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Homelessness

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

“What leads to homelessness and what can we do about it?”

SCHOOL

Grover Washington Jr. Middle School, Philadelphia, PA

YEAR OF PROJECT:

2003-2004

Can eighth grade students find jobs for formerly homeless men?

They can try. That’s what students in Jennifer Parker’s special education class did for the culmination of their yearlong project on homelessness.

The students were inspired after meeting two formerly homeless men from the nonprofit organization Ready Willing & Able. RWA provides support to men who are trying to end their addiction to drugs and find fulltime housing and employment. During their visit to the classroom the two trainees shared their stories with the students about how they had become homeless. No details were spared.

After meeting the two men, the class took a field trip to RWA’s downtown facility, where they ate lunch with other trainees. To get to know the men better and also participate in hands-on service, the students spent an afternoon working alongside RWA trainees sorting food at the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank – an opportunity that not only provided momentum for the project but also deepened the relationship with the men.

