

Fundraising Activities and Service-Learning

Quality service-learning means finding that balance point between high quality learning and high quality service.

While fundraising may be one of the service options in service-learning, it is often not the option of choice given the teacher's goal to generate positive student outcomes. High quality service-learning is an excellent opportunity for students to develop academic, personal, social, civic, career, and 21st Century skills.

Fundraising can be a tempting choice- it's often the first idea generated by students or teachers; nonprofit organizations solicit schools to fundraise (often misrepresenting it as service-learning); natural and manmade disasters compel us to want to act and to act immediately; and money is often the type of help that is requested.

In schools, fundraising should be the exception rather than the rule when students explore service options.

As teachers guide students through the process of service-learning, they challenge them to consider multiple options for action. (On the NAPS service-learning webpage, please download and refer to "The Service-Learning Process – IPARD" and to "Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice" for more information.)

There are four types of action in service-learning. Service-learning always includes at least one type of action and often includes more than one.

- Direct Service - Face-to-face interactions with people or animals or onsite environmental, construction, gardening work, etc. Students see results of their service immediately such as when preparing and serving lunch at Berkshire Food Project or serving as a Mentor to their peers.
- Indirect Service: The service is not seen by the people who may benefit from it but it meets a real need. Examples include running a pajama drive to benefit the Louison House and creating holiday cards for residents of senior housing. Fund-raising is one type of indirect service.
- Advocacy: Students work to make others aware of an issue and to encourage them to take action for change such as creating a video PSA to discourage bullying or running a voter registration campaign.
- Research: Students gather data on information connected to a community concern and then present or report the data to influential people in order to change policies such as testing water quality and reporting the results to government officials or surveying fellow students to assess a problem and reporting the results to school administrators.

Research tells us that students make better academic gains when they are engaged in advocacy service-learning. Students make better personal gains, such as developing empathy, when engaged in direct service. As the teacher, think about the outcomes that you want for your students and what types of service would best support those outcomes.

Some Do's and Don'ts about Fundraising in Service-Learning

DO challenge students to think deeply about the problem or need. Have them research who is helping with the problem and how they are helping. Lead students to explore systemic and societal issues that contribute to the problem and to peel back layers to reveal issues of social injustice. With this type of thorough examination of the problem, students will generate multiple ideas for action.

DO have students explore and interview people from local organizations that are involved with the issue.

DO consider how the idea for fundraising could be expanded or switched to advocacy, direct service or other types of indirect service. Every cause that needs money or goods also needs advocacy! For example, a benefit concert is more effective if it includes songs about the topic and includes public awareness campaigning prior to the event.

DO acknowledge yourself for your work providing opportunities for students to realize their own efficacy in the world and to learn about the value of giving of one's time, energy, and commitment in service.

DO reach out to your building service-learning representative or to the service-learning coordinator to talk over ideas.

If fund-raising is the desired service option:

DO follow school and district procedures for obtaining permission to conduct fundraisers or drives.

DO focus on the involvement and learning by students rather than on the amount raised.

DO have students research any organizations that will receive contributions to ensure that they are legitimate, to establish out how much money would go directly to the cause and how much would go to administrative costs, etc.

DON'TS

DON'T overburden your parents, colleagues, students, and community partners with repeated requests for donations.

DON'T use prizes or competitions (external rewards). They are counter-productive to the goals of service-learning.

DON'T contribute to the potential for students to develop mistaken beliefs such as that money is the solution to issues or that only those with money can contribute in meaningful ways.