



Service-Learning Project Examples Elementary School

The possibilities for service-learning projects are endless. The following are examples of real projects. Though successful service-learning requires projects that are tailored to the specific needs of the participants, these examples can be a wonderful tool to help practitioners and young people jumpstart the brainstorming process and dream up their own service-learning projects. Though these projects are targeted at elementary school students, they can be easily adapted for other ages.

Cooking Club

Kindergarten through Grade 6 and Special Education

Subjects: Reading, Math, and Communication

Special needs students chose nondisabled peer buddies to assist them in mastering the skills necessary to shop for groceries and prepare a nutritious meal. The special education students began by practicing their ability to read labels and recipes, along with the math skills to make change for food purchases. As a group, they choose an ethnic theme and searched for appropriate recipes. They planned the meal, made a grocery list, and purchased the ingredients. The students prepared the food and served it at a multicultural celebration, where visitors from a local senior center were guests of honor.

In the process, students began to rely on each other, instead of adults, for assistance with making decisions. Through ethnic foods and customs, the students shared their knowledge of other cultures with the guests. The special education students increased their reading, math, and communication skills, and improved their ability to develop peer relationships with nondisabled students. The nondisabled students increased their awareness and acceptance of students with disabilities.

Human Rights in a Montessori School

Grades 4 through 6

Subjects: Multicultural and Global Education

Classes studying the Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights developed projects to connect to those studies. The group brainstormed ideas, identified projects, and conducted related research.

The results were a wide range of projects: Students created a presentation on the Rights of the Child that was given at City Hall and the governor's mansion. They organized and participated in a peace site rededication and a peace prize festival. They also wrote and performed a play about child labor. After they performed the play for the local school board, the board agreed that the district would not buy soccer balls made by child labor.

Through the process, students improved their public speaking, interviewing, and photography skills. They regularly discussed what they had learned, wrote in their journals, and analyzed related issues.

The Honduras Project

Grades 1 through 3

Subjects: Math, Reading, Spanish, Art, and Geography

After learning that schools in Honduras lacked books, elementary students launched The Honduras Project. They wrote letters in Spanish to their peers in Honduras, raised money, and charted the progress of their fundraising. The students raised \$1,000, which they used to provide books for the Honduran students. Through the process, they enhanced their skills in math, reading, Spanish, art, geography, and design.

Family Bookworks

Grade 2

Subject: Reading and Art

In partnership with a local book center, students created books recording family stories and traditions. Artists trained the teachers in bookmaking, allowing them to guide their students through the process. Each student wrote a personal narrative. The families then joined their children at the book center, where they constructed and decorated the books together. The books were displayed publicly at a local department store. The second graders also read their books to the kindergarten students, and hosted an event where the stories were read for all of the families. At the end of the school year, students were given the option of donating their books to the second grade library.

This project also had a number of related activities: Families were invited to the school to participate in a folklore event with a local storyteller. At the event, the families wrote and designed books of their favorite folktales from their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and shared their work at the end of the day. A paper artist also worked with students to help them create and design their own symbol of peace using handmade paper. The symbols were then assembled into a beautiful hanging mosaic at a peace prize festival and the school's peace site dedication.

Quilt-Makers Project

Kindergarten

Subjects: Math, Reading, and Art

It all began as an introduction to the letter "Q": Quilt-related literature, both fiction and nonfiction, was read to the kindergarteners to give them the historical and cultural backgrounds on the origins of quilts. They reflected on how quilts relate to family traditions, and discussed the emotional and physical comfort a quilt can provide.

The children then took their love of quilting one-step further, creating a quilt to comfort a baby residing in a nearby shelter. The students used their imaginations and artistry to create quilt squares. When the quilt squares were completed and stitched together, each child took the quilt home for a night. Parents and children wrote and drew their thoughts and impressions in a journal that accompanied the quilt. The process culminated when the baby and mother visited the classroom and received the quilt.

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