

Multi-Cultural Magnet School, Bridgeport, CT

YES teamed up with Bridgeport RYASAP's Youth as Resources (YAR)* program to promote service-learning at Multi-Cultural Magnet School. YAR teams work to help promote service projects in their local schools. In addition to promoting the start up of service projects for other classes, the YAR team at Multi-Cultural Magnet chose to organize their own project in the form of a Summer Reading Book Swap. The goal was to increase reading fluency by creating an event for students in grades K-4 to trade in a book they had already read and obtain a new book to read over the summer.



Representatives of the YAR team

Beginning with the YES training workshop, the YAR team completed a survey of school administrators and teachers about the school's needs. They discovered that test scores in reading were low and that the problem could partly be related to students not reading at home. Recognizing that low reading test scores was a real problem for the school, the YAR team set a goal to encourage more out-of-school reading. The YAR team students had learned through their survey that increasing student reading would have a positive effect upon reading fluency.

Following YES guidelines, the YAR team developed their plan to organize the book swap, which included: 1. Obtain principal approval for their plan, 2. Create and distribute a letter to teachers, students and parents explaining the steps of the book swap, 3. Create and post flyers and make PA announcements as reminders to students and teachers about the book swap, 4. Collect books, 5. Organize books by reading level, 6. Purchase additional books to ensure supply for all students, 7. Host the book swap, and 8. Celebrate and reflect on successes and possible improvements for the future.

A successful book swap was hosted on June 17 and the team ultimately served approximately 250 students through the event. The team was able to collect and organize grade-appropriate summer reading books for all of their younger classmates at the school. During a closing project reflection, students celebrated their success of providing students with books to help promote reading. The students were also pleased to note the success of their teamwork and how they were able to reach their goal by working together. The team recognized the Book Swap encouraged a spirit of cooperation and learning from one another. The teacher sponsor acknowledged in her evaluation form how the YES team training was essential in helping the students develop the plan and learn team skills to complete the project.

The Multi-Cultural Magnet YAR team has set a goal to become a service-learning generator next year by providing mini-grants to teachers to begin projects in their own classes. They also want to continue the Book Swap project. The YAR team recognized the positive impact of the Book Swap and wanted to continue the effort to encourage students to read more books. Additionally, the YAR team was so satisfied with their YES training; they would like to encourage YES team training for any new projects that they sponsor.

**The Youth As Resources (YAR) project is administered by RYASAP (an urban/suburban youth and community development coalition) in collaboration with local schools. RYASAP invited the School for Ethical Education to provide the training for their YAR activities.*