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TAKE ACTION PROJECT

STEP ONE

IDENTIFYING THE CONCERN

- a) Poverty affects the everyday lives of some students in our school.
- b) Many students in our schools are deprived of basic needs due to poverty. They often experience the following difficulties:
- ◆ Poor nutrition
 - ◆ No books or basic school supplies.
 - ◆ Lack of transport which prevents them from attending school.
 - ◆ Inadequate clothing (school uniforms, shoes and other necessary clothing)
 - ◆ Health Issues (eg. poor eyesight, skin conditions- eg. scabies, ringworms).



STEP TWO

RESEARCH YOUR CONCERN

We have chosen this project dealing with problems caused by poverty because both our schools are located in the same geographical area. Both schools are located in a rural area with many families with low socio-income backgrounds. We have been working at our schools for over twenty years; as a result we have observed the difficulties that some students experience on a daily basis. Often poverty affects the general performance of those students who have the potential to do much better if their basic needs are met.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

- I. When students are registered for entry into the school, they are required to complete a socio metric data form. This form gives information on the following:
 - ◆ Family background (eg. Number of members in the family, single parent home).
 - ◆ Socio economic status of parents or guardians (Place of employment).
 - ◆ Educational background of parents/guardians.
 - ◆ Health Issues (eg. asthma, diabetes, allergies heart conditions)
2. Parents were also interviewed when they register their child.
3. Home visits are done to assess the situation where possible.

STEP THREE

(a) FIND OUT WHO SUPPORTS YOU

1. Support of school administration.
2. Members of staff.
3. Parent Teachers' Association.
4. Other stakeholders:



1. Parents
2. Politicians- (Parliamentary representative /councillor for the area)
3. Ministry of Social Welfare.
4. School Social Worker.
5. Community Council.
6. Rotary Club.
7. Kiwanis Club.
8. Businesses/Companies
9. Blind Welfare Association (Vision screening)
10. Ministry of Health- (Referrals to appropriate departments)

(b) HOW CAN I GET OTHERS INVOLVED?



1. Letters are sent to the various agencies listed, highlighting the plight of our needy students.
2. Use PTA meetings to inform the parents of the problems experienced by some students.
3. Use posters to encourage parents and students to become involved.
4. Letters are sent to parents to elicit donations of food items for food baskets.
5. Promote donation drives at school and class assemblies.
6. Fund raisers – Fun cruise for parents, cake sales and a walkathon. Students will contribute cakes and get donations for the walkathon where they get sponsors for the distance they complete.

STEP FOUR

CREATE A PLAN

Our plan is to provide the basic needs for students and families who are experiencing difficulties, which affects their everyday lives.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- 1) Provide basic school supplies.
- 2) Provide food for students and their families.
- 3) Provide transport for students to go to and from school.
- 4) Provide basic health care.
- 5) Provide clothing.





STEP FIVE

TAKE ACTION



1. PROVIDING BASIC SCHOOL SUPPLIES

- 1). Parents donated used textbooks, uniforms to be distributed to needy students.
- 2). Annual Christmas Shoebox Project in collaboration with the School's PTA- where students can donate a shoebox filled with stationery and other items (eg. toiletries) or can contribute items towards filling a box. These boxes will be distributed to needy students (excess to be given to Children's homes). Students are encouraged to write letters to recipients.
- 3). The PTA together with the school has initiated a program where they provide needy students with vouchers which can be redeemed for books, stationery supplies, school uniforms or school shoes.

2. PROVIDING BASIC FOOD ITEMS

- 1). **Monthly Food hampers-** All students are asked to donate one item of food from home on a monthly basis (eg. 1 can of peas or a pack of pasta, a pack of milk). They are asked to bring an item that was not used from their groceries at home (they did not have to purchase the item). Some teachers/parents also contributed the larger items needed (eg. flour, rice). A few hundred items are collected monthly; these are made into hampers and redistributed to the needy families. The aim is to generate 10 hampers each month.
- 2). Parents who are financially well off (eg. Businessmen) were approached to give financial assistance to purchase items for hampers.
- 3). A group of businessmen together with two teachers, myself and well wishes have been providing hampers at Christmas and Divali for twenty families in the area for the last 18 years. (This project was started by the first principal of the school).

The monthly food baskets will help provide food supplies during the rest of the year, since the families need proper nutrition throughout the year.

3. PROVIDING TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS

Sponsors were found to pay for the transport of students to and from school. Each sponsor was asked to sponsor a student for a year (\$300 per term). They pay the fees monthly or termly whichever is more convenient to them. Teachers involved in the project collect the fees and pay the school vans directly; no cash is given to parents for transport, to ensure the funds are used for the purpose intended.

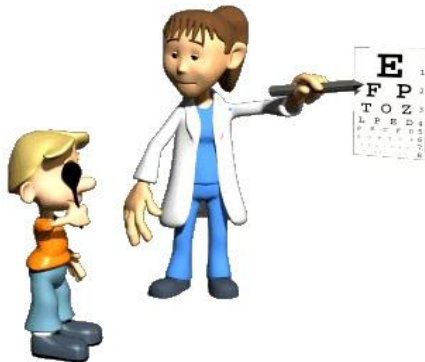


4. PROVIDING BASIC HEALTHCARE



- 1) Assistance for this came from a parent who is a medical doctor and a member of the executive of the PTA. He arranged for his colleagues to assist him in providing medical examinations for students/families where needed. Past Students who are pursuing medicine have pledged their assistance for the future.
- 2) The Chaguanas Rotary Club and Blind Welfare Association offer free vision screening for all students. This project is also supported by the Raghunanan Road Community Council. Students who needed spectacles and could not afford it were assisted by members of the Rotary Club and Optical companies. Presently the security company that services the school has a program called Giving Back to the Community; they are offering us assistance for students who need eye care.

- 3) Healthcare and Family Planning Clinics to be set up the school once per term. Assistance will be requested for this from companies and radio stations (eg. Fm 103) who has a mobile clinic that does charity events.



5. PROVIDING CLOTHING

- 1).Students and parents donated clothing, uniforms and shoes to the school which were redistributed to needy students.
- 2). Stores and factories donated items of clothing, uniforms and shoes to school which were distributed to needy students.



ACTION STEP SIX

EVALUATE THE PLAN.

We think that our plan of action turned out to be quite a success. We were able to achieve most of what we set out to do. We were able to provide basic school supplies with the assistance of the students, parents, PTA and other stakeholders. Basic food items were provided for needy families. We got great assistance from the business community and the PTA. Some months it was a little bit difficult to make up the ten hampers, while other months the support was overwhelming.

We also got sponsors to pay for the transport of the needy students to and from school. We ran into some difficulties where some individuals who promised to sponsor a child reneged on their pledges.

The provision of basic healthcare to students was accomplished. We were able to provide medical checkups for some students who needed it. Some students were provided with spectacles and others were subsidized and still others are waiting for theirs. The one thing we did not accomplish was the family planning mobile clinic. They are heavily booked to date and promised to try and accommodate us before the end of the year.

The provision of clothing was one area we got tremendous support from parents and companies in the area. It was hard work, as it took a lot of time to sort out the suitable stuff. While many parents donate really good items, some used it as an opportunity to get rid some of their really bad stuff. We were able to provide a number of students with uniforms, shoes and other necessary items of clothing.

We know that the novelty of starting new projects always gain much attention, for this project to be a continued success it is important to keep up the interest. It will be ongoing and we are hoping to expand in the future. Our aim is to involve past students to give back something to the school by volunteering in some way. We have started a face book page (the school and PTA) which we use to keep past students and other well wishers informed about what's happening in the school. This will be one of the avenues to beg for pledges.

ACTION STEP SEVEN

APPLY YOUR LEARNING

During the course of doing project we came across many obstacles. We began with boundless enthusiasm, only to come down to earth rather rudely. While our proposal was received with interest and enthusiasm, actually getting people to commit to carrying through with the project was more difficult than we expected. Many offered donations quite easily but when it came to offering their time that was another story. We had to find creative ways to get people involved. We know that this will always be a challenge as we will be continuing with this project. We learned to rally support and how to organize people to accomplish the task at hand. People skills were so important and knowing who was suited for certain tasks. (Eg. We had to find people who liked making phone calls, writing letters, sorting clothing). Thank God for the PTA (especially the ladies) and the Community Council.

We learned many things while doing this project, one of the most important being team work and how important it was to involve the community and make them feel a part of the school. The trump card we played here was to foster a sense of loyalty to the school since it is the core to the development of the community. Our intention is to involve the past students in playing a greater part in giving back to the school and community since their children will most likely be attending the school in the future.

Most importantly the value of involving our students in making a difference by getting involved in the project was most rewarding. They were involved in contributing items; collecting and packing the hampers which certainly made them feel part of the project. Some students accompanied the teachers and parents to the Operation Smile Children's Home where they got a firsthand experience of what it is like to not have their own family. They were encouraged to speak to their peers about their experience.

We have intentions of expanding this project by:

- ◆ Getting more teachers involved.
- ◆ Writing to factories for donations towards the food and clothing hampers.
- ◆ Encouraging other schools in the area to adopt the idea.

PHOTOS OF SOME ACTIVITIES THAT WERE DONE TO HELP NEEDY STUDENTS

SHOEBOX PROJECT



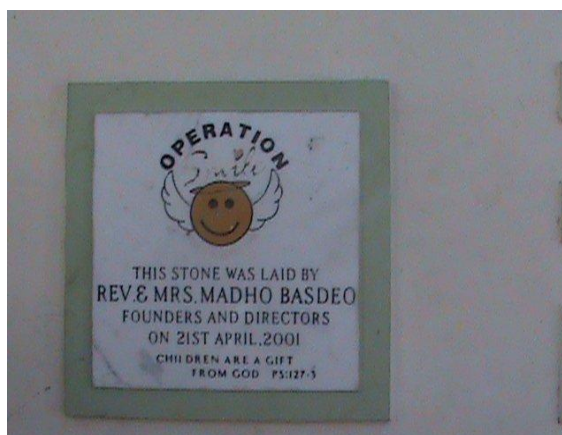
Former principal Mr. Hart assisting



Teachers and parents distributing boxes



Secretary of PTA, Parent and student at the home



Children's Home

Photos of school outreach program- Christmas shoebox project (These were contributed by students and parents. The response was so overwhelming that we donated the excess boxes to the Operation Smile Children's home. We were accompanied by parents, members of the PTA, students, teachers and former principal.

Parent Teachers' Association Book Voucher Project



Book Vouchers



Distribution of Vouchers by Teacher and Student to a parent.