



EYE ON POVERTY

A curriculum for planning your service-learning project

Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty

Many of us are lucky enough never to be affected directly by homelessness and poverty, but we are aware that others suffer and struggle to survive without enough of what they need. As students, we can learn about the problems. As concerned citizens, we can become part of the solution.

Service learning is a great way for us to both find solutions and get involved. With service learning, we grow and develop while participating in organized service.

Helping the homeless and poor goes beyond serving food in a shelter. Helping includes identifying the causes of homelessness and poverty, and working on long-term solutions.

There are four main parts to all good service learning projects: Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Celebration. This guide will take you through the steps of planning your own homelessness and poverty service learning project.

students actively volunteering for you



PARC

a service learning and teaching model

Preparation: Identifying and analyzing issues, choosing a project, learning skills needed to perform the project, and outlining the logistics (all the details) of the project.

Action: Performing the service as planned. Be ready for new circumstances that may arise.

Reflection: Enabling us to learn from the service experience. This is how service is tied back to what we learn in our classroom or "real life".

Celebration: It is important for us to realize we have made a difference and we should celebrate our accomplishments.

In Fact...

The homeless youth population is estimated to be 300,000 in the course of a year. In fact, youth make up 3% of the total homeless population.

Emergency shelter needs for families increased 15% between 1997 and 1998.

Living in a median state, a minimum wage worker would have to work 87 hours per week in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment, assuming they paid 30% of their income.
—National Coalition for the Homeless

Domestic violence is a primary cause of homelessness.

—US Conference of Mayors 1998

40% of Americans living in poverty are kids.
—1998 Census

Connecting Service and Curriculum...

English/Language Arts: Assist with literacy or educational needs of the homeless.

Math: Compute the number of people served at local shelters and compare it to the cost of running the shelter.

Social Studies: Study current trends in U.S. policy on hunger/poverty and discuss local laws for shelters.

Science: Do a fasting experiment and discuss your results, and the problems of those who suffer from hunger.

ESL: Students can gain confidence in their literacy skills and increase fluency by communicating with shelter residents.

Business Education: How does homelessness/poverty relate to the job market and business laws?

Economics: Students can assist transitional housing residents in setting up a realistic budget.

Physical Education: Advocate through posters the medical resources available to poor families.

Family Studies: Collect clothing for a variety of age groups or provide child care at a local shelter.

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PREPARATION

It seems like a daunting task, but it isn't. You'd be amazed at how much of the work students can do themselves! That's half the learning—to see how much they can do when they try! The idea behind service learning projects is to have teachers standing by as facilitators while the students teach themselves!

1. What can we Learn and Serve?

- Discuss poverty. Help students understand it is more than a lack of material things.
- Brainstorm problems that arise from poverty.
- Brainstorm possible solutions for your list of problems.
- Have students vote on a project based on your solutions list.
- Find information to educate students on the issue they selected.
- Find a shelter or community agency that would be willing to host the service.

2. Where can we Learn and Serve?

- Call the site you wish to serve, find out if your plan is feasible.
- Determine a mutually convenient time to perform service.
- Visit: It is highly recommended that teachers visit the site before arriving with students.
- Prepare students for what they will see. Dress appropriately

3. How will we get things done?

- Make lists of all tasks which must be completed....ie. communication with the site, supplies, transportation, publicity, permission slips, reflection and celebration committees!
- Assign each task to a separate group or individual.
- Set up your ideal timeline and put deadlines on each task!
- Report back to the group!

Project Possibilities

There are three types of service-learning projects. Each one has a slightly different goal, but they are all important in keeping our communities healthy and vital.

DIRECT SERVICE addresses an issue with hands-on activity. For example:

Celebrate a holiday with a local shelter.

Provide child care for a shelter—playing games.

Assist a soup kitchen with making and serving food.

Make colorful decorations for a shelter (signs, ornaments, pictures, flowers, etc.).

Renovate a low-income neighborhood with painting and repairs.

Sort and package food at a local food bank.

Tutor at a shelter in reading, writing and math.

ACTION

Do your Project... Some tips!

Before Hand:

- Have permission slips and emergency contact phone numbers for all students participating in the service!
- Have an emergency action plan. Students may encounter difficult clients during a direct service project of this nature; make sure they are prepared to deal with it if it arise and that they are comfortable doing so.

At the start of the project:

- Have all participants sign in!
- Explain team tasks to be done.

- Define your ground rules and expectations.
- Introduce site staff and agency contact.

During the project:

- Take pictures!!!! —You'll want them!
- Talk about how your services or your collection of goods could be used by the poor. Converse!

At the close of your project:

- Clean up the area around your site. If you are at an agency's location you want to leave a good impression, so leave it cleaner than you found it!
- Have participants fill out an evaluation of the project.
- Closing = begin your reflection!



INDIRECT SERVICE involves doing a service locally that helps a problem somewhere else. For example:

Collect supplies needed at a shelter such as personal hygiene items and blankets.

Do a food drive to raise awareness and collect food.

At holiday times, create colorful care boxes for shelter residents or low-income families with toys and other goodies

Put on a concert or play as a fundraiser for local shelters and agencies that work with the poor.

ADVOCACY is working toward a lasting solution to a community problem and informing the public about the issue

Write letters to the editor of your local paper advocating for the needs of the homeless.

Write a speech to present at town council meetings and to present to local businesses to ask for donations.

Design posters that raise awareness of the issues of homelessness and poverty.

Design an ad campaign to get local businesses and individuals to donate time or money to a shelter.



REFLECTION

Reflection can be a highly creative and on going process in a project. There are some things that you want to be sure to address in your reflection, as it is the crucial evaluating and learning segment of the service learning model.

Reflection starts on Day One, as students are discussing the problems faced by the homeless and those living in poverty. Record the students' thoughts as part of your project evaluation!

At the end of a project it is very important to reflect on the service itself. Reflection helps student to realize the importance of the service they not only masterminded but carried out! Reflection also introduces students to the important skill of evaluation; this step requires students to objectify

their planning and act on the project.

Finally, reflection allows students to discover for themselves what they have learned in their service process.

Some things to address:

- 1) What did we do?
- 2) How did this project improve the lives of the poor in our community?
- 3) What challenged or surprised me during the project?
- 4) Did others learn anything from us?
- 5) How did this project change the way I think about literacy or community?
- 6) Did we solve a problem?
- 7) Did we make a difference?
- 8) How does this apply to our lives?
- 9) How do you think this project will influence the actions you take in the future?
- 10) What does service mean?

Some Reflection Ideas

- Keep an ongoing service or project journal.
- Create a bulletin board of pictures and student writings about the project.
- Have students write or share about a person or event that touched them during their service.
- Create posters or pamphlets about the importance of helping the poor.
- Write thank-you letters to people who gave donations or helped and tell them how your project went!
- Speculate on where your donated goods went.
- Educate other classes!

CELEBRATION

Wow! We're really making a difference. It's important to recognize the accomplishments of everyone who put time and effort into serving our community. **Always celebrate and give recognition to participants.** The possibilities on how to do this are endless. How would the group like to celebrate? Here are a few suggestions to get the wheels turning:

- Throw a party. ☺ Invite the media. ☺ Give rewards like coupons, free admissions, certificates, buttons, and special awards. ☺ Play games. ☺ Create a bulletin board to show the progress of the project. ☺ Write up your project for local papers. ☺ Invite politicians or local celebrities to do the service with you. ☺ Write thank you notes to individuals who participated. ☺ Publicize youth service in school papers and newsletters. ☺ Videotape or photograph youth in service. ☺ Hold an awards ceremony. ☺ Devote a special page in your yearbook to your service.

Resources for Projects on Poverty

The following agencies are willing to work and share their knowledge with youth project planners.

Alpha Project for the Homeless
(619) 234-3041

Bayside Settlement House
(619) 278-0771

Brother Benno's
(760) 439-1244

Community Housing Program of North
County
(760) 432-6878

Good Samaritan Shelter
(760) 722-3476

Habitat for Humanity
(619) 465-7576

Homeless Advocates of San Diego
(619) 298-9197

Homeless Outreach Program
(619) 233-2801

Homeshare Connection
(619) 584-4357

Housing Rehabilitation
(619) 691-5036

Lutheran Social Services
(619) 229-2232

ReStore (Recycled Home Materials)
(619) 463-0464

Storefront, The
(619) 239-4688

Salvation Army
(619) 239-6221

San Diego City Schools/Learn & Serve
(619) 293-8676

San Diego Food Bank
(619) 523-8811

San Diego Rescue Mission
(619) 234-2109

San Diego Youth & Community Services
(619) 221-8610

San Diego Youth Involvement
St. Vincent de Paul Village
(619) 233-8500

Volunteer San Diego
4699 Murphy Canyon Rd.
(858) 636-4129

Did you know that December 21st is National Homeless Persons Memorial Day? Remember that most donations are received around the holidays, but real people need stuff all year.

Internet Resources

The internet is full of websites that relate to service and/or poverty. Here are those we have found to be the most useful.

AmeriCorps.....www.americorps.org
Center for Youth as Resource.....www.yar.org
Corp. for National Service.....www.nationalservice.org
Do Somethingwww.dosomething.org
Giraffe Project.....www.whidbey.com/giraffe/
Homeless Arts Page.....www.members/tripod.com/SingingBear
Impact Online.....www.impactonline.org
Nat. Coalition for the Homeless.....nch.ari.net
Nat. School-to-Work Learning & Info Center.....www.stw.ed.gov
Volunteer San Diego.....www.volunteersandiego.org
Youth Build, USA.....www.youthbuild.org
Youth Service America.....www.servenet.org
Youth Service California.....www.yscal.org

