's Finding Solutions to Hunger Project. The goal of this project is to open the students' eyes to hunger in the world. Students learn about global issues and how to communicate and collaborate with other cultures, and in the process develop excellent research and problem-solving skills in an online, collaborative learning environment. In the following account, Deanne shares some snapshots into the power of the Finding Solutions to Hunger Project, based on her experience at The Village Charter School in Trenton, New Jersey.

It all really began in July of 2011 when I took an online Global Collaboration course through the International Education and Resource Network (iEARN). We were asked to pick a project and create plans to implement that project in our school. It was a difficult decision. iEARN has over 150 projects to choose from and many were well suited for The Village Charter School. The Kids Can Make A Difference® (KIDS) Finding Solutions to Hunger project drew me into its tenacious web from the start. I could see ways to work this project into my technology curriculum for my middle school students. They could create Excel spreadsheets from food diaries and PowerPoint presentations from research on hunger in the world and their communities. They could conduct data analysis on hunger statistics, take virtual field trips, and best of all---collaborate with students around the globe.

Computer Technology class at The Village Charter School began with giving the middle school students—grades 6, 7, & 8—a syllabus that included studies of hunger. We used the “Finding Solutions to Hunger” guide by Stephanie Kempf to explore different types of hunger (famine & chronic); infant mortality rates; nutritional information; and what happens when you do not get what you need to grow, both physically and emotionally. Early on, I was passing along reading passages to the Language Arts teachers and global contacts to the Social Studies teacher. We were skyping and communicating using iEARN’s Finding Solutions to Hunger forum with students in at least a dozen countries. It became contagious!

At a professional development session on iEARN which included all the specialist teachers at The Village Charter School—art, music, media, physical education, Spanish, technology—we hit upon our first of many brainstorm: Let’s have a school-wide assembly on hunger and have all the specialist teachers participating in their own way. Voila! We were on our way. Our first meeting was February 7, 2012. We mapped out our basic agenda. It was determined that we would create a Student Committee,

which would design posters, create programs, and act as ushers. We decided to show a Sesame Street video about Lilly, their new “food insecure” character. The media specialist and I would create a skit about hunger. The music teacher would have students develop hunger raps, and we wanted some kind of “food for thought” elevator type speeches. The physical education teacher, Kathy Banko, would work with students to choreograph an interpretive dance to Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror.”



Karen Baker, our wonderfully talented art teacher, outdid herself. Throughout the year, all students created artwork around the theme of hunger. Some projects were individual pieces and some were group pieces. They all reflected on the issue of hunger, either within their community or globally, and discussed solutions. Each student incorporated writing into his or her work, whether poems or statements. All artwork was hanging in the auditorium during the Hunger Assembly. Here are some examples of what they did:

1st grade: Faces of Food. Students learned about the work of Italian artist, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, who painted portraits using food as features of the face. Students discussed how important food is to their bodies to help them stay smart, strong, and healthy. They created a cut paper collage of a face with various images they found in different magazines. They looked for shapes and colors of food that they felt could represent the eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and hair. Lastly, students chose a skin-toned marker to fill the face, and assorted markers for the remainder of the portrait.

2nd grade: Students created a gorgeous “Hope for Hunger” banner. It was a collage and used old maps to create birds.

3rd grade: Food Bank Mobile. The third grade classes created these pieces as a group, to visually bring awareness to the issue of hunger. Students discussed what a food bank is, why people use them or donate to them, and what kind of food someone might find there. Students learned about the mobile sculptures of American artist Alexander Calder, whose work is known for its balance and movement. They were challenged to draw a variety of items, and work together to determine how to attach them as hanging objects.





4th grade: Students created a “Stop World Hunger Now” banner using tissue paper.

5th grade: Students created hunger posters with artwork and slogans.

6th grade: Students created a “Power of One” banner.

7th grade: Students created a “Man in the Mirror” self portrait using watercolor and a photograph of themselves.

8th grade- Students created “Images with Impact” using altered photographs.

The Day of the Assembly

We invited the entire school, kindergarten through 8th grade, to come to the assembly. We had the date on everyone’s calendar for months, so anticipation was building, and hunger was a topic that all of the students had discussed in some form throughout the school year.

The Student Committee came dressed in black and white, looking beautiful and very official. As the students entered the auditorium we played a wonderful song that had been sent to us by our friends and fellow students in Sierra Leone, “Hunger Land.” We created a slideshow with photographs taken throughout the school year depicting the studies the students had done around hunger.



Tamika Law, a charismatic master of ceremonies, did the opening. She welcomed everyone to an hour where we would have the opportunity to celebrate our learning about world hunger.

“Hunger Pop Up”

This was our version of the “elevator speech”. We staged 5 students throughout the audience. After the opening, and between each segment of the assembly, a stool and a microphone was brought to one of the five students. This proved to be a very effective transition. The student stood on the stool and recited either a poem or an excerpt. One

student recited a poem written by a friend we had made in Dubai. A couple of the “Hunger Pop Ups” were excerpts from long and beautiful essays we received from students that we had worked with and skyped with at the St. Mary’s Ecumenical Community Secondary School in Enuga, Nigeria.



Excerpt from essay from Nigeria

Written by Nwajagu Jesse 16 years old

The Confinement of Hunger to the Dustbin of History in Africa

Between noon and tomorrow morning, 40,000 individuals will starve to death. The day after tomorrow, 40,000 more will die and in subsequent days, the precious lives of individuals would be snatched away by hunger and starvation. While the quest to eradicate hunger in Africa may seem to be as negligible as the forces of attraction of the molecules of gases, these are things that could be adopted as remedies to the plight of hunger.

Really Mister, He’s 9

We adapted a story from the *Finding Solutions to Hunger* guidebook by Stephanie Kempf, “Really Mister, He’s 9”. However, it ended up being “Really Madam, He’s 9!” because the caseworker was played by a girl.

The media specialist, Sara Makler, and I were the “adults in charge” of what turned out to be quite an ambitious endeavor. I had never directed a play—the logistics were a challenge. We had a cast of 12, including 2 kindergarteners. Arranging for our numerous practices AND space to practice was more difficult than anticipated. But the result was a really nice production with microphones, costumes, props, and a clever way to pass through scenes. We staged it like a row house with caseworkers walking down the sidewalk from home to home.

Hunger Raps and the Power of One

Dyan Zbikowski worked with her students in music class to write and perform raps about hunger. Kathy Banko had students do an interpretive dance to Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror”. The students used actual mirrors and danced around the periphery of the room. It was very powerful.

See sidebars for two of the hunger raps.

Why?

Prior to the Hunger Assembly, the Student Committee created over 30 posters—simply saying “Why”. They hung them throughout the school a few days before the assembly. It created quite a buzz, which is what we had intended.

Closing Activity - The Way the World Eats

I wasn't sure about the impact of our closing activity “The Way the World Eats” until a skyping session between the Student Committee and their friends in Philadelphia at SCH---I listened with great interest as Tyanta described it to the girls in Philly. She really got it! The activity was an adaptation of a lesson from the “Finding Solutions to Hunger Guidebook” by Stephanie Kempf. In her guidebook, a meal is arranged depicting the various levels of wealth around the world and who eats what. For example approximately 15% of the worlds population has an abundance of food, 25% has just what they need to survive, and a whopping 60% of the worlds population is being sustained—or not sustained—on rice and dirty water. We really wanted to express this in our assembly--but how?

What was decided was the following: The Student Committee designed programs for the assembly. They printed the programs on different colored card stock. 15% were pink, 25% were red, and 60% were yellow. We mixed them up and as students entered the auditorium for the assembly, the Student Committee gave each person a program. The students receiving the program had no idea what the colors meant. Along the sides of the auditorium were boxes that the student committee had covered in brown paper and labeled pink, red, or yellow. Inside the boxes were paper bags corresponding to the colors. The pink bags contained a bottle of water, rice krispie treat, and some candy; the red bags contained a bottle of water and a rice krispie treat; the yellow bags contained just a bottle of water. (You might question our choice of food stuffs, but we had to accommodate the

Broken Society

Gianni Jones, Taj Marie McClean,
& Jadea Ross

Verse 1: (Jadea)

They were born into a world
where they can't eat
From the beginning momma tried
to keep 'em off of the streets
She kept handin' 'em books and
makin' 'em read
Said it was better then them on
the streets smokin' the trees.

Verse 2: (Jadea)

I'm thirsty! That's what the babies
said
Then momma dropped to her
knees and began to pray
She said there our father who up
in heaven
I need a few minutes 'cuz my kids
are starvin'
See my kids are hungry and they
need to eat
Momma couldn't take the pain so
she started to weep
Baby came in and started to cry
She said something went wrong
momma brother just died.

Chorus: (Gianni)

Tears don't pay the bills
Kids running outta meals
People don't have no money
Workin' on an empty tummy.

Verse 3: (Taj Marie)

Daddy made a beat kids dancin'
on their feet
Momma fightin' to provide tryin' to
keep us all alive
Momma milk's running low kids
beggin' her fo' mo'
Even stuck around when the
funds went down.

Chorus: (Gianni)

Tears don't pay the bills
Kids running outta meals
People don't have no money
Workin' on an empty tummy.

Starvation

Amani Collins, Tah'von, Goss
Daelin Hemingway, & Jaasia
Williams

Chorus:

They suffering from starvation
Need each other as a nation
They need our help
So why we contemplating?
They have no food to eat
No place to sleep
They're humans too
And most of their life is steep.
They suffering from starvation
Need each other as a nation
They need our help
So why we contemplating?

Verse 1: (Jaasia)

Hunger is a problem
There's people dying
I see kids on the porch
And they can't stop crying.
What can we do to save 'em?
Be their prophet
It's too hard
And we just can't stop it.

Verse 2: (Daelin)

They suffer from hunger
Their stomachs caving in
Their lives are in danger
It's coming to an end
Pain getting deeper
Crisis is getting steeper
No love lost shown by the reaper.

Verse 3: (Amani)

The world is full of hate
And the love flow thin
And the children out here hungry
No food, it's a sin
Tryin' to be a savior
No strength within
These people need a hero
No help, it's zero.

schools food policies and be careful of peanut allergies!)
Mary Ferraez, friend, colleague, and 7th grade
Language Arts teacher, graciously agreed to lead the
closing ceremony. Her script went something like this:

This activity is designed to demonstrate firsthand how
unfairly food is distributed in the world.

You all have received one of three bags ----

One bag has water, rice crispy treat, and candy. This
represents the group of people whose tables are
overflowing with food.

Another bag has a bottle of water, and a rice crispy
treat. This group represents those people in the world
who have just enough food.

Most of you received a bag with a bottle of water. This
represents the people in the world who rarely have
more than rice and water every day.

Who controls the distribution of food?

Why do some people have too much and some people
barely have enough?

Is there enough food on the planet for everyone?

WHY???

Deanne McBeath has taught technology in Grades K -8
at The Village Charter School in Trenton, New Jersey,
for the last three years. She is a career changer, having
spent 20 years working in the corporate world as a
computer and network technician/manager. At 50 years
old, she received a master's degree in education and
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She currently is program facilitator of the educational
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