

Creation of a Peace and Friendship Garden at Danville High School
A Community Service-Learning Collaborative Project Between
Centre College and Danville High School

Introduction:

This proposal seeks funding from the ACS CCP Alliance to enable Centre College students, who are enrolled in a class called Fine Arts in the Elementary Curriculum, to assist special education/needs students at a local high school create a peace and friendship garden on their grounds. The course's theme is art and the environment. The proposal fits the CCP Alliances directives in two ways. It involves work with diverse populations (i.e., special needs students, who also in this case are mainly individuals of color) and the creation of a service-learning opportunity.

Goals:

The project has the following goals, (justified below) it will achieve:

1. Enable special education/needs students (SNSs) to participate in an outdoor environmental education activity.
2. Provide SNSs with a "real world" opportunity to practice their social skills in a work/learning setting
3. Provide prospective elementary school teachers, potential environmental educators, and general college students with skills, knowledge, and experience of working with SNSs.
4. Engage both the college and high school students in a service-learning project.
5. Enable the college students to learn how to integrate knowledge of the fine arts with environmental concepts, such as creating biodegradable art, choosing plants that are aesthetically pleasing but also environmentally appropriate.
6. Create a place on campus that symbolizes peace and friendship in which the SNSs can take pride but the entire high school student body, faculty, families, and community can enjoy and appreciate.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Justification:

This project was conceived to fulfill a number of needs for both the high school and college students. The first and most important goal was to provide SNSs with an opportunity to participate in a hands-on outdoor environmental educational activity. Unfortunately, SNSs are often left out of outdoor learning experiences (Dominguez and Schilling, 2001) and with an already full curriculum; teachers are often reluctant to add yet another item to it. SNSs' disabilities can range from moderate to severe and more

often than not, they can safely and effectively participate in outdoor activities with the proper preparation. In this particular case, the SNSs take a course that focuses on their social skills and behavior. Through the construction of the garden, which will entail working with a variety of people, they will have an opportunity to practice such skills in a safe environment. Thus, the garden will provide a venue for implementing the *existing* curriculum. In the vein of true service-learning the special education teacher plans to integrate science by having the students learn about the different types of plants being used and their life cycles. The garden will also only have plants native to Kentucky and be organic (i.e., pesticide free). Therefore, the students will also be learning ecologically friendly practices. Additionally, a fellow science teacher has approached the special needs teacher about the possibility of his science students mentoring the SNSs. If this arrangement can come to fruition, another sector of the school population would be drawn into the project.

Another justification for this project is that often SNSs (and to some extent students of color, particularly if in poverty) are only regarded as recipients of service. In this project, they will be the providers of service, thus challenging a prevailing stereotype. Finally, another reason that this proposal purposefully features SNSs concerns the fact that many individuals (i.e., the college students) often have not interacted substantively with people who have disabilities. Given that the class will be composed mainly of prospective elementary school teachers, it is critical they are not only knowledgeable but also *emotionally comfortable* in working and interacting with SNSs. This project will give them and the SNSs a shared reason to collaborate and work with one another. The college students will be required to reflect on their experiences as will the high school students.

It should be noted that approval for this project was granted by the Danville High School principal.

Activities: The table below provides a broad outline of the major components of the project implementation process with a rough time line.

2/1-2/15	Introduction of the project, discussions and planning concerning creating the garden, designs for the garden, and choice of materials (e.g., plants, etc.); college students and special needs students meet with each other and plan out the above details
2/15-2/28	A working plan and garden design scheme for the garden is finalized
3/1-3/31	Weather permitting, project participants start preparing the land for the garden and planting
4/1-4/2	Project Participants are installing the garden, evaluation of the project
Early May	Celebration and “Ribbon Cutting of the Garden”

Budget:

Soil and mulch for a garden area	\$200.00
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Trees @ \$75.00 – 125.00 each	\$300.00
Small shrubs/bushes @ \$25-35.00 each	\$200.00
Two benches	\$500.00
Other Plants (i.e., perennials, ground cover)	\$100.00
Tools & Other Resources (shovels, gloves, etc.)	\$150.00
Stipend for Special Education Teacher	\$250.00
Resources for Preparation (e.g., books, videos, etc.)	\$200.00
Stipend for Project Director	\$100.00
Total	\$2000.00

EVALUATION & DISSEMINATION

The project will be evaluated by the project director (myself), the participants, and the special education teacher. In terms of dissemination, the results of these evaluations will be provided through the final report to ASC.

INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL

Approval by Centre College Dean _____
Signature Date

Approval by Michael Hamm,
Environmental Coordinator _____
Signature Date

Approval by Preston Miles,
Environmental Coordinator _____
Signature Date