

Mentors with a Mobile Museum



Common Ground student describing changes in New Haven community from 1800's to present

Common Ground High School in New Haven continues to complete excellent service-learning projects that connect meaningful service to their community and the mastery of academic subject matter. Under the guidance of Joel Tolman and Monique Frasier, students at Common Ground worked throughout the spring semester to complete two service-learning projects that integrate the study of local history and application of English through the instruction of reading strategies and the practice of their own writing and speaking skills. The focus of this summary will be on the mentoring and teaching museum project that Common Ground students completed for fourth-graders at Katherine Brennan Elementary.

Common Ground students began to meet weekly with fourth-graders at Katherine Brennan. These meetings had two goals: to establish a mentoring relationship to support the development of reading skills, and to learn about the audience for local-history museum exhibits that the Common Ground students would share at the conclusion of the 6-week project. Back at Common Ground, the high school students were studying the historical development of New Haven, Connecticut and looking specifically at how industry and technology, the city's infrastructure, foods, fashion, sports and music changed over time from the 1800s until today.

As a capstone for their study, Common Ground students created museum displays of selected topics from their study of New Haven. Working in teams of two to four, the high school students prepared to be the teachers of their topics to the fourth-graders. The students created hands-on activities and presentations that helped emphasize main points of each display. The traveling museum ultimately included five hands-on exhibits; the elementary students moved in small groups to hear the presentations and complete the activities at each display.



Katherine Brennan students participate in activity focused on New Haven inventions led by Common Ground High School students

Common Ground students completed a great project with real-world deadlines. They researched and learned about their topics, prepared a display and activity strategy to teach their topic to younger students. As they reflected on the project, the high schoolers recognized the importance of cooperation within their teams, and realized that their own learning goals were met though the service to the students at Katherine Brennan. The fifth-graders were provided a positive opportunity to practice reading skills and learn relevant history about their hometown of New Haven. To learn more about this project and read how students can further publish their work connect to -- http://www.wkcd.org/your_stories/2007/11_new_haven/index.html