

the box

Service Learning Professional Development

Train-the-Trainer

When: June 23, 24 & 25, 2008

Time: 8:30-3:30

Cost: \$475 (includes "The Box")

Where: Ionia County ISD

SB-CEU's are available

(Lunch will be provided)



**Open Today
Change Tomorrow**

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IONIA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Voices for Service Learning

Engaged for Success: Service Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention

The promise of a nation rests in its youngest generation. The skills they develop, the habits they form, and the communities they build will determine the future of the nation and hold the keys to its progress. All of America's institutions – neighborhoods, schools, and places of worship, workplaces, and our democracy itself – are enriched by well educated people with skills to contribute to their communities and country.

With these goals in mind – to engage children in education and prepare them to address our nation's challenges – two reports released in 2006 cast a dispiriting light on the reality facing our country. The first report, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*, highlighted the fact that almost one-third of all public high school students – and nearly 50 percent of minorities – fail to graduate with their class. Academic failure was not the principal cause – 70 percent of the students reported that they did not see the real-world applications of their schoolwork and nearly half felt bored by their classes. More than 80 percent of students believed that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning – such as service-learning, work study, and internships – these opportunities would improve students' chances of graduating from high school. The second report, *America's Civic Health Index*, measured 40 indicators of the nation's civic health over the last 30 years. The most dramatic divides in civic health related to levels of education. College graduates outperform their less educated peers in every civic category, from volunteering and work on community projects to attending meetings and voting. For the most part, high school dropouts are no longer even a part of the civil society that would enable them to be effective advocates in their communities and states for efforts to reform high schools. They suffer both from a lack of learning and a lack of service.

One strategy has the potential to address both of these issues: service-learning. More specialized than just community service, service-learning involves applying classroom learning through investigation of a community problem, planning ways to solve it, action through service, reflection on the experience and what was learned, and demonstration of results. Effective service-learning is integrated into the curriculum, involves cognitively challenging reflection activities, incorporates students' voices in decision making, fosters diversity, includes monitoring of progress, has a significant duration, develops reciprocal partnerships with community organizations, and requires students to participate in meaningful service.

This report suggests that service-learning could be a promising way to not only stem the tide of dropouts, but create a new generation of youth who are academically prepared for success in college and who possess a strong sense of civic responsibility. Despite the promise and growth of service-learning over the last two decades, there remains a persistent gap between the number of students who want service learning opportunities and the number who have access to them, and this gap is largest for minority students. Good research has been conducted on the outcomes of service-learning, but there has been little research on the direct effect that it has on high school graduation rates. This report does not present conclusive evidence that service-learning has raised graduation rates, but rather offers new findings that demonstrate that service-learning can play a major role in keeping students engaged in school and on track to graduate.

This report presents original and secondary research that shows the ability of service-learning to address some of the principle causes of dropping out. It highlights findings from a nationally representative survey of 807 high school students, including 151 at-risk students, who share their views of service-learning. The report also examines the results of focus groups of service-learning teachers who provide specific examples of the ways in which service-learning has affected their students, as well as interviews with current students who offer their perspectives on service-learning programs. And the report draws upon research from a comprehensive national literature review, which found that service learning improves almost every aspect of education that has an effect on graduation rates.

Service-learning holds the potential to address each of the underlying causes of low graduation rates, while incorporating the strategies most recommended for preventing students from dropping out.

Check out this website for the full report:
<http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/service-learning.pdf>



Doing Good Together: Building Strong Families, Caring Kids and a Better World

Doing Good Together has found a secret, you might say. A secret that gives parents (and grandparents) a way to spend time with their children that is free, fun, rewarding, and helpful to others. What's more, this time together can provide an antidote to our culture's messages of competition, self-absorption and materialism.

We are talking about **family volunteering**. Researchers and parents agree this is a hands-on way to teach children the values of kindness, compassion, tolerance, community responsibility and good citizenship. It may also provide one of the few opportunities young people have to interact with people of other backgrounds, breaking down stereotypes of age, class and race. Children can better put their own problems in perspective when they see what others struggle with, which can enhance empathy and gratitude.

Engaging in volunteerism can also give families an opportunity to discuss important social issues and to make a real difference in the community while spending time together.

Doing Good Together offers the materials and services you need to volunteer with your children easily. A particular strength is our customized assistance for organizations -- including faith communities, schools, nonprofits, civic, community and parent groups -- that want an organized approach to their family service efforts. Explore our website to learn how we can help your family or organization make a difference.

Environment

By volunteering for the environment, you can demonstrate to your children the critical importance of good stewardship of the planet where we live. The earth is our home and it must be protected, for ourselves and for future generations. Here are a few ways you and your kids can make a difference.

1. Pick up litter at a park, shoreline, mountain, river, beach or wilderness area
2. Make gift bags
3. Be a frog watch volunteer
4. Volunteer to foster a pet for someone in the military who's been called to duty
5. Plant trees

Community Service

You might not think a small family can do much to heal a troubled world. But you and your kids can make an important difference simply by volunteering together. Check out the community service activities menu and descriptions below and pursue those that interest you and your children; then let us know how it works out.

1. Write a family e-mail to a soldier
2. Adopt a grandparent
3. Become a chemo angel
4. Assemble birthday bags to donate to your local food pantry
5. Make a blanket and give it away to a child in need of comfort

Social, Political and Community Action

Do you and your children want to get at the root causes of inequity, poverty and injustice? Do you hope to influence policy and public opinion? Then you are on your way to becoming social, community or political activists. Think about what your family can undertake in your neighborhood, in our country and around the globe to make the world a better place. Then read Barbara Lewis' *The Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to Solve the Social Problems You Choose -- And Turn Creative Thinking Into Positive Action* (Free Spirit Press, 1998) and *Taking Action! A Guide to Active Citizenship* by Marc and Craig Kielburger. These books will provide the tools you need to get started. Or simply begin with the ideas below.

1. Post the names of your elected officials on the refrigerator
2. Write a letter to free prisoners of conscience, protect human rights, and defend lives
3. Welcome new neighbors
4. Volunteer to be a "safe" house
5. Organize families in your neighborhood, school or faith community to take part in monthly volunteer projects together

Doing Good Together 

More Ideas to Become Involved Can be Found at www.doinggoodtogether.org

Connecting Content with Kids Through Service Learning

Written By: Monica Mansfield

Over the course of the 2007-2008 school year, Jay McTighe and Carol Ann Tomlinson presented a series of workshops on UbD/DI (Understanding by Design and Differentiated Instruction), to promote their new book, *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*. Although the workshop did not speak directly to the topic of service learning, it was immediately apparent that UbD/DI and service learning go together like milk and cookies.

At first glance, there may seem to be a mismatch between the basic approaches to UbD and service learning. Understanding by Design, a backwards design approach popularized by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, requires educators to identify learning outcomes, determine acceptable evidence of success, and then plan instruction. In contrast, service learning focuses on youth voice and student leadership. Fortunately, there are ways to marry these seemingly incompatible approaches. Three common service learning scenarios exist: 1) a class continues an existing service learning tradition, 2) the teacher introduces an idea for a service learning theme and gives students voice and choice in determining the direction it takes, and 3) students introduce an idea for service that the teacher fits into the existing curriculum. In any case, the service learning promotes academic achievement directly correlated to state standards.

The first scenario, where a class continues an existing service learning tradition, is ideal for implementing backwards design. Having done the project before, the teacher as the service learning facilitator has a basic idea of what is involved with the project and can set learning targets consistent with both the project and grade level content expectations. For example, a class involved with a service learning project involving water quality is not only fulfilling science standards related to measurement and inquiry but could also tie the project to language arts standards by creating a multimedia presentation on their findings to be shared at a city council meeting.

The teacher has a great opportunity to differentiate instruction by assigning responsibilities to students based on each child's educational needs. The child who is struggling with measurement can be given the job of double-checking everyone's measurements, thus giving that child significant practice. A child with solid composition skills but poor grammar could work on the Power-Point presentation. Others could choose visuals, proofread, write brochures, and present at the council meeting. Knowing that the report will be shared with an important audience is a great motivator. Having shared responsibility for the quality of the final product provides a safety net. Meanwhile, all students are actively engaged in acquiring essential understandings about water quality.

Imagine that a teacher has a service learning idea related to the existing curriculum but wants to give the students leadership and voice in determining the direction the project takes. In this case, other opportunities arise. Students are empowered to make key decisions and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles within the context of the service learning project. As part of a unit on human-environment interaction, the teacher might suggest that students organize a service learning project to apply and deepen their knowledge. Then students suggest ideas for such a project.

Some students might suggest organizing a school wide recycling program. Others could be interested in starting a community garden and compost pile. Yet others might be interested in conducting free energy audits for their friends and family, making recommendations for how they could save energy. Others could work in groups to create emergency readiness kits for senior citizens in the community. All of these projects could be going on simultaneously within the same classroom. Instruction is being differentiated based on student interests, but the teacher has already set learning targets for the unit.

Finally, there will be times when students approach their teacher with a great idea for a service learning project. Perhaps there has been a natural disaster, and the students have an idea to help. This may be the most difficult scenario because it requires the teacher to rearrange the planned course of study. It is also easy to fall into doing a "community service" project that does not have clear learning outcomes and is not tied to the grade level content expectations. Yet when possible to accommodate such requests, educators have a great opportunity to take advantage of students' natural motivation to be helpful, contributing citizens and to direct their energy and enthusiasm toward a well-deserving cause.

Service learning is a terrific way to connect content with kids, but many teachers feel that there isn't time in the year to add "one more thing." Rather than being an additional responsibility, service learning is an energizing, authentic means of instruction that allows teachers to motivate students and differentiate instruction at once. For more information on how to differentiate instruction while teaching to common targets, check out *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids* by McTighe and Tomlinson.

