

POTENTIAL MODELS FOR THE SERVICE COMPONENT

Thus far this month in the Teacher's Corner, students have observed needs in their community, chosen an area of focus for a service-learning project, and participated in a seminar to learn more about their community issue. This week's installment will present possible types of projects for the community-service portion of the service-learning project.

Often when one hears the term *service learning*, thoughts come to mind of hands-on volunteer work and helping others, usually at a location away from school. While this is a possibility for the service portion of a service-learning project, it is certainly not the only way. It is important to note that there are many opportunities to have an impact in the community without having to leave your school's campus.

Below are several different suggestions for actions students can take as a way of serving their communities. The most appropriate model for your service will depend on what issue your class has chosen, how much time you have to offer, whether there are established agencies in your community, and what actions will have the most impact. When designing this part of the project, it is recommended that you also consider the ideas about action steps that students wrote in their reflections after last week's Guided Seminar activity.

VOLUNTEERING TIME WITH A LOCAL AGENCY

One model for a service-learning project is to volunteer with an existing agency or non-government organization (NGO) that is working in the focus area that your class has chosen. How often your students volunteer and for how long will depend on the issue being addressed. For instance, suppose your class voted to focus on early childhood literacy, and they find a local NGO that provides educational activities or services for young children. If your students wanted to work directly with the children in the program, it would likely be more beneficial for them to volunteer twice a week for an hour or two each time, rather than to visit the agency just once for six hours. Or suppose your students chose the focus area of adequate housing, and they find a

local agency that provides free home repairs or that builds affordable houses. In this case, it may be better for the class to spend a whole day or two working on a single project with that agency rather than to spread out the time over several weeks or months.

If you and your students cannot travel to the community organization to volunteer your time, there may be other ways to get involved. Many agencies can use assistance with creating brochures, flyers, or educational materials. You can contact the organization to ask about projects your students may be able to complete at your school. Additional ideas about fundraising or collecting materials to benefit a community organization are shared under *Fundraising and Collecting Items* below.

ADVOCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Sometimes students can be of service to people affected by an issue in the community by simply letting others know about the problem. Some people may not even realize that the problem exists because the issue does not directly affect them. There are different ways that students can raise awareness about the community need they have chosen.

Letter-Writing Campaigns

Students can write letters to newspapers, elected officials, or even celebrities about the issues in their community. If students choose to write letters, be sure that they include facts and information about how members of the community are being affected by the issue. Letters asking for people to take a specific action, such as voting for or against legislation or donating funds to a project, are very persuasive.

Often, people advocating for an issue or cause will create a form letter that others can easily sign and send to their government representatives. A form letter may not work for every situation, but if it is something that is appropriate for your students' service-learning project, they might consider doing so.

Presentations or Speeches

To raise awareness about a community issue, students may want to give presentations or speeches to others about the issue. This type of presentation is effective when students share facts about the issue, discuss how it is affecting members of the community, and offer ways for the audience to take action or get involved. One way for students to gather necessary information is to interview professionals in fields related to the issue or to interview people affected by the issue. Students can share their presentations with community groups, government officials, or even other students and teachers at your school. Students can request time to visit and present at community meetings, or ask teachers for time to come to their classrooms to share information during the school day.

Infographics and Posters

If your students are creative, they can increase awareness about their community issue by making attention-grabbing visuals such as infographics and posters.

Infographics have become a very popular way to communicate facts, figures, and key information about different topics. An excellent free resource that students can use to create infographics is www.canva.com. More information about what to include in infographics and how to get started can be found in [this webinar](#) from American English. Infographics can be used in presentations and shared on social media.

Posters are another excellent way for students to share important information about their community issue with others. The information included can be similar to that of an infographic. Students can share their posters with others by using them in presentations or putting them up around your school. Another option would be to hold a poster session where students stand near their posters and share information about the community issue with others walking around the room. Students, administrators, teachers, community groups, and government officials can all be invited to attend a poster session.

FUNDRAISING OR COLLECTING ITEMS

If financial support would benefit the community issue your students have chosen, they may choose to organize one or more fundraisers. There are many ways to do this, some that require a bit of financial investment up front and some that do not. It is always important to communicate the purpose of the fundraiser to the audience, which can be done through presentations, posters, or any other ways your students come up with. Here are some ideas for simple fundraising activities:

- Food or beverage sales: Set up a table at lunch or break times at school to sell snacks, coffee, tea, juice, etc.
- Candy-grams: Your class can collect names, information, and money from students who want to send a candy-gram (a nice note and a piece of candy) to a friend at school. They then deliver the candy-grams on a certain date.
- Change drive: Share information about the issue and the need for money, and ask every class in the school to collect spare change for a certain period of time. Offer a small reward, such as an ice cream party, for the class that raises the most money.
- School dance/event: Plan a dance or other event that interests students at your school and charge admission.

Sometimes certain items are needed to help members of the community. In this situation, students can share information about their community issue and the need for these items and involve the whole school or other community members in collecting these items. Returning to the earlier example of early childhood literacy, students could organize a book drive to collect books for an organization that serves young children. Depending on the need, students can collect clothing, blankets, toiletry items, and more to benefit those affected by the issue.

There are many factors to think about when deciding what the service component of a service-learning project could be. It is important to consider the amount of time needed, students' interests and abilities, whether your class can travel, and the area of focus. Most importantly,



make sure that the activity will benefit both your class and the community. In the final installment of the Teacher's Corner this month, we will examine ways for students to reflect on the service-learning project and share the impact with others.