Service learning in Lutheran schools

Action (hands)

'Where ever possible this component should provide a series of 'first hand' experiences for students with a particular focus on students analysing their gifts and talents and connecting this with diverse global needs (that are both near and far).'

Understanding action

Action can either be direct or indirect based on the specific needs of the community and partnership:

- Direct service which involves hands on, direct contact. For example working in the local
- soup kitchen.
- Indirect service which involves hands-on, but not direct contact. For example knitting blankets for a
- winter appeal.

A) Student direction

When service is imposed from above without student/youth input and without adequate structure and support, young people may view their service experience with indifference, suspicion or even hostility. (S H Billig)

Giving students a say in every phase of a service learning project has a strong influence on academic and civic engagement. (Billig, Root and Jesse 2005, Bradley 2003, Fredericks, Kaplan and Zeisler 2001)

The benefit of allowing students to direct action means that they:

- • engage in problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting and helping others.
- • see themselves as change agents.
- • develop leadership and public speaking skills.
- • have improved interactions with teachers and partner stakeholders.

B) Respect for diversity

Explicit teaching of respect and discussion of diversity is necessary for meaningful and appropriate action to occur.

C) Reciprocal partnerships

Reciprocity is associated with sustainability of service learning. (Kramer 2000; Ammon, Furco, Chi and Middaugh 2002).

Reciprocal partnerships have mutual benefit, shared vision, two-way communication, interdependent tasks and common goals.

The action phase is often the most visible and tangible part of service learning, '… it moves social issues from participants' heads into their hearts and hands, and it motivates them to learn and grow while also contributing to community life' (Roehlkepartain, 2009:33).

Establish clear expectations, ensure participants are appropriately engaged and promote interpersonal and cultural sharing

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Also see 'planning a service learning experience' and 'establishing partnerships'

References
Roehikepartain, E.C. Service-Learning in Community-based Organisations: A Practical Guide to Starting and Sustaining High-Quality Programs. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2009.

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