Students Serving Students: Service-Learning as a Dropout Prevention Strategy

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National Service-Learning Partnership
Objective

To understand a process you can use whereby you engage your students in a service-learning project to prevent future dropouts
The Dropout Crisis

Every nine seconds a student drops out of school. . .
Reasons Students Do Not Attend School

- Did not like school
- Could not get along with teachers
- Could not get along with students
- Was suspended too often
- Did not feel safe at school
- Felt I didn’t belong
- Couldn’t keep up with school work
- Change school, didn’t like new one
- Was pregnant
- Friends dropped out

Data from a U.S. Department of Education Longitudinal Study
Let’s Look at What Works
NDPC 15 Effective Strategies

A School and Community Perspective

- Systemic Renewal
- School/Community collaboration
- Safe Learning Environments
NDPC 15 Effective Strategies

Early Interventions

- Family Engagement
- Early Childhood Education
- Early Literacy Development
NDPC 15 Effective Strategies

Basic Core Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service-Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- Out-of-School Experiences
NDPC 15 Effective Strategies

Making the Most of Instruction

- Professional Development
- Active Learning
- Educational Technology
- Individualized Instruction
- Career and Technical Education
The steps of the service learning process include:

- Investigation
- Planning and preparation
- Action
- Reflection
- Demonstration of results and celebration
1. Investigate

6. Sustain

5. Demonstrate & Celebrate

4. Reflect

3. Act

2. Prepare
Why Investigate? (Why Listen?)

- Address community priorities
- Develop research skills
- Project investment
- Engage community as partner
- Build responsive citizens, leaders, change agents
- Position youth as resources
Investigation

1. Discuss how your school is a “community.”

2. Identify the “community” to serve (school, specific grade level, peers).

3. Assess school/student needs (e.g., based on media reports, interviews, surveys, etc.).

4. Select a school/student need using criteria (e.g., importance, student interest, and “can we do this?”).
Assessing School/Student Needs

- Needs/Assets List – With students create a list of all of the positive and negative things about the school.
- Walkabout – Take a walk around the school recording observations of what is seen, heard, etc.
- Media Search – Scan newspapers, listen to radio or TV reports for information about the school.
- Map – Have students make a map including points of interest and concern, also indicate the locations of important resources.
- Survey – Create, conduct, and share the results of a variety of surveys that will help students gain a better understanding of the issues.
- Interview – Interview various members of the school community to determine what they feel are the needs and assets of the schools.
Walkabout
Take a walk around the school recording observations of what is seen, heard, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Positive Things About Your School)</td>
<td>(Things At Your School That Could Be Improved)</td>
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## Focus Groups & Interviews

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Interview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>Wide cross-section of people</td>
<td>Group discussion</td>
<td>One-on-one conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Questions</strong></td>
<td>Multiple choice, Ratings, Rankings, Open-ended</td>
<td>10 - 15 open-ended questions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td>Optional: Name, age, race/ethnicity, contact information</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recording Information</strong></td>
<td>Survey Instrument</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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Planning and Preparation

1. Determine the nature of the service to be provided.
2. Identify academic, civic, and other learning goals.
3. Develop an action plan.
4. Engage in reflection activities.
5. Develop and conduct assessment.
6. Develop a plan to assess student learning.
Getting Organized

- Coordinator; youth/adult planning team
- Scope & goals (service, asset building, learning)
- Review and refine listening tools
- Identify & engage “key informants”
- Tasks and timelines
- Engage adult supporters and parents
- Communicate the plan
Types of Action

**Direct Service**
Activities that require students to establish personal contact with the people in need.

**Indirect Service**
Activities that commonly take place at the school site, channeling resources to the area of need rather than working directly with those in need of the service.

**Advocacy**
Requires students to lend their voices and talents to help eliminate the causes of a specific problem (e.g., making a presentation to the city council or school board about a particular need and advocating for a solution).
Reflection

1. Continuous - Reflection must be done before, during and after the service learning experience in a variety of ways.

2. Connected - Reflection must connect curriculum with people.

3. Contextual - Reflection links service learning to the intellectual and academic pursuits of students.

4. Challenging: Reflection challenges students to change their perspectives and resolve conflict.

5. Coached: Students need intellectual and emotional support to think in new ways and to develop alternative explanations to their experiences.
## Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What?</strong></th>
<th><strong>So What?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Now What?</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Debrief</td>
<td>• Surfacing passions, links</td>
<td>• Focusing on priorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Summarize notes</td>
<td>• Finding common ground</td>
<td>• Next steps</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Commitments</td>
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</table>
Demonstration & Celebration

- Reinforcing contributions, growth, commitments
  - Individual check-in
  - Public and private acknowledgement
  - Follow-up learning
- Building broader commitment
- Engaging the community for partnership
- Positioning youth-led action in the public
- Assessing the project for future improvement
What Can Students Do?

- Look at the issues identified by the investigations.
- Choose one issue they would like to focus on.
- What are the possible strategies that can address this issue?
- What strategy can the students employ?
Making a Plan

What can students do to address this issue?
Making a Plan

As they solve this problem, what can they learn at the same time? (academic skills, leadership, workplace skills, etc.)
Making a Plan

What resources can be tapped for the next step?

- People
- Organizations
- Materials
- Training
- Funding
Dropout Prevention Resources

- Dropout Prevention Web Resources
- 40 Developmental Assets
- RICCO
- Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention
Service-Learning Resources

- Standards for High Quality Service-Learning
- Preparation for Service-Learning Worksheet for Teachers
- School Needs Assessment Activities
- Walkabout Worksheet for Students
Students Serving Students

- You are ready to begin!
- Thanks to all of you for helping all our youth succeed.
- You CAN make a difference!

www.dropoutprevention.org