

HERBERT HOOVER: A LIFE OF SERVICE

Designing a Service Learning Project

The purpose of this guide is to demonstrate the importance of incorporating a service ethic into the lives of today's students. By highlighting Herbert Hoover's life as an example of a lifetime of service, and planning a service learning opportunity based on some of the resources and suggestions in this guide this will afford students a chance to construct a productive community-oriented life and see their learning in more than just school terms.

Community Service Learning

Herbert Hoover's life was a reflection of humanitarian endeavors. Throughout his life he balanced personal and technical excellence with a moral obligation to perform humanitarian works. He believed strongly in the ethics of service. He acted on his beliefs, and he encouraged others to give service to humankind. "A voluntary deed by a man impressed with the sense of responsibility and brotherhood of man is infinitely more precious to our national ideals and national spirit than a thousandfold poured from the Treasury of the Government..." (Red Cross Speech, 13 April 1937).

With his abiding belief in voluntarism and a life which modeled selfless humanitarianism, Herbert Hoover would certainly support the movement in education known as Community Service Learning. Service learning is not really a new concept. It is evident in the early writings of John Dewey. It seeks to involve young people in community service projects that are coordinated between the school and the community.

Service learning engages students in activities that help others while allowing the student first-hand experience with social issues. The projects provide a means for the students to use academic skills and knowledge in real-life situations. Service learning differs from community service in that connections are made between service and learning opportunities, rather than just giving service.

The projects are integrated into the students' academic curriculum, and they are designed to support civic education. This participatory citizenship offers a multitude of benefits. Service learning helps to build community support for education; it facilitates a closer bond between school, the community, and home; the community is benefitted by the service learning because students are endowed with a sense of civic efficacy and the belief that they will have an impact on civic affairs; students discover a renewed sense of meaning in education when they participate in a project.

Through participation in a service learning project, it is hoped that students will learn to feel responsibility for continued service throughout their lives. Herbert Hoover stated that service is the essence of democracy, and Earnest Boyer believed that to be truly human one must serve. (Hoover, Speech N.Y. Conference of Methodist Episcopal Church, Kingston, N.Y., 9 April 1920; Boyer, address to National Association of Elementary School Principals, Spring, 1995).

Service learning may therefore help students gain a sense of social responsibility and prepare them to contribute to their community through service and social action. One way to realize the educational goal of preparing students for citizenship in a democracy is to provide opportunities to practice democracy, and this may be accomplished by participation in school-supported community and social action projects.

Implementing Community Service Learning

Community Service Learning offers an opportunity for the incorporation of student directed learning in the educational process. It is important for teachers to help students understand and connect social issues within the community with the students' service involvement, and it is equally important for the teacher to allow reflection time about the experience. This reflection can be incorporated informally in discussions on walks back from the service site, or in class discussion groups.

There are three major components to consider when setting up a Community Service Learning project. They are: preparation and planning, performance of the service, reflection on the experience.

Preparation and Planning

- Involve the students and the community partner in the planning process to develop clear goals that are achievable through a reasonable effort
- Identify a need in the school, neighborhood, or community that students perceive as filling a real need
- Establish an individual school or classroom learning theme that is developmentally appropriate for the students
- Define roles and responsibilities with the community partner
- Determine school or class objectives to address specific needs of the projects: identify major ideas to be learned; review curriculum areas applicable to the learning theme; select content to be taught

Performance of the Service

- Identify what the students are expected to learn and perform during the service
- Identify effective outcomes
- Establish a timeline

Reflection

- Incorporate reflection time for the student, formally and informally through discussion and writing
- Identify positive, and negative points of the experience
- Identify changes or modifications needed to improve the experience

Suggested Projects for Service Learning

- A student-run peer tutoring program
- Spanish classes--writing and translating children's stories into Spanish which are donated to centers to encourage native speakers to read to their children
- Partnership with local food bank to do month end reports and develop menu fliers for the food bags
- Designing and planning flower gardens on the school grounds
- Helping to plan, prepare, and serve school lunches
- Working with the elderly, homeless, disabled
- Publishing consumer pamphlets for: conservation of energy, recycling, water conservation
- Adoption of local historical cemetery to: restore, document and record information for local historical society use
- Recycling projects
- Creating wildlife habitats in the community or at school, example: butterfly garden
- Social action projects, examples: creating a smoke-free building, proposing a bill for adoption of a state symbol
- Making games, writing and illustrating books for shelters, pre-schools
- Fundraising projects for all sorts of community needs or adoption of whales, dolphins, or rainforest acreage
- Collection of materials for foodbanks, shelters, etc.
- Plan, gather and distribute Thanksgiving baskets for the needy
- Conduct a registration and voting campaign by identifying new families in the school district, design registration and voting information fliers, produce a local public service announcement for local cable TV encouraging voting
- Campaign for water conservation, recycling, etc. in the community
- Create congratulatory notes for people becoming new citizens
- Plan and participate in the blazing of a hiking, biking trail
- Participate in a community cleanup day
- Help build bird feeders, houses for local parks, school grounds

Resources for Service Learning

Creating a Culture of Service. Mar-Co Products, 1994. Grade level K-12.

Discovering the World of Community Service Learning. Pennsylvania Institute for Service Learning, 1992. Grade level 7-12.

Elementary, Middle School and High School Guides to Service Learning. Maryland State Department of Education, 200 West Baltimore St., Baltimore, MD 21201

Enriching Learning Through Service. Kate McPherson. Project Service Leadership, 1989.

Growing Hope: A Sourcebook on Integrating Youth Service into the School Curriculum. Rich Willits Cairn, Editor. National Youth Leadership Council, 1991.

How to Establish a High School Service Learning Program. Judith T. Witmer. ASCD, 1994.

How to Guide Reflection, Adding Cognitive Learning to Community Service Programs. Harry C. Silcox, Brighton Press, Inc. 1993.

Route to Reform: K-8 Service Learning Curriculum Ideas. National Youth Leadership Council, 1910 West Country Road B., St. Paul, MN 55113. Service Learning from A-Z. C. Parsons. Vermont Schoolhouse Press, 1991. Spirit of the Community: The Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda. Amitia Etzioni. Crown Publications, Inc. 1993.

The Kids Care Book (Grades 1-6). Scholastic, Inc. 2931 East McCarty Street, Jefferson City, MO 64102

Youth Service: A Guidebook for Developing and Operating Effective Programs. D. Conrad and D. Hedin. Independent Sector, 1828 L Street NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20036