2016 Jaffarian Award application – Friends Seminary Library

Narrative

1. Describe the program or program series, and how the school library and librarian were involved. If the program is ongoing, use the information on programming and activities from the previous school year (2015-2016) only.
   • Include the title of the program or program series.
   • Explain the humanities theme or topic emphasized in the program.
   • Explain why you chose this program.
   • Describe in detail the program or program series.
   • Describe the planning process and collaborative relationships involved.

DESCRIPTION:

The Greensboro Sit-In Research Exhibit was an interactive multi-media exhibit created by 8th graders to educate our school community about this pivotal event in the history of the struggle for equal civil rights for African Americans.

THEME:

The Greensboro Sit-In began on February 1, 1960. Four African American college students entered a local department store, sat down at a segregated lunch counter, and requested service.

The original four were soon joined by supporters both black and white. They were also harassed and threatened by whites. This peaceful protest spread throughout the South and nation-wide as citizens in other segregated localities were inspired to stage their own sit-ins. The Greensboro Sit-In was remarkable for its peaceful yet forceful strategy and for the way in which it heightened public awareness of the continuing injustices experienced by African Americans.

WHY WE CHOSE THIS PROGRAM:

The Greensboro Sit-In is an example of young people taking action to confront social justice issues in a courageous yet peaceful way. This topic aligned with the 8th grade history curriculum, which includes a study of the civil rights movement. It was perfect for a mosaic approach, with each student taking ownership of a small, manageable sub-topic, all of which taken together produced a substantive analysis of the Greensboro Sit-In. Last, we felt that this topic gave our students practice thinking critically about images, primary sources and integrating textual and image-based information.

PROGRAM IN DETAIL:

Teachers presented an overview of the Greensboro Sit-In in history classes.

Small student groups were each assigned a different aspect of the sit-in: sources of inspiration, opposition, supporters and outcome.
Each group chose a compelling historical photograph that captured the essence of their sub-topic and wrote explanatory text to help the reader understand the meaning and context of that photograph within the Greensboro Sit-In movement and the larger civil rights struggle.

Students created QR codes to link their images to their explanatory texts.

Images with QR codes were displayed in the library.

Students rehearsed presenting their information orally.

Families were invited to view the exhibit at an evening opening reception, during which students acted as docents, standing by their images and talking to the visitors about what these images meant in the context of the sit-in and the civil rights movement.

During the weeks following the official opening, middle and upper school students viewed the exhibit with iPads and iPhones in hand to scan the QR codes and learn about the Greensboro Sit-In.

PLANNING PROCESS and COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:

Director of library services, Constance Vidor, and history teacher, Elizabeth Grossi, created the idea for this program.

Constance Vidor and Elizabeth Grossi invited the 8th grade history teachers, Stefan Stawnychy and Elise McLean, to help plan and develop the project as part of their classroom curriculum.

This team met with the school’s academic dean, director of diversity and dean of co-curricular programs in order to secure administrative support and guidance. Dean of co-curricular programs, Leitzel Schoen, and director of diversity, Jason Harris, helped us to sharpen the program's focus on the significance of the Greensboro events in the larger struggle for equality, justice and civil rights. The administrators supported outreach to parents and provided funding for some research materials.

Team members collaborated throughout the fall and during the project to clarify and enhance the process as required and to develop and refine a rubric for evaluating student work.

2. Describe the involvement of others in the program. Letters of support (to be uploaded below) should emphasize the humanities program and the impact the program had on students and the school community, not the library program or the librarian.
   - Identify the number of student participants.
   - Describe how the program features higher-order thinking skills through student involvement.
   - Describe the benefits that ensued, including how you measured success.
   - Describe the involvement and awareness of parents, administrators and community leaders.
   - Explain why you feel the program is exemplary or goes beyond normal school library media programming activities.
This program had a strong and positive impact on the school community. Sixty 8th grade students participated in creating the exhibit. The entire rest of the middle school (180 students) viewed it during library or history classes.

HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS:

Students closely observed the details of the primary source images and texts in order to make inferences about them.

Students assessed different points of view revealed in the images and primary source texts.

Students examined multiple sources of information before selecting and synthesizing facts.

BENEFITS OF THIS PROGRAM INCLUDED:

Strong engagement by students.

High visibility in the school due to the library-wide exhibit.

Excellent quality of work due to the 8th graders’ individual engagement with the subject and commitment to the school's Quaker mission of social justice.

HOW WE MEASURED SUCCESS:

Quality of student work as judged by a rubric designed by the educator team.

Enthusiastic responses of members of the community who viewed the exhibit.

Responses of 8th graders to a self-evaluation survey. Responding to a question about “What was the most important thing you learned from this project?” student replies included:

“That even young average Americans can group together to make change in this country.”

“I learned that through peaceful protests, highly impactful change can be made. I also feel like I learned a lot about a less famous chapter of the civil rights movement.”

“That four young people were able to peacefully protest their cause even though they probably wanted to resort to violence.”

“If you believe in something, be brave and help.”

Responses of other educators to follow-up survey:

“Students took ownership of this project because they had an authentic audience.”

“Students were motivated by the responsibility for educating their peers and their families.”

“Students appreciated the fact that the Greensboro Four were young people, not much older than themselves, taking courageous steps to change the world!”

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, and REST OF SCHOOL:
Parents of 8th graders were invited to attend an evening opening reception with student docents. In total there were, 52 adults, 60 8th graders, their teachers, five administrators and the librarian in attendance.

Copies of this educational program have been shared with the Education Coordinators of The International Center for Civil Rights in Greensboro and the Schomburg Center for Black History at New York Public Library.

Following the opening, all 5th, 6th and 7th grade students viewed the exhibit with iPads and QR code scanners.

Upper School students viewed the exhibit informally throughout the day, as the library is the school's central meeting place.

Lower School students listened to the picture book Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down by Andrea Davis Pinkney and viewed the images for a discussion with the librarian.

WHY THIS PROGRAM IS EXEMPLARY AND GOES BEYOND NORMAL SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMMING:

Unlike library programming that features visiting authors or movie screenings, the students themselves created and presented the content of this program.

Unlike typical library-based research projects that connect to a single classroom, this project engaged the entire school.

3. **Provide evidence of a curriculum component.**
   - *Describe the relationship of the program or program series to the school’s curricular goals and to the state's learning standards.*
   - *State how the American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st Century Learner were incorporated into the program.*
   - *Provide evidence of a curriculum component for classroom treatment of the humanities theme or topic emphasized in the program.*
   - *Explain how the program goes beyond the school's standard curriculum requirements and programs.*

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROGRAM TO THE SCHOOL’S CURRICULAR GOALS AND TO THE STATE’S LEARNING STANDARDS:

Our curriculum is guided by our mission statement, which emphasizes Quaker ideals: “Guided by the testimonies of integrity, peace, equality and simplicity, we prepare students to engage in the world that is and to help bring about a world that ought to be…” To this end, our history department has articulated the following standards as essential dimensions of the curriculum:

Students will analyze primary sources, read and make maps, use both written and visual primary sources, write analytical essays and historical fiction, do a service learning activity, and complete a research project. Students should see their roles as future citizens in shaping their country’s future.
Students will cultivate the practices of keen observation, unhurried reflection, critical thinking and coherent expression.

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Students will explore what challenges the U.S. has faced and how successful it has been in achieving its founders’ goals of democracy, liberty, equality, rights and opportunity. The course will take a thematic approach to understanding the forces that have shaped U.S. history in the 20th century. Topics may include immigration and social reform, the emergence and role of the U.S. as a global power, African-Americans’ struggle for civil rights (emphasis added).

STANDARDS OF THE NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORK K-12 THAT WERE ADDRESSED BY OUR PROJECT INCLUDE:

Identify, describe and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents; works of art; photographs; charts and graphs; artifacts; oral traditions; and other primary and secondary sources).

Make inferences and draw conclusions from evidence.

Identify and compare multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.

Connect historical developments to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national or global processes.

STANDARDS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARAIANS STANDARDS FOR 21ST CETURY LEARNERS THAT WERE INCORPORATED INCLUDE:

Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society.

Inquire, think critically and gain knowledge.

EVIDENCE OF A CURRICULUM COMPONENT FOR CLASSROOM TREATMENT OF THE HUMANITIES THEME/TOPIC EMPHASIZED:

Eighth grade history teachers folded this project into their lessons on the civil rights movement 1954-1968. Previous to introducing the Greensboro Sit-In, they studied the origins of the civil rights movement, including the Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson, the Jim Crow laws it permitted, early methods that activists used, and obstacles that they faced.

HOW THE PROGRAM GOES BEYOND THE SCHOOL’S STANDARD CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRAMS:

Students were challenged to “write for an audience” as they created texts and formatted images for the specific purpose of educating the rest of the school community.
Rather than developing a learning product that explored many aspects of a bigger topic or situation, students were guided to discover the value of exploring a smaller sub-topic in close detail as they worked together to create meaning out of the complete mosaic of their individual tasks. This was an experience in learning how to create “the wisdom of the crowd.”

The curriculum tends to focus on the big picture; this was an opportunity to reflect closely on many smaller moments, each of which reflected the bigger picture in a particular way.

4. Describe how this program might be replicated.
   - Provide examples of how this program or program series might serve as a model or springboard for humanities programming in other schools.
   - Identify key components of the program that were essential to the program's success.
   - Identify any key components that might need to be modified for use in other settings.

REPLICABILITY:

EXAMPLES OF HOW THIS PROGRAM MIGHT SERVE AS A MODEL FOR HUMANITIES PROGRAMMING IN OTHER SCHOOLS:

This program is replicable both in structure as well as content. The concept of a QR code exhibit, in which images are given QR codes leading to text explanations, is well within the capabilities of middle school students with access to computers. It can be adapted for a wide range of topics that combine images with text information.

The content of this program also lends itself well to an image-and-text treatment because of the easy availability online of compelling photographs covering many aspects of the Greensboro Sit-in history. Ample information is also available online from credible sources, including the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro, N.C., the Library of Congress (loc.gov), and the North Carolina History Project. In addition, “Sitting for Equal Service” by Melody Herr is a thorough 160-page book that is in print, up to date and written at an accessible, intelligent level for middle school and high school readers.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM THAT WERE ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS:

Aligned with existing American history curriculum.

Intellectually accessible to 8th graders.

Emotionally compelling to 8th graders.

Aligned with the school’s mission statement, the core of which states: “Guided by the testimonies of integrity, peace, equality, and simplicity, we prepare students to engage in the world that is and to help bring about a world that ought to be” and with its service learning and diversity missions, which emphasize peaceful civic activism.

Availability of ample information resources, both print and online.

Appealing interactive structure is inviting to a wide range of visitors and viewers.

KEY COMPONENTS THAT MIGHT NEED TO BE MODIFIED IN OTHER SETTINGS:
Schools with limited access to computers and bandwidth could do this project using more print sources, especially Melody Herr’s book “Sitting for Equal Service”.

Schools with limited access to devices with QR scanners (iPads, iPhones) could do this project by creating posters with image and text combined on one poster.

Schools with smaller classes could assign one student per sub-topic or limit the number of topics to the ones deemed highest-priority.

5. Describe the expectations and outcomes of this program
   - What would you change about the program?
   - What were some unexpected benefits or reactions to the program?
   - How did this program take the library to the next level in terms of school and community collaboration, programming and student impact?

REFLECTION and UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

ELEMENTS I MIGHT CHANGE ABOUT THE PROGRAM:

Allocate more time to helping students rehearse their oral presentations as docents, as some of them expressed nervousness about this in the preparation. Invite 11th grade U.S. History students to help younger students rehearse.

Given that the students were so deeply engaged in this project, follow up with a speaker such as Linda Barrett Osborne, author of “Miles to Go for Freedom: Segregation & Civil Rights in the Jim Crow Years”.

Include an opportunity for viewers to express a personal reaction in writing or by video. We could ask viewers: “Have you ever been in a situation where you were inspired to step forward and do something to create change? What do you think you would have done if you had been living in Greensboro in 1960?”

SOME UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OR REACTIONS:

This program elicited unexpectedly moving and poignant personal responses from students and adults. Students were deeply moved by the courage and the risk-taking of the Greensboro students. Adults remembered attending sit-ins and marches in the 1960's.

Our Principal, Bo Lauder, was inspired by this program to offer to speak with classes or small groups about his own life experience growing up in a segregated southern town. Lauder says that he has not publicly shared these experiences from his past, but, given that the deeper context that students now have, he feels that this kind of discussion would be appropriate and beneficial.

I was struck by how frequently I observed students who happened to be passing by in the library would stop and look at the images and scan the QR codes. Even babysitters who were working with their children in the library after school scanned the codes to learn more. Members of the custodial staff expressed great interest in the exhibit as well.
HOW THIS PROGRAM TOOK THE LIBRARY TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN TERMS OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, PROGRAMMING, AND STUDENT IMPACT:

This program brought together a wide range of constituents and departments. It showed that as a school we can continue to explore and innovate models of collaboration to create inspiring learning experiences for our students.

The Greensboro exhibit brought greater visibility to the library as it drew in parents, students, and teachers to interact with the material.

Students became more aware of museums as essential conduits of legacy and learning as they used online materials of the Greensboro International Civil Rights Center and Museum, the Library of Congress, and state archives.