

CRANFORD HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY

“Living a ‘Life of Consequence’” Service-Learning and Character Education Program

Program Introduction

A decade ago, Cranford High School’s Academic Standards Committee created a program that seamlessly integrated academic achievement, service learning, and character education into the established curriculum. As a result of this initiative, the students of Cranford High School have come to recognize that a life of consequence is a life that is grounded in service to others. The program has enabled students to see for the first time a connection between the classroom and the “real world.” This award-winning program has become an exhilarating experience for the entire school community by creating an atmosphere of caring and respect that resonates throughout the school.

Program Components

Cranford High School has incorporated service learning into the curriculum by introducing four interdisciplinary units to students. Each unit is tailored to the preferred learning style of each grade and evolves as the needs of the students change. The program consists of the following interdisciplinary units:

- *CONquest*: This first unit is team-taught and encompasses all of the ninth-grade disciplines. The team of teachers selects readings, and students complete six assignments that all relate to a life of consequence. The objective of this unit is to help students make a connection between classroom learning and the outside world.
- *Diversity*: This unit is designated for tenth-grade students. English and social studies teachers use selected readings, class discussions, service-learning activities, and writing assignments to assist students in exploring the concepts of diversity and tolerance.
- *Community as a Classroom*: Eleventh-grade math and science classes are used as springboard for this unit. Students engage in a variety of service-learning projects that allow them to use their skills while assisting local community service initiatives.
- *Twelfth-grade Senior Service Project*: During the 2003-2004 pilot year of this unit, students completed a month-long community service project of their own choice that serves as the culmination of four years of service.

In addition to these curriculum-based units, service-learning programs have been woven into virtually all student-centered activities:

- *Learn and Serve Fair*: This annual event, which incorporates learning and reflection components, allows students to network with nonprofit organization and find volunteer positions. In 2003-04 more than 700 students signed up for service activities.

- *Co-Curricular Activities:* Cranford High School’s 50 sports teams and 70 clubs all strive to incorporate service-learning components through volunteer, workshop, and research endeavors.
- *Peer Leadership Program:* Juniors and seniors undergo training and then facilitate sessions with freshman on the school’s core values, health and adjustment issues, and work with elementary students doing drug and alcohol prevention work through puppet shows.

Program Assessment Tools

Cranford High School employs an array of assessment tools to measure the success of their program. The assessments used include:

- *Community Service Attitude Survey:* Utilizes comparative data to determine how students’ perception of service changes over time. The data is used to determine which areas of the program require attention. *(Example provided below)*
- *Unit Rubrics and Student Commentaries:* Provides data regarding unit completion and achievement, which is used comparatively to track student participation. Commentaries provide grounds for subjective analysis of units.
- *Surveys:* Administered to students and faculty and provide a means for evaluating projects and assessing progress.
- *Department Activity Summaries:* Track student involvement and successful completion rates.
- *Disciplinary Statistics Records:* Illustrate link between character education initiatives and disciplinary action rates.
- *Academic Achievement Indicators:* Compares annual performances on standardized tests to indicate relationship between character education and academic achievement gains.
- *Annual National Service-Learning Leader School Progress Report:* Outside assessment of report provides means for evaluating units.

Sample Assessment Tool

A “Community Service Attitude Survey” is administered to incoming ninth-grade students and re-administered to the same students during their graduating year. The results of the survey are used comparatively to determine how students’ perception of community service changes over time. An example of the survey administered is below.

Community Service Attitude Survey

According to the Corporation for National Service, service-learning is a method whereby students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community.

Directions: Put an "X" in the box that is closest to how you feel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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1	I fully understand what service-learning is.					
2	Community Service and "service-learning" are the same thing.					
3	There are needs in the community.					
4	There are people who have needs that are not being met.					
5	Service-learning can make a difference in the community.					
6	Community groups needs the help of students					
7	Our school can benefit from service-learning activity.					
8	I would like to participate in a service-learning activity.					
9	I feel I can make a difference in my community.					
10	I see service-learning as an added burden.					
11	I enjoy helping people.					
12	I feel an obligation to contribute to the community.					
13	Learning through community service would be a positive aspect of my education.					
14	Service-learning will help me improve academically.					
15	Service-learning will help me develop new skills.					
16	Service-learning will make me more responsible.					
17	Service-learning would leave less time for school work.					
18	Service-learning will help me prepare for college.					
19	I have participated in service-learning activities.					
20	I would perform community service even if it were not required.					

Source: Cranford High School