

**Project Card**  
**"The Eleanor Rigby Project"**

**Project Information**

<b>Project Name</b>	The Eleanor Rigby Project
<b>Number (ID)</b>	9
<b>City</b>	Calgary/Alberta
<b>Country</b>	Canada
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.masters.ab.ca/bdyck/Homeless">www.masters.ab.ca/bdyck/Homeless</a>
<b>Up and running since</b>	09/2003

**Short project description**

The "Eleanor Rigby Project" valiantly addresses the topic of homelessness to middle level students by exposing them to a variety of online resources and thought-provoking activities that will introduce them to the real people behind those who make their home on the streets of the world.

**Project summary**

"All the lonely people, where do they all come from? ... All the lonely people, where do they all belong?"

These lines from the Beatles well-known song Eleanor Rigby, was the starting place for the telecollaborative project The Eleanor Rigby Project. Brenda Dyck listened to those words and envisioned a project that not only introduced middle school students to the world of the homeless but gave them an opportunity to see the real people behind the homeless facade. The project is comprised of an eclectic variety of resources and activities, all designed to give students an opportunity to explore this ever growing social problem from many different angles. Not only did they have a chance to examine local homelessness, they looked beyond their own national borders to other countries where the homeless population exists in explosive proportions. The goal of The Eleanor Rigby project was not to just inform but to challenge students to explore possible solutions and to recognize the responsibility each person has in confronting homelessness in our world. This project began in the fall of 2003 and continues to operate. The project began with a focus on local homelessness and has now includes links and activities that prompt students to investigate international homelessness. Brenda Dyck continues to be the project coordinator. She regularly posts calls for participation, communicates with participating teachers and creates web pages to post the student work that participating classes send.

**Objectives and innovation**

**Please explain the objectives and the context of your project**

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free... send these the homeless, the tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

~ Emma Lazarus  
(Inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty)

The message of Lady Liberty still points us towards the poor, the tired and the homeless. We see them on the streets, cocooned in doorways, pushing overloaded shopping carts, standing on corners announcing their troubles on cardboard signs. Old, young, men, women.

- Who are they?
  - Where did they come from?
  - What circumstances put them on the street?
- and most importantly:
- What keeps them there?

The Eleanor Rigby Project' is a telecollaborative project that seeks to introduce middle school students to the real people behind the homeless facade. Participants study the facts, examine the stereotyping placed on those who are homeless, and are introduced to people who live on the streets, both near their home and in countries far away. And after all the facts and emotions have settled, they have been challenged to ask themselves why we all have a strange feeling of discomfort each time we see a homeless person, and what we can do to help and promote change in our world.

Using a broad array of activities students create poetry written from the perspective of a homeless person, they create a homeless advocacy project, they use their choice of artistic medium to create a piece of artwork that communicates the plight of the homeless, they write a letter to the editor and they participate in a debate about the criminalization of the homeless.

### **In what way does it try to achieve its objectives?**

The homeless problem is very complex and merits being presented in such a way so students recognize this complexity. Because of this, The Eleanor Rigby Project is comprised of a variety of online activities and resources, carefully chosen so that students have an opportunity to experience this topic from many different perspectives. Students view online video resources, read newspaper articles, view artwork, and navigate through documents containing a plethora of enriching hypertext. This eclectic variety of resources helps to promote deep learning that can be transferred to a variety of learning settings for students.

### **Which opportunities/problems does it address?**

This project presents students with the opportunity to envision how they could become part of the solution. They don't just learn "about" the homeless, they are challenged to use what they now know to become part of the solution.

### **Please explain what is unique or special in your project**

Some telecollaborative projects pull at your heartstrings- The Eleanor Rigby Project was one of these projects. Not only did it lead to solid learner outcomes, it reshaped students' mental models about homelessness and touched their hearts. Through the activities, students developed an increased understanding and empathy for the homeless and used sophisticated critical thinking skills to tackle some of the complex issues surrounding homelessness. The activities within "The Eleanor Rigby Project" supported students as they underwent an in-depth investigation of the topic of homelessness. Through the Internet resources, students interacted with information and ideas and used newfound knowledge to reconstruct how they viewed homeless people and their role as a potential advocate for "the silent poor".

## **User Profile**

**Category in which the project is candidate**      Youth Education Project: up to 15 years old

## **Results**

### **Project results up to date**

The student work from the various participating schools is posted on the web site (under student work). This project continues to run with an emphasis on international homelessness being addressed.

### **Contribution of the project to improving education and training for young people**

Participating teachers told moving stories of how this project impacted their students and even their schools. Some classes knitted scarves for the local homeless people, other classes cooked dinner and served it to the homeless in their city.

### **How the project has improved participation by professionals, children, youth and other stakeholders**

The Eleanor Rigby Project placed second in ISTE's 2005 SIGTel Online Learning Award, an award that recognizes creative educators for their pioneering use of telecommunication activities to provide innovative learning

opportunities for students in Grades K-16. I was invited to present The Eleanor Rigby Project at a poster session at the 2005 National Educational Computing conference in Philadelphia.

### **How the project promoted new technologies for educational and cultural development**

The Eleanor Rigby Project provided an opportunity to experiment with a new online journaling tool- weblogs. I created a blogging space for each of my students and they made regular use of their blogs as they reflected on what they were learning. I also created a weblog for myself so that I could reflect on the deep learning that I was observing in my students throughout the project. (to see my blog, go to <http://eleanor-rigby.blogspot.com/> )

\* Note: begin reading at the bottom of the page

Here is an example of one student's blog posting:

Friday, October 03, 2003

One of my own opinions on homes and the homeless is that there are people in the world who may have a roof over their heads but can still be homeless, like orphans and wives whose husbands abuse them. To me a home is more than a house, it is a place where you feel " at home". How can you call a place a home if you feel alone and insecure there?

There is a song by the Dixie Chicks called A Home and it sort of talks about that. The chorus goes "Not a night goes by that I don't dream of wandering, through a house that might have been a home. I listen to my pride..... and every day I wake up in, in a house that might have been a home." It also touches on the fact that a lot of people are homeless because of decisions that they have made. I would like to explore that a little more. I know that I would never get over myself if I knew that I was on the street or all alone just because I did a few stupid things.

- Stina

## Sustainability

### **The duration of our project is:**

From 3 to 6 years

### **The approximate total budget of our project is**

Less than 10,000 USD

### **The source of funding for our project is**

We have no funding. The project is managed and maintained by the volunteer efforts of the project creator, Brenda Dyck.

### **Economic self-sufficiency of our project**

The project is self-sufficient: less than 1 year

## Transferability

### **What lessons can others learn from this project?**

Social justice themes provide powerful learning opportunities for students. This level of inspiration provides significant motivation for students to not only learn but to begin to view themselves as "world changers".

### **We are available to help others starting or working on similar projects**

## Keywords

### **Keywords which better characterize the project**

homeless, poverty, homelessness, poor, street people, working poor,

## Background Information

## How the project came about

"All the lonely people, where do they all come from? ... All the lonely people, where do they all belong?"

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## Future plans and wish list

I would like to have more international participation from developing countries. The level of homelessness is staggering there and I think it would add a deeper dimension to this project. Would it not be incredible to hold an international symposium for youth, a coming together for the purpose of deepening their understanding of this social problem and for looking for solutions? What about inviting the experts- those who make their home on the street? They need to be heard. After corresponding with "Ben" I know they have plenty to say.

Young people will be the world changers in the future- why not fuel their dreams now?

## Contacts

<b>Organization</b>	Master's Academy and College
<b>Organization type</b>	Private Institution
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	Brenda Dyck