

24-Hour Homeless Experience

Anticipatory Set:

Have students imagine what it's like to be homeless by listing stereotypes of homelessness. Explain to them that they are going to be homeless for 24 hours and pick a suitable time/location for the experience with them.

- Be sure to have information available to parents, along with a very specific list of items students may have with them.
 - TO BRING: one pair of shoes, socks, pants, shirt, sweatshirt, and/or t-shirt;
\$5.00 in cash; five empty pop cans; one sleeping bag; one cardboard box or a series of boxes along with duct tape, for sleeping
 - Be sure to have a cell phone with you so there is available communication with parents at all times.
 - Suggested experience:
 - 9-11 a.m. Video: "Hidden in America" with ample discussion about sensitive subject matter.
 - 11-1 p.m. Lunch at simulated soup kitchen; learners walk to destination (Have the boxes, sleeping bags and cans taken to the site where you're sleeping by another volunteer.)
 - 1-3 p.m. Walk to a thrift shop and have students buy at least one item that they'll wear for the night and change at the store. They'll use their \$5 here.
 - 3:00 p.m. Use a public facility for water/bathroom facilities by walking there, i.e., library.
 - 4:30 p.m. Walk to a presentation by the director of a local mission/half-way home.
 - 5:30 p.m. Eat at the above simulated soup kitchen.
 - 7:00 p.m. Attend a free community entertainment or event
 - 8:30 p.m. Walk to and set up "box city" in a safe establishment with bathroom facilities. Create a fire and begin discussion on the day's experience.
 - 9:30 p.m. Invite a local homelessness advocate to speak to the learners about the community and give the learners an opportunity to ask questions.
 - 11:30 p.m. Sleep while families chaperone in two hour shifts throughout the night.
- NOTE: During the night, have chaperones hide empty pop cans in the bushes while learners are sleeping.



7:00 a.m. Wake up; clean up; surprise learners by asking them to find the total number of cans. (Be sure to have your chaperones write down the total they've hidden in a specific area that you've agreed upon so you're not on a wild goose chase.)

8:00 a.m. Walk to and have the learners purchase their breakfast at the local grocery store for the entire group with their returnable bottles. (Breakfast must include fruit and protein. They could buy juice for everyone.) Eat in the parking lot.

9:30 a.m. Get picked up by parent volunteers, go to the local mall (WARN SECURITY!) and join the mall walkers and local homeless folks.

NOTE: Learners should walk alone for 45 minutes or so and simply feel the tired exhaustion that comes from people looking at you and being "bored."

10:45 a.m. Family potluck and brunch at a participant's home. Include discussion and invite their entire families in celebration of the event. (The learners will ABSOLUTELY be as crabby as you feel!)

Following your experience, be sure to have the learners give feedback in writing as well as in a group and hear what their experience meant. Take the information they gathered prior to the experience and have them look it over again. Create a project with them where they show what they learned and what they're excited about both through your school community and the local community.

Assessment: Students should be graded on their participation, their contribution to the group efforts and their final project chosen as a group

