



Ethics Service-Learning Project

2022



Ethics Service-Learning Project

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.](#)"

Rubric

A rubric for the Ethics Service-Learning Project is provided on the next page. The rubric can be shared with students at the start of the project (to assist them in identifying and refining a project idea to maximize its impact on the school or local community) as well as at the completion of the project (to assess the effectiveness of the project and students' actual impact on the school or community). This rubric was inspired by the following source:

Peace Corps. (1998). *Worksheet #6: Service-learning rubric*. Retrieved May 11, 2023, from https://files.peacecorps.gov/uploads/wws/lesson-plans/files/insights.service.a.pdf?_ga=2.208331665.2027187885.1683732405-1580001289.1683732405



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Rubric

Criteria	Strong Impact	Good Impact	Some Impact	Minimal Impact
Meets actual community needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined by current research conducted or discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined by past research discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Determined by making a guess at what the community maybe needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Community needs secondary to what a project teacher or students want to do; project considers only student needs
Is coordinated in collaboration with community	<input type="checkbox"/> Active, direct collaboration with community by the teacher and students	<input type="checkbox"/> Community members act as consultants in the project development	<input type="checkbox"/> Community members are informed of the project directly	<input type="checkbox"/> Community members are coincidentally informed or not knowledgeable at all
Helps develop sense of caring for and about others	<input type="checkbox"/> Student reflections show deep understanding of the importance of service and their ability to make a difference. Students likely to take the initiative to serve again	<input type="checkbox"/> Student reflections show growing understanding of the importance of service and their ability to make a difference. Students likely to serve again	<input type="checkbox"/> Student reflections show limited understanding of the importance of service. Students likely to serve again, if asked	<input type="checkbox"/> Student reflections show they are largely unaffected by the importance of service and their ability to make a difference. Students unlikely to serve again
Improves quality of life for person(s) served	<input type="checkbox"/> Students help alleviate suffering; solve a problem; meet a need; or address an issue.	<input type="checkbox"/> Students significantly improve upon an already good community situation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Students' efforts are primarily superficial, but new and unique benefits are realized in community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Students' efforts are superficial, with highly limited community benefit.