From Kensington, Brooklyn IS 62 students stand with Kyiv,

Ukraine and its families

A model for easily infusible projects that make our children a positive proactive world force

It would seem that asking Brooklyn neighborhood middle school students to relate to the struggles of struggling families fleeing Ukraine and those staying behind to fight for freedom, would be quite a stretch. Especially with these same students emerging from a still ongoing pandemic and grappling with an option of wearing masks at school or not. Yet through Ms. Xavier’s 4 classes just watching the world unfold you tube (particularly Ukrainian girl singing Frozen “Let It Go” in a shelter), hearing from some staff who were Ukarinians or from the region, looking at the immensity of Russia on the map compared to Ukraine, and getting in the musical mindset of “We are the world, We are the children;” a few hundred Ditmas students became “involved in Mankind” (John Donne- “No Man is an Island”).

They were viscerally saddened as they saw their same age or younger peers on line with mothers waiting to board buses to Poland or beyond. Since at least 15 percent of the Ditmas students were from non-English speaking families, they grasped from their own experiences in life or from those of parents and relatives what it was to leave a beloved home with a few belongings to go somewhere unknown in a different country with no job, no money and no resources.

They researched further from the resources screened in class and began speaking with their parents as well as following the news themselves online.

As a first goal with a concrete outcome framed by Ms. Xavier, they worked in groups of 3 or 4 to create an awareness poster about the urgency of the Ukraine with facts about the war and the culture of the country. These posters were posted on the first floor of the large three floor middle school on March 11th. Not only were they viewed by the entire staff and at least 1/3 the school’s students, but other classes from the 7th and 8th grade were brought down and given an awareness tour by a few of the sixth graders.

The Xavier sixth graders who had developed the poster out of their study of the war, inspired other teachers (Ms. Michel, Ms. Akhter, Ms. Huerta, Mr. Carideo and Ms. Celebi) in the school to do the unit and posters or writings about it. They talked about the situation in the Ukraine during their lunch and outdoor breaks.

When polled about what they felt they had accomplished they stated:

Shohjahon Buzrukhov

680

I learned that we all need to speak out, even if we are just regular citizens. Injustice will not be stopped if you do not speak out against it.

Fiza Kamran

680

We can help a place that is going through a great deal even if we are not with them there geographically.

I learned that with just one poster, we can make a big difference. Our posters motivate people to do the right thing and speak up about the war in Ukraine.

I was proud to wear the Ukraine button on Friday.

Salfullah Wali

680

We need to speak out against injustice because Innocent people are being harmed.

Colin Moy

680

If we do not speak out against injustice, people will be killed or imprisoned depending on what the injustice is.

Anisha Adrita

660

Ukraine is a strong and a beautiful country that will not back down.

It is important to stand up for what you believe in. Unless you speak up, nothing will change.

Ishtiak Uddin

660

Ukraine wanted to become part of NATO. Russia invaded them to stop that process.

I learned through making the posters that the process of raising community awareness is done in various ways and posters are one of those ways.

If you do not speak up the injustice can get worse over time.

Abigail Figueroa

By helping to spread awareness of the war in the Ukraine, we are also fighting alongside Ukraine, even if we are not physically there.

While making the posters and running our campaign for awareness was stressful, it was all worth it when people at our school finally saw and appreciated the urgency of Ukraine’s war.

It is important because if injustice happens, the country or group doing the injustice is encouraged to continue with their wrong doing. When we raise our voice for justice to be served, the situation will change.

Luisa Luna

670

One important thing that learned from the Ukraine poster campaign was that one small act of kindness can have a big effect.

It is important to stand up when injustice is being done to others, because if you do not speak up for others, then when you need someone to speak up for you, no one will be there. This is what Martin Niemoller said in 1946.

Tiffany Bux

650

When you hear of a conflict going on anywhere in the world, you should stand up for the country you believe should win the conflict.

Shakibul Islam

660

If people are made aware of the Ukraine conflict, they will support and donate monies to charities. Their donations are so needed.

Faith Villafana

680

I learned that even if as you make the poster, you feel you are not making a difference, you really are making a difference for Ukraine.

Kurt Raagas

660

Helping the Ukrainians in any way is preventing them from admitting defeat and keeping them fighting.

Faghunda Khan

660

The Ukrainian people are losing their homes. They need our help and you can donate to Ukraine Razom, Ukrainian National Women’s League of America and Hope for the Ukraine.

Usman Ahmed

660

I learned through this project that spreading awareness and donating even a small amount helps. I am pretty sure you have heard the saying every penny counts. Try to donate more than a penny however, if you can.

Giovanni

Herrera

650

I learned from this campaign, that the Ukrainian people are not giving up their country without a fight.

Through this process, I learned that it is easy for us to raise our voices. We can make differences in our neighborhood and around the world.

It is important to stand up when we see injustice because so many people are getting hurt. Families are getting separated. If we do nothing, this situation will get even worse.

Harib Rahman

680

I learned that we should stand up for one another.

When some of us get the courage to stand up and speak out, that gives others the courage to stand up and speak out as well.

Alishah Akbar

650

Ukraine needs a great deal of support to stop this war. We in school do have a voice.

Ivy Pena

650

The Ukrainians were suffering more than I thought. They are struggling to survive against Russia. They are trying their hardest to flee the country (women and children) to survive.

Subhan Mahmood

660

I learned that Ukraine gained its independence as a nation, not so long ago.

I learned how to make posters and prepare for an awareness campaign for the first time.

We should have a voice, even in sixth grade.

We are all humans, so we should care for one another. If injustice is being done and we do not stand up, we contribute to others being harmed. If we do not speak up, we are harming ourselves.

Mariya Sarker

650

We can help in a global issue, even if we are geographically far from the country in conflict.

If everyone works together, we can help make a difference in the world.

It is important to stand up when you see injustice being done. We have to try to stop and to end this injustice.

Of course, this practice is only evolving as the Ukraine war sadly continues forward. But the model of engaging students in a global humanitarian crisis far from them geographically through use of digital coverage and online songs, is immediately adaptable for any crisis. In addition, creating awareness posters to display in school halls which represent student voices and speak to school stands against injustice, is very accessible and uses resources schools already have.

Beyond the immediate replicability and scalability of this practice for any humanitarian crisis, it of course bonds students to one another and to the world in which they are the children. Given the volatility of our world in this pandemic, climate change and world peace crisis era, what better gift can we give students than the sense that their voices can be heard at the schools and in aggregate around the world?

Resources:

A new song on Zelinsky

<https://youtu.be/zG91y8Jwt7c>

Little girl in Ukraine shelter sings

‘Let it go’

<https://news.yahoo.com/video-ukraine-singing-girl-let-it-go-shelter-kyiv>

We are the world lyrics

<https://g.co/kgs/VsZS6D>