Homeless Dinner Party
Primary Content Area: Fine Arts

Introduction/Overview
Homelessness in Chicago and around the country continues to impact hundreds of thousands of individuals. Although a common perception is that most homeless are older men, the reality is the average age of a homeless person is nine years old. Teens in Chicago and across the country are also impacted by the problem of homelessness. The Homeless Dinner Party service-learning project enables students to examine the root causes of homelessness and specifically the lack of services provided to teenagers under the age of 18. Judy Chicago, a local Chicago artist, created an art installation called The Dinner Party. The installation celebrated contributions by women throughout history. These women were “invited” to the party through the creation of plate and setting designs. Students will use this inspiration to create their own plate and setting designs that explore the problem of homelessness and “invite” the homeless to a place at the table.

Project Goals
- Students will research and understand the root causes of homelessness, particularly as it applies to teens, utilizing Internet resources and local organizations addressing the problem of homelessness.
- Students will research the work and initiatives already undertaken by Public Action for Change Today (see contact information below) and determine political actions that can be taken to support solutions.
- Students will create a plate and setting design that visually expresses root causes and solutions to the problem of teen homelessness.
- Students will plan and implement an exhibit that educates its audience about the problem of homelessness. The exhibit will include a silent auction that raises funds to support homeless shelters and rehabilitation programs.
- Students will reflect upon their experiences.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. Use selected resources from the teacher packet:
   - http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/dinner_party/. These resources and activities present the stories of individual women’s contributions to society as captured in Judy Chicago’s art installation “The Dinner Party.” Discuss the impact of excluding diverse elements of our society from representation.
2. Judy Chicago’s art installation introduces us to the problem of exclusion. This service-learning project deals with homeless individuals who are excluded every day. Brainstorm with students about root causes of homelessness.
3. Invite speaker from Coalition of the Homeless to help students understand community approaches to solutions and/or have the students research these causes through the Coalition and other appropriate websites (see contact information below).
4. Students complete a written reflection about root causes of and solutions to the problem of teen homelessness including their own possible personal connection to the issue. This link will take you to a lesson developed by Mikva Challenge on exploring root causes:
5. Students sketch a series of ideas that visually expresses the ideas they wrote about in their reflection. These sketches will be transformed into their plate design. The sketches and ideation are intimately connected to the writing.

6. Students can create their plate sculptures in one of two ways:
   - Clay
   - Assemblage, using plates from home, a resale shop, or sturdy Styrofoam, corrugated plastic, foam core, found objects, string, wire, card board, papier mache
   - Additional, they will design cups, silver, and place mats that further explore their sense of root causes and solutions

1. Students plan and implement their exhibition and how they will present their work to an audience. The exhibition should include a silent auction where the plates will be sold.

2. Students promote the silent auction to sell their art and raise funds to support an organization or program of their choice working to assist the homeless. The Coalition for the Homeless maintains an excellent database of organizations addressing the problem of homelessness in Chicago.

3. Facilitate one or more of these follow-up activities that can serve as an excellent reflection activity for your students:
   - Write letters to legislators requesting funding and programs that assist the homeless. Use the following sites to locate contact information for legislators at the national, state, and local levels: http://votesmart.org/ - enter address in box on right side of screen
   - https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members - uses your address Find restaurant owners willing to follow the example of Tom Tunney and his Ann Sather restaurants that will respectfully offer a table and a meal to the homeless.
   - Raise awareness of the root causes of homeless, potential solutions, and available community resources.
   - Host a dinner party for the homeless.

1. Conduct an evaluation with your students about the project experience. You may want to have your students participate in a group discussion using the Bertolt Brecht poem listed below or write a reflective essay that responds to the following questions/prompts: What did we learn about the problem of homelessness? How did our group work together to achieve our goals? What was my individual role and how did I do? Choose one solution to the problem of homelessness and write about its strengths and weaknesses.

Community Partners/Resources
Coalition for the Homeless: http://www.chicagohomeless.org
The Night Ministry – faith-based organization serving homeless individuals: www.thenightministry.org
Renaissance Social Services –Chicago agency working to end homelessness: http://rssichicago.org/
Jewish Women’s Archive http://jwa.org/people/chicago-judy - find resources related to Judy Chicago’s landmark feminist art installation, “The Dinner Party.”
Suggested Book: Civically Engaged Reader: “A Bed for the Night” by Bertolt Brecht

Addendum
This project addresses the following Common Core Standards and Social Emotional Standards:

CC.K-12.W.R.7 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
CC.K-12.W.R.10 Range of Writing: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CC.K-12.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CC.K-12.R.R.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
4b. Use conversation skills to understand others’ feelings and perspectives
B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
4b. Demonstrate respect for individuals from different social and cultural groups.
C: Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
4a. Evaluate the effects of requesting support from and providing support to others.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.
C. Contribute to the well-being of one’s school and community
4b. Plan, implement, and evaluate one’s participation in a group effort to contribute to one’s local community.

College Readiness - Reading 20-23: Understand the overall approach taken by an author or narrator (e.g., point of view, kinds of evidence used) in a work of art.

Duration
Preparation: Power Point/Discussion/Research – 3-4 hours
Action: Create art work/Host silent auction event – 6-9 hours
Reflection: Writing/Art/Discussion – 1-2 hours

Cross-Curricular Connections
Connections with Writing, Social Sciences and other Art courses could be made during this project.