

Combatting Apathy With Empathy:

A Focus on Technology and Service-Learning

Project Description:

My 10-minute IGNITE session will encourage educators to try a Service Learning project with their students. Research has shown that Service Learning improves academic performance and student engagement, but it can also teach our students how to be empathetic and active citizens in their own communities.

The 20 slide presentation will cover:

- The problem: apathetic students
- What is Service-Learning?
- Past Research on engagement, academic scores, creating powerful relationships between school and the local community
- The BIGGEST impact: teaching our students about empathy
- Share about our school's 4th grade Community Fair, how we leveraged different types of technology for powerful student presentations and the impact it had
- Why empathy matters (the big picture - empathy is the glue that holds us all together)

Topic Description:

We live in a time of division and rapidly growing hate. It is more pressing than ever that we help raise up the next generation to be active and empathetic citizens who will use their skills and talents to help others. Empathy is the ability to identify with what someone else is feeling. If we can empathize, then we can be moved to show compassion to others and treat them like we want to be treated. Not only do service-learning projects help train students to be active and empathetic citizens, but community needs are also met. This form of experiential learning also helps students develop 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. There is an emphasis on technology since it has the power to transform this unit into a powerful learning opportunity. Come hear about our service-learning project which culminates each year with students leveraging technology in order to persuade their audience to get involved. Past student projects include green screen videos, augmented reality, digital posters, video creation, etc. Come discover how technology and service-learning can transform your instruction and teach your kids about empathy.

Standards Covered:

ISTE Standards for Students:

Knowledge Constructor 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.

Project Application: Students work collaboratively to create a multi-media presentation on a community issue of their choice. Input from guest speakers, online articles, and additional research contribute to the authenticity of the project. Final presentations give students the opportunity to share their findings and advocate for donations towards their cause.

Creative Communicator 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.

Project Application: Students collaborate in small groups to plan, create and revise a digital presentation with the medium of their choice (green screen, augmented reality, digital animation, web design, infographics etc.)

Creative Communicator 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for their intended audiences.

Project Application: Students are responsible for presenting at our school's Community Fair to parents and community members. They share their multi-media presentation and answer questions from the audience.

ISTE Coaching Standard 3 Collaborator

Coaches establish productive relationships with educators in order to improve instructional practice and learning outcomes. Coaches:

- a. Establish trusting and respectful coaching relationships that encourage educators to explore new instructional strategies.
- b. Partner with educators to identify digital learning content that is culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate and aligned to content standards.

I think my presentation connects with ISTE Coaching Standard 3a and b. Through my presentation, I aim to "encourage educators to explore new instructional strategies" and help them "identify digital learning content that is culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate and aligned to content standards. The service-project unit I taught at my past school was with fourth graders. However, it can be adapted to fit any area based on location and community background. The universal goal for everyone participating is that students become aware, empathetic, and active citizens in their communities. This project also uses various forms of technology as a vehicle for students to deliver moving and persuasive presentations. Students are able to choose different types of technology that interest them (i.e. green screen, augmented reality, digital comic strips, podcasts, etc.) to demonstrate their knowledge and persuade their audience. Hopefully, after

listening to my IGNITE talk, teachers will be interested in exploring service-learning pedagogy more and will understand how vital technology is in engaging students, allowing for meaningful research and collaboration, and in student creation.

Supporting Research

Billig, Shelley H., "The Effects of Service Learning" (2000). Service Learning, General. Paper 42. <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/42>

Farber, Katherine A., "Learning by Doing: Service Learning As a Means of Personal Growth in the Middle Grades" (2017). Current Issues in Middle Level Education. 22 (1), 1-9. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1151671.pdf>

"The Impacts of Service-Learning on Youth, Schools and Communities: Research on K-12 School-Based Service-Learning, 1990-1999" (2002). W. K. Kellogg Foundation. <https://www.wkcf.org/resource-directory/resource/2002/04/the-impacts-of-service-learning-on-youth-schools-and-communities-research-on-k-12-school-based>

Markham, T. (2016, Nov. 16). *Why Empathy Holds the Key to Transforming 21st Century Learning*. KQED MindShift. <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/46980/why-empathy-holds-the-key-to-transforming-21st-century-learning>

Swaner, Lynn E., and Erdvig, Rodger C.S., "Bring It To Life: Christian Education and the Transformative Power of Service-Learning" (2018).

Digital tools mentioned in IGNITE presentation:

During the IGNITE presentation, I will mention some of the digital tools students used to collaborate and then educate and persuade community members. In order for teachers to learn more about these age-appropriate tools such as green screen, augmented reality, digital posters, etc. I can provide a link to my personal website that educators can access later to locate these resources.

- Website resources: Powtoon, Adobe Spark, Visme (infographics), Animaker, Storyboard That
- iPad applications: DoInk (green screen), Anchor (podcasts)
- Collaboration: Email, Skype for business, FaceTime or the Meet Now feature in Microsoft Teams

Collaborative participation

Check out #servicelearning on twitter to see what other educators are doing.

I am also hoping to lead a TwitterChat on Service-Learning after my IGNITE presentation. This would provide educators with an opportunity to learn more, share ideas, and ask questions.

IGNITE Presentation Notes

1. The problem: Apathetic students
 - a. Description of apathetic learners
2. The Solution: Service-Learning
 - a. What is service-learning: A teaching pedagogy that intentionally connects classroom learning with service opportunities outside of the school.
 - b. Science, math, reading.... These should not be silos of learning. Teachers should help our students connect their learning with authentic, and meaningful real-world experiences.
 - c. Service-learning helps students explore the world around them and learn that they can make a positive impact on others.
3. Dewey's Constructivism
 - a. Service-learning is a form of experiential learning and connects with Dewey's theory of Constructivism.
 - b. Constructivism learning theory emphasizes the importance of consciousness, free will, and social influences on learning. According to this view, we "construct" new knowledge through experiences rather than gaining it auditorially or through memorization. Constructivists believe that understanding is reached when we take new information, relate it to prior knowledge, and then process it. **To put it simply, we learn by doing and having social interactions with others.**
4. Key Characteristics
 - a. Service or "work" must directly connect to curriculum
 - b. Partnership addressing community needs
 - c. Regular reflection
 - d. Duration
 - e. Gives students practice with collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity
5. What it is NOT
 - a. Community service with no connection to the curriculum
 - b. Service around the school (i.e. peer tutoring or cleaning up school grounds)
 - c. Active learning without a service component (creating a video, website)
 - d. A one-time event
 - i. Should be sustained, multiple contacts with those being served
6. What it is NOT
 - a. Charitable work
 - i. SL is a true partnership between students and community members working together to address a need. ("Easy to fall into the trap of an

"us-versus-them" mentality, where community members are viewed as needy and the school is seen as coming to the rescue in some way" (pg 20). This is very counterproductive in building authentic relationships. In addition, if any students come from the community being helped or participate with the community organization being partnered with (foster care, food-bank, etc.) they may feel embarrassed or start to question their value. (pg. 19-21).

7. Impact of Service-Learning

- a. Increased student engagement and interest
- b. Higher academic scores
- c. Civic responsibility and desire to serve

8. Most importantly.... EMPATHY

- a. Empathy is the ability to identify with what someone else is feeling. To take on their perspective. It's like saying "I know what it's like. You're not alone."
- b. Social-emotional learning should be directly taught to our students.
- c. Brain research shows us that empathy activates the frontal lobes of our brain- where planning, execution, problem-solving and creativity are housed. So students will learn better if we can help them flex their empathy muscle!

9. Our Goals

- a. In the classroom
 - i. Academic - Persuasive Writing
 - ii. Technology - Multimedia Communication
 - iii. Social-Emotional - Empathy should be taught, practiced and coached.

10. Our Goals

- a. Out of the classroom
 - i. Communal - Aware of community needs and actively working to solve the problems they encounter
 - ii. Empowerment - Highlighting Student Impact: Our 4th graders can make a difference
 - 1. Hands-on service
 - 2. Advocating for a cause and educating others

11. The Community Fair

- a. STEP 1: Teach persuasive writing unit
- b. STEP 2: Hear from community speakers
- c. STEP 3: Research and hands-on service opportunities
- d. STEP 4: Individual persuasive essays
- e. STEP 5: Group technology projects

12. Community Partners

- a. Humane Shelter
- b. Wildlife Refuge
- c. Children's Hospital
- d. Food Bank
- e. Soup Kitchen

- f. Non-Profits
 - g. Veteran's Association
 - h. Foster Care
 - i. Refugee Resettlement
13. Community Presentations
- a. Our community partners agreed to come share with our students about the need in our community and how they were trying to fix it. Students were required to take notes and a Q&A time followed their 10-minute presentation.
 - b. After the presentations, students could select a cause they were passionate about to advocate for.
14. Community Service
- a. This is the "hands-on" learning portion. We had a minimum of two "field trips" to sites to learn more about the need in the community and have first-hand experience volunteering
 - b. Reflection is a critical part of service-learning. It helps students process their work and connect it back to the curriculum. Reflection generates, deepens, and documents learning.
 - i. Classroom discussions
 - ii. Think-pair-share
 - iii. Journaling
15. Technology = the key to success
- a. Technology is the vehicle that will get us from point A to point b. Without technology, it would not be possible.
16. Tech Integration
- a. Research - Student devices were vital in helping students construct knowledge and take charge of their learning
 - i. Internet searches and teacher-approved sites
 - ii. Newsela
 - b. Collaboration with experts - Interviews with professionals via email and Teams.
 - i. We taught students how to write formal letters and professional communication skills for virtual interviews.
17. Tech Integration
- a. Multi-media options - Gives students creativity and choice to demonstrate knowledge
 - i. Expand on student options to creatively express themselves and persuade others (Anchor, Storyboard That, Dolnk, Powtoon, Adobe spark, Visme, Animaker, HP Reveal)
 - ii. Collaborative platforms - most of the project options had collaboration features built-in which allowed each student to contribute and have a voice
 - iii. End product: engaging and interesting presentations
18. Community Fair Presentations
- a. Prepped students and role played

- b. Set up (table for each group with the required technology, poster board and donation jar. Someone taking money at door in exchange for raffle tickets symbolizing \$5 each)
 - c. Student role
 - d. Awards ceremony
19. Why does it all matter?
- a. We live in a time of division and rapidly growing hate. It is more pressing than ever that we help raise up the next generation to be active and empathetic citizens who will use their skills and talents to help others.
 - b. Through our service-learning projects, students have the opportunity to engage and learn about needs in their own backyard. This exposes our students to people's stories and perspectives, different from their own, and helps them develop a more empathetic worldview.
20. Empathy... "It's the subterranean, fundamental glue that holds humanity together." -
- a. If we do not care, we do not act. And the first step to caring is understanding. If we understand other people's perspectives, then we can start to empathize. Our empathy moves us to show compassion to others and treat them like we want to be treated.
 - b. "It's the subterranean, fundamental glue that holds humanity together."