



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER NAPLES

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

COLLIER EDUCATOR GRANT "STAND UP FOR JUSTICE"

Applicant's name: Danielle Yarusevich
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Number of years teaching: 24 Years Grade or subject taught: Grade 6-8/Art
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On a separate page(s) with the name of the applicant on each page, please briefly:

- Describe the precipitating events that motivated you to initiate these lessons or activities.

I need to dedicate my motivation to Ida Margolis. I had the pleasure of meeting Ida Margolis when she delivered the Champions of Learning Teacher of Distinction certificate to me in my classroom at Pine Ridge Middle School. After receiving this award, she stayed for a while and observed my classroom, my students, my teaching style, and the bases of my best practices which was called Embracing Personality through Positive Creativity. Based on her observation and my best practices, Mrs. Margolis asked if I would be interested in participating in the Butterflies of Hope and Remembrance Project. I honestly was thrilled for two reasons. First, I love butterflies. The butterfly symbolizes hope, life, and rebirth. It represents that in any situation one can find a positive solution for a brighter future. But most importantly, this project allowed me to help my students spread a positive message not just to their peers at school, but into the community as well. The Butterflies of Hope and Remembrance Project was an honor to participate in because the project allowed my students to have a voice for those children, their own age, that are now silent forever due to passed through the Terezin Concentration Camp. This project allowed my students to truly work on a project and positive message to the school, community, and world that is bigger than themselves.

- Describe the lesson(s) or activity(s); and if adapted from another source please reference.

My lesson/activity was adapted by the Butterflies of Hope and Remembrance Project. This project is dedicated to promoting Holocaust education and human rights via a year-long commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the end of WWII and the Liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camps. The

foundation of the project was inspired by a poem entitled “The Butterfly” written in 1942 by Pavel Friedmann while he was imprisoned in Theresienstadt (Terezin) Concentration Camp. The lesson began with an inspiration quote from Anne Frank, “In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.” This started the lesson on an in depth talk about the Holocaust. My students watched two YouTube videos based on the poem (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJd9w2oEh6w> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbPuWgcAjlI>). After reviewing the first video, we had a class discussion about the symbolism behind the important aspects of the poem and its content. In the first video, a young ladies voice read the important information about Pavel Friedmann and his poem. However, after discussing the symbolism behind the poem and butterfly, the second video had no narration and only set to music. This dynamic quality and prior knowledge allowed my students to connect with the poem and the Holocaust on a very emotional level. However, this was only the start of my student’s emotional connection. We then discussed a very important fact that distressed them. The fact that about 15,000 children under the age of fifteen passed through the Terezin Concentration Camp and less than 150 of these young innocent children survived. This hit home with my students because they are the same age as these innocent children who suffered. I told them that they are the voice of these children and they need to express their memory in a positive way. I tried to make them understand that this project is tremendous responsibility on them. That they are their voice of those innocent children that can no longer speak. That they have the responsibility to stand up and create a future that is kinder, more tolerant and peaceful so the past does not repeat itself. All it takes is one act or voice to change the past into a brighter future for everyone. My students’ projects had to make a connection to the class discussion and the poem by designing a project with a butterfly and positive message of hope, remembrance, freedom, kindness, and tolerance.

- Explain how the lesson(s) or activity(s) teach students the importance of respecting others no matter what religious, racial, cultural, or other differences exist.

The lesson taught my students the importance of respecting others based on looking at the events of the Holocaust in a different way. They have gone through school learning about the events on the holocaust based on historical information, dates, causes and effects of World War II and the Holocaust. I wanted my students to not only connect on an intellectual level but also emotionally as well. My goal was for my students to truly understand the Holocaust. I believe my students made that connection not only through the poem but also the fact that about 15,000 children under the age of fifteen passed through the Terezin Concentration Camp and less than 150 of these young innocent children survived. This so distressed them that they felt the need to participate in this project. That emotional connection allowed them understand how important respecting others is into creating a future that is kind, tolerate, respectful for everyone. They understood how important it is to remembering the past so the future can be better. I believe that the connection not only stressed the importance of respect but empowered them as well. It allowed them to realize that they have a voice. That their voice is important. Their voice and acts of kindness is a choice they have in life. They thoroughly expressed the importance of the Butterflies of Hope and Remembrance Project through their artwork. My students’ projects represent how they choose to have a kinder, tolerant, respectful, positive society and world for all. The Butterflies of Hope and Remembrance Project was not only about respecting other but empowering others to make a difference in a very positive way.





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