

Minnesota Service-Learning Project Collection



The Minnesota Department of Education promotes and celebrates students involved in service-learning in their schools and communities. The following projects are great examples of successful projects. Some were funded from Learn and Serve America and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Teachers can use these examples to implement new or expand existing service-learning practice. We know that service-learning is an effective tool that boosts student achievement, enhances student engagement and brings learning to life. [E-mail Michelle Kamenov, Service-Learning Specialist](#), for more information at 651-582-8434.

Elementary Examples



Community Connections

- *School: Lake Nokomis Wenonah Campus, Minneapolis Public Schools*
- *Curricular Connections: science, media and technology, language arts, writing, math, arts, communication, critical thinking*

This first-grade classroom researched and visited various libraries and book stores. They compared and contrasted their own media center to a public library. They interviewed librarians about their jobs. To make the public library more child-friendly, they made bookmarks and wrote book reports available to patrons. They learned about how books are made and bound.

Next, the students made a Little Free Library for their school grounds. They visited the hardware store to learn how to build it and hosted Todd Bol, who started the Little Free Library non-profit. Students designed the library, painted it and held a grand opening for the neighborhood preschool. They sang songs and gave out literacy backpacks that included pencils, crayons, notebooks, shape and color board books that the students made, a stuffed animal reading buddy and a hardcover ABC book. Students now watch the neighborhood benefitting as they take and leave books on a regular basis.



Shop with Meaning

- *School: Mounds Park Academy, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: math, language arts, history, art*

Kindergarten students started this project at home by doing chores, earning small amounts of money for those chores, and bringing it to school. They counted it and learned facts about each coin and the president pictured. Next, students partnered with a local grocery store that doubled the money the students had earned. Students shopped for food to ultimately donate to a local food shelf.

The grocery store turned into a classroom. The students used clipboards to record what they were purchasing using temporary spelling, created math sentences with their food, and practiced reading labels. They had to stay within their initial budget and purchase the best food for their money. The math lesson continued back at school by sorting and counting the items purchased by fives and tens. The food shelf director came and spoke to the students, helping them to better understand food shelves. The food the students collected helped feed 600 people.

Elementary Examples



Butterfly Garden

- *School: Farnsworth Aerospace Magnet, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: science, writing, art*

Farnsworth Aerospace Magnet has been converting a section of the school yard into a butterfly garden for the past seven years. This project has provided a wonderful learning experience for preK-4 students as they have grown plants from seeds in their classrooms, watched them mature and attract butterflies, witnessed the life cycle of the butterfly, and collected seeds for future plants. Students have partnered with their local watershed district to grow plants for lakeshore restoration and the butterfly garden. The students have picked up litter, removed dead growth for composting and weeded, all while learning and writing about weather, plants and insects.



Alex's Lemonade Stand

- *School: Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative, Chaska*
- *Curricular Connections: math, science, health, language arts, community awareness*

These preK-8 students started preparing for a lemonade stand by learning about childhood cancer, including important statistics and how families often become overwhelmed by medical costs. They visited local businesses and shared the story of Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation and asked for assistance. They visited a local bank to learn about keeping money and counting change. They built a lemonade stand and painted it with donated supplies. They assisted in preparing fliers and marketing materials. The lemonade stand was open for four days. Students took turns working outside, preparing the lemonade and assisting customers. The funds they raised were donated to [Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation](#).

Elementary Examples



Bark and Bake

- *School: Lowell Elementary, Duluth*
- *Curricular Connections: art, math, science*

Animal Allies and “Tornado” the shelter dog came to visit kindergarten students and their third-grade service partners. They learned about safety around dogs and generated ideas for how to help the shelter dogs. The students came up with the idea to bake biscuits and called the project, “Bark and Bake.” Animal Allies provided the recipe and the service dog, who was the only one allowed to bark. Everyone else had to bake!

Students rolled and cut the dough for the biscuits, which was made by kindergarten parent volunteers. After the biscuits were baked, they were sorted and counted by the kindergarten students. This was an opportunity to sort and count for a real-life math experience, to learn about wants and needs, help animals in need, learn empathy for others, cooperate with others, and develop partnerships in the community. The children also partner read as Tornado moved from group to group to listen to the animal stories and get some loving pats. To celebrate, the children also participated in dog agility events outside.



Peace Readers

- *School: Creek Valley Elementary School, Edina*
- *Curricular Connections: language arts*

Third-grade students needed to work on their fluency, comprehension and literacy skills. Each student chose a book about peace, practiced reading it aloud, and then read it to younger students throughout the semester. Each student led their younger buddy through a discussion about what the book’s peace message was and how to be a peacemaker. The third-grade students went from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” They received support and practice to increase the following literacy skills: comprehending the meaning of texts (what’s the peace message), linking it to meaning in their own lives (text-to-self), and fluency through re-reading opportunities (through reading and discussing books with younger students). The third-grade students grew as readers and the younger students grew as peacemakers.

Elementary Examples



Friendships Across Generations

- *School: Barack and Michelle Obama Service Learning Elementary, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: language arts, social studies*

Kindergarten students at Obama Service Learning Elementary partnered with Highland Chateau Nursing Home. Students investigated the needs of the residents, interviewed them and then explored ways to meet those needs. The main goal of this project was to help young children get to know and value people of another generation, while bringing joy into the lives of the elders through visits, pictures, conversations, and letters.



Adaptive Technology

- *School: Expo Elementary School, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular connections: technology*

This project challenged students to be technology consultants and designers in partnership with a classroom of students with mental and physical disabilities at Bridge View School. The Bridge View teacher was having difficulties finding software appropriate to the students' level, with an interface that required few motor skills to operate. Expo students used programming software called Scratch to create a learning game and user interface appropriate for the students.

Middle School Examples



Reducing Our Footprint

- *School: Farnsworth Aerospace Magnet, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: science, math, language arts*

Sixth-grade students were involved in this project that emphasized the connection between technology and the environment. Students explored the issue of water quality in the classroom and then participated in a shoreline restoration at Keller Lake, in partnership with the Minnesota Conservation Corps, Watershed District staff and master gardeners. They were also involved in learning about invasive carp through a University of Minnesota research project that explored the effect that carp have on the water quality of local lakes.

Classes went to frozen Lake Gervais to learn about water quality monitoring and were able to use the multi-parameter meter, the Van Doren Sampler, other probes and water quality kits to collect and compare water data.

Students designed a brochure and created displays to demonstrate how the community can become involved in keeping their water clean. They also produced a video about the Keller Lake project that will be used by the Watershed District. The students also initiated a project to address the erosion issue on their school property. They planned and planted shrubs and flowers with Hands on Twin Cities.



Youth Leadership and Community Dialogue

- *School: Open World Learning Community School, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: civic education, health and nutrition*

In this Delta Dental Serve a Smile project, middle school students living in Saint Paul Public Housing learned about healthy life choices, accountability, respect, reasoning, goal-setting and developed skills to cope with stress as they created a performance to share with the entire student body at Open World Learning Community School. The students met for six weeks consecutively after school and then hosted their performance and celebratory dinner.

Middle School Examples



The Art of Storytelling

- *School: Highland Park Junior High School, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular connections: Spanish language arts*

Junior high Spanish immersion language arts students were paired with the Spanish-speaking Early Childhood Family Education program and the Adams Spanish Immersion kindergarten classes. The junior high students developed their storytelling skills in Spanish. They either created original stories to perform or developed the theatrical side of a classic story. The students then performed their stories at selected venues to promote the idea and importance of parents reading to their children starting at a young age.



Save Our Zoo

- *School: Woodland Middle School, Duluth*
- *Curricular connections: language arts, social studies, art*

Save Our Zoo was a school-wide initiative to keep the Lake Superior Zoo open. In 2007, the zoo lost its national accreditation due to decreasing visitors, revenue programs and maintenance concerns. Art students across Duluth planned a city-wide Zoo Extravaganza to attract more visitors to the zoo. This multi-faceted project included the construction of large papier mâché animal sculptures that were displayed and sold at the event to raise funds for the zoo.



Social Action and Our Government

- *School: South View Middle School, Edina*
- *Curricular connections: government*

Students in the ninth-grade government class learned how to act on issues that are of concern to them. Each student or group of students identified an issue - such as the environment or homelessness - researched the need, and created a plan to have impact on that issue. These projects ranged from working in a homeless shelter, to increasing awareness about the needs of food shelves, to reading books aloud and creating a cassette tape to be given to ELL programs that support literacy.

Middle School Examples



Chemical Health Awareness

- *School: Chaska Middle School West, Chaska*
- *Curricular connections: health education, language arts*

Blending district health education requirements and state reading and language arts standards, eighth-grade students created a chemical health awareness campaign. After reading relevant literature and reflecting on it, students created pamphlets and display boards to educate seventh-grade students during a health fair.

High School Examples



Wolf Preservation

- *School: Northwest Passage High School, Coon Rapids*
- *Curricular Connections: life science inquiry anatomy, debate, flow of matter and energy, heredity, heredity and biological changes, interdependence of life, environmental education*

Students participated in a year-long project focused on wolves in North America. Throughout the year, students worked four to six days per month with the educators, researchers and biologists at the Wildlife Science Center (WSC). At least once a month, students participated in service work that paralleled the learning at the WSC. Examples included maintaining wolf enclosures, building a bear play structure, building a bobcat enclosure, assisting with the preparation for fundraising events, plus feeding and care of animals.



Philadelphia Community Farm Partnership

- *School: Northwest Passage High School, Coon Rapids*
- *Curricular Connections: science environmental education 2 and 5; social studies: economics: local impact*

Students visited the Philadelphia Community Farm in Osceola, Wisconsin, several times throughout the school year to support their work and learn about organic agriculture, sustainable economies and traditional skills. Students participated in farm projects including harvesting, weeding, bed preparation, animal care and greenhouse construction. They hiked through the adjacent prairie and forest to provide a practical view of inter-related biome and the role of humans in influencing the environment. Students also gained hands-on experience in fiber arts, seeing the process of creating a scarf, from sheep raising to yarn processing to creating needles and knitting.

High School Examples



Habitat for Humanity Construction

- *School: Virginia High School, Virginia*
- *Curricular Connections: career and technical education*

The Virginia High School Construction class has completed three remodel projects with the Northern St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity. Students solve real-life problems with hands on learning while remodeling the home. They apply math skills on a daily basis in figuring square footage, linear feet, angles, and engineering structures. Reading skills continue to develop as students are required to read highly technical material such as user manuals for equipment needed for the project. Students have the opportunity to earn two college credits at Mesabi Range College while taking this course.



Invasive Species Removal

- *School: Secondary Technical School, East High School, Duluth*
- *Curricular Connections: forestry, fish and wildlife, plant science*

The Forestry, Fish and Wildlife class and Plant Science classes learned about invasive species; how to identify them, how to manage and prevent them, and problems they cause. In partnership with the City of Duluth and neighbors to the property, they removed buckthorn and honeysuckle from the “school forest” at East High School. The removal of the invasive species improved the school forest by allowing species that should be in the forest to recover.

High School Examples



Robin Nest Boxes and Platform Feeders

- *School: Secondary Technical School, East High School, Duluth*
- *Curricular Connections: forestry, fish and wildlife*

A group of Forestry Fish and Wildlife class members investigated what types of feeders and houses would be best to attract birds to the school yard. They met with a member of the Audubon Society and a local ornithologist. Both experts came to the class and walked around the school grounds to assist in determining what birds they could encourage. The students decided to provide robin nest boxes and platform bird feeders and found construction plans. They shared their ideas with the construction technology students at East High School, who learned how to lay out the patterns and cut the wood. Students assembled the cut wood and installed the boxes and platforms in the schoolyard.



Kids Against Hunger

- *School: Open World Learning, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: social studies for English language learners*

High School students researched hunger issues in their community. The students organized a hunger banquet to demonstrate the unequal food distribution in the world and to share their knowledge about the dynamics of poverty. They did fundraising to collect money to buy supplies for a food-packing event. The students organized the all school food-packing event and trained elementary students to help them. The high school students reflected on their work and research, and gave a presentation to community members.

High School Examples



Transitional Handbook

- *School: Central Senior High, Highland Park Senior High, Ramsey Junior High, Murray Junior High, Saint Paul*
- *Curricular Connections: AVID standards including study skills, research, oral language skills*

AVID students wrote a "student-to-student" handbook for incoming seventh- and ninth-grade students. The handbook addressed topics such as classes, attendance, time management, friends and extra-curricular activities. The project was student driven, both written and designed by seventh- through 12th grade AVID students. Students discussed the challenges they faced when transitioning from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. Students worked cooperatively to determine which aspects are most important for incoming students. Students created a distribution method for the handbook and presented it in sixth- and ninth-grade classrooms.



Feed My Starving Children

- *School: Carver-Scott Educational Cooperative, Chaska*
- *Curricular Connections: work skills including behavior management, teamwork and productivity*

Once per month special education students worked on the Feed My Starving Children production line, filling food drop bags to be distributed via airlift to starving populations. Students were performing the same job each time, with the goal of increasing their personal production rates. Students discussed the value of and importance of food - and they learned about the places the food was going to and the people who live there.