
HANDS-ON LEARNING

Lombard Middle School

Baltimore, Maryland

Lombard Middle School Family Action Team decided to use community resources to reinforce children's learning skills. The team decided that the best type of reinforcement was a program some students had already benefited from—the Living Classroom Foundation.

The Living Classroom Foundation is located a few blocks down the street from the school. Students in science classes often were invited to come to the center to participate in projects after school. They loved the center and the activities that were provided. On several occasions, the Action Team chairperson visited with the students. Impressed with their work, she suggested that we build a partnership with this foundation to improve students' reading and math scores.

The principal volunteered to attend a board meeting with the founders and staff of the Living Classroom Foundation. From this meeting, we learned how to get funding so that more students could participate. After obtaining the funds, the task was to design a program. The Action Team decided that if students understood how they would use reading and math in the real world, the purpose of going to school and learning would be more meaningful.

Each day a group of 10 students went to the Living Classroom. Students learned how to read a set of directions to build a model boat, set a measured course up the river, and measure wood to design a chair. They visited a school for students with special needs, visited the city mayor's office, and observed the types of jobs available to people with a good education. In order to participate in the program, students needed good attendance, a positive attitude, average grades, a teacher's recommendation, and a parent willing to visit the Living Classroom one time during the six-week session.

Our collaboration with the Living Classroom Foundation started in 1996 and has continued to the present. Approximately 200 students and over 50 parents have attended the programs and activities at the center.

The results of this project increased our parent involvement, raised our attendance, and motivated our students to work hard to achieve academic progress. Students' positive attitudes toward school also increased. All students at Lombard work to become members of this team.

Ruth Gillespie, Action Team Chairperson

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