DESIGNING AN ACTION PLAN

AGENDA

- Why and How?

- The Parts of the Plan

- Research Methods

Objectives

Students will evaluate the usefulness of an action plan.

Students will explore the parts of an action plan.

Students will discover different methods of doing research in order to complete an action plan.

Materials Needed

- Magazines or newspapers with pictures that students can cut out (Part II)

- Scissors, glue (Part II)

- Poster board (Part II)

- Copies of two or three articles and/or book excerpts related to the students' project topics (Part III)

- One copy of a well-known story or poem (Part III)

Part I   Why and How?

Purpose: Students define and evaluate the usefulness of an action plan.

1. Students define a sports "play" as an action plan.

On the board, have a student athlete or a coach diagram a "play" that could be used during a sports competition. Ask volunteers to explain what they think has been drawn. Elicit the understanding that the diagram is an outline of a play that a team could use during a game. Ensure that students are familiar with this coaching technique, then ask them to explain why they think it might be useful. Help students to understand that diagramming a play provides the players with a plan and a strategy for what actions to take.

2. Students brainstorm analogies to an action plan.

Ask students to brainstorm other situations in which a specific set of instructions or steps can be useful. (Students might respond: directions for getting somewhere, directions for assembling something, a recipe for cooking.) Explain that an action plan and its purpose are similar to what they have mentioned.

3. Students outline the elements of an action plan.

Engage students in a more specific discussion about what makes up an action plan and how an action plan is useful. Elicit the following:

- An action plan spells out what outcome is desired.
- An action plan outlines which resources are available and which need to be acquired for completing the project.
- An action plan outlines a schedule and a time line for completing the project.
- An action plan outlines the steps that must be taken in order to complete the project.

Part II   The Parts of the Plan

Purpose: Students explore the information that should be included in an action plan.

1. Students review the definition of a goal.

Review with students the concept of goal setting, and the definition of a goal as a dream or plan that's measurable and has a time line for completion.

2. Students define the goals of the project.

Invite a volunteer to write the service learning project topic on the board. Ask students to determine if the completion of this project is a realistic, measurable goal. If the goal is not explicit in what the student has written, discuss with students how to make the goal realistic and measurable (e.g., determine how many people will be reached, how much space will be affected, and so on).

3. Students visualize the elements of their project in order to organize their action plan.

Have students form small groups. Provide each group with poster board, magazines, newspapers, scissors, and glue. Write the following on the board: "Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?"

Have each group visualize the completed service learning project, imagining and picturing it in detail. Tell students that as they visualize, they should consider the questions that you have written on the board and create collages depicting the answers to those questions. You may wish to have students annotate their collages with written lists and descriptions.

Invite each group to present and describe the different parts of their collages. Encourage students to organize their notes under the headings of the questions posed (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?). As students present information, ask them questions such as the following to elicit more specific information:

- Who exactly will do that?

- When in the sequence of steps will that happen?

- What needs to happen before then?

When students are unable to answer a question, encourage them to write the question under the appropriate heading and explain that they will need to do some research in order to find the answer.

Remind them to transfer this information to paper or poster board, since they will use it to formally write their action plan.

Part III   Research Methods

Purpose: Students discuss different methods of research.

1. Students discuss the need for research.

Ask students to discuss what they would do if you dropped them off in the middle of a town they had never visited, and told them to find their way home without a map. Elicit from them that just as it's easier to find one's way around an unfamiliar place by using a map to gather information about their location, students are likely to make their service learning project more successful if they gather information about the topic and learn how to successfully complete a project. Guide them to the awareness that research is the best way for them to find useful information.

2. Students discuss primary and secondary resources.

Have students pair up with the classmate they interviewed for the homework assignment mentioned at the start of this lesson. Have each pair team up with one or two other pairs, creating groups of four to six students. Ask each student to take out the article they completed for homework. Invite students to sit in a circle and to pass the articles they wrote to the person on their left, who will read the article. Continue this process until students have read each article in their groups. Encourage students to take notes on the articles if they wish.

Have students take turns being interviewed by their groups about how they spent their last school vacations. Encourage groups to ask questions and engage in detailed discussions about each student's experience.

When all students have been interviewed by their groups, pose the following questions to the entire class:

- After you read the articles on your classmates' experiences, did you feel that you had all of the details on their vacations?

- After interviewing your classmates, did you feel that you had all of the details?

- If I gave you the task of planning a vacation and told you to research what kinds of vacations others had taken, would you read articles about their experiences or speak to them personally?

3. Students consider how to locate primary and secondary resources.

Ask, "If you were looking for information on someone's service learning experience, would you read someone else's account of what happened or speak to someone who was actually there?" Have students explain the reasoning for their answers.

Explain that primary sources are those that provide firsthand information. Secondary sources, such as books, newspapers, and magazines, are those that provide secondhand accounts. Elicit from students that primary sources are the best sources of information and allow the researcher to pose specific questions.

Ask students to identify ways that they might locate a primary source who can tell them about a service learning experience or answer questions about their topic. Write the results of the discussion on the board. (Students might respond: use the phone book to find and contact local community organizations.) Help students to contact local organizations and arrange for a primary source to visit the classroom and participate in a question-and-answer session. Encourage students to consider in advance exactly what information they would like to find and the questions they'd like answered.

Explain to students that while secondary sources provide secondhand accounts of information, they are still very valuable. Ask students where they might locate secondary sources that will provide them with information that they can use for their project. (Students should mention visiting thelibrary or using the internet.)

Arrange a trip to the library so that students can conduct research. You may also discuss opportunities for them to visit the library outside of class time.

4. Students discuss using the internet for research.

Have students identify how and when they should use the internet for research. Ensure that students understand that, like books or newspapers, internet research is considered a secondary source, and should be treated the same way.

Remind students that material published on the internet may have factual errors and/or may be undocumented information. Students should be cautious about the information they find while researching online.

5. Students discuss effective research methods.

Ask students if reading every word of a newspaper every day to find information on their service learning project would be an effective use of their time. Elicit from students that this method is too time-consuming and inefficient.

Explain that there are two strategies that can be used for faster and more effective research:

* Check a resource's table of contents and index to see if it covers the topic you're researching.
* Skim the text, glancing quickly over paragraphs to find those that contain the information you need.

Distribute copies of two or three articles and/or book excerpts related to the students' project topic. Give students five minutes to skim the text for pertinent information. Then, facilitate a discussion of the information they were able to glean during that time.

6. Students recognize the importance of citing their sources.

Tell students that you would like their opinion on a story or poem that you recently wrote. Then, read a short passage from a well-known story or poem aloud. Ask students if they think that your work is good. If they do not challenge you on their own, ask students if they really believe that you are the author of the piece.

When students recognize that you did not write the piece, ask them to share their opinions on what you have done (claimed as yours something written by someone else). Ask students what they would do and what they would think if someone else took credit for their own work.

Explain that if students find information in their research that they would like to note or write down, they need to credit the source they got it from, including the name of the resource, the author's name, the date of publication, and the page on which the information was found. On the board, model the form you would like students to use for citations.

SERVICE LEARNING GUIDE AND CHECKLIST

Choosing a Project

- ☐ Define "service learning" for students.
- ☐ Motivate and inspire students to get involved.
- ☐ Help students choose a project topic.

Creating an Action Plan and Preparing for the Project

- ☐ Define "action plan" and explain why one should be made.
- ☐ Explain what information should be included in the action plan.
- ☐ Familiarize students with different ways to find information on service learning.
- ☐ Organize students' research efforts.
- ☐ Have students sign project contracts.
- ☐ Organize students' work efforts by forming project teams or work groups.
- ☐ Help students write an action plan.
- ☐ Assist students with the creation of a project time line/work flowchart.
- ☐ Have students submit the plan for approval from those who must okay the project.
- ☐ Prepare students to make presentations about the project.
- ☐ Help students refine their action plan, if necessary.
- ☐ Guide students as they follow the steps outlined in their action plan in order to prepare for the project.
- ☐ Explain the importance of and methods for tracking students' progress as they work to complete the project.
- ☐ Explain the concept and importance of having a strong work ethic.
- ☐ Explain special considerations that students may face while working on the project.

Carrying Out the Project

- ☐ Remind students to check and double-check to ensure that they have completed all the work for their project.
- ☐ Help students brainstorm last-minute project issues.
- ☐ Have students walk through the project and create an agenda for the day of the project.
- ☐ Support students as they complete their service learning project.
- ☐ Celebrate.

Self-Assessment and Public Assessment

- ☐ Explain what self-assessment is and why it is useful.
- ☐ Explain what self-assessment should include.
- ☐ Have students complete a self-assessment of their project work.
- ☐ Explain what a public assessment is and why it is useful.
- ☐ Explain what a public assessment should include.
- ☐ Have students complete a public assessment of their work.

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