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TEACHERS GUIDE TO **SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS**

Service-learning is a perfect way for students to engage in altruism. Students learn by doing, which creates an opportunity to be involved in their surrounding communities and make a difference.

This guide provides teachers with tips and strategies to use when planning service-learning projects with their students.

In this guide, the first section will cover the basics of service-learning, what it means, why it's essential, and how it benefits both the student and the community partner. The second part will provide interactive activities for your class as they plan their service-learning project. And finally, the third section will offer helpful resources for both teachers and students.

Service Learning 101

What is Service-Learning?
Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that combines classroom instruction with community service. It connects critical thinking skills with real-world problems to deepen student learning and promote civic responsibility.

Why is Service-Learning Important?
Service-learning is essential to learners as it provides students with an opportunity to learn about themselves and their world.
It also allows students to develop essential skills for success in college and beyond, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and leadership.

How does Service-Learning Benefit Students?
There are many benefits to service-learning for students. It provides the opportunity to:

- Develop an appreciation of diversity and global awareness.

- Build connections between home, school, and community.

- Explore career options in a practical setting by developing valuable skills such as teamwork and leadership.

- Practice 21st century literacy skills such as collaboration and communication.

- Develop knowledge, attitudes, and values that promote social justice.

Things to Consider While Creating a Service-Learning Project
Some of the things you should consider when designing a service-learning project include:

- The project should be relevant to the student's curriculum.

- The project should be designed in such a way that it allows students to apply what they have learned in the classroom.

- The project should be structured to allow students to reflect on their experiences.

When designing a service-learning project, it is crucial to consider the age and grade level of the students. Projects that are complicated or too easy can be frustrating for students.

Choosing a project relevant to the student's interests and concerns is also essential. Depending on the students' abilities, you can select a project that focuses on developing a particular skill.

Projects also vary in terms of their length and intensity. Some service-learning projects take place over a few weeks, while others may take months to complete.

Additionally, some service-learning projects are self-contained experiences where students learn about an issue and apply their learning through a concrete project. Other service-learning projects aim to teach students about social problems and provide opportunities to change their community.

If you plan to implement service-learning in your classroom or school, you can do some easy activities with your students beforehand to prepare them for the experience.

The following are a few interactive activities that will help your students learn about the community they will be working with, develop project ideas, and practice essential skills such as communication and teamwork.

Community Mapping
Have your students map out their community on a large piece of paper or poster board. Ask them to identify different areas in their community, such as businesses, schools, parks, and residential areas. Once they have mapped out their community, ask them to identify any problems or needs that they see in their neighborhood. This task can be anything from a lack of green space to a shortage of affordable housing.

Problem Identification
Once your students have identified some problems in their community, have them work together to develop solutions. You can allow them to do this in class or small groups.

Have each group present their solutions to the rest of the class, and then develop a list of common themes.

Community Interviews
Consider having your students interview people from different areas of their community.

This could even be done on Zoom or other video call platforms to help the students develop video conferencing skills. Ask them to talk to business owners, employees, teachers, students from local schools, youth leaders in the community, or anyone else who can provide insight into an identified problem.

Have them ask open-ended questions such as "What do you see as some of the challenges facing our neighborhood?"

Community Service Project Brainstorming
Once your students have interviewed members of their community, it is time to get creative. Have them brainstorm ideas for their service-learning project on large sheets of paper that they will later share with the community partner. The more ideas they have, the better!

Community Service Project Planning
If your students came up with a list of potential projects from their previous activity, then it is time to start planning!

Assign each group a different idea and have them develop a plan for bringing their community partner on board, what materials they need to complete the project, potential obstacles that could arise during implementation, etc.

Project Implementation
Now it is time to get started! Have each group present their projects in front of the class once they are ready for feedback. Make sure to celebrate everyone's successes along the way.

Evaluation and Reflection
Once your service-learning project is complete, have your students reflect on their experience. What went well? What didn't go as planned? How did they feel about working on a project that was meaningful to them and their community? What skills did they learn? What did they take away from this experience that will help them in the future?

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- Tutoring or mentoring students who are struggling in their academics
- Collecting food or clothes for the needy
- Raising funds for a good cause
- Volunteering in a kitchen or homeless shelter
- Helping elderly citizens with their chores
- Beautifying public places by painting murals or planting trees and flowers
- Educating people about health and hygiene
- Promoting recycling and waste reduction practices
- Teaching a new skill to economically challenged people

Final Thoughts

In this article, we have provided an overview of service-learning projects and a few examples.

Before you begin creating your service-learning project, make sure to consider the benefits of service-learning projects. Then, identify relevant real-world issues that you feel are important to address.

Finally, make sure to structure your project in a way that promotes student reflection and learning. If you're in need of a tool that can help capture the volunteer data, Altruize would appreciate an opportunity to talk about your school's specific goals. Altruize has many features that allow you and your students to focus on the service learning experience and eliminate that frustration of data collection and entry.

Reduce Time, Cost & Stress
- No more manually collecting volunteer activities
- No more entering volunteer activities into a spreadsheet
- No more waiting two weeks before graduation to find out who still needs volunteer hours

Accurate Reporting
- Easy-to-use, secure cloud-based dashboard
- Multi-level verification process (if needed)
- Stand out in the community as a Service Leader with aggregate student reports

College and Career Readiness
- Volunteer reflection journal - Perfect for writing those essays and/or discovering a career path
- "Skill Development" section - Highlights students' gained experience
- Goal setting and gamification - Soft skills development
- Student creates own reports for University/College/Job applications - 61% of admissions officials use volunteer activity as a "tie-breaker" and individuals who volunteer have a 27% higher chance of being hired

Building Empathy for a Lifetime

Students graduate...what's next? They build upon the school's foundation of social responsibility. They use the Altruize app to set goals and continue their community service efforts...
So they can tell a BETTER story, live a BETTER life.

Schedule a DEMO to see how Altruize can decrease your stress and increase your students' success!
https://meetings.hubspot.com/jesse-rozmarynowski

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