SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING MINI-GUIDE

OSTPD

CYPHERWORX 3349 Monroe Ave, Suite 116, Rochester, NY 14618

Supporting Alternative Pathways through Service Learning

WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

Service learning is an opportunity for children and youth in your program to engage in the world around them. This may be at a local, regional, or even global level. By participating in these processes, young people are able to both volunteer their time and efforts, while also learning and developing on a personal and academic level.

Service learning is a strategy rather than just an activity. It affords the participants to learn throughout the engagement, and includes both teaching components, so that adults are actively engaged, as well as many learning experiences through both the teaching and the volunteer activities.

Through these focus areas and support activities, youth are able to develop and enhance their connections to the community they chose, as well as enhance their academic growth. This is particularly beneficial for certain types of learners that are not traditional classroom learners through lectures, reading, etc. rather, those who are more experiential learners.

COMMUNITY SERVICE VERSUS SERVICE LEARNING

Community Service	Service Learning
• Focuses on providing the service or "giving back" • Lacks follow up with learning and connection to learning • Often focuses on a number of hours being provided as service vs. the social issue and impact	• Integrates service with instruction and reflection • Focus on making change(s) in the community • Enhances academic benefit • Teaches civic responsibility

As you can see here, there are some significant differences between volunteer work and service learning activities.

While the focus on community service is quite different, the lack of instruction, support through reflection and discussion, and outcomes focus, for both the community and youth, truly makes them stand apart.

This results in greater learning, growth and academic benefit for youth involved in service learning over those completing community service activities.

BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING

Two specific areas of benefit for service learning activities include academic gains and social and emotional impacts.

This section is adapted from the Afterschool Alliance, MetLife Foundation Afterschool Alert Issue BrieNo. 52: http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Issue_52_Service_Learning.cfm

Academic Gains

More than two thirds of students in a Flint, MI, service-learning program reported that their participation helped them understand what they were learning in school and improved their academic achievement.[xv]

Michigan service-learning students in grades 7-12 reported more engagement and more effort in English/language arts classes than nonparticipants.[xvi]

Sixth grade service-learning participants in New Hampshire demonstrated significant gains in achievement scores on state assessments compared to their own performance before participating in service-learning. [xvii]

One study found that involvement in service can contribute to lessening the achievement gap, with low-income students who serve doing better academically than students who do not serve. [xviii]

Social and Emotional Impacts

In a study of sixth, seventh and eighth-graders, students with substantial hours of service -learning, including reflection and a high degree of motivation, significantly increased their self-concept concerning helping others and maintained their commitment to class work at a higher rate than those with less service-learning participation. [xix]

A study of Wisconsin service-learning project participants found that middle school students reported lower rates of certain risk behaviors, higher levels of leadership and ability to resist danger, higher levels of positive peer influence, higher rates of homework and school engagement, higher interpersonal competence, and increased involvement in service to others. [xx]

Compared to their peers, young adults who participated in K-12 service-learning were more likely to discuss politics or community issues and vote in an election year; more politically and socially connected to their communities, both as leaders and role models; and more active members of society. [xxi]

HOW DOES SERVICE LEARNING SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS?

Service learning is connected to, and supports alternative pathways. By creating options and flexibility, service learning offers youth the opportunity to explore activities and connections that traditional learning does not. Youth have the opportunity to consider any and all activities, community needs and tap their creativity regarding how to become involved and address these issues.

From the onset, by simply considering all of the available options to them, youth begin to explore their community, redefine their community, and consider how they can have an impact in that community, etc.

As they begin the planning process of how to address an issue within the community they identified and defined, they will have the opportunity to explore and educate themselves with what resources and businesses are available, how to connect to them, what they may already be doing, and how to work collaboratively with some of them.

Growth in service learning is no longer confined to a text book, the walls of a classroom or school, or limited by their teachers influence. This experiential learning helps them push and redefine the limits of their learning and supports them in challenging themselves and their assumptions in order to benefit others, while they may not even realize this involved learning, and certainly not learning at the depth and scope that they are.

Service learning also helps youth interact with adults in less traditional, but positive and healthy ways. They not only practice and learn how to interact with adults in the area their project benefits, but also in other community resource areas.

COLORADO DROPOUT PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

The Colorado Department of Education provides the following framework regarding alternative pathways and dropout prevention. This resource provides a wealth of information including tips on identification of issues, implementing institutional change, and intervention and support ideas and resources. The information provided is structured in the following sections:

Identification

- Data Analysis

- Early Warning Systems

- Tracking of Out-of-School Youth

- Institutional Change

- Assess and Enhance the School Climate

- Policy and Practice Review

- Community Engagement

- Intervention and Support

- Family Involvement

- Transition Programs

- Multiple Pathways to Graduation

- Reengagement of Out-of-School Youth

- Enhanced Counseling and Mentoring

- Credit Recovery Options

The full framework can be located online at:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/cgp_framework

IMPLEMENTING SERVICE LEARNING

Tips (Taken from the NIOST Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 1999:
http://bonnernetwork.pbworks.com/f/serlearn.pdf)

- Choose appropriate projects

- Keep it simple

- Have youth help plan projects at a developmentally appropriate level

- Include relevant topics in research and lessons

- Develop partnerships

- Be persistent and specific

- Engage youth in reflection

- Celebrate efforts

STEPS TO SERVICE LEARNING [V]

Decide on a Project

Don't limit youth, or your pre-conceived ideas of what may or may not be realistic.

Use available resources to explore possible projects and their intended impact on the community. Youth can talk with people in the community, develop their own questionnaires or surveys to identify a need, or use online resources such as The Asset-Based Community Development Institute by the Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy – whose website is listed in the resource section.

Some programs may be able to partner with local schools or colleges as well. This will assist in developing learning activities, plans, goals and assessments, for those programs who need assistance.

Have the youth begin thinking about not only what they want to do, but why, and what they want to accomplish.

Once there is a focus on the activity that will be undertaken, then it's time to start on the second step.

Develop a plan

Involve youth in the planning, with some guidance, to make sure they understand how the project will progress, what the expectations are, and to understand what work is going to be required of them.

Be realistic in terms of the timeline and how long each step will take. Consider how available certain resources may be to the program and youth.

Discuss the benefits of being organized and having a plan. Talk about how this plan can keep everyone on track and also serve as a guide toward success. It also acts as a check point for them to ask for help before they get too far behind if they have difficulty or run into any delays or roadblocks to progress.

Be sure to have a discussion about how each step should be focused on, and help lead to, achieving the intended community impact of the project.

Research and Develop Lessons and Learning

Youth will be researching and learning everything they can about the community need, what is currently being done regarding that need, who is involved, who will be impacted, how will they impact this need, etc.

The youth, working with staff will be setting their goals for their project.

Meanwhile, adults are busy too. This is where the Northwestern University resource mentioned earlier, a school or other college can also be a beneficial resource or partner. What activities and lessons in the program will help guide the learning throughout the project? Each activity or lesson should have

Out of School Time
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Supporting Alternative Pathways Through Service Learning Mini-Guide | July 2015

Page 5

intended outcomes and goals so the youth are learning, but then applying that learning to the continuous development of their project.

Group discussions and peer support will be an important part of these lessons and activities as well.

Support Youth

Once youth are working on their project and moving forward, it is important to empower them, while making sure they know you are there to support them, in the event they have questions, challenges or need a sounding board.

Supporting youth while empowering them often times takes the forms of answering many questions with questions. This is a learning and growth activity, so giving them answers versus working with them to develop and practice the skills of problem solving is counter-productive to the goal. Brainstorm with them if necessary, but not for them. These activities should be just enough to get them started.

Make sure there are check points to stay on top of progress – this will coincide with the timelines that were developed.

Implement the Plan or Activity

Here, the youth get to see all their hard work and preparation put into action. More successful projects will not just be a one-time event or action. Change takes time. But more importantly effective service learning is a cyclical process of implementation, feedback, adjustment and ongoing action.

Youth need to plan for this launch and each subsequent project activity, including making sure that all necessary supplies and resources are available and where they need to be. This includes if any purchases are needed, if people or supplies require transportation, and clearly identifying the location, start and stop times for the project activities.

Support and encouragement, as well as being available as a resource when obstacles are encountered is especially important during this phase.

Reflection and Feedback

Schedule discussion time to explore what occurred, how things went, how the youth feel about it, what went well and what didn't go so well. Were they as prepared as they thought they were? What could they do differently?

Exploration questions regarding how they feel about the project progress, whether it is doing what they thought it would and wanted it to.

Staff guidance in the discussion is important to ensure productive evaluation, learning and future planning occurs.

Out of School Time
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
Supporting Alternative Pathways Through Service Learning Mini-Guide | July 2015

Page 6

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE FROM COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Using this link, you can access additional information provided by the Colorado Department of Education regarding alternative pathways and dropout prevention.

http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/cgp_framework

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I. Fayetteville University Office of Civic Engagement & Service Learning
    http://www.uncfsu.edu/civic-engagement/service-learning

II. Afterschool Alliance http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Issue_52_Service_Learning.cfm

III. Afterschool Alliance - http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Issue_52_Service_Learning.cfm

IV. Generation On - http://www.generationon.org/educators/lessons-resources/out-of-school-time/program-benefits

V. Corporation for National and Community Service -
    http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Youth-Impact-vol-3.pdf

VI. NIOST Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 1999:
    http://bonnernetwork.pbworks.com/f/serlearn.pdf

VII. Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance - http://afterschoolri.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/RIASPA-Service-Learning-and-Afterschool-Spring-2013.pdf

VIII. Child Trends. Table 1: Students who volunteer at least once per month by grade level, 1991-2009. Retrieved from
    http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/sites/default/files/20_Volunteering_tab01.jpg.

IX. National Commission on Service Learning. (2001). The power of service learning for American schools. Retrieved from
    http://nslp.convio.net/site/DocServer/executive_summary.pdf?docID=1202.

X. Zaff, J. F., & Michelsen, E. (2002). Encouraging civic engagement: How teens are (or are not) becoming responsible citizens. Child Trends. Retrieved from
    http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2002_10_01_RB_CivicEngagement.pdf.

XI. The San Francisco Department of Children Youth and Their Families. (2010). Service learning in afterschool: In San Francisco. Retrieved from
    http://www.dcyf.org/assets/609dc672a2ca4aa8ae785905a475ef25.pdf.

XII. Academic Community Service Learning Program. Community service vs. service learning. North Carolina Central University. Retrieved from
    http://www.nccu.edu/administration/academicaffairs/acslp/community/com_difference.cfm.

XIII. Skinner, R. & Chapman, C. (1999). Service-learning and community service in K-12 public schools. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from
    http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999043.pdf.

XIV. RMC Research Corporation. (2007). Impacts of service-learning on participating K-12 students. National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. Retrieved from http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/impacts.

XV. Smartworks, Inc. Flint Community Schools Service-Learning Initiative evaluation report, 2001–2002. Grand Blanc, MI.

XVI. Billig, S. H., & Klute, M. M. (2003). The impact of service-learning on MEAP: A large-scale study of Michigan Learn and Serve grantees. Presentation at National Service-Learning Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

XVII. Klute, M. M. (2002). Antioch's Community-Based School Environmental Education (CO-SEED): Quantitative evaluation report. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

XVIII. Scales, P.C. & Roehlkepartain, E.C. (2005). Can service-learning help reduce the achievement gap? In J. Kielsmeier & M. Neal (Eds.), Growing to Greatness 2005: The State of Service-Learning Project. Saint Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.

XIX. Scales, P. C., Blyth, D. A., Berkas, T. H., & Kielsmeier, J. C. (2000, August). The effects of service-learning on middle school students' social responsibility and academic success. Journal of Early Adolescence, 20 (3), 332–358.

XX. Potts, S. (2000). Fostering resiliency through service-learning 2x4x8: Evaluation summary. Madison, WI:Wi sconsin Department of Public Instruction.

XXI. Martin, S., Neal, M., Kielsmeier, J., & Crossley, A. (2006). The impact of service-learning on transitions to adulthood. In J. Kielsmeier, M. Neal, and A. Crossley (Eds.), Growing to Greatness 2006: The State of Service-Learning Project. Saint Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.

XXII. Skinner, R. & Chapman, C. (1999). Service-learning and community service in K-12 public schools. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999043.pdf.

XXIII. http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/01/nyregion/highschools-mandating-community-service-forgraduation.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

XXIV. http://www.servicelearning.org/what-servicelearning2www.nextgenscience.org/development-overview

XXV. http://www.servicelearning.org/what_is_servicelearning/characteristics/index.php

XXVI. http://www.servicelearning.org/what_is_servicelearning/characteristics/index.php

XXVII. http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/commoncore.aspx

XXVIII. http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/NextGenScience.aspx

XXIX. http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/8542_K-12_SL_Toolkit_UPDATED.pdf

XXX. http://www.generationon.org/teachers/service-stories

XXXI. http://www.ncwd-youth.info/fostering-inclusive-volunteering-and-service-learning