SERVICE-LEARNING: TAKING ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights Education (HRE) aspires to promote and protect human dignity, not merely by valuing and respecting human rights, but by fostering personal action to guarantee these conditions. For educators, service-learning puts human rights theory into action by transforming the classroom into a site of social change where students are empowered to become active citizens who question and inform society.

WHAT is service-learning?

Service-learning is a methodology wherein students learn about a specific issue through active participation which engages them in service and reflection through and upon completion. To set up a service-learning project, there are three parties that should be involved: 1) the school working to educate students on human rights, 2) the students, and 3) the organization receiving the service. For a service-learning project to be successful, it is important to construct educational activities that are mutually beneficial to all parties and collectively address social issues.

WHY teach through service-learning?

- Teaches about human rights while working to protect them.
- Encourages learners to form their own opinions and beliefs and then act on those beliefs.
- Engages learners in their community.
- Allows learners to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility.
- Turns theory into action.
- Provides a service that is needed in the community.
- Takes human rights out of the classroom and into the real world.
- Teaches critical thinking and problem solving.
- Empowers students to realize that they can make a difference.

WHERE can human rights and service-learning take my classroom?

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

At Carver Scott Educational Coop, high school students learned about how The Advocates for Human Rights was helping children in Nepal stay out of forced child labor by ensuring their access to education. In response, the students developed a project to support the school. The Chaska students wrote letters to the students in Nepal, created presentations to educate others about child labor, and raised money for the Sankhu-Palabari School by selling baked goods and student-made crafts. The monetary gift, letters, and photographs were delivered to the students in Nepal by The Advocates. In recognition of their work, the students received a service-learning award from the State of Minnesota, which included a $200 grant. The students used the money to pay for a year’s tuition for one student in Nepal. Source: www.discoverhumanrights.org/.

THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND HOUSING

Hunger and homelessness continue to pervade many American cities. Eighth and Ninth graders from a junior high school in New Mexico decided to ban together and combat these issues in their local community. Students partnered with a neighborhood soup kitchen and orphanage, gaining firsthand experience in running the facilities. Calculating supply costs, planning menus, cooking meals, and helping maintain the building were vital tasks that students helped fulfill. In addition, students created handmade books and games for the children at the orphanage and interacted with them on a daily basis. Through their work and personal encounters with poverty, students gained an awareness and deeper sense of empathy for those in less fortunate circumstances. Source: www.nylc.org/resources/projects/hunger-homelessness-and-loneliness.

SERVICE-LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN MINNEAPOLIS!

The Advocates for Human Rights has been working with educators and students for nearly 20 years. We currently have opportunities for Minneapolis teachers in Grades 5-8 who are interested in creating a service-learning project in their school. We work with each class individually to create “tailor-made” service-learning opportunities based on students’ interests and the needs in the community. To learn more, please contact Sarah Herder, Education Director, at sherder@advrights.org or 612-746-4691.
**RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS**

The Complete Guide to Service Learning
http://freespirit.com/catalog/item_detail.cfm?ITEM_ID=124
A compilation of activities, ideas, and resources. Provides an overview of the basic elements of service-learning and detailed instructions. Grades K-12.

Get Global
getglobal.org.uk/
A range of innovative and participatory activities promote a skills-based approach rather than a content-based approach, so they can be used within different subject areas and with all ages.

Human Rights and Service-Learning
hrea.org/pubs/AIUSA-HREA-ServiceLearning.pdf
Lesson plans and service-learning projects divided into five human rights topic areas: environment, poverty, discrimination, children's rights to education and health, and law and justice. Grades 8-12.

Kids as Planners
kidsconsortium.org/kidsasplanners_overview.php
Provides teachers and school administrators with a road map for integrating service-learning into their classes and curriculum.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
servicelearning.org/
A website with timely information and relevant resources to support service-learning programs, practitioners, and researchers. It operates a national listserv for service-learning to discuss and exchange ideas.

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)
nylc.org
NYLC hosts the annual National Service-Learning Conference. The website includes project ideas searchable by subject, grade level, or key word.

Teen ACTION
A service-learning curriculum aimed at helping youth in grades 7 – 10 learn about community issues through a human rights framework and implement a meaningful service project that meets a need in their community. The curriculum is free and downloadable.

Teen Guide to Social and Global Action
http://freespirit.com/catalog/item_detail.cfm?ITEM_ID=584
Provides everything youth need to start making a difference at the local, national, or global level. Includes handouts. Grades 3-12.

**RESOURCES FOR YOUTH**

Activist Learning
freechild.org/AL/community.htm
A youth-focused site, actively encouraging self-direction and education through community activism with inspiring stories of youth making change.

Free the Children
freethethechildren.org
Features excellent tools and actions, all designed for youth. Download the “Youth in Action Toolkit,” sign up for a leadership academy, or join an overseas international development project.

TakingITGlobal
takingitglobal.org
A global community for youth with useful resources such as the “Workshop Kit and Guide to Action.” View other youth-led projects by region or topic.

UNICEF Voices of Youth
unicef.org/voy
A forum for youth to learn, speak out, connect with other youth, and take action. Provides strategies for action on key human rights issues around the globe.