

# Service learning in Lutheran schools

## Rationale

A vision for learners and learning in Lutheran Schools (2005) highlights service as a core value of Lutheran education. Service is faith active in love. Service involves the selfless giving and loving of others, making a difference in their lives by responding to their needs, and acting without expecting recognition or reward. A Lutheran school challenges students to grow in their understanding that service is not only a personal response to God's love but a broader response as part of one's humanity for the sake of justice for all.

Therefore students in a Lutheran school learn about serving and learn through serving. This concept is known as service learning.

## Vision

The LEA vision is that service learning, as a response to the cross, is central to Lutheran schools. The mission of the Lutheran school demands that service becomes an integral part of the Lutheran school and its practices. Service learning brings service to the fore-front by embedding the concept into teaching and learning programs across all levels of the school community. An integrated approach to service learning in Lutheran schools strives to develop students who are transformed to serve as a life long pursuit, respecting the dignity and valuing the humanity of others.

## Guiding Principles

- Lutheran schools strive to develop in their students a deep understanding of the meaning, practice and value of service from a Christian perspective.
- Service learning is to be aligned to the vision of a Lutheran school, its core values and Lutheran theology.
- Service learning challenges students in developmentally appropriate ways to think and act while reflecting the core values of Lutheran schools.
- Service learning provides students with the experience of service as a way of living and learning rather than an activity that is in isolation from the rest of their lives. Therefore in the context of a Lutheran school when using the term service learning, it needs to be understood that we are really talking about Christian service learning.
- LEA encourages Lutheran schools to intentionally and systematically embed service learning programs in their curriculum.
- Preparation, meaningful reflection and analysis are essential elements of service learning.
- Service learning is formed and lived out in community and centred on sustainable and reciprocal partnerships.
- Service learning projects should be relevant and meaningful to students and selected on the basis of genuine need.
- As schools of the LCA, Lutheran schools should endeavour to make connections with agencies of the LCA when developing service learning programs and projects.
- Service learning should go further than just private charity and school fundraising. The challenge is to incorporate a social justice dimension to our service initiatives. 'Charity is giving a hungry person some bread, while justice is about trying to change the system so that nobody has excess bread when some people have none' (Rolheiser, 1998, p. 159)