

Afterword

for Teachers, Youth Leaders, Parents, & Other Adults

Use This Book to Inspire Young Activists

Teens have ideas, energy, and enthusiasm that can benefit our communities once they get involved. The question may be, where to start? By giving this book to students or to your own children, you are helping them participate successfully in service learning. The process of completing the activities helps them develop personal skills, knowledge, and abilities required to address the community needs they care about. Teens can use this book themselves, or adults can guide them in its use in school, youth groups, or a family setting. The following sections explain in more detail how these groups can get the most out of this guide.

Please note: While some consider the topics of climate change and global warming to be controversial, this book relies on the general consensus from the international scientific community that it is a fact.

In a School Setting

This book can easily be used in various ways within a school:

Academic Class: As part of a unit of study about the planet's water system—whether local, national, or international—this book provides an interdisciplinary approach to examining this important issue. Students look at issues from various perspectives, analyze information, conduct research, read an interview with an expert, discuss others' service efforts, develop activity plans, and put their plans into action. The book's activities can be implemented over three to six weeks of class time when used continuously, depending on the length of the service experience. Another option is to complete one to two activities per week and extend the study over a semester.

Advisory Class: Many schools have a dedicated 30- to 40-minute weekly advisory class meant to improve academic skills, provide opportunities for social-emotional development, and allow for a successful experience in a course of study or exploration. This book helps students develop communication and research skills, teamwork, and problem

solving, while working to make a significant contribution. When implemented in a weekly advisory class, all the activities could be completed in about three months.

After-School Program: These varied activities suit an after-school program. They are easily implemented and include many creative opportunities for expression that vary the teaching and learning methods. Different ages of students also can collaborate successfully. Activities can be completed in partner work as well as small and large group experiences. If implemented twice a week in an after-school program, the activities would most likely extend over three months.

Student Council: If you are looking for a way to transform a typical student council community service project into a service learning experience, this book can be your guide. As students are exploring the issues, they can develop a service plan that extends into the student body. Part of the plan could be an awareness campaign with the leadership students sharing with fellow students what they consider to be the most important information in this book, augmented by what they discover through research.

Words of Advice from the Field

Florida state award-winning teacher David Makepeace offers advice for teachers just starting out with service learning:

- Lean heavily on your students and their interests.
- Take advantage of local resources, including people and service learning opportunities. Seek assistance from experienced service learning practitioners.
- Pay as much (or more) attention to the learning as to the service.
- Realize that no project is too small and it is better to start small and build on success.
- Make sure you thoroughly investigate community partners.
- Get the support of your school administration.
- Have your students document what they do and let your community know about the successes.
- Remember, it is about the *students*.
- And finally: Have fun!

In Youth Groups

As service learning grows in popularity with youth groups, program staff often looks for activities that encourage academic skills in a nontraditional manner. Use of this book is most effective when consistent—for example, one or two times per week—so students know what to expect and what is expected of them. The activities compiled here offer opportunities for lively discussion, firsthand community experiences, creative expression (for example, writing, poetry, drama, and art), and integrated reflection.

As a Family

Family service projects provide opportunities for common exploration and experience. Rather than emphasizing the academic elements, families can use the book to guide them through the terrain of the service learning process while gaining collective knowledge and stimulating ideas for service plans. It's helpful for family members to approach investigating this topic on equal ground, with the youngest members being encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas.

For every participant, this book is designed to open minds, create possibilities, and encourage the lasting benefits that occur when making a contribution of one's personal talents and skills. Each person has value in the service learning process.

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