

HOW TO FOSTER YOUTH-LED SERVICE LEARNING

Research has shown that youth who participate meaningfully in their community are more successful in school.¹ Follow these simple steps to assist youth in designing and carrying out service learning projects in their communities.

- 1. Create the time and space:** Here are some questions to consider when arranging for Service Learning projects:
 - Will the projects be carried out as electives or as a required component of your program?
 - Will the service be a one-day event, or ongoing projects?
 - Will the projects take place on or off site?
 - Will everyone do one project, or will projects be done in small groups or individually?
 - **Find a project:** Allow youth to determine what the service project will be:
 - Begin your program by asking youth to brainstorm where help is needed in their community
 - Ask youth to come up with ideas for how they might help those in need (e.g. clean a park, make get-well cards for children in the hospital, knit hats for the homeless, etc.)
 - Assist youth in completing the service learning project planning form to identify resources needed, plan project, and create a timeline (attached)
- 2. Prepare for the project:**
 - Before doing service, provide articles or lead discussions that address the larger picture of your service project (e.g. read an article or watch a movie about homelessness, the environment, or hunger)
 - Assist students with making phone calls to agencies, gathering materials, and planning for their projects
- 3. Create a space for Reflection:**
 - After each project, allow students to reflect on their experience. Samples of Effective Journal Questions are attached to this sheet.
- 4. Celebrate/Appreciate:**
 - Plan a celebration or day of appreciation to recognize the contribution that the youth are making to their community!

¹ Peter L. Benson, Peter C. Scales, Nancy Leffert, and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1999)



WHAT SHOULD I HAVE IN MY TOOL BOX?

- Service Learning Project Planning Form (on reverse)
- Samples of Effective Journal Questions (attached)
- Service Learning Ideas... and contacts to get you started (attached)
- Helpful websites to get you started include
 - Youth Service California: www.YSCAL.org
 - The National Youth Leadership Council: www.NYLC.org
 - Youth Service America: www.YSA.org

I HAVE A TIGHT BUDGET, WHAT'S THIS GOING TO COST ME?



- ⌘ Materials for the project (e.g. trash bags, gloves, disposable cameras, etc.)
- ⌘ Certificates for completion
- ⌘ Materials for celebration
- ⌘ Many organizations give mini-grants to support youth-led service learning projects, encourage youth to research ways to fund their projects!