



The role of the teacher/leader in service learning

Student voice is very important in service learning. Students should be involved in the process of selecting a service project, planning, and evaluating the project. However, the adult leader also has a role to play. That role looks different depending upon the ages of the student group members, but some things are constant.

1. The teacher/leader is the one to make sure that every project touches upon academic skills and knowledge. Projects can align with State Standards which in Social Studies mandates Civic Participation. School Improvement Plans can be addressed as well as AQuESTT. Specific curricula can be directly addressed – literacy, math, or science can be a part of almost any project, however, the arts or PE are also legitimate curricular links. This should be intentional.
2. The leader should create or locate reflection tools.
3. Linking each project to career or post-secondary education is also the job of the teacher.
4. In school day or after school settings the leader needs to be in charge of any finances. If grants or donations are involved, they need to go to the leader.
5. Sometimes projects involve public spaces which are regulated by civic authorities, for example, a group can't paint park benches without city permission, there are also private institutions that have controls over what can be done at a site. Hospitals come to mind. If students want to extend support to people with illnesses, their access may be very limited. The teacher/leader needs to clear those potential issues.
6. Ensuring that students pause to reflect on their work and publish the outcomes is another role the teacher should play.