

6th Grade: Social Studies

1) Introduction: Service-learning is an excellent way to teach Social Studies. Service-learning emphasizes a “hands-on” experiential approach as a means of connecting academic learning to real-world applications. This approach is an effective way of engaging students in social studies concepts, such as civic participation. Service-learning engages students in real-world community problem-solving activities, exploring ways in which responsible citizens take part in civic life.

2) Definition of service-learning:

Service-learning is a form of teaching and learning that engages students in meaningful service activities in their schools and communities as part of the standard academic curriculum. Integrated into (but not limited to) the school day, service-learning connects young people with structured activities that address human and community issues, and that provide opportunities for increased student academic engagement, civic responsibility, personal and social development and the acquisition of critical thinking skills.

The following concepts are central to good service-learning practice. Evidence of these elements as well as their alignment with Pennsylvania state standards and the School District’s promotion/graduation requirements are key to model practices.

- **Student voice in choosing, developing and implementing a project:** Service-learning works best when students are involved in something relevant and meaningful to them. Encourage student participation and sharing of responsibility in all aspects of a project.
- **Identification of genuine need:** The “community” identifying the need can be the class, the school, the neighborhood, a community partner, the city, etc. Goals for addressing problem have the support of designated community and clearly defined goals.
- **Mutual benefit for students and community partner(s):** Students acquire knowledge and skills, and in return contribute a short or long-term solution to the problem. Sensitivity to needs and/or limitations of all parties is important.
- **Sustained student involvement:** Length of project can vary but should span a minimum of 8 weeks. Projects with greater richness and complexity may last a semester or an entire school year.
- **Rigorous, multidisciplinary research:** Projects should meet content standards in at least two academic disciplines and demonstrate writing and research competence. Research can explore root causes/effects, potential solutions or public policy related to the problem.
- **Ongoing reflection:** Reflection activities should occur throughout the project. They reveal cognitive and affective learning and can incorporate speaking, writing and/or multimedia strategies.
- **Assessment of student learning and project impact:** Evaluates academic, personal and social development as well as whether stated community need has been met/addressed. Rubrics and other authentic assessment tools are preferred.

6th Grade: Social Studies

- **Culminating presentation:** Presentations or exhibitions of learning allow students to demonstrate what they have learned for the benefit of others, including community partners.
- **Final celebration:** Positive change and collaboration is hard work! Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of all who were involved.

3) Sample Project Description

A sample project description is included for your convenience. This particular project is not required, however, it is designed to fit the core curriculum for this subject and it reflects a common issue or problem in many of Philadelphia's communities. Teachers are encouraged to transform this project and take it in new directions.

Food and Culture: A Community Exploration

The theme of exploring cultures and community history through food is relevant to the 6th grade social studies curriculum. Within an interdisciplinary study of food and culture there are many opportunities for students to engage in activities to improve community nutrition and food security on a local level while working to understand how geography, politics, economics and history shape food systems. Problems of poor nutrition including obesity and malnutrition are among the most serious public health threats in the world today. This project will engage youth in a series of activities to study the local food environment and help community members make healthy food choices. This project will help 6th grade students understand problems facing their community and how active citizens can play a role in solving community problems.

Suggestions include: Plan and grow heritage crops with senior citizens in a community or school garden. Choose crops with histories relevant to different cultures represented in Philadelphia communities.

Gather recipes and accompanying stories from different restaurants and/or community members that represent different cultures in Philadelphia. Try to gather healthy recipes (recipes with fruits, vegetable and/or whole grains, for example). Recipes can be adapted to a healthier style using resources such as <http://www.deliciousdecisions.org>. Publish a Philadelphia Food and Culture Healthy Recipe Book.

Host a healthy community meal at your school in honor of World Food Day (October 16) or some other holiday or event that honors food (Thanksgiving, Kwanza, National Nutrition Month, etc). In order to host the event students may need to prepare recipes themselves, solicit donations from local chefs/ restaurants or raise money to purchase ingredients and/or prepared foods.

4) Suggested Lessons/Activities:

Situating Students in the Problem

Why should students care about food consumption? Obesity is a major health problem among America's youth and a growing concern internationally as well. Many students will know family members, neighbors, friends whose lives are

6th Grade: Social Studies

adversely affected by diet related disease. Food and nutrition are high profile issues for youth. Since 2003 most major US newspapers have published at least one article about children and nutrition per week. Try engaging students by bringing in current news articles. This project is an opportunity to inject youth voices, ideas and action into a prominent issue.

Research

There are many great opportunities for primary research within this themed project. Personal reflection is great way to start. Ask questions such as “What kinds of foods do I enjoy? / Where are these foods produced? / Who grew/ produced the ingredients? / What foods are most available in my neighborhood?” Try keeping food journals and compare differences/ similarities across the classroom. Research can broaden to include family members and community members? It is always interesting to ask seniors questions because of their long histories. Questions such as, “Has the availability of food changed in your lifetime? / Do you have any old family recipes you would like to share?”

Creating a Solution

By growing, preparing and/or selling healthy foods, students will participate in a global movement to build food systems that nurture health and wellness. There are many ways for students to take action beyond the suggested projects. For example, students may choose to organize healthy school fundraisers, featuring fruits from different countries each month. This themed project can be supported by integrating a food lesson into every unit, even if it is not directly related to the service component. For example, when studying government structures, ask questions such as, “What are local, state and national agencies that regulate our food system? What are some of the current legislative issues related to food?”

Assessment

Involve students in determining if their intervention is successful. How many people/classrooms participated? How many recipe books were distributed?

Standards

It is challenging to identify 6th grade social studies standards not related to an exploration of food and culture. There are too many to list. There is outstanding potential to integrate food and culture into the study of PA History (8.2.6), Economics – Systems, Markets and Functions of Governments, Scarcity and Choice, Economic Independence and Work and Earnings (6.1.6 – 6.5.6), Geography – Interactions between People and Places (7.4) and Civics – Principles of Government and Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship (5.1.6, 5.2.6).

5) Sample Rubric

Rubrics can be used at all steps of the service-learning process. Each activity can have its own rubric, and you can use a cumulative rubric to assess student work at the end of the project. Here are two rubrics, one that covers students’ developmental progress and one that assesses specific tasks.

6th Grade: Social Studies

See attached.

6) Multidisciplinary Connections

Math - Measurement/ Fractions used in preparing recipes; Graphing / Statistics used in analyzing community nutrition surveys

Technology - Using desktop publishing to create a recipe book featuring recipes and accompanying stories gathered from community research project

Science - Explore food chains, Trace food as an energy source back to the energy sources that helped produce the food, Create a diagram of environmental inputs into food production/ distribution/ consumption and disposal, Start a schoolyard composting project (a way to reduce waste from food consumption)

Language Arts - Read *Seed Folks* by Paul Flaishman – explores issues of food/agriculture and cultural diversity in a Cleveland urban neighborhood; Read *Farmworker's Friend: The Story of César Chávez* by David Collins – explores geography, labor rights, community organizing, food justice.

7) Where to get more info?

California Dept of Ed

<http://chavez.cde.ca.gov/ModelCurriculum/Intro.aspx>

Garden Writers Association

<http://www.gardenwriters.org/Par/index.html>

World Food Day

<http://www.feedingminds.org/>

Slow Food USA

<http://www.slowfoodusa.org>

Five a Day

<http://www.dole5aday.com/Teachers>

8) Local Partners:

Urban Nutrition Initiative

<http://www.urbannutrition.org>

Philadelphia Green

<http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/>

6th Grade: Social Studies

Philadelphia Food Bank

<http://www.greaterphiladelphiafoodbank.org/>

Penn State Cooperative Extension

<http://philadelphia.extension.psu.edu/>

This curriculum insert was developed by Danny Gerber, Co-Director of the Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI), a program of the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, working with the School District of Philadelphia to integrate nutrition education and community-problem solving into the new core curriculum.