

Polio Drive

August/September 2008

Though polio can be prevented by simple preventative measures, there are some low income families in Udaipur that are unaware of the deadly effects of this disease and how to protect their children from it.

The aim of this project was to spread awareness on the disease polio in an effort to encourage more families to protect their children from it. To begin with, the students studied about polio – its causes, symptoms, preventative measures and cures. The students then created presentations and delivered the information gathered from their study to the identified households.

Planning

Forming Groups

Students were broken into small groups and were asked to delegate individual responsibilities – in consultation - to each of their group members. Each group had a leader or coordinator, a reporter (documenting the working of the group over time), a presenter (to make the final presentation to the visited families), and an individual in charge of group discipline, amongst others.

Identifying the locality for service

Teachers in consultation with the program coordinator identified suitable high-need localities for the project and discussed their findings with the students. After consulting with the students it was confirmed that the villages around the school would be visited for the service project. The teachers visited families in these villages to inform them about the project and ask for their permission to have the students visit their homes and make presentations about polio.

Research/Study

Before the students could make presentations on polio, they needed to study and gather information about the disease themselves. Each group was given a document on polio (prepared by the coordinator) to study. Students were also provided with a set of questions that they could use to quiz each other in pairs in order to ensure that each one gathered a clear and complete understanding on the disease.



From their study, students learned the definition of polio, its causes, symptoms, prevention methods and cures. They also learned that polio is an extremely dangerous disease that still exists in their State.

Students learned that polio can actually be prevented very easily by giving infants an oral dose of 'polio drops'. Further, they learned that this medication was being provided by the government free of charge. It was thus decided that the presentations made to the visited families would be focused on general information on polio and would end with an appeal to have infants in the household receive the necessary medication from the closest government medical center.

The students were then asked to draft presentations in their small groups. Each group shared their drafts with the rest of the class through mock presentations in order to receive feedback from their class mates which would be used to enhance their presentations.



Before the final drafts were created, students made mock presentations to a group of volunteer parents to receive further feedback from them and incorporate it into their work.



The students were also asked to make individual drawings on how they imagined the project taking place. These artistic representations would then be revisited after the service day, allowing students to reflect on the additional learning they had gained between the start and end of the project.

Action

On the service day, students, volunteer parents and teachers met at the school a half hour before their family visits. Teachers provided each group with road maps and a list of the

families that were going to be visited. Each group, escorted by an adult, then proceeded to make home visits to the designated families.



Reflection/Evaluation

During this project, teachers and volunteer parents observed that the students were more disciplined and effective in their presentations. Most of the students were interacting with adults confidently.

Suggestions from volunteer parents:

“Everyone should speak in each group”.

“Students should practice more in speaking Bengali, they often used English words during their presentations”.

“The discipline was unsatisfactory in one group, and the girls were more effective in their presentations than boys”.

“The students need to practice their presentations more. Some students hardly spoke in the group”

“Some students just weren’t given the opportunity to speak”

The following are additional comments made about the project by the volunteer parents:

“Almost all the villagers responded well to the students and our group was very happy at the end of our service”.

“I would like to thank the school for arranging such projects aimed at helping our needy community”.

The following are some of the successes and areas for improvement that the students came up with during their reflection of the project:

Successes:

- 1. We did not shout in the village.*
- 2. We did not run inside the village.*
- 3. We were careful not to interrupt our team mates during their presentations”.*

Points for improvement:

- 1. We should prepare our presentation better next time.*
- 2. We should thank the villagers after our presentations.*
- 3. All our team mates should be present on the service day in order to support the group.*

Project at a Glance

Number of student participants	: 87
Number of groups made	: 15
Number of teachers involved	: 10
Number of families visited	: 26
Number of parents volunteered	: 17

Cross curricular benefits of the project

Science: Students learned the scientific name of the polio virus, its causes, prevention measure, and cures.

Social Studies: Students learned about the government's medical services and where to receive it from.

Mathematics: Students used their counting, addition, multiplication and division skills learned during math class, while planning and tallying their outreach to families and individuals in the community.

Language: Students learned new medical vocabulary through the project like 'paralysis', 'poliomyelitis', 'symptoms', 'malnutrition', 'immune deficiency', 'fecal', 'oral', 'virus', etc. They also enhanced their written and verbal communication skills through the preparation and delivery of their presentations to the families visited.

Arts: Students made artistic representations of their project before and after its execution.

Spiritual development: Students practiced being polite, courteous, cooperative, patient, and humble throughout the project. Further, they better understood their responsibility to serve the community and experienced the joy that comes with it.

Social/emotional skills: Students learned how to work effectively in groups, and they developed an attitude of cooperation. They also increased their self-confidence and skills of communication by interacting with adults and children.

Conclusion

In addition to all that is stated above, the project helped to bring parents, teachers, students, and the local community together in acknowledging and working towards an issue that affects them all. The students not only reinforced their classroom study of various subjects but also learned about the benefits of working cooperatively and systematically in general. More importantly, the community and students were both equally benefitted by the project.