

From Knowing to Doing

From their experiences, the three districts have realized that service learning opportunities not only provide important community assistance, but also make academic learning more engaging, helping students make the connection between knowing and doing. As Spanish students tutor new immigrants, for example, they develop a deeper understanding of the language they are studying and a greater appreciation for the Hispanic culture. By developing a lesson plan, they must struggle to discover an effective way to explain an idea. By conversing with others in a second language, they develop more integrated understanding of the subjects in their textbooks.

Service activities also strengthen students' higher-level thinking skills.

For example, in building the chair for an 18-month-old child with multiple sclerosis, the industrial arts class at Foss High School applied skills of design and problem solving as they (1) selected a material that would provide both stability and mobility and (2) planned an expandable design that could grow with the child.

When schools and the community pull together, the benefits are far reaching. A student at Gig Harbour High, reflecting on her experience working at a homeless shelter, put it well:

I was initially opposed to the whole service learning thing. [But] I have [now] changed my attitude almost completely. Until you witness poverty and homelessness firsthand, it will not have an impact. It does not take much firsthand exposure to a human

need to get personally involved and begin to care. I am becoming convinced that just a little time required in community service will yield a lifetime of dedication to help. □

Authors' note: To obtain more information about Project Service Leadership and service learning efforts in Washington, contact Project Service Leadership, 2810 Commanche Dr., Mt. Vernon, WA 98273; (206) 428-7614. PSL is part of the National Service Learning Initiative, NYLC, 1910 W. County Rd. B, Roseville, MN 55113; 1-800-366-6952.

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— RICHARD LODISH —

A Lesson for a Lifetime

Wednesday "soup days" and Saturday "family days" are two of the ways a Washington, D.C., school's staff and its students and their families are serving the local community.

The call to service should come early and should be a vital part of the education for citizenship in every school system in the nation. The lesson of service learned in youth will last a lifetime.

—Senator Edward Kennedy, introducing a \$300 million volunteerism proposal to the Senate, July 27, 1989

Photograph courtesy of Richard Lodish, Sidwell Friends School, Washington, D.C.

Preparing sandwiches at Martha's Table, a nearby soup kitchen, is one of several ways the Sidwell Friends School "family" helps their less fortunate neighbors.



How early is "early"? What lesson of service should young children learn? I asked a 3rd grader, "What do you want for the world? What do you want for yourself?"

"For the world," he said, "I want enough food and shelter for everyone. For me, I want a GI Joe with a grenade launcher and a swimming pool."

When should young children learn the painful truths about the gap between the haves and the have-nots, between our ideals and the world's realities? Can elementary schools make community service an important part of the lives of their students? For many years, the Sidwell Friends School answered these questions with short-term projects in hospitals, senior citizen homes, and soup kitchens. These projects, while meaningful, did not have a lasting impact on our students or on their families.

A Commitment to Serve

We wanted a program that would provide ongoing participation. Eight years ago we chose Martha's Table, a non-profit soup kitchen that feeds homeless families in Washington, D.C. On every Wednesday each Lower School child trudges off to school with a vegetable in his or her backpack, sure that the carrot or potato will wind up in the soup at Martha's Table. Working together, the Lower School classes make 50 gallons of soup, the teachers and older students helping the younger ones peel the potatoes and slice the carrots.

In addition to our Wednesday "soup days," we've organized Saturday "family days." On scheduled Saturdays, 20 or 30 of our school families—fathers, mothers, children, and grandparents—meet

at Martha's Table to prepare food—about 3,000 sandwiches. Parents coordinate these days, and teachers participate in all the activities. Family members also assist with the children's program begun by Pamela Selden, one of our teachers on sabbatical, which provides supervised learning activities for homeless children seven days a week.

Parents help in other ways at Martha's Table, too. For example, the toys, furniture, books, and supplies used by the children's program have been donated by our school's families and teachers. During the holiday season families are paired, gifts are collected, and food is prepared for holiday dinners.

After All Is Said and Done

Perhaps, after all is said and done, after all the workbook pages are filled in,

after all the book reports are written, after all the math facts are memorized, after all the spelling lists are copied, we are left with our original question: "What do you want for the world? What do you want for yourself?"

"For the world, I want enough food and shelter for everyone. For me, I want to help others to have food and shelter." If we receive this answer from our children and if they mean it, understand it, and act on it, then the lesson of service learned in youth *will* last a lifetime. □

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— ANITA PAGE —

Raising Students' Social Consciousness in South Hadley, Massachusetts

Mosier Elementary School is committed to increasing students' awareness of environmental issues early on so that they have time to do something about them.

The Mosier Elementary School—with 450 students in grades 3-5—in South Hadley, Massachusetts, has moved from scattered efforts toward a consistent and still-evolving series of programs to raise students' awareness of their responsibility toward the environment and humanity. It all began in January 1989, when we invited a young man working in a New York City shelter for the homeless to speak to our 5th graders. Afterward, when students asked what they could do, they were surprised to learn there are homeless shelters and soup kitchens in nearby Holyoke. By

spring, our six 5th grades had begun to make sandwiches with food donated from home every Friday at a center called Kate's Kitchen. And by the fall of 1989, *all* classes were participating. It's been over a year now—no parents have complained their child missed lunch in the cafeteria or time in class—and we haven't missed a Friday lunch yet.

More Than a Slogan

This student-initiated program gave the faculty cabinet some ideas when we met to select our annual school-wide theme. We felt the students

needed a coherent philosophy—not just a slogan—to focus our efforts. Feeling strongly that environmental issues must become part of daily life, we developed this statement, sent it to all parents, and posted it throughout the building.

The Mosier School students and staff value the Earth and understand the need to protect its environment. Our aim is to live in harmony with the earth and its many kinds of human, plant and animal inhabitants.

Statements of philosophy are, of course, not enough. We needed knowledge for our students and for

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