

Service learning in Lutheran schools

Research (head)

'Offer students opportunities to engage in problem-solving by requiring them to understand the specific context of their service learning activity and community challenges, rather than only to draw upon generalized or abstract knowledge from a textbook. As a result, service learning offers powerful opportunities to acquire the habits of critical thinking; ie the ability to identify the most important questions or issues within a real-world situation.'

Research component allows students to engage in:

- Deep knowledge: Students need to engage in real world issues, questions and concerns that focus on key concepts to ensure that their knowledge is deep.
- Deep understanding: Students demonstrate their deep understanding of ideas and concerns surrounding the service learning issue in number of ways, including solving problems, giving explanations and drawing conclusions.
- Problematic knowledge: Students consider the issues from multiple perspectives, recognizing alternative possibilities and considering a range of options for their project. As they do so they discover that knowledge is problematic.
- Higher order thinking: Service learning tasks require students to use higher order thinking skills to organise, recognise, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate knowledge and information about the issue at hand.
- Substantive communication: Students reflect throughout the project. They discuss the project and articulate and communicate their ideas and arguments to others, in substantive communication.

Inquiry and questions

- Investigating and inquiry based approaches can focus on concept a wide range of concepts and values including, for example: 'community' and 'responsibility'.
- Draw distinctions between different kinds of responsibility – students may not be causally or legally responsible for the pollution, but do they have some social or moral responsibility to improve the situation?
- Examine their assumptions about moral responsibility by asking, for example: 'What is the extent of our moral responsibility? How do we judge this? What is it to be a good citizen?'
- Making such distinctions develops and sharpens thinking skills
- Some practical examples
- Guest speakers provide background information (could be from within the school community or outside)
- Use of images/ photos/ quotes/ newspaper articles/artefacts that act as a pre-text for discussion and research
- Students develop inquiry questions and seek to answer them (wonderwall – students write questions on post-it notes and stick up)
- Internet sources
- Books, magazines, newspapers
- Make and collect survey information
- Collecting raw data from observations or experiments

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- Watching documentaries, movies, clickview
- Stimulate a class discussion on a topic
- Brainstorm/mind map to collect ideas (other thinking tools)
- Excursions/Incursions
- Expert panels

References

www.empower.org.au

Eyler & Giles, Where's the Learning in Service learning?

<http://www.servicelearning.org/library/resource/2202>