

8th grade: American History

1) Introduction: Service-learning is tailor made for teaching American History. The essence of both service-learning and history is helping students understand the world around them so they can be effective citizens and leaders. Service-learning brings students into direct contact with real-world community problem-solving. The experience provides a context in which to explore the impact of government, policy, and economics on our every day lives.

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 keys 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.
- **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.

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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.

Conflict Resolution:

Today, many of our schools and communities are plagued by violence. Whether in the form of bullying on the playground, abuse in the home, drive-by shootings in our neighborhoods, or even war and destruction around the world, violence is all around us. However, as in the past, today's communities are taking a stand against the bloodshed.

The Conflict Resolution project is designed to engage students in this fight against violence while at the same time reinforcing the academic content for this course. Unfortunately, many of our students have first-hand experience with violence; this project is meant to help transform tragedy into positive action for the common good. In this project, students will explore the impact of violence and conflict within, between, and across communities throughout the American historical experience (8.2.9 D, 8.3.9 D). They will study the impact of violence in their own lives, school, and community, and will design methods by which to alleviate tensions and reduce harm. Two suggested methods are the creation of a school-wide or school-community Social Contract (5.1.9 A-F, H-J; 5.2.9 A-C, F; 5.3.9 G, J) and the implementation of a conflict resolution/peer mediation program for the school.

4) Suggested Lessons/Activities

Situating students in the problem

- WHYY's War Letters. The War Letters series is a collection of private correspondence between U. S. soldiers and their families dating back to the American Revolution (5.4.9 A-C, E; 8.1.9; 8.3.9 B-C). Students will read the letters and write reflective papers about violence and war. They may also write their own "War Letters" to describe violent experiences they have dealt with personally.

Research / Learning

- Invite local peace and/or anti-violence activists, law enforcement officials, attorneys, former gang members, and other relevant speakers to the classroom and for workshops, testimonials, or interviews.
- Research paper topics: What are the major sources of conflict between students at our school? Between students and teachers? In the community? Do students feel safe at school? When do they not feel safe?

Creating a Solution / Serving

- Design a school-wide or school-community Social Contract that states the rights and responsibilities of all parties (especially recognizing that there are often multiple stakeholders)
- Implement a conflict resolution/peer mediation program in the school that will serve students, parents, teachers, etc.

5) Sample Rubric

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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 sample rubrics, one of which can be used to evaluate student completion of work and the other which can be used to evaluate overall student development.

See attached

6) Multidisciplinary Connections

Math—graphing statistics on violence, arrest, detention, conviction, and incarceration by geography, race, class, etc; use mathematical analysis to determine costs of violence to individuals and to societies

Science – understanding the social context of science. How did scientists explain violent behavior in the 1800s? the 1950s? today?

ELA – writing and reading of letters and other primary and secondary sources

7) Where to get more info?

Veterans of Foreign Wars: <http://www.vfw.org/>

Physicians for Social Responsibility: <http://www.psr.org/home.cfm?id=violence>

United for Peace and Justice: <http://www.unitedforpeace.org/>

Peace Action: <http://www.peace-action.org/>

8) Local Partners

Institute for Study of Civic Values (Social Contract Project):

<http://www.neighborhoodsonline.net/GettingInvolved/gettinginvolved.html>

WHYY War Letters: <http://www.whyy.org/community/warletters/>

Good Shepherd Peer Mediation Program: <http://www.phillymediators.org/>

Philadelphia Anti- Drug/Anti-Violence Network: <http://www.paan.info/>

Women’s Anti-Violence Education: <http://www.waveselfdefense.org/>

Center for Resolutions: <http://www.center4resolutions.org>