

Lesson 2

Understanding Service-Learning and our Role in N & GYSD Special Service Day



Objective:

You will understand the concepts of service and service-learning and reflect on your role as a participant in National & Global Youth Service Day and other large service events.

A note on this lesson:

The lessons in this curriculum guide adapt a service-learning model to learning a specific skill – Project Management – and applying that skill in service to the community through the organization of National & Global Youth Service Day and other service-learning projects.

A service-learning approach includes four specific activity phases: **Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Celebration**. While the remaining lessons focus on Action (steps for project implementation) Reflection and Celebration, **Lesson 2 is specifically focused on Preparation** – laying the foundation through discussion, research, and collective reflection about the concepts of service, service-learning, and on the meaning and purpose of public awareness campaigns.

Directions:

Generate a conversation in your group about the concept of service by asking questions such as:

- ✦ What experiences have participants had with community service?
- ✦ Were these positive or negative experiences? Why?
- ✦ What personal assets did you contribute? How did you feel?
- ✦ What does a meaningful and successful service experience look like?
- ✦ Is service a choice or a responsibility?
- ✦ What do we know about the history of service in this country? And in other countries?

Introduce the concept of service-learning. We repeat the following example from the National Youth Leadership Council, which can be very useful:

What is service-learning?

Picking up trash by a riverbank is *service*.

Studying water samples under a microscope is *learning*.

When students collect and analyze water samples and the local pollution control agency uses the findings to clean up a river ... that is *service-learning*.

Continue the discussion with the following questions:

- ✦ What other examples of service-learning are you familiar with?
- ✦ In your own words, how would you explain the difference between service and service-learning? What is the potential impact of each?
- ✦ Wrap up this part of the discussion by highlighting key elements of service-learning such as connection to an academic subject, addressing a community need, and youth voice.

Conclude the discussion by introducing National & Global Youth Service Day, its history and goals:

A public awareness campaign that seeks to

- ✦ **MOBILIZE** youth as leaders to identify and address the needs of their communities through service and learning
- ✦ **SUPPORT** youth on a lifelong path of service and civic engagement
- ✦ **EDUCATE** the public, the media, and policymakers about the year-round contributions of young people as community leaders.

Help your group reflect on:

- ❖ What other campaigns are you aware of? Have you participated in them? Why?
- ❖ What makes campaigns successful?
- ❖ What do the goals of National & Global Youth Service Day mean to you?
- ❖ What will your role be in meeting these goals?
- ❖ How will you know if this campaign was successful and the goals are being met?

Reflection:

- ❖ Continue the reflection exercises above by writing down your personal views on service, service-learning, and especially about your role in a national campaign to engage youth in service.
- ❖ Visit www.YSA.org/nysd and www.GYSD.org to find out what youth are organizing in every state and around the world. Contact the local organizers to exchange ideas about your service-learning projects and community issues. Communicate with each other to strengthen the youth service movement!

Adapting the activity for younger children:

Reinforce the connections between children's assets and potential contributions to the community by having them play skits where they apply their talents to solving a community problem. Conclude by explaining National and Global Youth Service Day as an event that happens all over the country and around the world, when children like themselves will be going out into their neighborhoods to help those in need. Reinforce this concept by showing a map of the United States and the world and descriptions of projects planned. (www.YSA.org/nysd and www.GYSD.org)

"When you see kids who are disengaged, you know they are not learning. Seeing 100 percent engagement by all students in a service-learning activity really sparks curiosity, wonderment, and inquiry that we know provides for good learning."

Seewan Eng, Middle School Teacher,
San Francisco, CA

SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

Students in Ms. Morant's community service club at the Community Academy Public Charter School held their Second Annual Foster Care and Adoption Carnival. The event gives foster children and their providers a chance to enjoy a day of free fun, games, and lunch. Other classes from Community Academy volunteered to run activity booths for the children and the carnival also provided information and resources for adults who are interested in becoming foster parents. Information was also available for adults who were already foster parents and looking for community support options. Some of the stations for the children included "American Idol" themed activities, an egg race, and a moon bounce.

To prepare for the event, students learned the difference between writing a business letter and an informal letter as they solicited donations from companies and invited special guests to attend. They also learned about the local government structure as they reached out to local leaders to seek their participation in the day's events.

Twenty-six adults from the school and approximately 130 youth volunteered at the carnival. Out of the 46 foster children and families who were invited, 32 attended. Perhaps the most exciting outcome from the service-learning project was five new matches made between parents looking to adopt and children looking for a home.