Hospital Dolls

First Grade
Service Learning Project
Hospital Dolls

Oneonta City Schools Pilot Project
in collaboration with A.O. Fox Hospital
2007-2008 School Year
Project Origins

Kiwanis of Burnside, Australia created this project. The piloted first grade service learning project drew upon their model and information gathered from the websites of hospitals using these dolls. Johns Hopkins additionally provided details that have been incorporated in the information that follows.
The Challenge

A hospital experience can be overwhelming for an adult. Imagine what it is like for a sick or injured child.

The child enters a strange environment of bright lights, strange noises, uncomfortable furniture, and lots of strangers.

Someone takes away clothes and starts poking and prodding.

The child has no sense of control.

Through this all, the child hurts.
Medical play dolls:

- Help children relax in the hospital environment and provide a wonderful source of comfort.

- Help staff develop a rapport with children, assessing children’s perceptions and feelings. Talking about the doll helps children prepare for and cope with the treatment process and explore concerns in a non-threatening way.

- The doll can be used to show where an injection will be given or what posture or body position is desired.
The dolls serve several purposes:

- Children can use the doll to express their feelings by drawing a face on the doll that indicates their emotions. They can mark the place of the injury or the pain they feel.
- The nurse or doctor can use them to demonstrate the procedure that the child must undergo. Supervised play with medical equipment helps young children feel more involved in their care and cope more effectively with hospitalization, helping children who are resistant to become more cooperative.
Creating and personalizing a blank, stuffed, body-shaped doll is a pleasurable and expressive activity for children. Children decorate the dolls with non-toxic permanent markers to personalize them. The dolls then become a part of the treatment process and children take them home when they are discharged.
Patients are provided with an array of real medical supplies to use to care for their own "patient." This type of play is particularly beneficial because the patient is given a sense of being in charge of the situation.
"Madeline" -- soon to undergo surgery -- is handed her doll by an attending nurse. She's a little tentative at first... but quickly 'gets into' the task of coloring her newfound friend & confidant.

"Madeline," shown with her parents & the attending nurse, begins to color her Kiwanis doll.
What hospitals use the dolls?
Why First Graders?

- As we build a K-12 service learning sequence, first graders need a project that coordinates with their curriculum and which can provide for an ongoing community need.
- Our first graders commonly go to the emergency room for an educational hospital visit.
- The kindergarten Caring for Animals service learning project paves the way for this project, with a similar trip to the local veterinarian.
- First graders are close in age to children receiving the dolls and therefore understand the practical need for the dolls. They can readily understand this contribution to their community.
Initial Steps in Our Community

- Emergency room nurses at Fox Hospital suggested this project in 2003 and in 2007 “they were enthused” that it would be piloted with local first graders.

- Fox Hospital indicated that 450 children between the ages of 1-8 go through the emergency room each year.

- First grade teachers committed to the project.

- High School Family Career and Community Leaders of America students committed to cutting and sewing the dolls for the first graders to stuff.
Project Components

- Hospital Visit
- Fabric and stuffing
- Community partner to cut and sew dolls
- Community celebration

Original instructions included chopsticks to stuff the dolls. Our first graders were able to stuff the dolls better with just their fingers.
Project Outline

- First graders visit Foxcare to see fitness equipment, pharmacy for prescriptions, optometrist and dental equipment x-rays, a lab with microscopes and learn about the hospital dolls and how and why they are used in hospitals. Learn about the hospital dolls and how and why they are used in hospitals.

- High school FCCLA (Family Career and Community Leaders of America) students work with first graders who stuff and dress the hospital dolls. (FCCLA take the dolls to sew the openings)

- Reflection activity on the value of the hospital dolls.

- First graders and FCCLLA students present the finished dolls to a hospital representative at a school assembly and maybe a few reflections could be read by the first graders (invite the radio, newspaper).
Arriving at Fox Care

The Pharmacy
Fitness

Checkups
Eye Exams

Dentist
Making the Dolls

- **Fabric:**
  - One yard of 45” fabric will yield 3 dolls
  - Muslin or cotton with no sheen so markers can be used on the fabric
  - Light, middle and dark skin shades

- **Sewing:**
  - Simple cutting, sewing around the edges with curves
  - Stay on the pattern: misshapen dolls are hard to use at the hospital
  - A label identifying the class can be sewn into the leg without the opening for stuffing
  - The size and location of the opening for stuffing needs to allow for a first grader to stuff the doll with ease
Stuffing the dolls:

- Start with the head, then arms and legs, chest last
- Dolls should be plump but not stiff so the dolls can bend (although not flop)

After the first graders stuff the dolls the openings will need to be sewn

Hospital gowns with arms and Velcro at the neck can also be made, children like to dress their dolls after the procedure; fabric scraps can be donated for the gowns; no buttons should be used. (The first graders also like having a gown for the dolls as part of the project)

Cost in 2007 for 50 dolls*:

- 12 yards for 36 cream colored dolls @ 99 cents per yard = $12
- 5 yards for 15 darker colored dolls @ $1.99 per yard = $10
- 50 pound box of stuffing: $14
Hospital Doll Pattern

The doll is 15” tall
FCCLA Students Arrive
Materials for the project
Getting Started
Our hands worked better than the chopsticks!
Working hard

Finishing Touches
Almost finished dolls...
The children really enjoyed this project. It worked well to have the first graders go to the hospital and then make the dolls so they knew they were doing something to help. This prompted a discussion with the children about making the dolls and why they are important.

The first graders were excited to have the high school students come to their class with the dolls for them to stuff and dress.

The high school students were excited to have a reason to work with first graders on a community service project.
High School FCCLA Perspective

Family Career and Community Leaders of America
(formerly FHA: Future Homemakers of America)

FCCLA is committed and “enthusiastic about the project.” We think we could complete at least 50 dolls.

“We are looking forward to direct involvement with the first graders and definitely want to be involved with the first graders when it is time to stuff the dolls.”
Hospital Perspective

“The dolls have been awesome! We love it!” “The nurses love them and think it’s great and they use them all the time.”

“This was a real need and eases anxiety for young children”

In less than a month the first delivery of dolls from one class were almost gone. The hospital had this story to share:

“A two year old girl came into the emergency room the other day needing stitches. She was scared and weepy. As soon as she got the doll, she settled right down. She loved the doll and put Band-aids all over it. She even put a Band-aid on a spot where her own blood had dripped on the doll.”
At Johns Hopkins Hospital

- The dolls are used all over the hospital
- Teenagers practice on them
- Hospital staff demonstrate procedures on the dolls
- The dolls help in assessing what children understand about their bodies
- Some patients need to engage in needle play/experimentation
- Children color the faces first to personalize the dolls (eyes, nose, ears)
- The dolls may be given a voice
- Children may want to dress the doll afterward
- The child life specialist keeps a few on hand and stores the rest until supplies need to be replenished
- Pens are supplied by the hospital. Permanent markers are used, depending on the age of the patient.
First Grade Service Learning Outline

- Preparation: Students visit the hospital and learn about the purpose of the dolls.

- Action: Students stuff and dress the dolls.

- Reflection: This is typically a written activity after discussion about the purpose and significance of the contribution.

- Celebration: The dolls are given to a hospital representative at a school wide assembly and the local community is informed of the event.
Reflection Possibility

A critical thinking option suggested by a teacher in the district could be to give an index card to a student with a scenario that the rest of the class does not know. It might say: “You stepped on a nail while playing with your friends and you’ve arrived at the emergency room for treatment.” Another student would be the doctor and ask what happened. The student would then use the doll to describe the problem, using the foot of the doll to explain. The student role playing the doctor would use the doll to explain what would be done to correct the problem.
Disciplines Incorporated

- Health
- Language Arts
Timeline

- Contact local hospital to confirm need for the project; share the project information

- Contact high school FCCLA or other groups to create the dolls for stuffing (parents, sewing groups, retirement community, disabled persons, school classes or organizations, service organizations, church groups); Discuss how many dolls can be made and when they will be ready for stuffing

- Request a copy of the hospital doll pattern from the Service Programs Department at Kiwanis International.

- Purchase fabric, stuffing, thread (some companies may donate, or have leftover manufacturing materials)

- Cut and sew dolls (option to create labels identifying the project which can be sewn into the leg seams)

- Schedule hospital visit and make bus arrangements for the field trip
- Coordinate a time for the sewing group to meet with the first graders to stuff the dolls

- Determine when the stuffing opening should be sewn – if there is time during the stuffing with FCCLA members and/or if it is safe for the children to be there when the openings are sewn or if FCCLA should take the stuffed dolls to sew the openings at another time

- Students write a reflection piece about their work and contribution

- Schedule an assembly time for a hospital representative to receive the dolls; Invite all participants in the project and local media

- Students create a project description to shared in a school newsletter, inviting parents to the celebration assembly

- At the assembly students:
  - Describe the need and the project
  - Acknowledge all participants
  - Share reflection excerpts
  - Present dolls to hospital representative
Melanie was a five-year-old girl brought to the emergency department with obstructed breathing caused by severe tonsillitis. The doctor said she would require an intravenous line for administering antibiotics.

Melanie’s father asked her, “Are you scared?” She said, “Yes,” and started crying. I thought she would benefit from having a doll to play with. When she was given the doll, along with some felt-tipped pens, she began to draw lines on the doll to act as clothes.

I asked her “Can I put a drip in to the doll, like the one that you will have to have?” She said, “Yes,” so we put an intravenous cannula into the doll and then gave some medicine (water) to the doll, which Melanie helped with.

When it was time for Melanie to go into the treatment room, I asked if she wanted to take the doll with her, and she replied, “There are some things dolly does not need to see!” Once her own intravenous cannula was in situ, with no fuss at all from Melanie, the drip was connected, and, with supervision from me, she gave a flush of saline.

The doll was really useful to help Melanie understand what was to happen to her and also how a drip works. She loved the doll and cuddled it all the way to the ward.

-- Robyn Corser
Six-year-old Olive fell on a fence and sustained a laceration to her upper right thigh. The wound was near the groin and was gaping about three centimeters. Olive appeared to be scared. The doctor wanted to suture the wound.

I explained the whole procedure to her using the doll in the suture kit and then gave her another doll and some markers to draw on the doll with. Local anesthetic was applied to the cut and then I left her with her mother.

When I came back, she had completely colored the doll and drawn a sad face on one side with blood on the doll’s leg from a cut. The other side had a happy face and a sewn-up cut.

It was about 30 minutes before we were able to start suturing the wound. I thought the local anesthetic might have worn off by then. At first, Olive flinched a bit but didn’t appear to be in pain.

She wasn’t interested in watching, so she closed her eyes or looked away. Because the wound edges needed to be trimmed before the stitches, the whole procedure took about an hour. The doctor and Olive’s mother were very impressed with how successful the preparation had been.

-- Louise Collins
Tom was a six-year-old boy who had cut his scalp at school. He told me in a loud voice what had happened. I asked if I could have a look at his cut, and he let me willingly. I said, “I think that the doctor will want to sew that up. Otherwise, it will not get better.” I explained to the school nurses that sedation would take an hour. They felt that Tom would not go to sleep due to his hyperactivity and it would take too long. They felt it would be better if we just got it over with.

I then got the suture kit and said to Tom, “I’ll show you how we are going to make you better.” I showed him the doll with the cut and how we would clean it first, demonstrating as I went. He then took the forceps from me and cleaned his own cut on his head!

I then explained about Adrenaline and Cocaine (AC), using water and a syringe and putting it into the doll’s cut. He loved that part. I explained this was the medicine that would make his skin go numb so he wouldn’t feel the stitches.

I then showed him the suture material, saying how small and soft it was and that the needle was very tiny. He took it from me and attempted to sew up the cut on the doll. He asked, “Did the dolly cry?” I said, “Yes, a little bit, but it was OK and he kept very still and it was all over quickly.”

The two nurses held his hand, and I steadied his head. The doctor started cleaning and pulling at his hair. He started to cry and say, “That hurts. I want to see.” We explained everything that was going on. He wriggled a bit but didn’t need to be restrained. All the way through, he kept up a running commentary, “What are you doing now? That’s cold. That hurts”.

-- Rebecca Burden