

PROJECT IGNITION NEWSLETTER: TEACHER NOTES: 1



What is Service Learning?

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 defines service-learning as:

- A (teaching) method whereby students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- Coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service programs, and with the community;
- Helping to foster civic responsibility;
- Integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
- Providing structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience.



Benefits of Service-Learning

- Provides quality education
- Increases the relevancy of education to students living in the real world
- Enhances personalized education
- Teaches positive values, leadership, citizenship, and personal responsibility
- Empowers students as learners, teachers, achievers, and leaders
- Invites students to become members of their own community

Goal of Service Learning

The goal is to blend service and learning so that the service reinforces, improves, and strengthens the learning, and the learning reinforces, improves, and strengthens the service.

The pedagogy of service-learning, at its best, produces a greater impact than either could have produced separately. (National and Community Trust Act, 1993)

What makes a Service Learning Project meaningful and effective?

From the Maryland Service Learning Guidelines

High quality experiences meet Maryland's Seven Best Practices for Service-Learning. These projects allow students and teachers to:



1. Meet a recognized need in the community—(Teen Driving Safety)

Students work to identify pressing community needs and devise and participate in projects that address those needs. The Corporation for National Service categorizes community needs as related to health, education, environment or public safety. Students might engage in direct, indirect or advocacy projects.

2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning—(Our Project Ignition activities cross a number of academic areas.)

Service-learning provides an opportunity for classroom knowledge to be applied and tested in real-life settings. Service-learning projects should meet existing course outcomes in an experiential manner. Engaging students in high quality service-learning experiences develops skills such as those assessed through State and Private School Testing and the future High School Assessments.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience—(Student complete reflections on the consequences and outcomes of their Project Ignition Activities).

Through reflection activities in the form of discussions, journaling, performing, writing, etc., students come to more fully understand the connection of their schoolwork to the service work performed. Reflection helps students explore the cycle of: What & Why? So What? Now What?

4. Develop student responsibility—(Student lead and direct Activities that make a difference in our school and

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community.)

High quality service-learning allows students to take leadership and ownership over the projects performed. Students learn important school, work, and life skills such as working as a team, organizing and scheduling activities, and problem solving when given increased responsibility for the success of projects.

5. Establish community partnerships—(We have partnerships with public and private foundations, businesses, and agencies that support our Efforts in Project Ignition and Service Learning)

Service-learning experiences provide opportunities for students to learn about their communities, explore career possibilities, and work with diverse groups of individuals. Quality projects involve community organizations as partners.



6. Plan ahead for service-learning—Since what we do has an ongoing effect, the students have to work with agencies and teachers to make sure that they sustain their project. It does not just happen in the Fall but is a

year round activity that support our mission)

As with all effective instruction an action plan must be created which features specific objectives to be achieved through the activity. Service-learning requires teachers, students, and community organizations to carefully plan out projects and work collaboratively.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service—(Service is a Life long skill. IF we get them involved today, we make an impact on them in the future. We have guest speakers, field trips and other activities that support the learning process. Our students had to do research to find the data to support their play and activities. This is ongoing)

To effectively engage in a project, students must understand the issue they will be addressing. As part of preparing to engage in service-learning, students are often required to conduct research, read articles, and listen to guest speakers. Students also need to learn project specific skills, as well as explore issues related to citizenship and civic engagement. If you would like to evaluate the effectiveness of a service-learning project you current offer or engage in, the following evaluation tool is useful.

What you as teachers and club moderators can do to help—

1. Assign your students a project that combines your subject area and Teen Driving Safety. Some of our ideas are—Ethics—an assignment on surveying the ethics of responsible driving and measuring attitudes; Physics: the dynamics of a crash and developing some statistics that you can share with the students—The Catapult Exercise; Biology: A project that educates on the dangers of alcohol while driving; Literature: this newsletter or student information letters

2. Become a Project Ignition Mentor—Help with the language translations, bike rodeo, dramatic production, website, and other activities.

3. Encourage your students to take the message of the students seriously. Incorporate Driving safety and good decision-making into your curriculum.

