

## **Excerpt from Chapter 5 – Charitable Giving & Service: Ready, Set, Make a Difference!**

### **Engaging in Service: Who, What, Where, Why and How**

The following points can help you answer the basic questions around service and giving opportunities that will impact the lives of children in your community and across the planet.

#### **1) *Decide what type of charitable project best fits your objectives, values, preferences, and resource capacity:***

- Will you be raising funds or collecting items to donate?
- Will the entire school participate, or only certain grades, classes or clubs?
- Would you like the organization you support to focus on a particular need? For example: collecting eyeglasses or sports equipment; building a well and learning about clean water initiatives; or raising money to fight hunger or to aid victims of a natural disaster.
- Is it important that causes or geography tie-in to existing curricular priorities (e.g., if a grade is studying Mexico, do you want the service activity to take place there?), or will these choices be kept separate?
- If you are collecting items, will someone coordinate drop-off, storage, shipment and payment for shipment to the intended recipients? This step often makes the collection of goods prohibitively difficult over collecting funds.
- How many adult volunteers are committed to the project and how much time can they invest per week or per month? Make sure that expectations are aligned with human and financial resource capacity. If projects are overly ambitious, this could result in burn-out

or disappointment, and not be repeated in future years. Starting small is often preferred, so schools can continue the project and go from strength to strength.

2) *Use a variety of tools to help research which organizations fit your goals:*

- At [www.globalgiving.org](http://www.globalgiving.org) you can learn about a variety of projects around the world. The website serves as a clearinghouse for numerous, pre-approved organizations, both in the U.S. and around the world. Users can search the database by topic, by region, or by current situations in the news.
- Inventory your own community. When Michelle Saylor, an Assistant Superintendent in the Bellefonte Area School District, in rural Central Pennsylvania, wanted to set up connections with schools and programs around the world in her previous districts, she wasn't sure where to begin, so she wrote to her school's staff to see if they might have some personal connections with anywhere in the world. The response was so positive that outreach started with those contacts and has been maintained over several years. Certain staff, such as the music teachers, gave her the most enthusiastic response, and she ran with their suggestions.
- Get inspired. The internet is full of stories about kids making a difference all over the world. The website Kids Are Heroes, <http://www.kidsareheroes.org>, offers hundreds of examples of real kids making a real difference in so many ways. [DoSomething.org](http://DoSomething.org) is geared for teens, but also offers adults working with kids so many "how to's," "action tips" and strategies for making a difference near or far. We hope the examples included in the section below might also offer inspiration for your own activities!

- Evaluate the charities. <http://www.guidestar.org> offers users the financial information and reviews from people familiar with the agency; <http://www.charitynavigator.org/> offers impartial evaluations on thousands of charitable organizations. What are their annual goals and results? How efficiently do they use their funds? What is the impact the organization has had?
- Be wary of organizations that do not disclose financial information or do not answer your questions. Even if they have nothing to hide, they might simply be overstretched. Transparency is a powerful tool.
- Follow Facebook and Twitter accounts of charities and organizations you admire, to stay on top of their regular developments and assess if that's who you'd like to align your school's service with.
- For more ideas on charitable organizations, see the many recommendations in [Growing Up Global's](#) Chapter 9 on Service and Giving, as well as its Appendix on "Action Steps."

### 3) *Integrate learning into the service.*

When you have chosen your charity, work with the teaching staff to integrate lessons into the curriculum or in school activities. Often times, a fundraising pamphlet gets sent home, the parents might write a check and return it, and the children are not involved in any of the steps. Thus, kids will completely miss out on the learning or impactful lessons that are inherently part of the initiative.

When the school incorporates presentations, hands-on learning, and involves the students in raising the money, the kids begin to grasp the meaning of the project. For example, Becky's kindergarteners were raising money for a women's and children shelter. The teacher asked the

kids to each write down three chores they would do at home to earn money for the fundraiser. The parents needed to “sponsor” the chores in the name of the charity, and the kids had to “work” for their donation. This simple but meaningful way of involving the kids meant that the money passed through their hands, and as philanthropists, they became a part of the giving.

Check with the organization for lesson plans they may have written to accompany the project. In addition, some organizations provide speakers or at least materials to support a proper presentation. Involve the children in learning about the location, the issues, and the background information so they will be more intrinsically motivated to participate. Students who broaden their cultural horizons and understand that they are part of the solution will grow into more compassionate adults. By encouraging our students to work as a team, they begin to see how they fit into the larger, global picture, and learn many life-skills along the way. This encompasses many key attributes of 21st Century Learning.

#### **4) Build in Reflection and Celebration.**

According to the [\*K-12 Service-Learning Project Planning Toolkit\*](#), the final components of a typical service-learning project include “Reflection” and “Demonstration/Celebration.” These steps may be overlooked or avoided due to time constraints or unfamiliarity with the process, but they can cause the difference between making life-long impact or getting forgotten by busy children and families. Reflection involves “[a]ctivities that help students understand the service-learning experience and to think about its meaning and connection to them, their society, and what they have learned in school.” Demonstration/Celebration entails “students, community participants and others

publicly shar[ing] what they have learned, celebrat[ing] the results of the service project, and look[ing] ahead to the future.”<sup>i</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> *K-12 Service-Learning Project Planning Toolkit*, 2009 Updated edition, by: RMC Research Corporation for Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, found online at: [http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/8542\\_K-12\\_SL\\_Toolkit\\_UPDATED.pdf](http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/8542_K-12_SL_Toolkit_UPDATED.pdf), p. 7 (accessed March 4, 2013).