

TAKING ACTION



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.

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 it. 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.