

SERVICE-LEARNING IN OUR



BY KEVIN ENGLISH AND DEB MOORE

Many schools use service-learning on their campus to enhance their classroom content. “Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities,” notes the Learn and Serve Clearinghouse. It is not volunteering. It is an application of academic standards to the project that makes it more than just a volunteer event. “Service-learning provides structured time for thoughtful planning of the service project and guided

reflection by participants on the service experience.”

Programs

There are several projects that can be implemented on the high school campus that can promote service-learning. The following two, Empty Bowls and The Solar Project, were implemented at Raymond S. Kellis High School, Glendale, Arizona.

Empty Bowls

Empty Bowls is a nationwide program developed to feed the hungry in communities. The Empty Bowls concept was cre-

ated by an artist/teacher in 1990. “From its humble beginnings as a meal for the staff of one high school, Empty Bowls has spread across the United States and beyond and has raised tens of millions of dollars for anti-hunger organizations,” notes Empty Bowls’ Web site. Raymond S. Kellis took part in this program during both lunches on March 12th. Teachers purchased lunch for \$10 that day at the Culinary Café. Lunch included pasta, salad and iced tea as well as the selection of a bowl created by our students. (Teachers could choose a student-produced ceramic bowl, a wooden bowl or a bread bowl.)

This cross-curricular project included

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the ceramics, woods, culinary, accounting and marketing students with each classroom working toward their own state standards. For example, the marketing students covered their event planning, leadership and management studies and utilized their project management techniques. The accounting students tracked all the monies and costs on a spreadsheet. The culinary students cooked and planned for the crowds at their restaurant; they also hosted and worked on customer service techniques. The ceramics students learned how to make bowls, and the woodworking class learned how to turn bowls with the machines in their shop. All the students were able to reflect upon their part in the event and how their work made a difference in the community.

The Solar Project

The student store at Raymond S. Kellis has undergone some upgrades this year and in the process has added more appliances. Unfortunately, the electrical load blew the circuits in the building. The marketing students sought advice on how to make changes on the loads by asking the building trades classes to do an electrical assessment of their needs. Thus was born another service-learning project on the campus. The building trades class decided that the installation of solar panels would be perfect for the store, a great learning opportunity, and a good thing to do for the environment by going green. This project would require some funding, though. Enter a partnership with Green Clubs of America. The club applied for a grant on the school's behalf, and was awarded \$15,000 from the Earth Day Network for the project. The students then worked with Green Fuel, a local

company, to learn how to install the solar panels. Students and Green Fuel will be making a difference by collaborating on this solar project.

The Solar Project will now have a culminating event on Earth Day, April 22nd; the marketing students are working on their public relations and sponsorship sales state standards as they plan the event. The Green Fair will be held on the campus of the school with parents, teachers and business partners working to educate the community about alternative energy. The main event will be the "flipping of the switch" for the solar panels that will power the student store appliances. The event will include clubs and vendors educating the public about how to save energy and be more environmentally friendly. In addition to learning the curriculum in this hands-on way, the students will have an opportunity to reflect on how their event has helped make the community better.

Practice

All great projects start with finding out the needs of your school and your community to figure out if you can work your curriculum into the solution. Read the paper for leads, or come up with an idea and seek out partners. The biggest challenge is for the teacher to be a great task manager. There has to be a clear understanding of the full scope of the job and how it will align to your state standards. Then, the teacher will need to use a calendar to plan out the deadlines for students, with some wiggle room built in for delays that will occur. Once the work gets going the students, teachers and business partners will form a bond that will enhance the classroom learning. The

students will become actively engaged in the process and will take pride in the results. For further assistance, there is a 10-step guideline that can be downloaded at www.nationalservicerresources.org/node/17462.

Impact to Schools and Communities

There are many benefits to the schools and communities from service-learning projects. The two projects listed here will raise money for the hungry in the community and will reduce the ecological footprint of the school. There are additional learning outcomes from the Corporation of National and Community Service. It notes that service-learning:

- Promotes learning through active participation in service experiences.
- Provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and/or writing about their service experience.
- Provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations.
- Extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community.
- Fosters a sense of caring for others.

You should try a small project first and then build on that success. Once you get going, you will find out how dynamic and meaningful your classroom can be! **I**

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