



SERVICE-LEARNING: INCREASING EMPATHY AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

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Research has shown that there are many positive outcomes to students and schools from participating in service-learning. Some of the benefits of service-learning include a greater understanding of material, higher attendance, and greater engagement of students. However, elementary students are less likely than older students to participate in service learning, especially if they attend schools that serve lower socio-economic classes. For my Integrative Service Project (ISP) I created and implemented a service-learning curriculum with an emphasis on Guatemala for the Salt Lake School District. The service learning curriculum helps empower students and creates new in-depth learning opportunities for them while allowing them to make an impact on a community in Guatemala. During the 2014-2015 school year, the curriculum was taught at North Star Elementary School and Edison Elementary School, both Title I schools in Salt Lake City. The service-learning curriculum follows a “learn, serve and reflect model”. I created academic lessons about Guatemala ranging from astronomy to clothing and health. The service projects included knitting hats and making educational banners for an elementary school in Sololá, Guatemala. Students reflected on their impact through journal entries, pen pal letters, drawings and verbal reflections. Students who participated in the class had increased empathy levels as shown through an empathy survey. The students also developed a greater sense of community and a more knowledge about Guatemala and service. Edison Elementary School plans to use this service-learning curriculum for future fifth grade students.

