

James Hillhouse High Convenience Store



Students administer a trial-run convenience store for classmates during Hillhouse High lunches.

Christine Baldino and Deb Vita are inclusion teachers at James Hillhouse High School in New Haven. They worked with their life-skills students to open a convenience store to serve the local student population and provide their students the opportunity to learn business skills of inventory management, sales and handling money. An additional opportunity for service and community building was added to the project as volunteers from the school’s JROTC and Best Buddies Club paired up with the life-skills students to operate the store.

The life-skills students began the project by researching and planning the inventory that would be purchased for the store. A SASL (Student Activists for Service-Learning) mini-grant helped fund the initial inventory purchases. The class went on a field trip to a local department store to make final purchasing decisions for their convenience store. During life-skills class the students practiced making change for purchases that could be made at the store. The House of Blues Convenience Store opening was conducted with products on a rolling cart. Life-skill students with assistance from peer mentors from JROTC and Best Buddies operated the store to take money and make appropriate change for the sale of products. The store’s trial run was designed to create interest within the student body and the class planned to follow-up with a market survey to further investigate items of interest for future store openings.