



# Service-Learning Project Examples

## Middle 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 middle school students, they can be easily adapted for other ages.*

### **Controlling Buckthorn**

*Grades 7 and 8*

Subjects: Science and Social Studies

Facing a growing threat of buckthorn — a tall non-native shrub that spreads aggressively, forcing out local flora, including tree saplings — students did an issue analysis, community education program, and cleanup projects. The students divided themselves into action groups to research and respond to the problem, with different groups focusing on educating elementary students, conducting public surveys, contacting media outlets, and designing a brochure for a river bluff specialist. In the spring, the students helped the county Parks Department with a buckthorn removal project.

To reflect on their work, students discussed and wrote about issues relating to buckthorn. For the final reflection activity, they worked in groups to create and share reports about their group experiences. At the end of the school year, the students celebrated their accomplishments with a party.

### **Neighborhood Heroes**

*Grades 6 through 8*

Subjects: Writing and Reading

Students wanted to honor the local heroes who had a positive impact on their community. To prepare, the youths took a bus tour of their ethnically diverse neighborhood, heard folk stories retold by local residents, and wrote their own stories. The students then interviewed local heroes and compiled those interviews into a book. They honored the local heroes at an awards banquet and gave readings of the book at their school. The book was then donated to a local resource center.

To reflect on their work, each student wrote both an essay on why we need heroes and also an evaluation of the project. The class celebrated their success with a gathering that included community-building activities and food from their cultural heritages.

### **Books for Children**

*Grades 7 and 8*

Subject: Spanish

Students in a town with a Central American sister city wanted to learn more about their counterparts. A volunteer from the Sister City Project spoke to the class, showing slides of the Central American community. When the speaker told the students about “Libros para Niños” (Books for Children), a program providing books for Central American children, the students decided to make and donate handcrafted books. The youths studied simple Spanish vocabulary to write the books, and wrote essays about themselves to accompany the donation.

Throughout the semester, students evaluated the project via class discussions. The teachers and the students graded the books based on language content and creativity. The youths shared the completed books with each other and with visitors from the state’s Department of Education. At the project’s close, the books were sent to preschoolers in the sister city.

**A Virtual Tour***Grades 7 through 9*

Subjects: English and Art

Youths created a school-orientation video that prospective students and their parents could view at home. To prepare for the project, they took classes covering data collection and organization, interviewing, filming, editing, narrating, and graphic design. They planned and produced a video that gives families a glimpse into the day-to-day school routine, including its curriculum and policies. The video is narrated in English, Hmong, Somali, and Spanish, ensuring that it serves the entire school community, including English Language Learners and their families.

**Preventing West Nile***Grades 7 and 8*

Subjects: Biology, Language Arts, and Video Production

After reviewing a number of issues affecting their local area, seventh and eighth graders decided to take action and try to stop the spread of the West Nile Virus in their community. They began by conducting Internet research and reviewing information from the Department of Health and the state's River Basin Commission. From their research, they discovered there was no cure, but that members of the community, if educated, could help prevent its spread.

The students sprang into action. They surveyed the community about their knowledge of how West Nile is spread. Based on the results, they created a brochure containing a "Back Yard Checklist" for eliminating mosquitoes, which was distributed to local residents and at a nearby mall. Other students created PowerPoint presentations used to educate community groups, schools, and participants at a statewide environmental conference. Finally, a collaboration with the local cable company resulted in a public service video documenting the students' research, actions, and recommendations. The video aired several times on cable TV and was made available to the public.

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