

PART IV

DEMONSTRATING THE SKILLS

SERVICE LEARNING HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

AGENDA

- About Service Learning
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- Scheduling
- Organizing the Work
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- Planning—A Guide and Checklist

About Service Learning

Motivated young people who have been prepared for life in the world beyond school are most likely to succeed when they begin their first jobs or start college. The key to this preparedness is ensuring that they learn the skills necessary for success in a context that is relevant to them. Providing such an experience while they are in school can be a challenge.

A service learning project is an opportunity to address this challenge. Students put their life skills into practice as they work to fulfill a goal that has relevance and meaning to them. Neither the size nor the scope of the service learning project is critical to its worth—rather, it is the dedication and commitment that students make to fulfilling the project's goals that make it successful. The opportunities in a service learning project for students to apply and practice their communication, time management, goal setting, and decision making skills are of paramount importance.

Many experts consider adolescence to be the ideal time to foster the desire to help others. During adolescence, young people tend to be idealistic and think about ways to make a difference in the world. Developing and carrying out a service learning project satisfies many needs, including the need to belong, the need to be recognized, the need for diverse experiences with clear boundaries and structure, and the need for self-exploration. Students who participate in service learning projects are impacting the world in which they live in a manner of their own choosing. These students experience the powerful feelings of connectedness and satisfaction that come from working with others to fill a need in their communities.

Organizing a class of adolescents into a goal-oriented, detail-focused project team may seem like a daunting task. This module provides a comprehensive plan for developing a successful service learning project. It outlines the steps, lists the materials and tools, and offers suggestions and resources that will help you engage your students in a meaningful project.

We suggest that you read the entire module and all the lessons before you start this project in your classroom. Do some preliminary planning. Discuss what you have read and what you plan to do with others in your school. By doing these things, you will give yourself the firm foundation you need to launch your service learning project.

Service Learning: A Closer Look

Defining “Service Learning”

Service learning is an educational process through which students learn by participating in a project that meets a need in their communities. It should be integrated into and enhanced by specific academic courses within your school's curriculum. In a service learning project, academic skills are applied to meet a community need. “Service” and “learning” are complementary—the service aspect makes the learning relevant to students' lives and increases student motivation.

Service Learning vs. Community Service

Many students equate service learning with community service. The commonalities between the two start and end with the word “service.” The major distinction between the two is that service learning is facilitated by a teacher and carried out by students who are actively learning; the learning and the service are equally important. Community service is carried out by a group of people who are contributing to the improvement of their surroundings. Clarifying the two terms for your students will allow them to gain an appreciation for service learning and to recognize how this project will allow them to apply the skills they are learning in school.

The Benefits of Service Learning

Students, schools, and communities all benefit from service learning projects. The table on page 3 lists a few of those benefits. Throughout the service learning experience, you and your students will discover many more benefits than those listed.

Scheduling

A service learning project is completed through a three-step process:

1. Planning and preparation
2. Action
3. Reflection

It is a simple design that’s fairly easy to execute, particularly if you choose the method of scheduling that works best for you and your students. Two scheduling possibilities are outlined below.

Weaving a Service Learning Project into the Overcoming Obstacles Curriculum

The service learning project is designed to integrate with the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum. The project enables students to apply and demonstrate the skills taught in the various modules and lessons. In this way, Overcoming Obstacles becomes a project based curriculum in which the skills taught are immediately applied to an experience outside of school, resulting in more effective learning, a better understanding, and an internalization of the skills.

In weaving the service learning project into the course, it is preferable that the project’s topic be identified early. This requires a certain degree of initial interest and commitment from your students. Some classes become a cohesive group from the onset, and the necessary level of commitment naturally results. In other cases, it takes more time. Don’t worry and don’t force it—if you’re weaving the service learning project into the curriculum, your commitment, momentum, and enthusiasm will carry you through until the group becomes cohesive and develops interest in the project.

BENEFITS OF A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

Students

- Students form or strengthen connections to their communities.
- Students learn tolerance by working with different people, organizations, or causes.
- Students practice teamwork by joining efforts with others to create a positive impact on their communities.
- Students apply their academic knowledge and skills to the project; these skills become increasingly relevant to their lives, making school more exciting.

Community

- The community develops a sense of pride in students involved in the project.
- Community members, who may not have the opportunity otherwise, experience positive interaction with young people.
- The community sees that the school uses resources effectively.

Schools

- When a school supports the efforts of the community, it will experience an improvement in community relations.
- Service learning empowers and motivates students to make a positive impact in their schools.
- Teachers who strive to make education relevant to students' lives and assist them in positively impacting their communities foster a better rapport with their students.

Concluding the Overcoming Obstacles Curriculum with a Service Learning Project

The service learning project complements the Overcoming Obstacles curriculum, as students must apply the skills they've learned during the course. This scheduling method can be useful if your students need a more substantial amount of time to develop a group identity or to become comfortable with the Overcoming Obstacles classroom environment.

The Bottom Line in Scheduling

Whether your class undertakes the service learning project simultaneously with or at the conclusion of the course, the steps of the process outlined throughout this module are the same. Choose the schedule that allows your students to benefit the most from the service learning experience.

Organizing the Work

Just as you have some flexibility in scheduling the project, there are options for organizing students to carry out the work. Consider your students as individuals and as a group, and choose the method of organization that works best for your class.

Whole-Class Project

Enlisting the entire class to work on one big project can foster a strong sense of teamwork and commitment in a classroom. Whole-class projects may be larger in scope than projects in which students work individually or in small groups.

The most effective way to organize a whole-class project is to encourage students to form small groups, each of which is responsible for one aspect of the project. This encourages interaction between students who may not normally work together without causing them to feel that they are being separated from their friends. Many teachers find it easier to track the details for one big project than for a variety of individual or small-group projects.

Whole-class projects have a way of internally addressing the issue of individual responsibility. While each small group is responsible for one aspect of the project, each student is accountable to the larger group, which is depending on the completion of the smaller tasks. This helps to keep commitment and interest high even when students are encountering obstacles. The tracking sheet introduced in this section demonstrates the “paper trail” that each student will create in order to detail their work. This system of documentation allows students to assume appropriate responsibility for the completion of the project.

Small-Group or Partner Projects

Encouraging partners or small groups of students to work on different projects is an excellent way to address differing student interests. If students cannot agree on a whole-class project, small-group projects can mean the difference between commitment and resentment.

However, small-group projects usually necessitate limiting the scope of each one. Tracking the progress of many small-group projects can be difficult for the teacher because more projects mean more details. It is also important to consider that small-group projects will not generate a sense of teamwork within the whole class.

On the other hand, strong facilitation and thorough preparation can result in groups that compare notes and work collaboratively to help one another address issues and pitfalls as they arise.

Individual Projects

Individual student projects may arise out of a student's journal writings or meetings with a teacher in which the student expresses a commitment to a particular project topic. An individual project can be especially empowering for students who feel that one person can't make a difference. It can foster an increased sense of responsibility and commitment to a goal.

The drawbacks of individual projects are essentially the same as those outlined for small-group projects: limited scope and limited opportunities to practice teamwork skills. While this can actually make it easier for you to assess the projects, tracking the details may be difficult.

Time and Resource Management—The Paper Trail

Setting up record-keeping systems before the planning stages begin is crucial. In a process that has many steps, having good records of what's been done, by whom, and when will help you and your students to feel more in control and more relaxed.

Included in this module are activity sheets that you can use to create your "paper trail." Descriptions of each are below.

The Contract

Formalizing students' participation in the project with a written contract is a proactive way to ensure that they will be seriously engaged in the process. While the project should be fun and interesting, it is also a serious undertaking. A service learning project is reciprocal, meaning that people are expecting the students to follow through on the service that they've agreed to provide. In that respect, it's like a job (a parallel you may wish to highlight); when people agree to provide a service, they often formalize that agreement with a written contract.

A sample contract is provided in this module, but the contract that you use must be pertinent to your students' projects. One way to ensure relevance is to guide students to write their own contracts. Most importantly, the contract should state the students' agreement to undertake the project seriously, to meet commitments fully and on time, and to see the project through to its completion. Contracts should be signed by students, by you, and by another student acting as a "witness." File one copy of the signed contract and give another copy to the student who signed it.

Time Management

A blank tracking sheet is included with this module. This sheet will allow you and your students to stay organized, keep track of the work that's been done and that needs to be done, and adhere to a schedule. In addition, this tracking sheet will help students to practice crucial time-management skills, such as keeping a personal schedule and accounting for their work. The sheet should also help you to easily evaluate your students' work throughout the process instead of assessing them only at the project's completion. After all, the process is as important as the result—during the planning of the project, students must regularly demonstrate the life and job skills that they've learned throughout the Overcoming Obstacles lessons.

There are several options that exist for tracking students' progress. Project journals may be used, for example. Weekly progress reports can also be used in conjunction with the tracking sheet; the reports may also eliminate the need for the sheet. Whether you choose to use a tracking sheet or not, students should be reminded of how to create and use a to-do list in order to complete tasks.

Planning—A Guide and Checklist

The remainder of this module details the steps to facilitating a service learning project. It includes lessons that you can use to help your students complete these steps. It also includes activity sheets that you can copy and distribute to aid students with completing the project.

As mentioned previously, the goal of this module is to provide you with a step-by-step guide to navigating the service learning project process. We have created a checklist/guide that corresponds to each step outlined in the module. Although it does not offer the detail and resources that you'll find within the module, it is a useful tool for charting your class's progress and judging where you are—and where you are headed next—in the service learning process. We've designed the checklist so that it can be photocopied and slipped into your plan book or hung on a bulletin board near your desk.

GETTING STARTED

AGENDA

- Choosing a Topic
- Project Examples
- Methods for Eliciting Student-Generated Topics
- Choosing a Project Topic
- Establishing Groups

Choosing a Topic

It is crucial for students to feel that the project is relevant to them. This fact should determine how the class is organized for the project and how the project topic is chosen. Be sure to consult school and district policies regarding projects, field trips, and student service activities—they may be relevant to the feasibility of certain projects.

This section describes methods for choosing a project topic, along with the pros and cons of each method.

Teacher-Generated Topics

If you know that you'll be facing especially stringent limitations on time and/or resources, generating a list of preapproved topics is one way to ensure that students are able to complete their projects. Offering possible ideas can also be used to inspire your group to create a list of its own.

If your class's service learning project is to be chosen from a list of topics that you generate, it is necessary that you do research. Look over the list of suggested topics on the next page, speak to other teachers, or contact local volunteer organizations for information on projects that other student groups have taken on. Before adding a topic to the list, consider your time and resource limitations, and determine whether a project is within the scope of those limitations.

District-Generated Topics

Some school districts consider service learning projects to be a part of their curricular (or extracurricular) goals. In some cases, this translates to plans, resources, and support that are already in place. There may be a list of potential projects that has been established and approved at the district level.

Though it's important to be attuned to students' choices, if plans and support are in place for a district-selected project, use them. There are ways of creatively introducing a preapproved project that will leave students feeling empowered and committed to the process (e.g., bring in a video clip that supports the need for a project to address a certain issue, play topic "Jeopardy" to reveal preapproved projects, record a plea for support). District personnel may be willing to speak to your students about the importance of the project they are undertaking and offer them encouragement.

Student-Generated Topics

Though this process requires a fairly well-developed level of communication among students, a student-generated project topic is ideal. When students choose to take on a project of their own creation, a strong sense of ownership is fostered, leading to greater student commitment to the project.

Because the best scenario includes students generating a list of project topics that interest them and then choosing the one(s) in which they're most interested, the success of this approach also depends on the initial commitment of students to take the process of generating and choosing topics seriously. If this is a potential issue in your classroom, bear in mind that student-chosen projects are the most empowering and successful, even if the choices themselves are generated by another method.

Project Examples

Encouraging your students to work on a service learning project of their own choosing is the best way to ensure that the project is relevant to them. Use the following list of potential service learning projects to spur students' thinking:

1. Students collect and distribute shoes and clothing to the homeless.
2. Students collect toys for foster children.
3. Students raise money for a nonprofit organization (e.g., National Urban League, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, ASPCA, American Cancer Society, Farm Aid).
4. Students write children's books and donate them to elementary schools.
5. Students clean up neighborhood parks.
6. Students create greeting cards for children in the hospital.
7. Students perform a play for senior citizens.
8. Students create a community garden in a vacant lot.
9. Students plan a holiday party for homeless children.

Methods for Eliciting Student-Generated Topics

A topic may be generated as a result of a catalytic event that takes place in the school or in the community, or an issue may emerge from an intense class discussion. Sometimes, the class must engage in a deliberate process in order to generate an appropriate project topic. The following are strategies to help students consider potential service learning project topics and methods to help you implement these strategies in your classroom.

Motivation through Inspiration

The work of others who have done service learning projects can provide you with a variety of resources to help the class generate topics.

To introduce your students to potential service learning projects, use articles, videos, and guest speakers who can share their community service experiences. Look for information on projects completed by public figures, including athletes and entertainers. Showing students what others have accomplished can inspire and enable them to generate at least one project idea that they'd be interested in trying themselves.

Use the internet to research information on the following organizations and events:

- All for Good—www.allforgood.org
- Youth Service America—www.ysa.org
- Do Something—www.dosomething.org
- The VH1 Save the Music Foundation—www.savethemusic.com

Tackling the Tough Questions

Many of your students may never have been asked to offer their opinions on their school, their communities, or the portrayal of young people in the popular media. Pose questions such as the following to your students in order to generate discussions about these topics:

- What do you think are the “hot” issues in your community and in your school?
- What things do you wish were different in your community and in your school?
- How do you think people perceive your community and your school?
- How do you want people to perceive your community and your school?
- How do you think most people perceive adolescents? Do you think that their perceptions are accurate?
- What would you change about the way you, as young people, are perceived?

During this discussion, focus on the issues instead of jumping straight to identifying a topic. Giving your students time to discuss what they think is happening in the world will assist you in your efforts to excite them about the ensuing project.

The following is an example of how this discussion might play out in the classroom:

- What are the “hot” issues in your community? (*Students might respond: people don’t get along or don’t like to come to our town.*)
- More specifically, who doesn’t get along? (*Students might mention people from different generations or different ethnicities.*)
- How can we address this? (*Students might respond: break down stereotypes, improve communication.*)
- What are some ways that we can break down stereotypes? (*Students might respond: visit a local senior citizens center, arrange a multicultural event.*)
- Which senior centers can we visit?
- Which of these is easiest to get to?
- Are they willing to work with us? How can we find out?

The result of this discussion will essentially be a list of issues that concern your students. Once these issues are identified, it's time to move from the general to the specific, to consider each issue and the options that exist, and to address the issues within your community. Ask the class to gather information on the options, whom they can work with, where they can go, and what they can do to address these issues.

At the end of this process, you'll have a detailed list of service learning project options generated by the brainstorming session or by examining what others have done. Over the course of the discussion, it may have become clear that interest in some topics was low. Perhaps one project naturally emerged as your students' first choice. Maybe there are a variety of viable options, in which case it's time to make some decisions.

Choosing a Project Topic

The decision making process will go smoothly if you establish some rules that will govern it. For example, consider whether the decision will be made by consensus or by majority rule. If you choose to employ the latter, discuss the importance of students' commitment to whatever project is chosen, even if the topic isn't the one for which they most strongly advocated.

You may also use a combination of the majority rule and consensus methods: first narrow the project topic options with a consensus vote, then take a vote by majority rule to determine the final topic.

As the decision making process evolves, consider the grouping and organization options that were outlined in section 1 of this module. For example, if it seems as though choosing one project is becoming too divisive to ensure a successful outcome, you may wish to consider organizing students into two different groups focused on two different projects.

Establishing Groups

By now, your students have chosen to work as a whole group on one project, in small groups on different projects, or individually on different projects. If the decision making process dictated the formation of project groups or individual projects, move on to the contract stage. If your whole class will work on the same project, work with your students to form the small groups that will concentrate on planning different aspects of the project.

Groups can be formed in a variety of ways:

- **Random:** Assign students to groups based on birthday month, names that fall between two letters of the alphabet, who is wearing a certain color—anything that randomly assigns students to a particular group. Though students may balk at being separated from their friends, this method ensures that students are working with others with whom they may not normally interact.
- **Assigned:** Assign particular students to particular groups. This gives you a chance to consider students' various strengths and weaknesses, and to group students who you believe may work well together and will learn well from one another. However, assigned groups may breed a sense of injustice among students who want to work specifically with their friends.
- **Self-selected:** Allow students to form their own groups. Generally the most popular choice among young people, this method of organization can alleviate feelings of discomfort that some students feel when working with classmates whom they don't know. However, this option can breed or enhance a sense of cliquishness among students who have fewer friends. You may wish to allow students the opportunity to go by their task preferences when they choose their groups. This may reduce the likelihood that students will form groups composed only of friends.

Consider your particular students and the dynamics of your class, and choose the grouping method that you believe will lead to the most successful overall experience for your students. Whatever method you choose, encourage each group to create rules and to discuss expectations of members' participation, division of work, commitment, and the like. Formalize these discussions in the student contracts.

After students have chosen a topic and formed groups, have them create and sign project contracts.

DESIGNING A PLAN

AGENDA

- The Importance of a Well-Crafted Plan
- The Parts of a Plan
- Student-Needs Assessment
- The Necessary Research

The Importance of a Well-Crafted Plan

The service learning project is designed to be a vehicle for students to apply what they've learned and to have a positive, community-centered experience. It's the process—the opportunity to prepare for the project and the desire to make a contribution to the community—that's most important. If your students are able to practice and implement what they've learned in your classroom, then the service learning project is a success.

Creating an action plan is a crucial step of the service learning project process. The plan has several purposes:

- Outline exactly which resources are available and which must be acquired for the project
- Provide a schedule and a time line
- Encourage critical examination of the project's scope in light of the resources available

The creation of an action plan by students is primarily an exercise in goal setting, decision making, problem solving, and communication skills, as well as an opportunity to practice effective writing. The finished action plan will serve as students' ongoing guide to project completion, providing a framework for where they're going and a map for how they plan to get there. It should clearly outline the materials, people, and tasks that will comprise the project, as well as a time line that indicates what will happen and when.

Take the time to ensure that your students recognize the relevance of the action plan to more than just the project at hand. Explain that any well-prepared project or task, including those that occur in the workplace, has an action plan that participants can follow and refer to. (An example might be the lesson plans that you, as an educator, prepare and follow.) Just like in the workplace, this project will need to be reviewed and approved by the people who manage the school and are responsible for the students (e.g., principals, administrators, teachers).

Creating an action plan primarily involves considering the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Gathering the information that answers these questions and organizing that information in a written document are the steps to creating an action plan. This section of the module outlines the parts of the plan and what questions each part should address. It also suggests a variety of methods for finding the answers.

Don't limit the questions to those suggested here. Use the module only as a guide and encourage your students to delve deeper into the details of their project, to ask additional questions, and to consider the project's specific needs. As a general rule, if an issue is under consideration by the project planners, it should be addressed somewhere in the action plan.

The Parts of a Plan

Steps to Be Taken

A well-crafted plan should answer the following questions: What is the goal of the project? What will happen during the project? What steps led up to the project? What are the stepping stones to reaching the goal?

Students create a working list of steps by working backward. You and your students should create a mental picture of the ideal project and how it will look at completion. Using this mental picture, determine the following:

- Who is involved?
- What are they doing?
- Are they using any particular materials?
- What kinds of facilities are at their disposal?

Work backward to determine how each of the elements that are in the mental picture must be contacted and secured.

Students should also create a series of lists onto which they will record their work. The lists can be entitled “People,” “Materials,” and “Activities.” (See examples in section 4.) Alternatively, each list might be titled with the description of an activity and contain information on the people needed, the materials that must be secured, and the tasks that must be completed in order to perform the activity. Explain that these lists can be running lists to which items are added or taken away as the discussion and the action plan become more detailed.

Materials

Every project requires materials. Students who decide to clean up a local park will need to identify and gather the tools necessary for cleaning. Students who decide to launch a letter-writing campaign to support an issue will need to gather writing materials. It is important to create a list that covers all possible needs; students may decide later that certain materials are not necessary, but suggest that they err on the side of caution. It is discouraging and frustrating not to have an item when it is needed.

As discussed above, a materials list may stand alone or be integrated into the description of each project activity. In addition, encourage students to consider what they will need to do in order to gather the materials for the project—gathering materials might require obtaining postage, a telephone, paper, and envelopes. If publicizing the project is a priority, remind students to consider the materials that they will need in order to inform others of their project (e.g., paper, poster board, printers).

Encourage students to revisit the steps they need to take and carefully check the materials list against each step.

If your school has a website, speak with the site's administrator about publicizing and requesting help and support for your class's project on the website. If possible, have students design portions of the project's web advertisements. You might also encourage students to code the advertisements themselves and submit them to the administrator for approval—many students who are interested in technology careers are eager for projects that will allow them to build their web-design portfolios.

Necessary Approvals

Because the project will most likely require time, resources, and activities that are not part of the typical school day, it's important to inform those in charge. Students should submit their plans and get official approval for the project if approval is required. Consider the following:

- Who needs to know that your students are doing a service learning project? How do you need to inform them? Are there special forms to be completed? Whose signatures are required?
- Does the project require the approval of the principal, the superintendent, and/or any local government agencies (particularly if you plan to clean up a local park or beach)?
- Do parents need to be notified? If so, how and when?
- Will the project require the teacher to be away from the school for a day? Will a substitute need to be found for that day? If so, what needs to be done in order to hire the substitute?

Encourage students to revisit the steps they need to take and their materials lists, and list items such as field trips or telephone access that may also require specific approvals.

Time and People Resources

Although tangible materials and approvals are necessary for a project, the skills and time commitments of participants are in many ways a project's most valuable resources. Urge students to consider the following as they work to identify how much time and which people the project will require:

- Whose time will be needed? When? For how long? Remind students to consider your time and whether you will be needed outside of class.
- Are certain resources available only at certain times? For example, can calls related to the project be made only at certain times from a certain telephone?
- Will all students be able to give the time required for their schoolwork and still be able to complete the project as scheduled?
- How many people must participate in the actual execution of the project? Is everyone in the class needed? Do they need to recruit additional people?
- What roles are students interested in taking on? How do they wish to organize themselves? Do they need team leaders, task managers, communications specialists, and so on? What are the descriptions for each of these jobs?
- Who can teach students about the facts/rules they should keep in mind for their particular project (e.g., special considerations for working with senior citizens, health considerations when cleaning a park, things to know about working with younger students)?
- Will students be working with an outside group or agency to complete the project? What are the limitations for the agency's time and people resources?

Encourage collaboration with other groups or agencies whose experience and resources will help students to better implement their projects. In addition to providing a great opportunity to practice teamwork and communication skills, working with other groups means further exposure to the world outside of school, to new career options, and to potential role models. If students choose to complete the project in cooperation with another group, urge them to consider the who, what, why, when, where, and how details of this collaboration:

- What organization will the group contact?
- Who will contact the organization?
- When does the organization need to be contacted?
- How should that organization be contacted? What should be said?
- What exactly will the organization's role be?

Consider creating a contract with any outside organizations to formalize their commitment and demonstrate how serious students are about this project.

Student-Needs Assessment

The service learning project is primarily an opportunity for your students to practice their life skills. In particular, on-the-job and communication skills may need to be reviewed in relation to project planning. You may want students to practice these skills before they need to use them. Questions to consider include the following:

- Will students need to make phone calls to businesses, organizations, or agencies? Will they need to write business letters?
- Are there any physical or academic skills that your students must develop in order to complete the project? For example, if they have chosen to record books for the blind, it's important that they are skilled at reading aloud.
- If your students are not versed in the skills needed, how can you address this? What's the most efficient way to help them develop their skills?

The Necessary Research

The purpose of research in the context of a service learning project is twofold. First, students will gather information to support the need for the project and search for answers to questions regarding the necessary steps, materials, approvals, skills, and time required to complete the project. The amount of information that's needed to create the plan may seem overwhelming, but it is available. Identifying that information will be fairly easy because you and your students have taken the time to assess the project needs and know what to look for.

Second, many professional and academic situations require students to effectively gather information, a skill that's also required to make good decisions. This is an excellent opportunity for students to hone their information-gathering skills and to use what they learn in order to make decisions about the project.

Help students organize their research efforts so that work is not duplicated among groups of students. The following are strategies for organizing students' research efforts:

- Divide the class into small groups. Each group is responsible for finding answers to all of the questions posed, but each will use a different research method.
- Invite individuals to choose a research method they are interested in utilizing, allowing no more than four or five students to choose any one method. Remind students that one method may seem more interesting than another, but it may be more difficult to access (e.g., in-person interviews). Each student is then responsible for researching all of the questions posed, using the method of research they have chosen.
- Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group a few of the questions posed. Encourage each group to use all of the research methods at their disposal.

Consider both the strengths and weaknesses of your students, and the other methods by which the project is being organized. The way you choose to organize research efforts should reflect your students' current level of commitment to the project. You can gauge that level of commitment by asking yourself questions such as the following:

- Does every aspect of the project seem to be centered around group work? Do students need an opportunity to conduct research individually for grading purposes or for skill development?
- Are small groups experiencing personality conflicts? Could research be used as an opportunity to have students work in different groups than those in which they'll be working for the duration of the project, thus restoring commitment to the larger group?
- Can students working on several small-group projects combine their research efforts on any common issues in order to develop a sense of class unity? (For example, two groups working on projects focused on elementary school students may wish to combine their research efforts on the stages of child development.)

Many resources are available to help students find the information that they are looking for. The following are some suggested methods that should be available to your students.

Guest Speakers/Interviews

When possible, accessing a primary source is the best way to get information. Primary sources include people who have personally participated in other service learning projects, people who work at the organization to which students are offering service, or people who have had similar experiences. Learning about the process that others have used to develop service learning or community service projects can be very beneficial even if the project topics differ.

Ask students if they know of others in their school who have participated in service learning projects. Encourage them to find out, either by asking around in the school or contacting local organizations. Ask students to research what steps these people followed and what lessons they learned. Help students to invite guests who can speak in the classroom about their project experiences or about the resources necessary for the project your students want to complete. If guests are unavailable to visit, help students arrange one-on-one or small-group interviews in person or by phone. In either case, remind students that the best way to ensure they get all the information they need is to prepare a list of questions before the interview.

Before a guest speaker makes an appearance in the classroom, discuss with students the procedures and expectations surrounding the speaker's presentation (e.g., students should avoid side conversations, determine what kinds of questions are appropriate to ask, and consider the procedure for asking questions). Establish and explain to students the repercussions of displaying inappropriate behavior or asking inappropriate questions. Encourage students to take notes during the presentation.

Your students may be unsure of where to begin their search for a speaker or a person whom they can interview. The best place to begin is the local phone book. Even if the first few organizations they contact can't help, they will most likely be able to refer your students to someone who can. Another option is for students to contact one of the national organizations listed below and to explain what kind of information they are looking for. These agencies have a broad geographic network and may be able to suggest someone in your area whom your students should contact.

If students plan to contact these agencies by phone, suggest that they write down exactly what they want to say (i.e., who is calling and for what purpose) before making the call. Explain that it's easy to get flustered on the phone and it can become difficult to express yourself clearly, especially if you are being transferred to different people and must repeat yourself several times.

- Corporation for National and Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 606-5000
www.americorps.gov
- Youth Service America
1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 296-2992
www.ysa.org
- Points of Light Institute
600 Means Street, Suite 210
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 979-2900
www.pointsoflight.org
- United Way of America
701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-7112
www.unitedway.org
- 4-H National Headquarters
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 2225
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 401-4114
www.4-h.org

Library Research

Explain to students that library research involves exploring secondary resources, such as magazines, newspapers, and television news or public interest programs, that provide a secondhand account of an event or an idea. Though primary research conducted with an interview is almost always more desirable, secondary research is still a valuable source of information.

If students are unfamiliar with the library (e.g., how the information is catalogued, how to use microfiche), schedule a trip to your school or nearby public library and arrange for the resource librarian to acclimate students to the library system. (This usually takes about two hours.) Most public libraries have programs designed to help students learn to use the library effectively.

You may need to provide students with a “crash course” in effectively using printed materials for research. For example, explain to your students the concept of “skimming” through material to quickly find what they’re looking for, instead of reading every word. Discuss techniques for using the table of contents in a book or magazine in order to determine whether the source contains the information they’re seeking. Point out the differences between quoting, paraphrasing, and plagiarizing, and show students how to properly cite sources if they choose to use quotations to support statements made in their action plan

Locating television shows or videos to use as research can be difficult if your library does not catalogue such sources. However, there are other ways to find such programs. First, students might visit www.youtube.com or a local station’s website, and search for clips or whole videos of the program they are looking for. Students can also use the local newspaper to track the television programming scheduled for your area and watch for programs that may be of interest to them as they work on the project. (Remind them to add TV and DVR to their materials list, if necessary.) Encourage students to pay close attention to the programming on educational or public broadcasting stations and to weekend programming that’s aimed at young people; these shows are more likely to highlight activities in which other young people are involved.

Internet

In addition to using the internet at your school, most public libraries allow community members with library cards to use their computers free of charge. The internet contains a plethora of resources that your students may want to use for their research. In general, the rules for conducting research on the internet are the same as those rules that govern library research. Most of what your students will find on the internet can be considered a secondary source, like a book or magazine article. Below is a list of websites that might be useful to your students.

Suggested Secondary Resources

- Teen Ink—www.teenink.com
- Time for Kids—www.timeforkids.com
- Newsweek—www.newsweek.com
- National and local newspaper sites

Service Learning Websites

- The Corporation for National and Community Service—www.nationalservice.gov
- IPSL—www.ipsl.org
- National Wildlife Federation—www.nwf.org
- Volunteer Match—www.volunteermatch.org
- Idealist—www.idealists.org

Using a search engine will allow you and your students to conduct more effective research online. Search engines are sites that use a word or phrase to find other sites containing the information you are looking for. For example, if you enter “service learning” into a search engine, the engine will search the internet for sites containing that phrase. A list of some recommended engines is included below. Encourage students to use search engines responsibly and to get permission before going online.

Search Engines

- Yahoo—www.yahoo.com
- Bing—www.bing.com
- Google—www.google.com

It is possible that in the course of their research, students will locate an actual copy of an action plan that was created for another project. If so, encourage them to use it as a model. While it’s not appropriate to plagiarize material that someone else has created and published, it’s also not necessary to reinvent the wheel. Using a plan that’s already been successful as a model for the one students want to develop is an effective use of resources.

FINALIZING THE ACTION PLAN AND GETTING APPROVAL

AGENDA

- The Contents of a Complete Action Plan
- Submitting the Action Plan
- Presenting the Action Plan
- Approvals

The Contents of a Complete Action Plan

At this point in the planning process, students will organize the information that they have gathered from their research in section 3 to create a formal action plan.

An action plan is a formal explanation of the project. Thus, it should be written clearly and presented neatly. A complete action plan will contain the following information.

Introduction

This section of the plan states the need for the students' proposed project and articulates their motivation for engaging in it.

It would be helpful for students to review their notes from the brainstorming sessions and the research that they gathered. This section of the action plan should include all background information so that readers will have an overall picture of the project, including who is involved, what will happen during the project, when and where it will happen, and why and how it will happen. Below is an example:

Project Summary: Eight students from Ms. Grimes's seventh-grade science class have chosen to develop and act out a play about the ecosystem of a local park. The students will perform the play for students at the elementary school as part of their science curriculum. In order for students to create a play that explains the ecosystem in a meaningful way, they will visit and study the local park. They will also research the developmental level of the students who will watch the play.

Materials Needed

It is acceptable to include a simple, straightforward list of the materials needed, but encourage students to create a more detailed list of tasks to be performed and the materials needed for each task. In either case, next to each listed material should be an indication of whether it is already available or whether it must be procured. If the material must be procured, the action plan should explain where it can be found and how it will be obtained (e.g., money must be raised to buy it, will ask for donations, can borrow).

Example (partial list)

Human Resources

This section of the action plan will clearly state the people needed to complete the project, along with their availability, skills, and commitment.

Like the materials list, the human resources list can be organized by activity or task. This section of the action plan should explain which people will do which tasks in order to successfully complete each aspect of the project. This information can also be organized by outlining the areas of expertise required by the project and listing the people who are skilled in them.

Jobs and Responsibilities

Encourage students to outline the responsibilities each person has taken on by naming the role each person has agreed to fulfill (e.g., team leader, publicity manager, materials manager) and listing the duties of each job. Include each participant's name, title, and job description.

Examples:

Ms. Grimes, *Supervising Teacher*. Ms. Grimes will act as the liaison between the students and the administration at our school and at the elementary school. Ms. Grimes will sign transportation requests and chaperone (or find a suitable chaperone for) off-campus activities.

Helen Wilson, *Playwright and Editor*. Helen will research information about ecosystems, and prepare potential plot outlines and characters for a play about the ecosystem at Winnipeg Park. She will complete the first edit of the script.

Jim Graham, *Playwright and Editor*. Jim will research how stage directions are written, and write and title a play about the ecosystem at Winnipeg Park. He will complete the final edit of the script.

If students are working with an outside organization or agency, the introduction to this section of the action plan should clearly outline the nature of the collaboration and the role that the agency will be playing. Remind them to include the names of the agency personnel who will be working on the project and a description of the tasks to which they have committed.

Example:

The students in Ms. Grimes' class will collaborate with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. The Department of Parks and Recreation staff will provide written materials and be available for interviews during the research phase of the project. They will guide students on a tour of Winnipeg Park and supply the necessary permission to conduct a field trip there.

Schedules and Contacts

This section of the plan should include transportation schedules (collected from train/bus stations and so on), work schedules, and a general list of resources and references. A list of all participants and their contact information (i.e., address, phone number, email address) should be included. If an outside organization is participating in the project, include its contact information and the names of the people there with whom students will be working.

Time Line

Goals have a measurable time line, and a service learning project is no exception. The time line provides a plan to follow and ensures that tasks are completed on schedule. This is especially important if the start of one task must be preceded by the completion of another.

Though it's acceptable for the time line to be somewhat preliminary, it should indicate as many concrete dates as possible. Students may wish to organize their time lines by listing the tasks that must be completed each week or each month from now until the end of the project. The time line should also include a detailed schedule of what will happen on the day of the project.

While it's likely that a project's schedule will change, it is important to create a strong working time line as both an indicator of what should be done by what date and a barometer by which to judge how much work is expected to be done in a certain amount of time.

Appendix

If students have referred to particular materials, or if the project was inspired by a particular newspaper article or story, encourage them to include photocopies in an appendix. This section of the plan should also contain photocopies of student contracts, transcripts from interviews, and a list of all the sources that students used to gather information.

Submitting the Action Plan

The action plan should serve as a proposal to those who must approve the project. As in the workplace, the proposal should be typed and should look professional. Though your principal and administrators should know that the proposal is coming from your students, you may wish to add a cover memo explaining the nature of service learning and your students' proposal.

Once the action plan is completed, ask students to share it by sending copies of it to others. In addition to obtaining any necessary administrative approvals, sharing an action plan often gets others involved in and excited about the project. It is also an excellent method of getting feedback.

Example:

MEMORANDUM

TO: Principal Dominguez

FROM: Ms. Grimes

DATE: December 12, 20XX

RE: Ecosystems Instruction for Casimiro Fontanez Elementary School

CC: Helen Wilson, Jim Graham, Chris Yates, John Armin, Kate Clark, Dr. Bashir

The students mentioned below have spent the past month researching and developing a service learning project. They would like to complete the project by the end of this marking period and they would like your approval to do so. The attached proposal has been prepared for your review. Please respond by Friday, December 17, 20XX.

Due Diligence

Once the action plan is written, you and your students must critically examine the project's strengths and weaknesses, and encourage others to do the same. Have students ask those who have received a copy of the action plan to consider its limitations and whether or not it can be accomplished on time. Model for your students what it's like to honestly address these issues, and encourage them to critically examine their plan. If necessary, work as a class to revisit or scale back the project by again considering the issues outlined in section 3. Your goal is to emerge from this stage with an action plan that is detailed, realistic, and achievable.

You may wish to ask questions such as the following:

- Do you think the proposed project can realistically be completed in the time allotted? Why or why not?
- What challenges do you see the group facing as they try to complete this project? Can you offer any suggestions for how the group can respond to these challenges?
- Do you have any general advice for the group?

A complete written proposal will usually provide the information necessary for the pertinent parties to make a judgment about the project. However, they may require further information or wish to speak directly with students to discuss the project in more detail. In this case, students may need to prepare a project presentation.

Presenting the Action Plan

Ensure that students understand that it is common for approval of a project to be contingent on both a written proposal and a face-to-face meeting. A project presentation is a positive event—it enables those proposing the project to immediately address questions and concerns, and provides a great opportunity to excite administrators about the project. A face-to-face meeting will make the students' personal enthusiasm for the project more apparent than even a well-written proposal.

Presentation Preparation

Since your students have completed a written action plan, they already have all the information needed to make an effective presentation. Preparing for a presentation is similar to preparing for a job interview—it is a matter of organizing one's thoughts and preparing for questions.

Revisit with students the questions they considered when first putting together their action plan: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Each student or group of students should be responsible for preparing part of the presentation. If your class is working as a whole on one project, you may wish to have students work in small groups to prepare their answers to these questions, with each group discussing and organizing the answers to one question. Students should create note cards with the points that they want to make in order to best answer their questions.

A great way to keep a presenter on topic is with the use of visuals, which can be very simple and still be effective. For example, a poster that lists the benefits of the service learning project will be useful for both the presenter and for the audience. Students may also choose to create a visual for each question. If students have access to a projector and a computer, allow them to use presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint). Demonstrating effective presentation skills will serve as a testimony to how seriously students are taking the project. Remind students that visuals can be useful, but the presentation is only as strong as the content they present.

Making the Presentation

Some students may feel nervous about speaking publicly or intimidated about answering questions posed by an adult or an authority figure. Calm their fears by reminding them of two points:

- If they have done the work needed to create a detailed action plan, they should be proud of what they have accomplished and fully prepared to answer questions about their project.
- It is acceptable to respond to a question by saying, “I don’t know the answer to that question, but I can find out and get back to you.” It is possible that a concern about the project is one that your students did not take into account. This is not a negative response—in fact, action plans are submitted for approval specifically so that others can examine them for potential problems and ensure that issues are dealt with before they become actual problems.

Remind students that, just as they would for a job interview, they should consider their oral presentation at the meeting to be a reflection of how they feel about the project. There is no need to dress up, but students should dress neatly. Clear, appropriate language that is audible to everyone is important.

Approvals

With both the written action plan and in-person presentation, your students should have provided all of the information requested by those whose approval is needed to move forward. Remind students to establish a date by which they expect to hear a response to their proposal and to follow up with a visit or phone call. Students should also indicate that they would like to receive a response in writing—as in the workplace, it’s important to establish good records. A written approval may be needed as a reference during the course of the project. Once students have received a written approval, remind them to make a photocopy and file it.

TAKING ACTION

AGENDA

- Working
- Fundraising
- Special Considerations
- The Big Day
- Celebrate
- Project Briefs

Your students should now begin tackling the many tasks required to make their service learning project a reality, as outlined in their action plan. Whether that work spans just a few weeks or an entire marking period, it is important for students to track their progress throughout the process and to keep their commitment to the project active. The following are some strategies and methods for helping your students to track their work and stay committed to the project. Because it is possible that some projects will require students to raise funds or pursue in-kind donations of materials or services, this section of the module will also outline strategies for fundraising and seeking donations.

Tracking Progress

Tracking students' progress is a very important part of any service learning project. Use the "Tracking Sheet" activity sheet to do so. This sheet is designed to be used throughout the course of the project to track students' progress as they complete the tasks they've outlined in their action plan. If you have not done so previously, introduce students to this tool as a means of recording the work they have completed, when they completed it, and when additional tasks are scheduled for completion. Tell students to regularly update their lists and schedules, including those originating from their action plan, as both a means of tracking progress and a way of creating records of their work.

Explain the concept of numbering and dating the different versions of their schedules and checklists to avoid confusing old and new versions. Suggest that students keep these tracking sheets in a project notebook or folder.

Another way to track progress throughout the project is to visually record students' work. If a camera or video recorder is available, encourage students to capture images of their work as they proceed during the project. You may wish to have students keep a project journal, in which they both describe the work they are doing and personally reflect upon their experiences.

Work Ethic

For young people and adults alike, it can be difficult to maintain enthusiasm and keep interest high over the course of an entire project. Inevitably, there are obstacles and challenges, high points and low points, and times during the process when it can be tough to stay motivated. However, the concept of having a strong work ethic—which includes honoring commitments and working to meet deadlines—is one with which students should become familiar. Like any project, a successful service learning project requires a sustained commitment from all involved. The following strategies can help your students to stay enthusiastic throughout their service learning experience.

Student-to-Student Motivation

This strategy requires managing the group dynamic so that students keep one another motivated, help their classmates remain enthusiastic, and hold one another to commitments and deadlines. This strategy will foster the feeling that the project is a team effort; that there is a responsibility to the team; and that losing motivation, not completing tasks, or not meeting deadlines fails classmates and teammates. One way to help students keep each other motivated is to have them create team banners or slogans.

When to Step In

Sometimes, student commitment to a project weakens and their work ethic begins to wane. Deadlines aren't met, tasks aren't fully completed, and general disinterest sets in. You may need to step in, especially if some students are feeling frustrated because they are keeping their commitments and feeling let down by their classmates. If this happens, it may be an indication that the entire group needs to review the action plan and evaluate their reasons for initiating this project.

To remedy this, you might invite a community leader to remind students of how their project will have long-term benefits. You might also have students research college scholarships that are given for school service projects. Another option is to spend a class period doing team-building activities to invigorate students and remind them that working together can and should be fun.

Fundraising

It is not uncommon for a project to require more resources than those that are readily available. However, locating those resources through fundraising and seeking in-kind donations can be an excellent opportunity for students to practice their communication and goal setting skills. The identification and procurement of donations requires carefully crafted letters, phone conversations, a step-by-step approach, and follow-up.

Fundraising can be fun, but it can also be difficult. Avoid projects that rely on fundraising to procure the majority of materials. Encourage students to reevaluate their plans if too much fundraising is involved.

Raising Money

Ensure that students understand the concept of financial philanthropy as an agreement between two parties: one party furnishes money in order for the other to concentrate on providing a service. Encourage students to consider their fundraising efforts as a nonprofit venture—one that generates enough money to provide a service but does not focus on financial gain.

You may wish to try the following fundraisers:

- Bake sale
- Book fair
- Dance-a-thon or walk-a-thon
- Selling balloons or candy for holidays (e.g., Valentine's Day, Christmas)
- Crazy clothes day (students pay \$1 to wear crazy clothing or hats)
- Car wash

In-Kind Donations

Often, it is easier for students to simply have materials donated instead of raising the money to buy them. Explain to students that in-kind donations are donations of goods or services, instead of financial donations.

Local businesses are usually eager to get involved with young people who are contributing to the community. They want to both support students' efforts and to have their business name associated with a constructive effort.

In-kind donations can be solicited for a variety of project needs and plans. Suggestions include the following:

- Materials and prizes from hardware stores, craft stores, general goods stores, supermarkets, sporting goods stores, toy stores, and restaurants
- Advertising from local television and radio stations, newspapers, local business newsletters, and church bulletins
- Work space from hotels, colleges and universities, and community organizations
- Services from transportation companies, printing companies, and advertising agencies

In order to solicit donations, explain to students that they will need to contact the people or businesses whose help they would like by telephone, in writing, or both. Their communications should explain the details of their project and clearly state what benefits the potential donor will receive by becoming involved (e.g., opportunity for positive media attention, recommendations from students, being part of a constructive effort, and so on). Remind students to treat these communications with great care and respect in order to achieve the best possible results.

Special Considerations

There are many elements to the service learning project, and within those elements are many details. This is perhaps most evident in two specific tasks: the collection of materials and the arrangement of transportation. The following section outlines some strategies and special considerations to take into account for these tasks.

Materials

Ensure that those responsible understand that managing the project's materials means more than simply finding out how to acquire the articles needed. Additional considerations include record keeping, storage, and maintenance of the materials.

Record Keeping

In their action plan, students included a checklist of the materials they needed and indicated how they planned to procure each item. Even if their project requires few materials, it is still important for them to keep track of the following:

- What's needed
- What's been acquired
- What needs to be returned
- Where things are stored

Encourage your students to add columns to the materials checklist in their action plan reflecting the above issues. They should use this extended checklist to keep records of the project's materials. This checklist should be updated weekly.

Storage

Remind students to consider not only the amount of space needed to store their materials, but also issues of safety and maintenance. They should consider questions such as the following:

- Do you have permission to store things where you'd like to keep them?
- Is your storage area in a secure place, where you know the materials won't be disturbed?
- Are there any materials that must be specially stored (e.g., paint, cleaning solvents, breakable materials, perishable items)?
- How long can you use the space to store materials?

Encourage students to contact staff members within the school who are familiar with these issues, such as the maintenance crew or the cafeteria staff. Remind students to consider them as business contacts and treat them accordingly. Also, remind them to always put requests in writing.

Maintenance

Ask students to imagine what will happen when the project has been completed and they have to clean up. They should consider questions such as the following:

- Will there be any trash left over from the materials used? How will the trash be disposed of? Are there any special procedures to be followed (e.g., separating recyclables, using special trash bags or bins)?
- What will be done with leftover materials?
- Are there any borrowed materials that must be returned immediately after the project is completed? How will students get materials where they need to go on time?
- What kind of cleanup will be required? Are there any potential messes or spills that must be prepared for? Will any particular cleaning supplies be needed in order to adequately clean up these spills?

Explain to students that materials, maintenance, and cleanup should be considered integral parts of the project, not afterthoughts. As a general rule, project sites should be left as clean or cleaner than they were found, and commitments to return borrowed items should be honored without fail. Remind students not to let a successful project be marred by misgivings about an inadequate cleanup job, or the loss or untimely return of borrowed items.

Transportation

Arranging transportation for a service learning project can be a project in itself. Even if students are not planning a project that takes place off school grounds, transportation will likely be needed in order to take trips off-site for meetings or collection of materials.

The process for securing transportation often varies from district to district—and sometimes from school to school—but there are questions everyone must consider when arranging transportation:

- **Money:** Is there a school budget that dictates how many times buses or vans can be made available for student trips? If so, are there budgetary constraints?
- **Chaperones:** Is there a required chaperone-to-student ratio? What are the requirements to be a chaperone? Whom can you recruit to act as a chaperone?
- **Space:** How many people need to be transported (including teachers, students, chaperones, etc.)? How many buses or vans will be needed to accommodate them? How much space will be needed to transport materials?
- **Time:** What time is the project scheduled to begin? What time do you need to arrive in order to have sufficient time to set up? Until what time will you need to stay in order to have sufficient time to clean up?
- **Paperwork:** Are there specific forms that must be filled out when requesting transportation? Who needs to complete and sign them? To whom should they be submitted?
- **Availability:** Are there buses available for the dates and times that your group needs them?
- **Alternatives:** If transportation cannot be arranged through your school, are there other options (e.g., parents, private bus services, public transportation) that can satisfy your transportation needs?

Though students are responsible for handling the details of their service learning project, you may need to spearhead the process of securing transportation. Encourage students to solicit your help on their behalf, just as they would if they were soliciting the help and participation of an outside partner.

The Big Day

Every moment and detail leading up to the “big day” has been important, and those moments and details—when added together—actually require more time and energy than the event itself! This module reflects that same phenomenon. Many pages of explanation regarding planning have preceded this one, and it seems as though the “big day” requires less explanation than all the sections that came before it.

For days, weeks, or perhaps months, your students have worked to plan and prepare a project that will, for some of them, be their first experience in making a contribution to their communities. They have practiced and applied their communication and teamwork skills, as well as their time management and decision making skills. They have also shown themselves to be competent writers and record keepers. They have undoubtedly encountered obstacles along the way, but they have found ways to address them and to persevere.

Your students will likely feel a mix of excitement and nervousness on the day that their project takes place. They will likely look to you for help and encouragement as their teacher and mentor. If they sense in you a feeling of pride and calm, they will be able to effectively perform their tasks that day and enjoy themselves.

Tips for the Day of the Project

- Don't forget to eat! Arrange for snacks or lunch if you will be away from school during regular meal times.
- Take pictures! Bring cameras and record as much of the day as possible. Consider appointing a few students to be the day's photographers. Sometimes, convenience stores or large drugstore chains will donate disposable cameras that are still on the shelves after their expiration dates have passed. The cameras still work, but cannot be sold.
- Invite others to take part! If appropriate, formally invite local political and community leaders, your school principal, your district superintendent, or others who may be interested in seeing the results of students' work.
- If appropriate, demonstrate school spirit! Make a sign explaining who you are and hang it at the site of your project. Wear clothing in your school's colors, or decorate your own T-shirts.
- If things fall apart—for example, if weather or administrative issues impede or halt the project entirely—help your students to remember that it's the process and commitment that are most important. Even an unfulfilled project does not diminish the commitment to community that your students have demonstrated. Allow students time to feel sad or angry that they were not able to fulfill their plans, and provide them with an opportunity to discuss those feelings. However, make sure that students ultimately understand that their work has not been in vain because of what they have learned from the service learning project.

Celebrate

You and your students have put a great deal of time and energy into this project, and you deserve to reward yourselves for your efforts. Whether the outcome of the project was exactly what you had hoped for or not, this is a time to celebrate. The celebration can be whatever your class decides is enjoyable and in line with school regulations. You may choose to watch a video of your project, watch a video about helping others, or create a photo album to tell your service learning story. Do you have the time and money to go to an amusement park, go to a sporting event, or have a picnic in a nearby park? Be creative in how you choose to celebrate your success. The limits for celebration should only be those set by the school and by the district—other than those, the sky should be the limit!

Project Briefs

This module would not be complete without some brief descriptions of exemplary service learning projects. We hope these either serve as models of what can be accomplished in a project of this sort or inspire your class to organize a similar project.

- A group of high school students in New Jersey began their participation with a local charitable organization at the start of the school year. They decided that two of the most pressing issues facing youths in their area were drugs and teen pregnancy. The teacher provided students with a list of local charitable organizations, which she obtained from the internet. The description of one such organization appealed to the students as a way to address the two issues. The organization is a home for “boarder babies.” These babies, who have been abandoned, neglected, exposed to drugs and/or HIV, are healthy enough to go home from the hospital, but have no homes to go to. The organization posted their wish list on the internet, and the students decided that they would raise money through bake sales to purchase items from the list and deliver those items to the organization on Make a Difference Day. The students spent Make a Difference Day caring for the babies and learning about their needs. The students continued to support the organization through bake sales and donations. They donated over \$500 and many hours of their time.
- A middle school class in Michigan learned about lead poisoning contracted from house paint. The students contacted the local Department of Health to obtain a list of houses in the area that needed to be repainted in order to not be condemned. The students visited nearby homes and offered to repaint a house owned by an elderly couple. The students had the paint donated, recruited the assistance of a professional painter, and worked for a week to complete the painting.
- A high school math class in Arizona noticed that the elementary school yard looked uninviting and neglected. Students researched the developmental stages of elementary school students and invited a mathematician and an elementary school teacher to be guest speakers. The students obtained permission to paint a mural of geometric shapes and designs on the wall that faced the school yard and created math games for the students to play during recess. Once a month, students supervised recess at the elementary school.

ASSESSMENT

AGENDA

- Student Assessment
- Teacher Assessment

Ongoing Assessment

Ongoing assessment and evaluation of the project will help you to notice small problems before they grow, keep students focused, and create records of the project's progress and outcomes. It also eliminates the need for a post-project evaluation, which might seem like a grade based on whether the project goal was realized.

Over the course of the project, a variety of progress reports should be written and exchanged among participants. The content of the reports will vary depending on who is involved, but possible exchanges include the following:

- From individuals, small groups, or teams to the rest of the class
- From individuals, small groups, or teams to the teacher
- From individuals, small groups, or teams to school administrators
- From individuals, small groups, or teams to participating outside organizations or agencies

Help students establish a format for reports and a regular schedule of when reports will be sent, depending on the overall length of the project. Remind the class that, like a memo sent in the workplace, their progress reports should be neat and succinct. They may even use bullets instead of complete sentences.

Example:

TO: Ms. Grimes
FROM: Playwriting Team
RE: Weekly Progress Report
DATE: March 22

This week, our team accomplished the following tasks:

- Wrote a second draft of the play's second act.
- Proofread the first act, which is now complete.
- Met with the research team to discuss the following questions that we still need answered for the final act of the play:
 - What species of fish are part of the park's ecosystem?
 - How does the change of seasons affect the ecosystem?

We have the following challenges to overcome:

- The elementary school auditorium is booked on the day we had planned for our performance.
- We still cannot find cardboard boxes for scenery.

Next week, we plan to complete the following tasks:

- Write the first draft of the play's third and final act.
- Get the second draft of the second act proofread.
- Reschedule date for auditorium at the elementary school; review time lines.
- Contact more local stores and recycling plants to request cardboard boxes.

Post-Project Assessment

Because your students have done important work throughout the project, discourage them from basing an evaluation of their performance on just the culmination of that work. Encourage students to instead focus on their preparation and planning for the project and on their commitment to making a contribution to the community. There are a variety of ways to conduct a post-project assessment. Use the method most appropriate to your students and their projects.

Self-Assessment

Section 1 of this module describes a service learning project as a student-directed educational process. Just as the planning and production of the project relied heavily on the students' work, so too should the culminating assessment of the project.

Encouraging students to reflect on their work helps them to master the skill of self-assessment and provides an opportunity for them to consider the personal lessons and insights that they gained from the project. These lessons and insights may be related to their own abilities, issues of social awareness, their communities, or their experiences working with others.

Students can assess themselves in a variety of ways. If they have been keeping journals of their experiences, you may wish to have them write a final entry summarizing their thoughts, the lessons they learned, and their feelings of accomplishment. Also, you may wish to have them express their thoughts and recount their experiences using the medium of their choice (e.g., writing, art, music).

However you choose to engage your students in self-assessment, ensure that they consider various aspects of their experience by posing questions such as these:

- What was the goal of the project? Do you think the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
- Was the work you did personally meaningful? Why?
- Who do you think benefited from your work? How?
- What made you happy about your experience? What made you unhappy? Was there anything you did or saw during the project that bothered you? What? Why?
- Did you have a chance to interact with the people whom the project was serving? How? What was that like?
- If you could do one thing about the project differently, what would it be? Why?
- What was the best part of your service learning experience? The worst? Why?
- What new things did you learn during the process?
- What issue in our community/society made your project necessary?
- Are there any assumptions or stereotypes that you held when you started this project that you now know to be false?
- How did participating in the service learning project change you?

Although the vast majority of young people are positively affected by their service learning experiences, it is not inconceivable that students may express negative feelings about the project. This may be because their beliefs have been challenged, because there were conflicts within their work groups, or perhaps because they believe they put more into the project than others did, but did not receive recognition for their efforts. If this happens, encourage the student or students to discuss their experiences. Depending on the dynamics within your classroom, this discussion may involve the entire class, a specific student and their work group, or just you and the student in a one-on-one conversation. In any case, act as a discussion facilitator in order to avoid making students uncomfortable about sharing their feelings and to alleviate the potential for a group conflict. Encourage students to utilize their conflict management skills during the discussion (e.g., use I-statements). Try to consider all students' feelings in an open manner.

Public Assessment

In addition to self-assessment, it is very valuable to produce a public report of the project and the process by which it came about. Explain to students that public assessment is one way to ensure outside recognition of their efforts. In the workplace, it is appropriate to report back to those who approved a project's creation; the same theory applies to a service learning project. Additionally, just as your class searched for information on others' project reports in hopes of using their experience as a guide, another group that wishes to execute a project might find a report of your students' experiences useful. Remind students that the more groups they share their assessment with, the more they increase their chances of recognition in the form of awards, certificates of merit, and praise. If your students have decided to join one of the national service efforts mentioned earlier, they may find organizational websites or publications devoted to sharing the stories of participants.

You may wish to have your students work as a group to create a public report or assign them to individually report on the project. Consider inviting students to report on their work using the medium of their choice. Options include the following:

- A written report
- A newspaper article
- A public question-and-answer forum
- A slide show
- An annotated photo album
- A video

Remind students that just as a formal report in the workplace is well thought out and neatly organized, the presentation of their reports will reflect their feelings about the work they did on the service learning project.

Teacher Assessment |

Just as your students have evaluated their service learning experience, it is appropriate for you as the teacher and service learning leader to evaluate the project. This evaluation should cover two topics:

- Overall execution of your students' project
- Your students' overall service learning experience

Evaluating Your Students' Project

Consider the following:

- Was the project age-appropriate for my students?
- Were there safety factors that should be addressed if I were to have another group of students work on this project?
- Were the scope and size of the project appropriate for my students and the time and resources they had available?
- Were students able to complete the majority of the planning and work on their own, or was much adult help required?
- If the project was held in conjunction with an outside agency, is the agency a candidate for future collaborations?
- How did students respond to the work? If there were clients involved, how did students respond to the clients?
- Have students drawn any inappropriate conclusions from their experience?

Evaluating Students' Overall Service Learning Experience

In order to determine how you can improve on this experience for other students, consider the following:

- Did students have the opportunity to practice a set of skills in a real-world context?
- Were my students academically and socially ready for this kind of experience?
- Did the project fulfill the definition of “service learning,” in that it meshed with students’ academic curricula?
- What kind of impact did the service learning project have on my students?
- What kind of emotional responses did students have? Was I adequately prepared for these responses?
- What major lessons did my students learn from their experience? Are these satisfactory, or does the project need to be altered in order to achieve different goals?

Use your evaluation to consider the future role of service learning in your classroom, what you would change, and what you would repeat. Most importantly, take time to congratulate yourself. A complex project that is student-focused requires a great deal of organization, patience, and good humor.

Service learning projects become easier to facilitate each time you repeat the process. Set an example for others by making service learning a standard part of your curriculum—and provide your students with the unmatched opportunity to connect with their communities while they learn an invaluable set of skills. This project is certain to be a win-win situation for all participants, and most importantly, the students. It is likely to be one of the richest experiences of their school careers.

INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE LEARNING



AGENDA

- What's a Service Learning Project?
- What's Going On?
- Making Up Your Mind

Objectives

Students will define “service learning project.”

Students will identify issues and problems that they perceive in their communities.

Students will select an issue to address in a service learning project.

Materials Needed

- One or two dictionaries (Part I)
- Articles about young people or celebrities who've done service projects and/or a guest speaker who can describe a personal experience with a service project (Part II)
- One large sheet of paper and marker per group (Part II)

Part I What's a Service Learning Project?

Purpose: Students define “service learning project.”

1. STUDENTS INTERPRET A QUOTE ABOUT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.

Display the following quote on the board:

“If you want your neighborhood clean, sweep the front of your steps and maybe the house on the left and the right. If you don’t want graffiti, paint over the graffiti that’s close to you. If you don’t want it to be so noisy, you try being quiet. You’ve got to treat others the way you want to be treated.” —LL Cool J

Ask students to interpret this quote. Ask if it applies to their communities. Elicit from students that the quote suggests that people have the power to improve their communities, no matter what its problems are. Ask if they have ever heard the last sentence before.

2. STUDENTS DEFINE “SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT.”

Ask students to brainstorm the meanings of the words “service” and “learning.” Ask a volunteer to write students’ definitions on the board.

Ask two other volunteers to look in the dictionary for the definitions of these words. Invite these volunteers to read aloud the definitions they find, and to write them under or next to the suggested definitions. (Students should respond: Service is work done for another or for a community; it is assistance or benefit given. Learning is knowledge acquired by study.)

Ask the class to use this information to make an educated guess about what a service learning project is. Discuss their definition, and explain that a service learning project is one in which the participants choose to do a project that provides a service to the community. Explain the difference between service learning and community service. Tell students that the participants in a service learning project are guided by a teacher to practice and use a set of skills that they have learned.

Part II What's Going On?

Purpose: Students consider service learning topics by learning about and discussing other service learning/community service projects.

1. STUDENTS READ ARTICLES OR LISTEN TO A PRESENTATION ABOUT OTHER PROJECTS.

Provide each student with a copy of an article about a service learning project executed by a young person or by a person who is well known to your students. Allow students a few minutes to read the article. If a person who has been closely involved in a community project is available to speak to the class, invite them to describe the project and the work it accomplished.

Encourage students to write down comments or questions while listening to the speaker. Have them ask their questions after the speaker's presentation.

2. STUDENTS DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE READ OR HEARD.

Organize students into groups of three or four. Give each group a large piece of paper and a marker. Assign each group questions such as the following to answer:

- Who is the focus of the article/the guest's speech? What did this person do?
- Where does this person live?
- What prompted this person/group to act? What would you have done in their position?
- What issue is the focus of the article/speech? Why did this person/group choose to address this particular issue?
- What did the person/group do to address the issue?
- What are the plans for follow-up? Is this an ongoing project?

Circulate through the room while students are working and write down striking statements.

3. STUDENTS REPORT THEIR ANSWERS TO THE WHOLE CLASS.

Facilitate a brief discussion on the information students have read or heard, encouraging them to offer their opinions on the project described, the issue it addressed, and the participants' overall experience. Read aloud the statements that you overheard while students were working.

Part III Making Up Your Mind

Purpose: Students discuss issues in their own communities and choose a topic for their service learning project(s).

1. STUDENTS SHARE THEIR OPINIONS.

Ask students to respond to some or all of the following questions:

- What problems do you see in your town, state, or country?
- What do you think are the "hot" issues in your community and in your school?
- What things do you wish were different in your community and your school?
- How do you think people perceive your community and your school?
- How do you think most people perceive adolescents? Do you think their perception is a realistic one?

Write their responses on the board.

2. STUDENTS DELVE MORE DEEPLY INTO THE ISSUES THEY'VE IDENTIFIED.

Focusing on the top five issues that generated the most interest, facilitate a discussion of the details surrounding the issues that students have identified. Ask questions such as these:

- Who is involved in this issue?
- What specifically would help to alleviate the issue or problem?
- What are some things you could do that would lead to that help?
- Are there places in your community where you could provide help?

This discussion addresses those issues that your students identified. If necessary, list the actions on a separate part of the board so that students can see them clearly.

3. SET RULES FOR DECISION MAKING.

Explain to students that they've just created a list of potential service learning projects. Explain that while each has merit, you'd like them to try to choose one on which they'd like to focus.

Explain that a final choice will be made either by majority rule (i.e., a vote will be held and the topic that receives the most votes will win) or by consensus (i.e., those in favor of a topic must convince those opposed to accept the topic). Using the same debate structure as in Module One: Communication Skills, you may choose to have students participate in a controlled debate to finalize a topic.

Another alternative is that a final choice will be made first by consensus and then by majority rule (i.e., after each group makes an argument for why their project topic should be chosen, a vote is held and the topic with the most votes will be acted upon).

4. IF THE DECISION IS BEING MADE BY MAJORITY RULE, STUDENTS VOTE ON TOPICS.

Number the potential topics as they are listed on the board. Ask each student to write on a piece of paper the number of the topic in which they are most interested. Collect the papers, count the votes, and announce which topic received the most votes.

If the number of votes between two topics is equal or especially close, consider holding a runoff vote. If the voting is still close, or if choosing becomes divisive, consider inviting students to work in smaller groups on separate projects.

5. IF THE DECISION IS BEING MADE BY CONSENSUS, STUDENTS DISCUSS AND VOTE ON TOPICS.

Number the potential topics as they are listed on the board. Call out each option and ask students to raise their hands to vote for the topic of their choice. Have students who voted similarly meet in small groups. Give each group five minutes to discuss arguments for why its choice is best. Give each group two or three minutes to present its arguments to the rest of the class. Then, hold another vote.

If you have decided to combine the consensus and majority rule methods, announce which topic received the most votes. If you have decided to make a decision solely by consensus, repeat this process until students agree upon a project.

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 the library 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.

GATHERING INFORMATION AND MAKING THE COMMITMENT



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.

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.

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.

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

FORMALIZING AND FINALIZING THE ACTION PLAN



AGENDA

- Parts of the Plan
- Getting Approval
- Creating a Time Line

Objectives

Students will identify the information that should be included in a formal action plan.

Students will determine whose approval is needed in order for them to complete their project.

Students will create a time line for the completion of their service learning project.

Materials Needed

- Magazine pictures that you have cut into puzzle pieces, enough for each group of four to five students to have a puzzle (Part I)
- Calendar pages for each month of your project (Part I)

Part I Parts of the Plan

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

1. Students review the usefulness of an action plan.

Review with students why an action plan is useful:

- It outlines what resources are available and what needs to be acquired.
- It outlines a schedule and a time line for completing the project.

2. Students complete a puzzle.

Have students form small groups of four or five. Distribute a puzzle piece to each group member, without explaining what the pieces are. Then, ask students to tell you what is depicted in the pictures you've given them. If the groups do not begin to put the puzzles together, explain that they each have five minutes to assemble the pieces they've been given into a complete picture.

After students have assembled their puzzles, ask questions such as the following:

- What did you start with in this activity?
- What did you finish the activity with?

Elicit from students that when they correctly assembled the puzzle pieces they started with, they were able to finish the activity with a clear picture. Ask students to take out the information they collected while presenting their collages during Lesson 2. Also, ensure that they have the information they collected from their research. Explain to students that they will be using all of this information to create a formal action plan—a clear picture of what their project will involve.

3. Students explore the sections that will be included in their action plan.

Write the following sections of an action plan on the board in a single column:

- Introduction
- Materials
- Human Resources
- Jobs and Responsibilities
- Schedules and Contracts
- Time Line
- Appendix

Explain each section. As you speak, write notes next to each heading indicating what should be covered in that section of the plan. When each section has been described, suggest to students that, just as they have divided their work on the project, they might consider dividing the writing according to their work group's tasks.

4. Students review the writing process.

Explain to students that there is an established process for writing that helps to ensure that the work will be complete, clear, and free of mistakes. Explain the five steps of the writing process:

- Prewriting: Use techniques such as word association, brainstorming, and outlines to generate ideas for your work.
- Writing: Use the prewriting information to write a first draft of the work.
- Revising: Read and reread your own work, and have peers review your work to make sure it is clear.
- Proofreading: Read your work again to find grammatical and spelling errors. Correct any problems.
- Publishing: After a final proofread, format the work in a way that makes it easy to read. Put it in a folder or notebook.

5. Students determine a schedule for creating their action plan.

Work with students to determine deadlines for each stage of the writing process and for each section of the action plan. Also, identify a final deadline by which the action plan will be published. Give each group a set of calendar pages. Encourage students to complete their calendars by detailing each deadline and the work expected on each date.

Part II Getting Approval

Purpose: Students determine what approvals they will need in order to complete their project.

1. Students consider situations in which they need to get approval.

Ask students to name activities for which they need their parents' permission. (Students might respond: going out with friends, staying out late, etc.) Ask them to name activities for which they need their teachers' permission. (Students might respond: leaving the classroom to go to the restroom.)

Elicit from students that approval is usually needed when someone wants to do something atypical or out of the ordinary. Since the service learning project is not something that happens every day, it will require the approval of certain people.

2. Students determine whose approval will be needed.

Have students brainstorm whose approval might be needed for their project. Ask questions such as the following:

- Who at school might need to approve the project?
- Will your project take place somewhere else? Who might need to approve use of that space?
- Will your project take place in a public facility? Who needs to give approval for you to use that facility?
- Will the project take place during school hours? Who might need to give approval for you to be somewhere else during the school day?

Have students write their answers. Explain that this information will also be included in their action plan.

Part III Creating a Time Line

Purpose: Students create a time line and a schedule for completing their project.

1. Students evaluate the usefulness of creating a step-by-step outline.

Write the following on the board:

- Melt one cup of butter.
- Form into small balls on a cookie sheet.
- Add eggs and flour.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes.
- Add one cup of sugar.
- Gather ingredients.
- Mix.

Ask students what would happen if they completed these steps as they are written. (Students should mention that they'd make a big mess.) Now, ask students if there is a different way that they could arrange these steps in order to achieve the desired result. Students should arrange the steps as follows:

- Gather ingredients.
- Melt one cup of butter.
- Add one cup of sugar.
- Add eggs and flour.
- Mix.
- Form into small balls on a cookie sheet.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes.

Ask students what would happen if they did step five before step two, or step four before step one. Elicit that without following the right order, the latter steps cannot be completed properly. Explain to students that this same idea applies to a service learning project. To get the results they want, students will need to create and follow a step-by-step plan outlining what needs to be done and when.

2. Students identify and order the steps of a project time line.

Encourage students to work in their teams to brainstorm the steps that need to be taken for the different parts of the project. Suggest that groups focus on topics such as getting materials, contacting people, getting approvals, etc.

When the groups have completed their brainstorming, have each group present its ideas about the steps that need to be followed in order to complete the project. Help students to place the steps in order, just as they ordered the steps to make cookies. Ensure that the final step of their time lines is completing the project.

3. Students attach dates to their project time lines.

When students have ordered the steps, write the date on which the project is scheduled to be completed next to the final step. Discuss with students how much time there is between now and that date. Then, facilitate students' work to attach a date to each step they have written. Encourage them to consider both the date on which a step must be completed and how long it will take to complete that step.

Conclude the activity by explaining to students that they have created a schedule, or time line, to follow as they complete their project, with time frames and deadlines that detail when each step should be accomplished. Explain that this information should be included in their action plan, and should therefore be written neatly and clearly.

GIVING PRESENTATIONS



AGENDA

- Presentation Preparation
- Practicing the Presentation
- Refining and Revising

Objectives

Students will prepare an oral presentation.

Students will practice giving an oral presentation.

Students will discover the steps to refining their action plan.

Materials Needed

- Index cards for each group (Part I)
- Art materials (e.g., poster board, markers) (Part I)
- Presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint, OpenOffice Impress) (Part I)

Part I Presentation Preparation

Purpose: Students identify the characteristics of effective presentations.

1. Students identify the characteristics of a good presentation.

Introduce the exercise by poorly giving a brief presentation (e.g., slouch, mumble, speak very informally).

Ask students what they thought of your presentation. Elicit their criticisms of your presentation. Then, ask how the presentation could be improved. List their answers on the board. (Students should respond: speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard, use good posture, organize your thoughts so listeners can easily follow your presentation.)

Explain to students that all good presentations display these characteristics.

2. Students plan the organization of their presentation and make presentation notes.

Explain to students that if they have created a written action plan, they have already completed most of the preparation necessary to give a presentation, since both the written plan and the presentation include the same information: an introduction, information on each activity to be undertaken, and a conclusion.

Ask students if it would make sense to just read aloud from their action plan if they are presenting it to someone who has already received it. Elicit that this would not make sense, since the listener has probably read the action plan and wants more information. Instead, the presentation should elaborate on the action plan's key points.

Have students work in their groups to identify the key points of the action plan (e.g., who, what, when, where, why, and how) and to write them on index cards. Work with each group to ensure that the key points are organized in an order that makes sense, just as they are organized in the action plan. Then, encourage each group to present the section of the plan on which they have worked. Engage students in a discussion about the organization of the entire presentation, including who will present which information.

3. Students create visuals for their presentations.

Ask students whether they think the presentation will be interesting if it's just a series of people standing up, reading, and then sitting down. Ask students to suggest ways to enliven the presentation so that listeners will be interested in and excited about it. Elicit that visuals would help with capturing interest.

Have small groups brainstorm visuals that might enhance each section of the presentation. Remind students that visuals are meant to enhance the presentation, not draw attention away from it; therefore, they should be colorful (but not distracting), simple, and easy to read. Encourage students to use photographs, charts, and graphs.

Have students choose and create at least one visual for each section of their presentation using the art materials and presentation software you have provided. When they have finished working, have students practice their presentation using their visuals. If necessary, discuss again with students the organization of their presentation, including who will be in charge of presenting visuals while others are speaking.

Part II Practicing the Presentation

Purpose: Students complete final preparations and practice their presentation.

1. Students practice their presentation.

Ask students why professional dancers or actors practice instead of just showing up to perform. (Students should respond: in order to improve their performances, to sharpen their skills, to practice working well together.) Explain that practice does the same thing for everyone. The best way for students to ensure that a presentation goes smoothly is to practice it until they are completely comfortable with it.

First, encourage students to practice each section of the presentation for their peers. Listeners should take notes on whether the information is organized clearly and whether the speaker can be heard. Next, have students practice their entire presentation while you take notes on the organization and flow of information, whether speakers can be heard clearly, whether the visuals are being used well, and whether students are taking an appropriate amount of time to complete their presentation. If possible, have students invite others, such as another class or teacher, to watch their presentation and to make suggestions.

2. Students practice answering questions during their presentation.

Ask students to talk about an experience in which they were listeners at a presentation. Prompt student participation by posing questions such as the following:

- What kept you interested—or disinterested—in the presentation?
- What did the speaker do well?
- As listeners, did you have questions? How and when did you ask those questions?

Tell students that it is very likely that their listeners will have questions, and that it is up to them as presenters to tell their listeners whether they would like to take questions during or after the presentation.

Explain to students that preparing for questions during a presentation is much like preparing for questions during a job interview—they should think about what they would want to know if they were hearing about the project. Encourage students to brainstorm possible questions that a person outside the classroom might have about the project.

Prepare students to field questions by acting as an attendee at the presentation and asking questions. Invite other teachers or students to do the same. Remind students that if they do not know the answer to a question, it is appropriate to respond by saying, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out and get back to you.”

3. Students make final preparations for their presentation.

Discuss the following with students:

- **Attire**—As in a job interview, the way that you present yourself reflects how you feel about what you’re presenting. The way you dress can prove that you are taking your project seriously. There’s no need to be formal, but you should dress neatly and professionally.
- **Behavior**—It won’t matter what you’re wearing if your behavior doesn’t also show that you are taking the project seriously. You should consider the presentation to be like an interview, and behave appropriately. Holding side conversations or arguing with one another is not appropriate. If you behave professionally, your listeners will take you seriously.
- **Conclusion and Thank-You**—Because you’ll be presenting a lot of information, it’s important to include a conclusion that briefly summarizes your presentation’s key points. A conclusion also lets your audience know when it’s time to ask questions or to leave. Remember that your listeners have other commitments as well, so you should be sure to thank them for their time.
- **Notes**—You’re going to be concentrating hard during your presentation, and you’ll probably be excited; it can be easy to forget some of the things that happen during the presentation. It’s a good idea to appoint a few people to take notes on what happens, what questions are asked, and what requests are made, so that you will remember what needs to be done after the presentation.
- **Requests**—Remember that if you are asking your listeners for approval or for feedback, you must clearly describe what you want and suggest a deadline.

Part III Refining and Revising

Purpose: Students explore the steps to revising their action plan.

1. Students share their feelings about revising their project.

Ask students to discuss or write about their project experience up to now. Encourage them to discuss their feelings about having to revisit or revise their original plan.

Help students to understand that revising a project is like revising a piece of writing—the goal is to improve the outcome. While it may seem difficult to revise a plan that was exciting and seemed perfect, there's no reason to be discouraged. Help students to reexamine what inspired them to do a project in the first place. Remind them that their service learning project will allow them to practice skills they've learned and provide a service to their communities.

2. Students identify what needs to be changed.

If students are revising the project based on a request from someone whose approval is required, facilitate a class discussion about the requested changes. Encourage students to seek clarification about anything that is unclear.

If students are revising the project because their planning made it clear that the project could not be completed as they had hoped (perhaps because of time or resource restrictions), encourage them to pinpoint the problem areas of their plan and create a list of issues that must be addressed.

3. Students revise their action plan.

Ask students to review the definition and uses of an action plan:

- Action plans outline what resources are available and what needs to be acquired.
- Action plans also outline a schedule and a time line for completing the project.

Help students to revisit the activities and questions they encountered in the first four lessons and revise their action plan.

AGENDA

- Tracking Your Progress
- Work Ethic
- Special Considerations

Objectives

Students will evaluate means of tracking their progress as they work to complete their project.

Students will explore the importance of and the qualities that comprise a strong work ethic.

Students will evaluate specific project issues that may require special attention.

Materials Needed

- A popular song, a well-known poem or speech, or a clip of a popular television show or movie (Part I)
- One copy of the “Tracking Sheet” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- One copy of the “Sample Memo” activity sheet for each student (Part I)
- Six to 10 index cards or playing cards for each student (Part II)

Part I Tracking Your Progress

Purpose: Students evaluate the use of tracking sheets and status memos.

1. Students discover the usefulness of keeping records.

Before playing a popular song, reciting a well-known poem or speech, or playing a clip of a popular television show or movie for students, count the number of times a particular letter, word, or phrase (of your choosing) appears in the piece. Choose one that will appear many times. Then, tell students to pay close attention to the piece, as you'll be asking them questions about it afterward.

Play or recite the piece. Then, ask students how many times the particular letter, word, or phrase appeared in the piece. Students should be unable to accurately recall the correct number.

Tell students that you will give them another chance to find the correct answer. Encourage them to keep a record this time of what they're looking for on a piece of paper.

Play or recite the piece again. Ask students again how many times the particular letter, word, or phrase appeared in the piece. Then, ask questions such as the following:

- Why are you able to answer this question?
- If you hadn't kept records, would you be able to answer the question confidently?

Explain to students that in the workplace, record keeping is crucial. It's impossible to remember the details of everything that happens, so careful record keeping ensures that they can make good comparisons and learn from work that's already been done. This is similar to their looking for information about others' service learning projects in order to learn from what others have done. Record keeping also helps to keep track of which tasks have been completed and which still need to be done.

2. Students become familiar with tracking sheets.

Distribute the "Tracking Sheet" activity sheet to each student, and place a copy of the tracking sheet where everyone can see. Walk students through each section of the sheet, first soliciting their opinions on the purpose of each section, and then providing a straightforward explanation for each. As a class, decide on an example that you can use to fill out the tracking sheet.

Discuss with students a schedule for submitting tracking sheets to you, and establish dates on which you expect to receive tracking sheets from each group. Also, discuss with students what sort of filing system they will adopt in order to keep their records safe and organized.

3. Students become familiar with status memos.

Distribute copies of the “Sample Memo” activity sheet, and place a copy of the sample memo where everyone can see it. Explain to students that memos are a crucial form of communication used in the workplace. Explain that learning to write a memo is not difficult because the structure of a memo is always the same. Once students know the structure, they will always be able to write memos.

Walk students through each part of a memo, beginning with the headings (“To,” “From,” “Re,” “Date”). Explain that the body of a memo can be divided into three parts:

- Explanation of why the memo is being written
- Important information
- How to contact the writer

A memo should always be written as simply as possible, and it should not exceed one page.

4. Students practice writing a status memo.

Have students work in small groups. Assign each team to compose two status memos: one that will be sent to you, and one that will be sent to the other teams working on the project. The memo should explain the current status of the project.

Ask students if they had difficulty writing their status memos. As a class, discuss ways to determine which information should be included in their memos.

Afterward, have students identify which people involved in their project should receive memos (e.g., principal, community leader). Discuss how often memos should be sent, and create a schedule for sending memos (if appropriate).

Part II Work Ethic

Purpose: Students explore the importance of a strong work ethic.

1. Students build a house of cards.

Distribute index cards or playing cards to students; then, have them form small groups. Instruct each group to build a house of cards. The team that builds the tallest house wins. Give students three minutes to complete the activity. While students are working, move around the room and watch them work.

When the activity is over, ask students the following questions:

- Was it easy to build a house that didn't fall down? What method did you use to keep the cards up?
- What caused the house to fall down?
- If your house were standing and you took out one card, would the house have remained standing?

Help students to understand that in a house of cards, all the cards are dependent on one another—if one card drops, the whole house comes down. Explain that when working with a team on a project, the same principle applies—if one person loses momentum, or doesn't meet their responsibilities, the whole project can fall apart.

2. Students discuss the importance of commitment.

Ask students to pretend that they are business owners who have put all of their personal resources into the business of their dreams. The business grows, and they decide to hire employees. Ask students, "What qualities do you want to see in your employees?"

Remind students that they have put all of their personal resources into the business, so they are dependent on its success. Write their answers to the question on the board. (Students should respond: people who are committed to their work, complete tasks on time, keep others informed, stay enthusiastic even in the face of obstacles, communicate well with their co-workers, and are more concerned about the success of the project than about "getting their way.")

Have students identify what would happen if they hired employees who weren't committed to their business. Explain that just as commitment is important to a business, students must be committed to their service learning project in order for it to be a success.

3. Students learn about the power of attitudes and expressions.

Have students work in pairs. Explain to students that their assignment is to mirror one another's emotional expressions, but to do so without speaking. Say, "For example, if your 'mirror image' appears sad, you should mirror their sad expression. If your mirror image's emotional expression changes to enthusiastic, your expression should mirror that change."

Explain that students must concentrate intensely in order to seamlessly mirror one another. Give the class five minutes to complete the activity.

When students have finished the exercise, encourage them to share their responses. Ask:

- Was it easy to mirror your partner's image?
- Did one person model most of the expressions while the other person mirrored them, or did you take turns modeling and mirroring?
- What thoughts were running through your mind as you mirrored one another's expressions?
- Do you think this exercise was anything like real life? What happens when the people around you are expressing a particular emotion?

Elicit from students that people's emotions and expressions tend to influence the emotions and expressions of those around them. Ask students what effect this might have if people's emotional expressions are primarily negative. Elicit from students that their attitude and expressions will affect their service learning project; therefore, it's important for everyone to stay positive and motivated.

4. Students discuss the importance of dependability.

Read the following scenario to students:

You call a friend, and the two of you decide to go to the movies. The movie you're going to see is brand new and popular, so you decide that he'll meet you at the theater by 6:30 in order to get tickets. As soon as you hang up the phone, it rings—it's another friend, someone you haven't seen in a while. She's leaving at 6:15 to go to a party and wants you to come. You say thanks, but tell her that you already have plans. You hang up and head for the theater. Six-thirty comes and goes, and your friend is nowhere to be found. At 6:45, the tickets sell out. At 7:00 he walks up casually and asks if you're ready to see the movie.

Ask students:

- How would you feel?
- What would you do?
- How will you feel the next time your friend asks you to go to the movies with him?

As a class, discuss the importance of dependability and keeping commitments to the service learning project. Tell students that if they fail to keep a commitment, they must be sure to apologize and work to correct their behavior.

Part III Special Considerations

Purpose: Students evaluate project issues that may require special attention.

1. Students discuss special considerations for project materials.

Explain to students that managing project materials means more than simply collecting them. Encourage students to brainstorm what other issues, with regard to materials, might need to be considered. (Students should respond: record keeping, storage, cleanup, special agreements for donated or borrowed items.)

Help students to create a checklist that will help them keep track of what materials they need, how and when they'll get these materials, and where the materials can be found.

Ask students to consider the following questions regarding how to store their materials:

- Do you have permission to store things where you'd like to keep them?
- Is your storage area in a secure place, where you know the materials won't be disturbed?
- Are there any materials that must be specially stored (e.g., paint or cleaning solvents, breakable items, perishable items)?
- How long can you use the space to store things?
- Do the appropriate people know where materials are stored?

Have students consider the following additional questions:

- Will there be any trash left over from the materials used? How will the trash be disposed of? Are there any special procedures to be followed (e.g., separating recyclables, using special trash bags or bins)?
- What will be done with leftover materials?
- Are there any borrowed materials that must be returned immediately after the project is completed? How will you get them where they need to go on time?
- What kind of cleanup will be required? Are there any potential messes or spills that must be prepared for? Would any particular cleaning supplies be needed in order to adequately clean up these spills or messes?

Students should create an established plan for managing, cleaning up, and returning materials on time.

2. Students discuss special considerations for transportation.

Ask students the following questions:

- Will your project take place off school grounds? How do you plan on getting there on the day of the project?
- Will you need to visit the site before the actual day of the project? How many times will you need to visit the site beforehand? How do you plan on getting there?
- Do you need to go anywhere else in order to meet with people or pick up materials? How do you plan on getting there?
- Will you need to transport materials anywhere? How will you do that?

As a class, discuss these transportation issues and how they might be addressed. Explain that if students need to, they may request your help with arranging transportation, completing the appropriate paperwork, and so on.

TRACKING SHEET

NAME:

TODAY'S DATE:

PROJECT TOPIC:

Name	Task	Target Date	Actual Date	Comments

SAMPLE MEMO

TO: Ms. Grimes
FROM: Playwriting Team
RE: Weekly Progress Report
DATE: March 22

This week, our team accomplished the following tasks:

- Wrote a second draft of the play's second act.
- Proofread the first act, which is now complete.
- Met with the research team to discuss the following questions that we still need answered for the final act of the play:
 - What species of fish are part of the park's ecosystem?
 - How does the change of seasons affect the ecosystem?

We have the following challenges to overcome:

- The elementary school auditorium is booked on the day we had planned for our performance.
- We still cannot find cardboard boxes for scenery.

Next week, we plan to complete the following tasks:

- Write the first draft of the play's third and final act.
- Get the second draft of the second act proofread.
- Reschedule date for auditorium at the elementary school; review time lines.
- Contact more local stores and recycling plants to request cardboard boxes.

THE BIG DAY



AGENDA

- Checking and Double-Checking
- Last-Minute Issues
- Walk-Through

Objectives

Students will look over their action plan and ensure that they have completed each step of their project planning.

Students will brainstorm and create action plans to address last-minute project issues.

Students will create a project agenda.

Materials Needed

- One large sheet of paper and one marker for each group of two to three students (Part II)

Part I Checking and Double-Checking

Purpose: Students ensure they have completed each project-planning step.

1. Students discuss the importance of checking and double-checking.

Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever packed a bag to take with them on an overnight trip or sleepover. Ask students if they have ever forgotten to pack an item that they needed, such as toothpaste or a toothbrush. Ask those students if they knew when they left home that they had not packed every item that they would need.

Remind students that they have created materials lists, time lines, and plans for their service learning project. Tell them that after all of that work, it would be a shame not to have everything go as planned simply because they forgot something. Explain to students that it is important to double-check everything about their project, even if it seems obvious.

2. Students double-check each step of their project.

Have students work in small groups of two or three to look over their action plan, checklists, schedules, and status memos. Have each group report on whether each of their planning steps has been completed or whether they are still working to complete parts of the action plan.

Part II Last-Minute Issues

Purpose: Students brainstorm last-minute project issues and needs.

1. Students brainstorm last-minute project needs.

Have the entire class brainstorm last-minute project needs, issues, or potential problems. Have a volunteer write results on the board. Encourage students to concentrate on identifying all issues of concern before discussing or addressing any of them.

2. Students create action plans for addressing last-minute issues.

Explain to students that the best way to ensure that each issue they've identified is addressed is to create mini-action plans. Have students work in small groups of two to three, with each group considering one or two issues, identifying that issue's details, and creating a plan for dealing with the issue. Give each group a large sheet of paper and a marker. Students should write their plans on the large sheet of paper. Have groups report back to the class on their plans.

Part III Walk-Through

Purpose: Students walk through each step of their service learning project.

1. Students do a project walk-through.

As a class, have students verbally walk through each step of their service learning project, beginning with their arrival at school that morning and ending with their departure from school at the end of the day. Students should describe what will happen during each part of the day and how long each step will take.

2. Students create an agenda.

As students describe the day of their project, write their descriptions and time estimates on the board. Help students use this information to create an agenda for the day of the project. Encourage students to write or type their agenda and to distribute copies to all participants.

SELF-ASSESSMENT



AGENDA

- Self-Assessment: What and Why
- What to Consider
- Methods of Self-Assessing

Objectives

Students will explore the usefulness of their self-assessment.

Students will discover questions to consider when self-assessing.

Students will choose a method of self-assessing their service learning experiences.

Part I Self-Assessment: What and Why

Purpose: Students discuss what self-assessment is and why it can be useful.

1. Students write about a personal experience.

Ask students to write about a personal experience that was either very positive or very negative. Tell students to be as descriptive as they can. They should include what happened, how they felt, what they would change about the experience, and what actions they would repeat.

2. Students self-assess the experience.

Encourage students to discuss what they wrote, and ask them if they learned anything from their experiences. Explain that they have just completed the process of self-assessment: taking stock of a situation and deciding what lessons were learned, what actions to repeat, and what not to repeat. Self-assessment is how people learn in the workplace and in life.

Part II What to Consider

Purpose: Students explore questions to consider when self-assessing.

1. Students brainstorm self-assessment questions.

Have students brainstorm questions they think should be considered when self-assessing their service learning project. Write responses on the board. If appropriate, include some or all of the following:

- What was the goal of the project? Do you think the goal was achieved? Why or why not?
- Was the work you did personally meaningful to you? Why?
- Who do you think benefited from your work? How did they benefit?
- What made you happy about your experience? What made you unhappy? Was there anything about the project that bothered you? What? Why?
- Did you have a chance to interact with people whom the project was serving? How? What was that like?
- If you could have done one thing about the project differently, what would it have been? Why?
- What was the best part of your service learning experience? The worst? Why?
- Did you learn anything new during the process? What?
- What is happening in your community/society that makes your project necessary?
- Are there any assumptions or stereotypes that you held when you started this project that you now know to be false?
- How are you different after participating in the service learning project?

Part III Methods of Self-Assessing

Purpose: Students choose a means of self-assessing their service learning experience.

1. Students identify modes of expression.

Have students work in small groups of three or four to brainstorm different ways in which people express themselves. To help students begin their work, you may need to provide some examples (e.g., writing, music, painting). Have each group report back to the class on the results of its brainstorming while a volunteer writes responses on the board.

After all responses are recorded, engage the class in a discussion about the modes of expression that are listed. Ask students to explain which mode they feel most comfortable using to express their own thoughts and feelings, and which they are most able to understand or learn from.

Explain to students that people learn and express what they know or think in many different ways. Ensure that students understand that no one mode of expression or learning is better than the others—whichever mode allows them to learn or express themselves best is the mode that they should use.

2. Students complete a self-assessment of their project.

Have students complete a self-assessment of their participation in the service learning project in a way that takes advantage of their preferred learning and/or expression styles. Students may wish to express their thoughts in writing, music, art, or dance. If students wish, invite them to share their self-assessment projects with their classmates. If students feel that their self-assessment works are personal, assure them that they will be kept private.

PUBLIC ASSESSMENT



AGENDA

- Public Assessment: What and Why
- What to Consider
- Methods of Public Assessment

Objectives

Students will explore the usefulness and methods of public assessment.

Students will discover questions to consider when creating a public assessment.

Students will choose a means of publicly assessing their service learning experience.

Students will prepare a public assessment.

Part I Public Assessment: What and Why

Purpose: Students discuss what public assessment is and why it can be useful.

1. Students recall how they began work on their service learning project.

Ask students to recall the process they went through when starting their service learning project. Elicit from students that they started with an idea and then researched information on the project topic and on service learning in general. Ask students what kinds of sources they searched for and consulted in order to find this information. Elicit from students that one of the sources they looked for was information on other service learning projects.

Explain to students that in the workplace, a public assessment of a project is almost always expected. Public assessments report to others what kinds of projects took place and whether they were successful. The assessments also provide important information to others who may want to initiate similar projects. Explain to students that a public assessment of their service learning project will provide a source of information for others who are interested in service learning or in their project topic.

Part II What to Consider

Purpose: Students explore questions to consider when creating a public assessment.

1. Students discuss information to consider in a public assessment.

Have students list information they looked for when they did research for the project. (Students should respond: what happened during previous projects and planning processes, what steps were taken to plan and complete the projects, what were the projects' outcomes, what were some suggestions concerning steps or actions taken that others should repeat or avoid.)

Have a volunteer list students' responses on the board. Explain to students that the information they have listed should be addressed in their assessment of the project.

Part III Methods of Public Assessment

Purpose: Students choose a means of publicly assessing their service learning project.

1. Students discuss means of assessing their project.

Have students work in small groups of four or five to brainstorm different ways they could present a public assessment of their project. Encourage students to consider their suggestions about ways of self-assessing their projects. You may wish to provide students with the following examples of public assessments:

- Written report
- Annotated photo album or collage
- Public presentation
- Public forum, question-and-answer session
- Play or video about their experiences
- Publishing excerpts from their journals
- Newspaper or newsletter articles
- Website

Have each group report the results of their brainstorming to the class while a volunteer writes responses on the board.

2. Students complete a public assessment.

Have students work as a class to discuss and choose the method or methods they wish to use in order to create a public assessment of their project. Have them prepare the assessment and present it.