

## Service-Learning Project Sharing

A high quality example of a curriculum-based local or global outreach effort made possible by Learn and Serve Ohio, Partnerships Make a Difference, and a caring community of K-12 teachers and students

Learning with Purpose . . . Serving with Passion . . .  
Creating a Positive Legacy

**Project Title:** *The Schools and Community of Dublin . . . Growing Together*

*"We're cheffing it up!" -- Davon Fisher, 16, West Bridge Academy Student*

**Big Idea:** High school alternative program students developed recipes, hosted cooking demonstrations, and taught both younger students and local food pantry patrons about nutrition and horticulture.

**Teachers:** Leslie Bamford and Ryan Walton, West Bridge Academy, Dublin City Schools, Dublin, Ohio

**Students :** 8 West Bridge Academy Students and 25 Sells Middle School Students

**Curriculum Area(s):** Science, Health, Social Studies, Language Arts, and Mathematics

**Community Partner(s):** Dublin Food Pantry, Green Thumb Revolution

### Planning and Implementation Process

#### Investigation

*How/why did you choose to do this project? What significant need(s) or issue(s) did your students address? What made the idea for this project compelling/inspiring? How did you get them intellectually/emotionally engaged?*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most Americans eat amounts well below the daily fruit and vegetable recommendation. Adults should have

two to four servings of fruit and three to five servings of vegetables a day. Only 32.5% of adults consumed fruit two or more times per day, and 26.3% consumed vegetables three or more times per day in 2009.

Young people learn eating habits from the adults around them. As a result, over the last 30 years the number of obese children in America has doubled and the number of obese teenagers has tripled. The future of young America does not look “healthy.”

According to Healthfinder.gov, it is possible that one third of American adults will have diabetes by 2050. Diabetes is hereditary, however, Type 2 diabetes can also be a result of poor eating habits and obesity.

Obesity is expensive and Americans are paying for it. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, medical expenses related to obesity accounted for 9.1 percent of total U.S. medical expenditures in 1998 and may have reached as high as \$78.5 billion.

Learning nutrition facts and healthy eating habits while they are young increases a child’s chances of living a life free of diabetes and obesity. The students of West Bridge Academy love cooking vegetables and herbs they grow themselves in our school’s garden and greenhouse. As next steps, they developed an interest in improving their own eating habits, and then taking what they learned to 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the middle school next door (Dublin Sells Middle School) and also to Dublin community residents who use the community food pantry across the street.

### **Preparation**

*How did you and the students get ready? What learning was involved? What partnerships did you develop?*

The West Bridge students have been growing herbs and vegetables in the classroom and in an on-site school garden for the last three years. They love tasting what they have grown. The group has a number of amateur chefs, and a few have even expressed an interest in a culinary career.

Through the “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network, we met Christine Annarino. Christine is the founder of Green Thumb Revolution, a local business committed to educating the public about organic gardening, eating locally, and nutrition. Christine and her business associate, Derek, became our main resource for learning the knowledge and skills we needed to educate ourselves, the middle school students, and the community members about sustainable gardening practices and healthy eating habits.

Christine and Derek came to WBA for three sessions to teach the team of eight students about the benefits of different vitamins found in certain vegetables and how to grow

produce organically. They all worked together to develop recipes, practiced the cooking techniques, and tasted their creations in the classroom before heading out to demonstrate their new skills and knowledge to others.

WBA students have been volunteering weekly for two years at the Dublin Food Pantry, located just across the street from the school. Nancy, the new Pantry director, met with our students to discuss the 30 percent increase in use of the pantry by Dublin residents. The kids also learned about how the pantry is striving to provide more fresh options to its clients, including fruits, vegetables, dairy, and meats.

Laura Blue's 7<sup>th</sup> grade science class at Sells Middle School had been studying plant growth and development, and they were prepared for the application steps of harvesting, cooking and eating locally grown produce.

The WBA students divided themselves into four teams of two students each. Each pair worked together to create a recipe showcasing their favorite vegetables and herbs. Some things they would grow themselves, and we would purchase others locally. The students researched the nutritional benefits of these ingredients and how they fit into an overall healthy diet. Then it was time for the grocery shopping.

As a class, we visited the Whole Foods store in Dublin. In addition to choosing their ingredients, the students were given a store tour by the Whole Foods Healthy Eating Specialist, Carrie Rasmusen. They learned about organic growing practices, where various local foods are sourced, and even got to taste some unique fruits and vegetables. There was even a team scavenger hunt to look for unique and rare items. The students showed great enthusiasm for the project and for what they were learning. And to celebrate this stage of the project, each team was allowed to choose one produce item that they had never tried before to take back to West Bridge to eat and experience as a group. We had a whole fresh coconut, bean and pea sprouts, yellow watermelon, and white cherries.

In addition to the above tasks of planning the recipes and purchasing the produce, the students determined what seasonings and cooking/prep tools they would need to prepare their final products both at the middle school and at the food pantry. Plus, the patrons of the food pantry would also get recipe cards, an extra portion of fresh vegetables (green beans, peppers, asparagus, or Brussels sprouts), and pepper and tomato plants so they could grow their own veggies in the future. The West Bridge Academy students did all of the assembly for 20 "gift boxes" to pass out on the day of the cooking event at the pantry.

### **Action**

*Service-learning allows students the chance to change the world—sometimes in small ways, sometimes in much larger ways. Please explain the meaningful service activities in which you and your students were involved.*

The service activity had two stages: (1) cooking and talking about nutrition with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade science class in the middle school next door, and (2) cooking for the patrons of the food pantry across the street while also providing them with the means to grow veggies and cook for themselves.

#### ***Mrs. Blue's 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Class***

Christine and Derek led the first part of the activity by talking with the middle school students about the foods they all eat and vitamins found in various fruits and vegetables. The WBA students used their knowledge in the discussion too, and then set up their four cooking stations to demonstrate what they had learned about how healthy food can be both easy to make and delicious as well. The class rotated around the food stations, tasting Asian-inspired Brussels sprouts, garlicky kale, steamed lemon broccoli, and spinach salad.

The younger students loved the healthy recipes, and the older kids were proud of themselves, what they had created, and of their teamwork and communication skills. At the end of the period, each middle school student made a promise to add an extra fruit and vegetable into their diet every day. Goodbye obesity and diabetes!

#### ***Dublin Food Pantry***

On Tuesday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., the food pantry is open for Dublin residents to come and get free boxed, canned, and fresh food items. As many as 15-25 local families visit the pantry on any given day. The team of WBA students set up their cooking stations in the multi-purpose room to pass out samples of their healthy recipes as the patrons were exiting the pantry. They dished up small portions of their creations with smiles on their faces, and they shared information about their project with the people they met.

They practiced their communication skills by explaining the vegetable gift boxes and answered questions about how to care for the plants and make the recipes. Any leftover boxes were passed out to people who visited at a later date. However, there were no leftovers of food as many people came back for seconds and thirds of the kids' creations!

### **Reflection**

*Written, oral, artistic, visual, dramatic and other forms of expression... all these are important ways of reflecting. In what ways did your students reflect on their experiences*

*and the learning that was a part of it? What were a few of their key observations and insights?*

We reflected individually and as a group throughout the duration of the project. We talked as a group about what we were learning, and each student kept a food diary of just the fruits and vegetables they were including in their diet. Each person had a goal for either increasing the amount of healthy options they choose or for adding more variety into their weekly diet. As a culminating reflective activity, the class created a video to showcase the project and to inspire others to think positively about eating locally and healthily.

### **Demonstration/Celebration**

*Along the way and at the end of the project, how did you celebrate the impact of your efforts? In what ways did students demonstrate their new learning?*

The service event at the food pantry was also a celebration for the kids involved. They got enormous amounts of positive reinforcement and compliments from the pantry director and workers, as well as from the patrons. A reporter from the local Dublin paper came to the event, interviewed the students, and took pictures. When the story was published, the project team shared the article and photos with the other West Bridge students. We held a reception to honor those involved and to encourage others to consider the service-learning class in their schedule next year.

### **Curriculum Connections**

*High quality service-learning connects service with the curriculum. A variety of state and local standards can be addressed through the investigation, preparation, action, reflection and celebration/demonstration/evaluation phases of service-learning.*

*So . . . how did your students use their academic knowledge and skills to “make a difference?” How did they become scientists, writers, artists, researchers, etc. to support this project? What curricular areas were addressed through this project? What were some specific standards or learning objectives that were covered? What kinds of interdisciplinary planning and learning occurred?*

**Science:** biology, botany, agriculture, horticulture

**Health:** nutrition, wellness, disease, fitness

**Social Studies:** economics, government, citizenship, social issues, community awareness

**Language Arts:** public speaking, advocacy skills

**Mathematics:** consumer economics, computation, currency

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

*There is an increasing emphasis on helping students develop and demonstrate 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (Ken Kaye et. al.) Service-learning provides an excellent way to incorporate these skills in an authentic way. Please check the themes and skills that were addressed in your project.*

- ☑ Global Awareness
- ☑ Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy
- ☑ Civic Literacy
- ☑ Health Literacy
- ☑ Creativity and Innovation
- ☑ Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- ☑ Communication and Collaboration
- ☑ Information Literacy
- ☑ Media Literacy
- ☑ ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy
- ☑ Flexibility and Adaptability
- ☑ Initiative and Self-Direction
- ☑ Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- ☑ Productivity and Accountability
- ☑ Leadership and Responsibility

*Please provide at least one specific example or anecdote of how one of the skills was evident in your students' work.*

### **Communication and Collaboration**

Students were given/selected project roles specific to their gifts and interests, and each student brought the strength of his/her specialization to the group. The students also worked in pairs, and then, as a team, they created a multi-level cooperative environment.

Students practiced communicating in both small and large groups, with peers and with adults, and in both verbal and written forms.

### **Creativity and Innovation**

Students demonstrated both group and individual creativity in the design of the recipes they created

### **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**

The students used critical thinking and organization to plan the recipes, create the shopping lists, and plan for the additional tools needed for cooking. They had to find solutions to cramped classrooms, the lack of electrical outlets, and a shortage of fresh zucchini at Whole Foods as the project progressed.

### **Social and Cross-Cultural Skills**

Even though many of the students had been volunteering at the food pantry for nearly a year, personally meeting a number of the people that they have helped to feed made their efforts more meaningful.

### **Impact: Kids Using Their “Best Stuff” To Make A Difference**

*Curricular skills/knowledge and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are certainly part of students’ “best stuff.” In addition... how did your students use their individual gifts, passions and strength of character in carrying out this project?*

The West Bridge Academy alternative students are typically the kids who are “trouble”, or left out, or at the least undervalued. The gifts and skills that they possess are often overlooked due to the students’ discipline problems, attendance issues, and/or lack of willingness to conform to traditional expectations.

*Do you think your students felt empowered by this project? What “voice” and leadership roles did they have? How did they “take charge” of certain aspects of the project?*

This service-learning project provided an opportunity for these kids to be the leader. They were the experts on nutrition and healthy eating habits for younger students and for community members. Instead of school being externally imposed on them, they chose what they wanted to learn about, created a project to teach others what they had learned, and were the authors of their own education in every step along the way.

*What aspects of the project made your students especially proud?*

Instead of being perceived as burdens to the school and community, the WBA students are being featured in the media as talented, contributing young people. They now have the opportunity to change the way they think about themselves as others begin to view them in a different way as well.

### **And Now, Some Numbers . . .**

*Please estimate the time spent on your project:*

Number of Project-Related Hours per Student: 14 (WBA students), 2 (Sells Middle School students)

Number of Students: 8 (WBA), 25 (Sells Middle School)

Total Estimated Service and Learning Hours: 162

**Other Insights/Your Own Reflections**

*Can you describe one or more of the “magic” or “aha” moments that happened as part of this experience?*

My students learn best when I get out of the way and let them lead.

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**Other Resources**

Dublin Food Pantry: [www.dublinfoodpantry.org](http://www.dublinfoodpantry.org)

Director: Nancy Johnson

Green Thumb Revolution: [www.greenthumbrevolution.com](http://www.greenthumbrevolution.com)

Christine Annarino and Derek Lory