

On Thursday, May 17th, the Apollo High School ELL (English Language Learners) and ASL (American Sign Language) students were recognized at the Minnesota Student Service Award Ceremony at the State Capitol for their ***Languages of the World*** service-learning project. Diane Gurda, District 742's Learn and Serve America Grant Coordinator, nominated this group of students for the award. Since 1988, this recognition program has honored over 30,000 students who have touched approximately 180,000 people in communities throughout Minnesota.

Besides being recognized by the MN. Dept of Education at the ceremony, House of Representative Larry Haws and District 742 school board member Joanne Dorscher were on hand to greet them.

The ASL/ELL students from Apollo High School worked together to create a hands-on learning project in which students could apply their knowledge and critical thinking skills to meet a community need. Lynn Hanson, the service-learning coordinator for District 742, helped orchestrate this project as part of the PLC entitled, ELL Literacy Through Service Learning.

The twenty-two ASL students from Deb Riehl's class taught four different ASL stations on December 14. The stations were: the alphabet, numbers, animals, and the reading of the book Mouse's First Christmas in sign language. The students planned the project themselves with assistance from teachers after learning about the service-learning process.

Sixty -one ELL students from the classrooms of Sue Peterka, Jill Schuldt-Martinez, Amanda Schwinghammer, and Becky Zabinski assumed the teaching role on December 15. The ELL students taught the ASL students how to make felt mice and how to pronounce six different words in six different languages.

The objective of this project was to bring students from diverse backgrounds together and create a hands-on service-learning environment that would continue throughout the school year. It will also increase literacy because the ELL students will learn new vocabulary from the project, which is a district goal for this year.

Article and picture submitted by : Lynn Hanson and Diane Gurda