



FAST FACTS

Project : Community Outreach
Teacher: Whitney Harris,
whitney.harris@slps.org
School: Gateway STEM High School
Location : St. Louis, Missouri
Website: <http://www.slps.org/gatewayhs>
Start/End date: September-December 2013
Mentors provided by: Google, MasterCard, Merck & Co., Inc. and Thomson Reuters

Unique requests of participating mentors: Mentors communicate with students at least twice each week to help them discover areas of need within the St. Louis community and plan projects to address the identified needs. Mentors assist students with writing to potential partners and sponsors, and potentially connect them with various resources to aid them with their projects. Mentors must be familiar with and have access to Google Docs.

Contact: David Neils,
ITP Founder/Director
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Students meet needs of others through community outreach, service



Albert Schweitzer, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, theologian, educator, musician and missionary, said, “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

Whitney Harris, who teaches at Gateway STEM High School in St. Louis, Missouri, agrees. After all, doesn’t everyone gain satisfaction from serving others? Apparently not, at least not until they experience it for themselves.

Harris partners with the International Telementor Program (ITP) to provide her 10th-grade AVID* students with the extra encouragement and assistance they need to achieve at higher levels through researching needs in their community, learning who’s addressing them and

Learning to serve
Appetites for food and real learning are satisfied in a homeless kitchen

planning to help do the same. “I want students to really understand the various needs of the community, discover their true passions and how to fit the two together for the betterment of people.” She was surprised when they didn’t immediately embrace the challenge.

“I intended for my students to be much more eager and ‘on fire’ about helping their communities and they haven’t been,” she says. “I’m still trying to figure out a way to truly instill in students the inclination to volunteer and to guide students towards understanding that helping others does in fact help them.” One approach she has found that fans a fire for service in her students is, through the ITP, matching them with professionals who mentor them in the finer points of volunteerism and helping others.

Harris says, “I love the mission of ITP and the volunteers that work with the program. I want my students to do great, big things but I realize I’m only one person, so the support of mentors across the country is awesome.”



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Whitney Harris, Gateway STEM High School Teacher



Gearing Up *Students collaborate on planning*

Once students research needs within the St. Louis metropolitan area, they develop programs or projects that will help others through activities like organizing donation drives or tutoring younger students. They are expected to develop or secure their own resources, partnerships, transportation, budgets, and marketing and sustainability plans to ensure their projects are effective and successful. Students work collaboratively in small groups and with their mentors to plan their community service projects.

Harris' goal is for "...students to learn to effectively collaborate and how to depend on and trust professional relationships."

An important component of that trust is when mentors fulfill their commitment to communicate with their students at least twice a week. Harris says, "The importance of regular communication between students and mentors cannot be overstated. A few mentors who worked with me last year have returned, and that has helped this process."

For Harris' students, regular communication is especially important since Gateway STEM High School unexpectedly altered its master school schedule, reducing the number of days Harris sees her students each week from three to two. "Without the extra day with students, it is very difficult to provide them with the

opportunity to message their mentors while they are working on other district mandated projects and activities."

Despite this added challenge and students' initial lukewarm response to their community outreach assignment, Harris' students are learning to serve others. Harris reflects, "Throughout this entire experience, my students have become much more aware of the different types of community service. I think in the beginning, the misconception was that they could only host a canned food drive or pick up trash, but since working with their mentors, they've been introduced to a number of other awesome avenues for service. I love the support they've received from ITP and I look forward to working with more mentors who are eager to help at-risk students."

**AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. This nationally acclaimed academic support program for middle and high school students helps prepare them for college and success. Although AVID methods can be used with all students, the program specifically targets those who are academically average and supports them as they participate in advanced classes. It is designed to level the playing field for minority, low-income and other students whose families do not have a tradition of college attendance, but it is not a remedial program, a college outreach program or a free ride. 🌍*

STUDENT REQUIREMENTS

AVID students in the Community Outreach project at Gateway STEM High School are required to work with their mentors to:

- Discover areas of need within the St. Louis community
- Create community service action plans to address areas of need
- Execute action plans and recruit outside help to ensure success
- Develop sustainability plans for long-term improvement.

WWW.TELEMOTOR.ORG

The International Telementor Program ■ David Neils, Founder/Director

