

# GATHERING INFORMATION AND MAKING THE COMMITMENT

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## AGENDA

- Organizing the Work
- Making a Commitment
- Forming Work Groups

### Objectives

Students will organize their work efforts in order to effectively complete their research.

Students will discuss and create contracts that formalize their commitment to the service learning project.

Students will form work groups and create job descriptions.

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**Part I Organizing the Work**

*Purpose:* Students discuss the importance of working effectively and organize themselves accordingly.

**1. Students explore the importance of organizing their work efforts.**

Tell students that they have two minutes to perform the following tasks:

- Write all the words you can find on the first page of [any book in your classroom] that begin with the letter “B.”
- Count the number of ceiling tiles in this room.
- Get the phone number of the school’s main office.

Stop the activity after two minutes, and ask students the following questions:

- Did you complete the tasks? Why not?
- Do you think you were working as effectively as possible? Were there multiple people doing the same tasks? Do you think that was efficient?
- Is there a better way that you could have organized your work?

Elicit from students that to be effective, a team must organize its efforts so that it can get the most done in the least amount of time. It is important that people aren’t duplicating each other’s work.

**2. Students organize into research groups.**

Ask students to state how they can most effectively do the necessary research for their service learning project. Pose the following options to students:

- The class divides into small groups, one for each method of research. Each group is responsible for locating the same information, but each will use a different research method.
- The class divides into small groups. Each group concentrates on different portions of the information needed, using all of the research methods at its disposal.
- Individuals choose a particular research method. Each person is responsible for researching all of the information needed, using the method of research they chose.

Help students divide their research tasks according to one of the above options, or others that the class has identified.

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## Part II Making a Commitment

Purpose: Students create contracts formalizing their commitment to the service learning project.

### 1. Students explore the usefulness of a contract.

Ask students why contracts with professional athletic teams are mentioned so often in the news. Students will likely offer what they know about individual NBA players and their contract negotiations, and may offer similar data about football and baseball players who have negotiated huge salaries. Some students may comment on seasons that began late because the teams could not negotiate their contracts.

Ask the class why contract talks are so important to athletes. Help students to recognize that contracts are created to protect two parties when people do business together. It is imperative that a contract makes clear the terms and conditions of the agreement so that everyone knows what is expected of them. Remind students that it is important to read a contract carefully, including the fine print, before one signs such an agreement.

### 2. Students recognize what is expected of them during the project.

Ask students to recall the definition of “service learning project.” (Students should mention: a project that provides a service to the community and is carried out by participants who are practicing a set of skills they have learned.)

Reinforce students’ understanding that a service learning project has reciprocal benefits for its participants: those creating the project get the benefit of learning and practicing a set of skills, and a segment of the community receives a service that’s needed. In other words, there will be people expecting to receive a service that they have been promised, and it’s up to the project participants to keep that commitment.

### 3. Students create contracts.

Have students work in small groups to consider what information should be outlined in their contracts. Ask students to consider the following:

- Time commitment
- Completing assigned tasks on time
- Communication and conflict resolution
- Perseverance

Work as a class to create a standard contract that each student will sign, or assign students the task of writing their own contracts. Remind students to draw up their contracts neatly and professionally, just as they would do in a business situation.

#### **4. Contracts are amended, signed, and filed.**

Have students submit contracts to you for approval. If the contracts are complete and acceptable, meet with each student to complete a contract. You should each sign the contract, along with one or two witnesses.

If you feel that a contract is missing an important element, propose an amendment and discuss it with students.

When each student has completed and signed a contract, make a photocopy for the student and file the original in a safe place.

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### **Part III Forming Work Groups**

Purpose: Students will organize the work to be completed for their service learning project.

#### **1. Students review the need to organize work.**

Ask students to recount the reasons they organized their research tasks. (Students should respond: good organization leads to effective work, helps avoid repetition of work, and allows the most work to be completed in the least amount of time.)

Explain to students that just as they organized their research in order to complete it effectively, they'll need to organize their work to prepare for and execute the project.

#### **2. Students determine what groups are needed.**

Have students brainstorm, based on their research and their work on their action plans, a list of the different tasks that their project will require. Write responses on the board, and label them with the title "Project Tasks."

#### **3. Students are assigned to work groups.**

Explain that you will be assigning students to the groups in which you would like them to work. There are several methods of assigning students to groups. You might randomly assign students to groups (e.g., by grouping students with the same last initial or with birthdays that fall in the same month, by randomly assigning numbers to students). Alternatively, you may ask students to write on a piece of paper the three project tasks that they would most like to work on, and then assign as many students as possible to the group focusing on their first choices.

#### **4. Students create job descriptions.**

Facilitate a discussion with the class about what kinds of jobs may be available in each work group (e.g., group leader, record keeper, reporter). Consider jobs that may be specific to your students' project. Have each work group create job descriptions for each position. Encourage students to use bullet points in their descriptions.

Have each group report back to the class on the job descriptions they created. Help each group to reach a general agreement on the contents of its descriptions.

### **5. Students choose jobs.**

Have students choose jobs within their work groups. Tell students that they may discuss within their groups the positions that each person should have. They may also vote on the job that each group member should do. Remind students that they identified their learning styles in *Module Six: Skills for School and Beyond* and their goals in *Module Three: Setting and Achieving Goals*. Tell them to use this information to choose appropriate jobs.

Have students write their job titles and submit photocopies to you for record-keeping purposes.

# SAMPLE CONTRACT

I, (student's name), as a member of (educator's name and subject) class, hereby state my commitment to the service learning project that our class is going to execute. As part of the project team, I agree to the following:

- Come to class on time in order to maximize our work time on the project.
- Treat the project and all work involved seriously.
- Complete tasks on time and to the best of my ability.
- Keep all project commitments.
- Continue working on the project until it is completed, or until the team agrees that the work is done.

Signed on \_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Educator's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness' signature