



PARTNERSHIP TIPS: WORKING WITH AGENCIES

Partnerships between schools and their surrounding communities can have a positive impact on both parties involved. Too often relationships are strained by assumptions made by both sides. However, if both sides collaborate to work towards the common goal of community improvement, great strides can be made. It is important to realize that many community agencies may not have the same or as extensive experience working with young people as your school. You may need to advocate for the involvement of young people or help agencies understand how to best provide appropriate opportunities.

STEPS TO BUILDING A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES

1. Plan before contacting community organizations.

- Develop basic goals and guidelines for your program.
- Identify the issues in which volunteers and volunteer leader are interested.
- Learn which community organizations and people are involved in addressing these issues—from the Volunteer Center, United Way, community resource directories or word of mouth.

Remember that some agencies resist involving students as volunteers and may need some convincing

about the benefits of working with your school, campus, or club. Budget cuts for agencies often mean they have no additional staff to coordinate or supervise volunteers; one solution is to involve faculty or staff volunteers.

2. Include community organizations in the planning process.

- Community organizations can offer a multitude of information.
 - They can provide valuable insight into the needs of the community.
 - They may provide guest speakers or other services for classes, meetings or events.
 - They can assist in the development or presentation of curriculum.
 - (The Volunteer Center of San Francisco publishes a [Guide to Community Educational Resources](#) that lists speakers and other educational resources nonprofit organizations have available.)
- Invite a variety of community organizations to participate.
- Involve the organization's clients, if appropriate.
- Obtain the agency's "buy-in" and belief in your program.

3. Involve community agencies as partners in your program.

- The agency has the final say in the service to be provided to their clients.
- Develop shared responsibility for the program (in areas such as orientation, training, project development, supervision, recognition).
- Develop a partnership that is mutually beneficial and on-going.
- Share costs where possible.
- Identify a contact for the agency to call if it has questions.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF AGENCY CONTACTS:

- If your community has a United Way or Voluntary Action Center, call them first. They may have listings of agencies that want to work with young people.
- Check your phone book. Some have separate listings for community agencies.
- Contact social service agencies: hospitals, nursing homes, group homes for adults with disabilities, child care centers, etc.
- Contact your municipal or county governments
- Ask any volunteer director identified through the methods above if there is a professional association of volunteer directors in your area.
- Talk with churches, community councils, police precincts, business associations, neighborhood organizations, political parties, special interest groups such as environmental organizations or any other community groups near your school.
- Ask parents of your students to help identify possible volunteer opportunities.
In any case, start small and build on success. Better to have strong relationships with one or two good service sites that you visit a few times before expanding. Don't over-commit yourself.
(From Learning by Giving)

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY & ON-LINE RESOURCES

Building Community: Exploring the Role of Social Capital and Local Government, Program for Community Problem Solving-A Division of the National Civic League Building upon the work of academics and practitioners alike, this working paper takes a clear-eyed view at how local government efforts to strengthen individual, organizational and neighborhood relationships additionally build the capacity to tackle tough issues of communities. This paper concisely explains the theoretical aspects of social capital and then examines how these aspects can be practically applied by nonprofits, local government and other grassroots organization. Program for Community Problem Solving, Washington, D.C., 1998. \$8.00 -- To order, call (202) 783-2961.

Creating Better Community Partnerships
<http://www.fsu.edu/%7Evoluntee/news/partner.html>
Irma Jamison (1998)

This article contains tips on how anyone can maintain good community partnerships for service.

Teacher's Manual for Parent and Community Involvement, Larry E. Decker, Gloria A. Gregg, and Virginia A. Decker, August 1995. Based on the premise that community and parent involvement is integral to the success of public schools, this training manual provides topical outlines and instructional units to be used by trainers or school educators. National Community Education Association, 3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91A, Fairfax, VA 22030; (703) 359-8973, (703) 359-0972 fax.

School Community Collaboration: A Vehicle for Reform, Toward Collaboration: Youth Development, Youth Programs and School Reform, Michele Cahill. This synthesis provides different strategy approaches to youth development and school reform. Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, 1996. \$5.00 Prepaid -- To order, call (202) 884-8266.

Community Agency and School Collaboration: Going in with Your Eyes Open.
Mark P Batenburg (1995)

Agency/school partnerships were analyzed from the agency perspective in this research report. Individuals from six CBOs were interviewed about their experiences working with schools and youth volunteers. The study found that despite culture clashes between agencies and schools, the agencies were committed to continuing the partnerships. Specifics are given about the problems each agency encountered.

Critical Issues in K-12 Service-Learning: Case Studies and Reflections.

Edited by Gita Gulati-Partee and William Finger, National Society for Experiential Education (1996)

This guide is broken into sections on each of the critical issues, including "community". This section has six articles written by teachers, agency project managers and those whose role it is to manage partnerships between schools and agencies

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH AGENCIES

- Know what you want.
- Ask up front what the agency and its clients need. Many agencies will have specific rules for children who volunteer. Find out what those rules are and communicate them to your students.
- Evaluate whether your goals and the agency's needs match.
- Visit the site. Don't try to have students go somewhere you know little or nothing about. Ask a parent volunteer to check it out.
- Invite an agency representative to class to orient students and to inform them about their community.
- Orient students to volunteer work issues such as time requirements.
- Have students develop contracts with the agency. (See sample page 103.)
- Monitor and follow-up at the end of the service project. Develop clear goals and procedures for evaluating student performance as well as the success of the program. (See sample forms, pages 107-108.)
- Have students write thank-you notes to the agency.