Service learning in Lutheran schools

Service learning project planning checklist

Best practices

There are essential components for all service learning projects. The seven best practices listed in order of importance for quality service learning are:

1. Meet a recognised need in the community
2. Achieve curricular objectives through service learning
3. Reflect throughout the service learning experience
4. Develop student responsibility
5. Establish community partnerships
6. Plan ahead for service learning
7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

With these components in mind, thorough preparation and planning is essential for a successful and meaningful service learning experience.

Investigation

Understand the students you are teaching and identify the outcomes you would like to achieve and the 'starting point' for the service learning, for example:

- A global issue identified in one or more subjects
- Students' interest
- Existing community engagement activities
- Extending existing links with community organisations
- Existing events

Identify the community you wish to work with

Planning and preparation

Before the project/experience (inform and motivate)

- Assess needs of community/those being served.
- Students investigate/research the issues/circumstances surrounding the need
    - tell stories and watch videos
    - invite someone with a personal experience to speak
    - ask parents involved in community service to speak
    - ask representatives from community agencies to visit
    - organise a trip to a local community agency
    - invite older students to present to the class
    - ensure the goals of service, learning and growth are central to process
- Find suitable agencies and visit:
    - community centres
    - neighbourhood centres
    - local councils
    - Ask parents and teachers for advice

- ○ Also consider: local police, hospitals, libraries, schools for special purpose
- Who will participate?

Project design: what will we do? service offered, where, when (dates and times)

Plans for the project/logistics: equipment needed, funding/budget (if required), transportation Safety and risk management: site check for safety and appropriateness for age group, parental permission, insurance requirements, supervision plans, medical forms, transportation plans, risk assessments completed

Project orientation for participants: orientation to the site and project, etiquette and cultural orientation, skills training, background information on underlying societal issues (research) Partner engagement: type and frequency of communication, clarity of expectations and roles During the project: focus on student direction, reflect before, during and after the project, ask students and community agency to evaluate, have sufficient staff to nominate at least one person to coordinate and visit students during the program

Plan for reflection, celebration and demonstration: focus, strategies and timeline for reflection, students demonstrate the outcomes of their service learning eg educate others about the issues they have been addressing, planned celebration or recognition activities eg invite community partners and others to celebrate the project – public forums, becoming involved in advocacy , teaching others etc

Guidelines for students during a service learning experience
- Be courteous, friendly and respectful to others serving with you or receiving the service
- Get to know the people whom you are serving
- Work cooperatively as part of your team to reach the goals
- Become familiar with emergency procedures at the work site
- Tell project leaders or staff when you cannot meet your timeline
- Do not use language or dress in ways that might be offensive to people in the community
- Use your time (and other people's time) well
- Keep in mind your learning goals
- Ask questions about things that you don't understand or that make you curious
- Ask for help in learning new skills that you need
- Have fun

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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