

AFTERSCHOOL *news*



Making Service Learning a Part of Extended Learning

Service learning, extended programs that seek to integrate volunteer service into a learning experience, can be extremely rewarding afterschool programs for participants, sponsoring organizations, and the community. Well-designed service-learning programs help students apply their academic learning to real-world situations and offer them leadership and problem-solving experience.

Have students lead the investigation. Quality service-learning programs involve students in researching and planning the service project. Instructors can help students identify a need or opportunity, create a plan, and enact it, allowing students responsibility in choosing and leading the project.

Link service learning to academic studies. A key to distinguishing community service projects and service-learning projects is the connection between the activity and students' academic curriculum. Both community service and service learning benefit the community, but service-learning projects intentionally help students connect academic theory and practice. In turn, students involved in service learning generally perform better in the classroom.

Action leads to reflection. Much of students' personal development in service learning comes after the project ends. Evaluating its successes and failures and their roles in the outcome enables students to identify personal strengths and weaknesses. Again, this step rarely occurs in community service projects but is integral to successful service learning.

Celebrate the experience. Successful service-learning projects represent significant investments in time, often spanning several weeks or months. At the culmination of the service, instructors should acknowledge and celebrate the project and students' roles in it. The celebration could be a recognition ceremony within the afterschool group or a demonstration of the project to a larger audience.

Continue and sustain students' interest in service. Service learning strives to create lifelong civic participants. To sustain students' participation and desire to serve, service learning programs should be prepared to launch into investigating new projects as soon as students complete their initial project.



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The SEDL National Center for Quality Afterschool helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.

www.sedl.org/afterschool



RECOMMENDED *resource*

VIRTUAL ACADEMY FOR AFTERSCHOOL

This interactive professional development resource includes five online courses for professionals in a variety of expanded learning settings. Each course includes links to help align afterschool to day-school learning, effective instructional strategies, guided practice in project planning, and evidence-based instruction models that keep students engaged.

www.sedl.org/afterschool/academy

Jennings All Stars

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Afterschool learning programs sometimes struggle to incorporate service learning into their programs. At Jennings All Stars in St. Louis, Missouri, however, service learning is the key component. High school students compete for one of only 15 spots in a 3-year program that culminates in an international service trip. "The goal," as director Grace Lee explains, "is to create service-minded students who will go on to college and continue to build their sense of service."

Students spend their first year in the program studying poverty and how it affects their lives and communities. In the second year, students take their studies to the global level, examining how international efforts to combat hunger have affected communities.



In the final year, students select the country they would like to serve. The most recent class of students chose to serve the children of Kibera, a slum in Nairobi, Kenya. The Jennings All Stars built a basketball court and playground for the children living in Africa's largest slum. Upon returning home, the students evaluated the impact of their work and continued to examine how service affects others.

The travel makes funding an issue, but Lee views it as an integral component of the program. "I believe the students learn more when they experience new things, get immersed in different cultures, and step outside their comfort zone," Lee explains. She also closely connects participation in the afterschool program to increased academic gains during the school day. Because students do not want to lose their space in the program, they comply with its rigorous requirements. Students must attend weekly meetings and monthly retreats, complete all reading and writing assignments, maintain at



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GRACE LEE
director

least a 3.0 GPA, and follow academic plans created for them. All of Lee's students have gone on to college.

Lee thinks service learning should be included in all afterschool programs. "I think one of the most important lessons we can teach our kids is to learn how to serve others without expecting anything back. I think our programs will be richer, our lives richer, and our future a lot brighter."

TEACHING tip

Getting Families Involved

Service-learning projects are not just for students. They can also provide opportunities for parents to get involved. Parents who live in the community may have suggestions for possible projects. Once a project has been selected, parents can serve as a link between your afterschool program and the community. If your service-learning project includes a final event, open house, or celebration, remember to include parents so that they can celebrate their students' achievements.



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EVENTS calendar

- June 10-12 Adolescent Literacy: How to Access and Comprehend Text
<http://www.sedl.org/cpl/sessions/13.html>
AUSTIN, TX
- July 9 Summer Learning Day
www.summerlearning.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=104&Itemid=426
NATIONWIDE
- July 14-15 Active Learning With Technology II
<http://www.sedl.org/cpl/sessions/11.html>
AUSTIN, TX

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.