
THE QUILTING PROJECT

Galena Middle School

Galena, Maryland

For the past eight years, sixth-grade students at Galena Middle School have participated in an annual quilting project with families, community members, and teachers to provide ill children with beautiful quilts. The students have learned measuring, geometric concepts, sewing skills, and positive social skills while contributing to their community. A Galena Middle School teacher created the project after her own daughter became ill and had received many kindnesses during a long hospital stay. Giving handmade quilts has been a wonderful way to let parents and hospitalized children know that others care about them.

The Quilting Project supports the school improvement goals of academic achievement and family and community involvement. Students use basic and higher order thinking skills to solve problems and communicate results. The project involves staff and students in community service, enriching the educational process.

The Quilting Project usually begins in November with the collection of materials, and then students work on their quilts from December through February. All sixth graders participate in the project. Fathers as well as mothers, aunts, and grandmothers assist the students. Depending on the number of students participating and teachers' available time, students construct an average of twenty to thirty quilts per year. Each quilt takes anywhere from ten to twenty-five hours to complete. Thus far, Galena Middle School has donated 147 quilts to area hospitals.

Students follow the steps listed below to create their quilts.

- Step One: Students assemble fabric packs which were previously created (backing fabric with top fabrics cut into 4-5 inch squares).
- Step Two: Students select three or four group members and a fabric pack, and construct grid-patterns to be sewn.
- Step Three: Students learn to thread needles, make knots, draw seam allowances, and sew squares and rows together. Parents and family members volunteer to teach sewing classes to aid in reading grids, sewing and pressing seams, running sewing machines, and other skills.
- Step Four: Students put the top and backing together and secure it with knots.
- Step Five: The teacher takes all completed quilts to the hospitals.

School faculty and staff strongly support this project. They donate items and support students while sewing by visiting classrooms to lend a helping hand. Grant money from the Maryland Student Service Alliance (MSSA) greatly helps to offset expenses.

The greatest challenge faced by the quilting project is the gathering of necessary materials. Quality fabrics are expensive, but easier for the students to work with. Parents donate materials, grant money purchases fabrics, and teachers donate the use of sewing machines and other sewing supplies. Depending on the supplies donated, the cash outlay runs between \$200 and \$600 per year. However, the smiles, tears, hugs, and cuddles received from parents and patients make the quilts priceless!

In the Quilting Project students learn and work with family members, teachers, and peers to do for others, rather than themselves. Everyone sees the positive results of the students' work in hospitals where the quilts are displayed until they are given to patients. Some quilts also are shown in the local 4-H Fair held in the county each year.

The Quilting Project is evaluated by feedback received from nurses, thank-you notes written by parents of children who received quilts, and the teachers' personal visits to the hospitals. The hospitals ask that the students not visit because of the risk of germs. As an alternative, pictures capture the deliveries and students read the thank-you notes and other comments kept in a class scrapbook.

To enhance the Quilting Project, the teacher has created a web page to help students learn more about quilting, its history, and its connections with math. Visit www.kent.k12.md.us/kcps/projects/Quilt/main.htm for the sixth grade website and www.cte.jhu.edu/techacademy/web/2000/heal/artists.htm for the seventh grade website.

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