## AGENDA

- Student Assessment
- Teacher Assessment

**Student 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 did they benefit?

- 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 his or her 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.