

Service Club

By Sally Poole

This is not the usual classroom project that is built by connecting service with classroom experiences and curriculum. I was confronted with the need for educating students about student service-learning (SSL), which was at an all time minimum required level at our school. I choose to start a Service Club after my first year in the SSL advisor's position. Its inception began two years ago by connecting with the REACH Cold Weather Shelter and offering our students an opportunity to serve meals to people who are homeless. After engaging a group of 25 students in this project the stage was set for starting a Service Club. Their goal for the year was to advocate for SSL through a variety of projects and invite the entire student population to become involved in these projects.

Best Practice 1: Through the club, students took project ideas to various teachers for their support.

Best Practice 2: The Foods and Nutrition class connected the project to feed people who are homeless on one occasion by planning and baking the bread/dessert item to be included in the bagged lunches. On another occasion the Environmental Resource classes chose to do a landscaping project when the club realized the need for some improvements around our campus.

Best Practice 3: The students reflected throughout the school year by having the leadership of the club get together to evaluate the club structure, leadership responsibilities, communication, and to review projects. They reflected on their purpose "... to help people less fortunate...identify community needs..." and related their experiences to that purpose.

Best Practice 4: Student responsibility was developed by the club advisor modeling how to lead a project, getting goals with the students, and also allowing them to fail and learn from that failure. At times it was, and still is, very hard to keep out of the way as an advisor, but a hands-off approach has been wonderful for them to grow as leaders.

Best Practice 5: Because of our relationship serving people who are homeless through REACH, our students have been personally asked to stay involved serving meals. They have become associated with Children In Need, Inc. to supply clothing for their clothing store each fall and the Town Council of Boonsboro keeps the club in mind when they need service done. Students have built relationships with the community and the community respects them. The students have been great ambassadors for SSL and have truly made a difference in their school community and Boonsboro community! The number of quality projects has increased and the number of students going beyond the required 75 hours has been astounding! Students have built relationships with the community and the community respects them. The students have been great ambassadors for SSL and have truly made a difference in their school community and Boonsboro community!

Best Practice 6: As noted above, the club meets regularly to plan and assess projects.

Best Practice 7: Depending on the project, the preparation varies.