

Service-Learning Leadership Camp

The Service-Learning Leadership Camp was a partnership between the Westminster City Recreation Office and the Carroll County Public Schools during the summer. Estelle Sanzenbacher and Craig Giles organized the activity. Students participated in the service-learning camp activity for five days. In the morning, students learned about the community and needs in the community. They then actually visited a non-profit and carried out a service project, reflecting on the activity at its conclusion. In the afternoon, students served as counselors-in-training for younger children attending camp. A celebration was held and participating students were given special certificates at the end of the camp experience.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Project planners contacted local community based organizations to find places in need of volunteers. Based on the results of those calls, students served at a local soup kitchen, worked at a food bank, and helped at Shephard's Staff, a local senior citizen center, and at the Brethren Service Center.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Students utilized critical thinking skills, organizational skills, and demonstrated character education attributes (compassion, integrity, responsibility, respect) through the projects. This was a summer learning activity in which lots of learning took place!

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Students created a tri-fold display board of their experiences. They drew on pieces of a blank puzzle depicting their feelings and places they had visited. They also made placemats for the soup kitchen and wrote thank you notes to organizations for inviting students to help.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students took active roles in getting jobs done. Students more comfortable with working directly with clients did that, and some chose to stay in the background and organize the projects. All the students were really anxious to pitch-in and help accomplish tasks.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? We worked with Carroll County Food Sunday, Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen, Brethren Service Center, Shepherd's Staff, and West End Senior Center.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? We discussed each location and their missions. We did sensitivity training with students, worked on leadership building activities, gave quizzes on students' knowledge about hunger and poverty issues, and engaged in simulations about distribution of wealth such as the "Pretzel Game."

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students learned how to work together as a team. They learned about services in the community that they did not know existed. They also learned about people in need. Most importantly, students learned practical ways to help people in need like preparing and serving food, sorting clothing, and spending time with often isolated senior citizens.

For more information on this project, contact Estelle Sanzenbacher at eesanze@k12.carr.org or 410-751-3097.