Service-Learning and Social Responsibility

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This project was designed to study the effect of service-learning on raising the level of social responsibility in grade six students. It provides a meaningful link between the school and the community. It develops lifelong skills. The activities are rigorous, engaging and relevant. The project is all about developing relationships and developing capable citizens through the learning environment.
Twenty-four grade six students designed and conducted service-learning projects. Each student designed one project and every student participated in every project. Students used the BC Performance Standard for Social Responsibility rubric for self-assessment to guide their personal reflections before and after participating in projects. They each kept a journal of the projects that included their personal reflections and photographs.
The Project:
Developing social awareness through service learning.

• Belonging
• Mastery
• Independence
• Generosity
Success looks like:

• Teachers share research on the benefits of service-learning for students
• Teachers and students collaborate to brainstorm appropriate service projects
• Projects include local, national and international services
• Both students and staff are involved in service learning
• Both students and staff journal/reflect about their service learning
• Social responsibility rubric guides reflections
• Students design and participate in service learning projects
Focus on Formative Assessment Strategies

The class set clear goals and discussed them in depth and often. The goals are the B.C. Social Responsibility Performance Standards. Each project also had specific goals which were written and presented by each of the students on each project that they designed. All students participated in each service-learning project. Student journals and reflections were based on the standards. Students reflected before and after each project. As well, the group reflected together. This provided thoughtful feedback and the students were learning/teaching resources for each other. Students owned their learning by designing and participating in the projects. Reflections were based upon the questions: Where am I? Where am I going? How can I get there? Goals were continually set and revisited.
Rationale for the project
Based on personal values and personal strengths

• Deep seated belief in the value of public service.
• Familiarity with the values and goals on the B.C. Performance Standards of Social Responsibility.
• Awareness of how service-learning creates a solid connection between the curriculum and the community.
• Service-learning requires and develops the values or guidelines.
• It takes a community to raise a child, and service-learning provides a deep awareness of our social responsibility to do that.
Reflections, Advice

• Educators use service-learning projects to enhance and extend social responsibility for all students.
• Students plan the service-learning projects under careful guidance to enhance ownership and to improve engagement.
• Service-learning projects should be accompanied by reflective journaling before and after each project.
• Individual and group journaling are incorporated to provide reflection time for grade six students.
• Students should have the opportunity to be fully engaged in all aspects of the service-learning process.
• The rubric should be very familiar before beginning the study.

• Teach journaling skills before beginning.
• Teach rubric skills before beginning.

Throughout the power point, this symbol indicates a specific service-learning project.
Guiding Values & Strengths
BELONGING, MASTERY, INDEPENDENCE, GENEROSITY

- Relationships
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Environmental awareness
- Challenging problems
- Meaningful work
- Physical challenge
- Integrity
- Knowledge
- Friendships
- Family
- Self-respect
- Spirituality
- Competence
- Fun

Students plan and participate in art, story-telling, puppet shows and outdoor play at the local pre-school and day care.
Model the Way

- Do some research on the staff
- Storytell at staff meetings
- Share service projects completed in the past
- Tell Stepping Stones project commitment
- Invite others to storytell
- Include home, school and community projects

Students buddy up with grade one for trips to the library.
Students ‘get bailed out of jail’ to raise money for the community.
Inspire a Vision

- Bring local guest speakers to share their visions, dreams and plans
- Invite local counselors and providers to talk about community needs
- Brainstorm areas of need in the students, the school and the community

Students plant trees at the new housing complex for seniors.
Students buddy-read with younger grades.
Challenge the Process

• Invite staff to seek solutions to student, school and community needs
• Brainstorm service-learning projects that tie local needs to curriculum goals
• Create a list of suggestions and possibilities to address local needs

Students prepare soil to plant lawn at local seniors’ housing complex.
Special needs students participate in service-learning projects.
Enable Others to Act

• Together as a staff, study the B.C. Performance Standards of social responsibility
• Together as a staff, develop a plan to engage the students. Consider:
  Relevance, Relationships
  Rigor
  Reflection
• Brainstorm the needs in the community, school, world...
• Discuss possible projects
• Decide who might tackle each project
Students tidy fall gardens at Terra Pondera, the local mental health clubhouse.
Encourage the Heart

• Share successes at meetings
• Place project write-ups in school newsletters
• Create a float for a parade to celebrate success
• Invite recipients and volunteers to a picnic
• Invite media to take photos and run a story
• Congratulate successes at assemblies
• Have a bulletin board to post photos of projects
• Have celebrations specific to each project

Students bake Christmas cookies with seniors at the extended care facility.
Students create obstacle course for Strong Start clients.
Possible Roadblocks

- Teachers believe it’s not their job to teach social responsibility
- Teachers don’t have examples of previous service projects to share
- Teachers aren’t interested
- Staff meetings are already overbooked
- Difficult to get guest speakers
- Difficult to work with a community group
- Teachers have other priorities
- Teachers aren’t interested
- Teachers won’t vary from set teaching practices
- Teachers may be too controlling – projects must suit class personality and strengths
- Teachers may resent time and effort away from core subjects
- Lack of money, time, interest, effort, coordinator
Resources

- Professional development time
- Staff meeting time
- Local experts/service providers
- Specific needs per each service project
- Celebration funds

Students participate in chair yoga with seniors at the ended care facility.
Timeline

- One year-to complete class projects
- Staff meeting time in August or September to introduce the plan-2 hours
- Periodic guest speakers as warranted
- Monthly staff meeting updates
- Spring celebration time – as a school community
- Ongoing

Students help biologists collect data at the local salmon hatchery.
Budget

• Specific to each service project
• Dealt with on an individual basis per project
• Mostly unnecessary
• Monetary needs will determine the feasibility of the project

Students decorate gingerbread men and houses with families at Strong Start.
School Plans for the future

I plan to continue providing the opportunity for students to design and participate in service-learning projects to the students in my classes and to use journaling to reflect on their experiences. It is an effective and powerful means of enhancing social responsibility skills which then help to cultivate a positive learning environment. Students who are consciously pursuing the goals of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity help create a culture that inspires collaboration and growth.