

Competency 2: Communication Skills

- **2.1 Related Task:** Knowledge of group interaction techniques.
- **2.1.2 Specific Task:**
 - o Participate in the administration-student-faculty activities regarding student government
- **Narrative Description of Task:**
 - o Take an active role regarding student government by promoting the interests of student council, assist and advise student leaders, and be the link for communication between students and other staff members in the building. Promote and help manage the student government idea of doing a spring fundraiser (staff vs. 5th grade basketball game) to raise money for the Children’s Miracle Network. Also, attend student government meetings, provide guidance, advice and information if requested to other ideas, topics, or issues. Help to ensure the student government becomes part of the structure of the school that it is involved in all aspects of school life through frequent meetings, fundraisers and school and/or community events.

Smart Goal: By April of 2016, help to assist the student council in their daily efforts to provide for a better school and carry out a spring fundraiser to raise money for the Children’s Miracle Network.

Specific:	Host a staff vs. student basketball game that raises money for the Children’s Miracle Network, celebrates the graduating 5 th graders and showcases the school environment.
Measurable:	Earn money through admissions, concessions, and donations during the event.
Attainable:	Allowing students to make decisions for the building allows for higher engagement levels in all aspects of education.
Relevant:	Helping to ensure student government is part of the structure of the school that it is involved in all aspects of school life is essential to a healthy educational facility.
Timely:	By April 2016 I will have planned the staff vs. student basketball game to raise money for the Miracle Network.

Description and Rationale of Project:

With worldly struggles as prevalent as ever, Gaines Elementary has done a lot to help many of the struggling groups through well-known foundations and charities. However, in recent years with the collapse of the local economy, Gaines Elementary wanted to do more for the local charities. Up to last year, the school had always done a fair share of fundraisers for many charity groups such as United Way, Ronald McDonald, Angelman, and many others. One thing that the students had pointed out was that they wanted to help out with a cause that was closer to home. Gaines staff, the students, and the community were more interested in helping out a local cause which would help unify the extended communities by promoting acts of kindness.

Gaines Elementary and the Swartz Creek Community School district have always had a long-standing tradition of excellence. This is noticed within the many thank you letters and

letters of appreciation from the various groups the school and the district have helped. Yet, the school itself wanted to help more.

Last year, Gaines Elementary partnered with the Children's Miracle Network and put on a staff verse fifth grade basketball game where all donations and money raised went towards the local charity. The Children's Miracle Network through Hurley is based out of Flint, Michigan which is not very far from the Swartz Creek community. The charity itself is to help raise money to give children the proper care they need but cannot afford. Alas, Gaines had a charity to help that was not only local but helping other children around the same ages. Every penny that would be raised at this event would go towards the foundation. This allowed Gaines to meet its goal of helping a local cause while also unifying the extended community through an incredible act of kindness.

Through the success of the event last year that raised over \$1,700, Gaines and its student council wanted to host the event again. The planning began in January after winter break. The student council members began brainstorming ideas and discussing what went well last year and things they wanted to try differently in an attempt to improve this year. At the first meeting in January, a date was established to have the game played in March which was earlier than last year's date. At this meeting, it was also established that we would again sponsor the Miracle Network through Hurley.

This year, more than ever, declining enrollment has been a hot topic district wide. Thus, three goals were set in regards to this event, one in particular aimed towards the issue of the declining student population. First, the students decided we wanted to host this event again to help a local charity that is closer to home. Second, the students wanted a way to show off our school and district to neighboring communities. Third, the students wanted to celebrate the fifth graders and their achievements during their time at Gaines Elementary. Many other great ideas were underway after this initial meeting. Ideas like having face painting, the Swartz Creek Dragon mascot, Swartz Creek Cheerleaders performing at halftime, DJ entertainment, and better concession food items to be for sale throughout the night.

Every week, 5th grade students and student council members would meet in my classroom at lunch to discuss the progress of the event planning and decide the next steps moving forward. The first issue that came about after our initial meeting, was the date in March was no good because of other conflicting events previously scheduled. Thus, the game had to be pushed back to April 22nd. The negatives to this was that it caused a rescheduling of the middle school cheerleaders, the rental of the dragon mascot, rescheduling of the DJ entertainment, and many communications to be sent out to the community to be sure they knew of the date change. The positive, however, was there was more time to plan the tiny details of the event.

During the month of January, initial flyers were sent home to families notifying people of the date, some of the activities that were going to take place, along with letters requesting for financial and concession donations. These flyers were created, sent to the office for approval, and then ultimately sent home with the students. Additionally, I had asked a couple of the well-known parents to take a few copies and post them around the community in an effort to help spread the word.

During a meeting in February, student council and 5th graders decided they wanted more ways to raise money for the charity than just the concessions and money raised through admissions. They suggested we do a 50/50 raffle along with a basket raffle. Following the meeting, community members that were met through the Gaines After School Program, along with parents of the students were contacted and asked for donations for the raffles. Two parents came forward with the urge to be in charge and were delegated to be in charge of the raffles for the event. Sponsors such as Scentsy, Thirty-One, Thrive, Mary Kay and others agreed to donate basket items for the raffle. At this point, the event planning was off and rolling.

I had approached another parent who I know is very fond of community events when involving the school. I also knew he was very savvy when it comes to technology. Thus, I had asked if he would not mind making some recordings of interviews to help compile a video or two to continue to help get the word out of our wonderful event. He agreed to come back later in the week and that would give me time to have a plan of what I wanted him to record. Later that week, the fifth graders and I decided we wanted to do a morning announcement skit that would get the attention of the rest of the school. During one day at lunch, five fifth graders gave up their lunch and recess time and came to my classroom to provide their thoughts and help me come up with a script. They also agreed to be the ones reading it for morning announcements later in the week. By the time Bill Feudale (parent) came back later in the week, the fifth graders were ready to do their skit on the announcements. Bill recorded the announcements and then had all of us go to the gym afterward to conduct interviews with each us. Through the recordings he made, he compiled many media advertisements and posted them on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. This was a huge hit with the community and gained a lot of attention.

Last year, we raised over \$500 in concession items, offering items like pizza, pop, bags of chips, and candy. During that year, those items were all donated by students and their families along with the help of the PTO. This year, we wanted to offer more items and raise even more money through concessions without placing as much of a burden on the students and their families. This year, students and their families were still asked to donate what they can but companies such as Coke, Pepsi, Frito-Lays and others were asked and agreed to be sponsors and donated concession items for the event. These companies were contacted through local businesses such as the Gaines Superette and K&M Party Store. In addition, this year, pizza and breadsticks will be donated by B&T Pizza and Little Caesars.

By March, it was time to start pushing the advertising of the event even more. Ultimately, we had the activities and things to sell, but we needed people to sell it, too. So, with the partnership and help of local media and parents, flyers and newsletters were made and sent out again. The building secretary placed an advertisement in the school's ENewsletter, a press release was sent to WNEM 5, and ABC 12 News along with a publication sent to the Swartz Creek View. Parents also contributed social media advertisements on Facebook and Twitter. In addition, the district posted an advertisement on the district's homepage. Ultimately, the publications were a great start, but the public wanted a place to view more and gain further event details. Thus, a S'more page was created. It was a website created with a listing of flyers that had all of the details in one location. This website was then shared out to all of the previously mentioned media sources.

As the initial planning came to a close and finer details were being sorted out, communication increased between student council, staff, students and the local community. By March, it was time to invite staff and students and see who was willing to help out and where. A staff sign up sheet was placed in the lounge with email communication regarding the event stating that help would be very beneficial. Positions needed were players, concessions, photography, admissions, raffles, and ushers. By the end of March, we had 14 staff members agreeing to play, 6 people willing to assist with concessions, 3 people for admissions, and 3 people for ushers. On the other side, a registration sheet was sent home to all fifth graders asking for parent permission and interest if they would wish to play. Twenty fifth graders out of 33 registered which was an even higher percentage of the fifth grade class than last year.

At the last student council and fifth grade meeting, it was pointed out that the fifth graders and some staff members were uncomfortable regarding their inability to play the sport of basketball. So, a last minute idea of establishing a basketball clinic for all fourth and fifth graders, along with staff members, would be set in place the weeks before the event on April 13th and April 20th. This clinic would be free of charge and take place immediately after school on the above listed days. Registration forms were sent home to all fourth and fifth grade classrooms and due back April 1st. Upon the closing of the registration window, 28 students were signed up for the clinic which included all 20 of the registered basketball participants. Quite a few staff members also responded with their willingness and want to participate.

With many of the details and planning done, rosters set, event advertisements sent out, and responsibilities delegated, the only thing left is to have the event. Last year, \$1,781 were raised and this year, even with the smaller student population, student council hopes to break \$2,000. Many changes such as the sponsorships of concession items, raffle baskets, 50/50, higher admission costs (was \$5 and now is \$6) along with face painting, dancing and cheerleading entertainment hope to be the help needed to reach that goal. We will find out on April 22nd, at 6:00 PM when the event will officially take place.

This project grew into a much larger project than was ever thought of. It started out simply being an idea to raise money for a local charity, and turned into an event where the fifth graders challenge the staff in a basketball game with a wide variety of entertainment that has been advertised and recognized through a variety of media sources. I think this mostly happened because all parties involved cared so much for helping out a local cause and wanted so desperately to bring the community together in a time of stress. We looked at this as a fun, exciting venture. Personally, I know that every time I see Gaines Elementary and its students, I see a school that would give the shirt off of its back just to help others in need. Therefore, I wanted to do whatever I could to help the school meet its goal of wanting to help a local charity, celebrate the 5th graders, and show off our amazing school and district. Once I got the school staff, students, and community on board, it was just fine tuning all of the event details, and we were well underway. Upon last year's event success, I wanted to go bigger this year, which made me even more motivated to get working on this project. As a result of the recent success and hype of the event, the Staff vs. Student Basketball Game is a well-known fundraiser and another amazing event to be considered a Gaines tradition for many years to come.

Project Outcomes:

Other schools in the school district are looking to implement a similar event in an effort to celebrate their students and help out local charities. Morrish Elementary, which is also a part of the Swartz Creek Community School District, specifically has been asking for ideas as they would like to celebrate their 5th graders and help out a local cause. This event has allowed the fifth graders to feel more celebrated and honored while also allowing the school to instill more pride in itself for its ability and desire to help others in need. It also has become contagious and other schools now are looking to do similar efforts causing Gaines' staff and students to feel even more proud.

Reflection:

I feel that this competency, though high-stress and intense throughout, has given me a lot of valuable tools that I can use in the future. The Staff vs. 5th Grade Basketball Game has really shown me how a project could turn from something very small, to a full-force, intense initiative when interested persons jump on board and help promote the message. I also found how eager and willing the students, staff, and community were to work with the school in almost any capacity. Being that they worked with me to create an event in our district that helped celebrate the students and raise money for a local foundation, the event itself was a great way to join forces and form partnerships.

Though it all looks good on paper, I hit many roadblocks when dealing with district liaisons, administrators, students, parents and community sponsors. Many of the individuals were willing to help right away and jump on board with anything put in front of them, where others took a more relaxed and apprehensive approach and did not respond punctually to emails or duties that they were assigned or asked to help with. It was incredibly difficult being that I am at one of the elementary schools and was depending on others to help me communicate to people at other schools because I could not talk to them in person based on their location and building time differences.

Another roadblock I met along the process was obtaining the approval to continue or initiate certain aspects of the charity event. For example, because many of the flyer advertisements for the event had Swartz Creek Community Schools' name on it, our principal and superintendent had to approve every letter and form we prepared. Though understandable, it kept me on track in terms of organization and preparing to meet deadlines. If they did not approve of the flyers, it was then brought back to the student council members and rethought. Also, due to other staff members working on t-shirt designs for the event, including the art teacher working on making tie-dye shirts with the 5th graders, I had to meet with them frequently. Being that I had my own class to teach, this posed an issue to the overall process. This was where delegation and teamwork between Lori (printing staff shirts), Sandy (creating staff t-shirt design), Matt (crafting 5th grade t-shirts), Alison (PTO President) and myself were vital.

We had three main goals to the entire event. First, we wanted to help a local charity. Second, we wanted to showcase our wonderful school and district to the neighboring

communities. Third, we wanted to celebrate our soon to be departing 5th graders. With these goals in mind, a lack of available funds became an issue as we had many things we wanted that would need payments. Due to the unavailable funds at first, we approached the parents, community, and local businesses to help us. This was where the business side of the situation surfaced. To supply enough concessions alone for the event, we would need at least \$500 in food and drink items. We would need an additional \$150 for the DJ. Our justification to asking the parents, community members, and local businesses for donations and financial support was that this would help showcase our school and district which could ultimately help boost enrollment in the future through much needed publicity and advertisements. Through the three months of planning and preparation, many parents have been sending in concession donations and many local businesses contacted their food companies and we gained donations from them, as well. We also formed a partnership between two local pizza places, B&T Pizza and Little Caesars, which will both be donating food for the night of the event. The financial side of the planning proved to me that money is always a major factor in education and can be a major influence in many educational decisions being made. Had we not received the financial support and donations we did, I am not sure the event would have went on as planned which would have been a major loss to the students and community.

Lastly, this project proved to me how important partnerships are in education. This project alone allowed many partnerships to form. Partnerships between local businesses as previously mentioned, staff, students, local churches and community groups, and even staff members with other private businesses they run out of their own home. For example, the staff t-shirts were being made by Lori Luther, an educational aid at Gaines Elementary, who prints and customizes shirts out of her own home. The shirts were also designed by the school's ex-principal, who is recently retired and now designs shirts and apparel out of his own home. These partnerships contribute to the success and formation of such an amazing event. Without these partnerships, the three goals would never be met and the event would have never become a soon to be Gaines' tradition.

Though there were many roadblocks, reflecting upon the project gives me a sense of great pride. It turned into something great that I know came about because of my determination and care. The students that participate in the planning and are participating in the event have a ton of fun, are excited to be a part of something that helps out others (Miracle Network), and get a chance to have their work admired by all of those who attend the event. This is certainly a source of joy for me. When you review the ISLLC standards, 5.3 shows how effective principals connect the school with the community. I feel that through the entire implementation and planning of the event that I did connect the school with the community in a highly tangible way. This entire event provides a way for the students to show off their own accomplishments along with their school in which they take great pride in. The event shows the community that positive events are occurring in our schools, which I think in turn will only help the image of the school and the district in a time of struggles with enrollment.

Ultimately, when you look at the ISLLC standards, 5.4 discusses how principals establish expectations for the use of culturally-responsive practices that acknowledge and value. In a time where socioeconomic diversity is so prevalent, it has become the norm for many people who do possess many luxuries, help out others who may not be as fortunate. Currently, this event and

others like it around the world, are incredibly important to many people who depend on the hands of others. Through working with the community, and other influential forces, we were able to make this happen with substantial success.