



Ethics Service-Learning Project

2022



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Overview

The **Ethics Service-Learning Project (ESLP)** gives students an opportunity to strengthen their ethical leadership skills while affecting a positive change in the school and/or community. Students will work with their classmates to identify, plan, implement, and evaluate a service-learning project that engages with and provides ethics training to a select audience, such as elementary or middle school students, local businesses and organizations, and/or other community members.

The ESLP is more than just doing community service—its purpose is to undertake something new or different from what students do on a regular, day-to-day basis. The ESLP will give students the opportunity to work toward improving the lives of those around them, such as through raising awareness, charitable giving, or another venture. In doing so, students will demonstrate emotional intelligence, utilize teamwork skills, and apply project-management skills.

One of the reasons that people serve others in their communities is that they have a strong **code of ethics**: a set of rules for governing behavior.

Benefits to Students

When students plan and complete a project to help their community, they don't just help others—they grow as people, too. Here are some of the ways that completing this project will make students better members of their communities:

- **They become more socially responsible.** They become aware of community needs such as hunger, sickness, or loneliness that are not always obvious to the everyday citizen. They learn what it means to be a good citizen by helping others.
- **They learn how to think critically.** As they solve the problems facing their community, they use problem-solving skills that improve their critical thinking skills.
- **They improve their social intelligence skills.** Social intelligence includes their ability to work well with others and communicate effectively. As they work on their community service project, they'll spend time collaborating and cooperating with each other and members of the community. This will help them learn how to communicate, make connections, and work as a team member — skills that will take them pretty far in life!
- **They develop leadership skills.** Making their community better makes them a leader. Being a leader will set them apart and give them the ability to make a difference.
- **They become an active member of their community.** By getting involved, they become more aware of the people living in their community and what their needs are. Their role as a community volunteer can also give them a sense of pride, identity, and belonging.
- **They increase their self-confidence.** When they serve others, they develop a natural sense of accomplishment. Helping others causes them to view themselves as a generous, helpful, and kind person, which gives them a positive self-image.

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Project Options

A highly recommended option for the service-learning project is the *Epic Ethics for Peaceful Schools* program, an ethical leadership initiative that connects high school mentors with elementary students through storytelling and team building activities. Epic Ethics for Peaceful Schools promotes ethical character development and peace building through five lessons per year that teach self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and ethical decision-making to children in grades K-6. If interested, visit www.epicethics.org or email getinfo@epicethics.org.

If that option is not feasible, students can develop their own service-learning project focused on ethics. For examples of ethics-related service-learning projects, go to the School for Ethical *Education's Project Ideas for Service Learning* at <https://www.ethicsed.org/project-ideas-for-service-learning.html>.

The class service-learning project(s) should:

- Further the school's and/or community's knowledge and understanding of principles-based ethical decision-making
- Focus on real needs in the school and/or community versus contrived activities
- Involve student interaction with the individuals served by the project
- Bring students and community members together for a common purpose
- Further students' commitment to ethical action and social justice
- Offer benefits to the school and/or community
- Include opportunities for students to reflect upon the project, course content, and their personal growth with an ethics-oriented mindset
- Be planned, implemented, and evaluated primarily by students, rather than the instructor
- Have sufficient scope to involve every student in the class (working in groups)

For more information on assisting students to determine how they can best make a difference in the lives of others via giving, service learning, and/or social action, see The New York Times' article/plan entitled "Making a Difference: Ideas for Giving, Service Learning, and Social Action"

(https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/learning/lesson-plans/ideas-for-giving-service-learning-and-social-action.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_In_20161117&nl=learning-network&nl_art=1&nlid=67665642&ref=headline&te=1&r=1).