

Making a Difference through Volunteering and Service

Note (May 2012): This guidance lesson is a draft document meant to be a component of a Nevada Volunteers toolkit for K-12 educators. This lesson was prepared by:

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Lesson Overview:

This lesson provides grade appropriate activities and information to help K-12 students in Nevada consider community engagement through volunteering. There are a variety of resources and suggestions for helping students find ways to volunteer. For high school students there is an introduction to AmeriCorps national service as a post-secondary option. More information and assistance can be obtained through the Nevada Volunteers website (www.nevadavolunteers.org)

American School Counseling Association (ASCA) Standards:

The following ASCA standards and competencies are addressed in this guidance lesson.

Academic Development

Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.

Competencies:

A: B2 Plan to Achieve Goals (Grades 7-12)

B2.7 Identify post-secondary options consistent with interests, achievement, aptitude, and abilities

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home in the community.

Competencies:

A: C1 Relate School to Life Experiences (Grades K-12)

C1.2 Seek co-curricular and community experiences to enhance the school experience

C1.5 Understand that school success is the preparation to make the transition from student to community member

Career Development

Standard A: Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

Competencies:

C: A1 Develop Career Awareness (Grades K-12)

A1.2 Learn about the variety of traditional and nontraditional occupations

A1.3 Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests, and motivations

Personal/Social Development

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others

Competencies:

PS: A1 Acquire Self-Knowledge (Grades 7-12)

A1.11 Identify and discuss changing personal and social roles

Standard C: Students will understand safety and survival skills

PS: C1 Acquire Personal Safety Skills (Grades K-12)

C1.6 Identify resource people in the school and community and know how to seek their help

Lesson Objectives Grades K-6:

1. Students will define the term community.
2. Students will be able to list three- five ways people can be involved in helping in our community.
3. Students will begin to understand how helping others can also help them build important skills connected to their learning and future career plans.

Materials Grades K-6:

- Pictures of different kinds of communities and community members.
- Board markers or chart paper and pens.
- Blank piece of paper for each student, preferably colored. Students will need crayons, markers, or colored pencils.

Engagement Grades K-6:

Start the lesson by showing the students pictures of people living and working in different communities. You can find these on the internet and incorporate them into a Power Point or use picture books from library.

Ask the students to help you define “community.” Write their answers on the board.

Using their answers, explain that a **community** is a group of people living, working, and even playing together in a place. We live and work in communities. Communities can be big or small. Our classroom is a community, our neighborhood is a community, and our city is community. Our state and our nation are even bigger communities. Even the entire world is often called the “global community.”

Tell the students that today we are going to think about some ways that we can be good community members.

Explanation & Activity Grades K-6:

This activity is adapted from an exercise called “Blue Sky Envisioning Activity” (see references/resources for the entire activity.)

1. Make two columns on the board. One side is labeled “Good” and the other is labeled “Improve or Change.” In K-3 it may be better to just focus on the “Good” column. Ask the students to raise their hands to share something that is good in our community. Record answers. Next invite them to share things they would like to see improved or changed in our community. Record those answers and summarize the insights of the class.
2. Note that there are many ways people can help make their communities better. For example, one way to help our community is to collect food for the Food Bank so that it can be shared with people who do not have enough to eat. Or, people may volunteer as tutors to help students in our school with reading or math. Observe that when we help others we can learn too. If time, students can share with the large group or an elbow partner a way that they have noticed people helping in the community and something that can be learned by helping.
3. Give each student a piece of paper, preferably colored. You may want to use blue paper and cut the pictures into clouds for a bulletin board or you could use different colors and create a “quilt.”

On the paper ask students to draw a picture and complete the sentence, “I will make my community better by _____.”

Depending on time, students may share their pictures. If possible, collect and display the papers as part of a counseling or classroom bulletin board.

Lesson Objectives Grades 7-8:

1. Students will name at least five responsibilities that citizens may have in their communities.

2. Students will give examples of times when they or people they know have volunteered and will discuss whether they think it is important to volunteer.
3. Students will be able to articulate at least three to five ways that volunteering can teach them skills or give them new knowledge about their community.
4. Students will select 2-3 areas of interest or types of volunteer experiences they may want to try. They will know how to connect to volunteer opportunities in our community via school, community, and online resources.

Materials Grades 7-8:

- Video clip or pictures of people volunteering or serving the community in some way.
- Board markers or chart paper and pens.
- Worksheets: “How Can I Get Involved?” and “A Student’s Guide to Volunteering”

Engagement Grades 7-8:

Start the lesson by showing the students a video clip or pictures of people volunteering or serving the community in some way. You can find many examples on the internet.

After the clip, begin a discussion by asking the students to name some responsibilities of citizens. Record the answers on the board. If not listed, ask if they think volunteering or service is part of a citizen’s responsibility.

If time, you may engage in a deeper discussion, considering whether they think volunteer experiences should be a required part of high school. Why or why not?

Explanation & Activity Grades 7-8:

Explain that in today’s activity, we will consider what kind of volunteering they might like to try and some ways that volunteering helps not only the community but also the individual who volunteers.

1. Ask for some examples of volunteering they have already done or volunteering that family members engage in. Use those example to consider skills or insights the volunteer gained from the experience. For example, helping with a fundraiser might teach you how to organize an event or how to count and record money. Or, serving a meal at a homeless shelter could help you learn about homelessness in our community and you can gain new insights from interacting with people you may not normally meet.
2. Distribute the work sheet, “How Can I Get Involved?” and allow students time to complete it.

3. Use the additional worksheet, “A Student’s Guide to Volunteering,” (either distribute copies or share through a Power Point to save paper), to summarize key points. If possible, actually show students ways to find volunteering through the Nevada Volunteers Matching System and have them share other ways to find and start volunteering.

Lesson Objectives Grades 9-12:

1. Students will discuss and name some responsibilities for citizens and community members. Specifically, they will consider the role volunteering plays in a healthy community.
2. Students will give examples of ways they or people they know have volunteered in the past and they will name skills or knowledge they gained from volunteer experiences.
3. Students will consider a particular interest they want to develop or a future college/career path. They will create a potential plan for volunteering that will help them build skills or experiences to help meet this goal. This includes knowing how to find volunteer opportunities through school, community, and online resources.
4. Students will be introduced to AmeriCorps national service options and understand the possible benefits of choosing this experience as a post-secondary option.

Materials Grades 9-12:

- Video clip or pictures of people volunteering or serving the community in some way.
- Board markers or chart paper and pens.
- Worksheets: “Professional Skills Matrix,” “Connecting Your Skills to Volunteering,” “A Student’s Guide to Volunteering,” and “What is AmeriCorps?”

Engagement Grades 9-12:

Start the lesson by showing the students a video clip or pictures of people volunteering or serving the community in some way. You can find many examples on the internet.

After the clip, begin a discussion by asking the students to share some of the ways they have volunteered or ways they might like to volunteer. If they have volunteered, ask them to share what they liked and did not like about the experience.

If time, you may engage in a deeper discussion with the following kinds of questions:

- Do you think volunteer experiences should be a required part of high school and college? Why or why not?
- Do citizens have an obligation to find a way to serve their communities or their nations? Why or why not?

Explanation & Activity Grades 9-12:

Explain that today we will consider the ways that volunteering helps not only the community but also the individual who volunteers.

- By volunteering they are gaining or enhancing skills that appeal to college interviewers and employers. In a tight job market, volunteering builds important experience.
 - It is important to reflect on lessons they learn through volunteering and ways they can genuinely connect to issues they care about. College admissions professionals have said that it most impressive for a student to have a regular volunteer commitment---it does not have to be flashy, but it is better if it is both heart-felt and if the student can connect it to real skills.
 - Volunteering can also help you explore potential careers. For example, volunteering at the animal shelter if you think you want to be vet, or tutoring after school if you want to be a teacher.
1. Distribute the handouts, “Professional Skills Matrix” and “Connecting Your Skills to Volunteering.” Read or ask for a volunteer to read the quote from Karen Ross at the top of the student worksheet and allow students time to complete it. Point out that the Skills Matrix handout can help them if they are stuck.
 2. Use the additional worksheet, “A Student’s Guide to Volunteering,” (either distribute copies or share through a Power Point to save paper), to summarize key points and to provide ways to find volunteer opportunities.
 3. Share the information about AmeriCorps (handout) as a national service opportunity that could be a great post-high school option.
 4. Conclude by encouraging students to find a way to get involved during high school that meets both community needs and their own needs. Let them know that if they have additional questions or need to talk about volunteer options in more detail, making an appointment with their counselor is a great idea.

Evaluations:

Process Data: Counselor will record the date(s) of the lesson, along with the number of students and grade levels that participated in this activity.

Perception Data: Primarily qualitative student and teacher feedback. However, counselors can assess in future guidance if students remember how to find volunteer opportunities. They can also note if this lesson is a part of or a spur to a classroom/school-wide volunteer project or a nonprofit volunteer fair, etc.

Results Data: Students and faculty will rate the helpfulness of this lesson as part of the counseling department survey and needs assessment. The faculty survey might include a question about volunteering projects to help counselors place the lesson at a relevant time of the year.

Follow up or extension of this lesson may include:

- Inviting a current AmeriCorps member or community volunteer to speak to the students. In high school, it might be particularly relevant to have an employee who volunteers through a corporate program talk to the students about the connection between professional skills and community involvement.
- In the computer lab or with laptops, use the volunteer match feature on the Nevada Volunteers website (www.nevadavolunteers.org) to find local volunteer options, or look at AmeriCorps options through www.americorps.gov. Students could complete a worksheet on a volunteer opportunity that interests them.
- Use this lesson to help create or launch a classroom or school-wide volunteer project.

References and Resources:

Counseling Standards:

American School Counselor Association. (2004). *ASCA National Standards for Students*. Alexandria, VA: Author

Websites:

AmeriCorps www.americorps.gov

Nevada Volunteers www.nevadavolunteers.org

Activity Sheets:

“A Student’s Guide to Volunteering: Making the Best of Your Experience” available in this lesson plan appendix, created by Nevada Volunteers.

“Blue Sky Envisioning Activity,” available as a PDF at
<http://learningtogive.org/lessons/genon/Blue%20Sky%20Envisioning%20Activity.pdf>

“Professional Skills Matrix,” created by HandsOn Network, available as a PDF at
http://www.handsonnetwork.org/files/resources/GI_ProSkillsMatrix_2010_HON.pdf

“What is AmeriCorps?” available in this lesson plan appendix, created by Nevada Volunteers with information from the National Corporation for Community Service.

Appendix A: “A Student’s Guide to Volunteering” (Grades 7-12)**A Student’s Guide to Volunteering: Making the Best of Your Experience****WHY VOLUNTEER?**

- ❖ Make a difference in your community.
- ❖ Explore career options and gain experience.
- ❖ Build your resume for scholarships or jobs.
- ❖ Learn leadership skills by creating your own projects.
- ❖ See how what you learn in school applies in the real world.
- ❖ Meet new people and have fun!

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

- ❖ Visit the Nevada Volunteers website and use their VolunteerMatch, an electronic matching service, at www.nevadavolunteers.org.
- ❖ Check out opportunities through your school, service clubs, or faith communities.
- ❖ Ask friends or family where they like to volunteer and what causes they support.

I’M READY TO VOLUNTEER...NOW WHAT?

1. Most importantly, find out what the organization wants to achieve and why they need volunteers. It’s good to know how your time and effort will make a difference.
2. You may be placed in an office or professional environment---Use your best manners and practice your workplace skills.
3. If you don’t know what is expected of you, ask for clarification. Asking questions makes you look smart, organized, and prepared. Some good questions to ask include:
 - ❖ Who do I talk to if I have questions about my tasks and what is the best way to contact that person?
 - ❖ What time should I arrive? Where do I meet you or the volunteer coordinator?
 - ❖ How long will this project last?
 - ❖ Is there a dress code and/or safety concerns to be aware of
4. Other things to keep in mind:
 - ❖ Do a great job as a volunteer so you can ask for letters of recommendation or references.
 - ❖ These organizations do have paid positions. Represent yourself well and you may have a job down the line.
 - ❖ Take initiative. If you see a need within the community, think of ideas to meet it! However, before you set an idea in motion you should do your research. Learn what it will take to carry out your plan.
 - Are resources required? If so, where will the resources come from?
 - Has someone else tried to meet this need before?
 - Is there another organization with goals similar to yours?

THAT WAS FUN! WHAT’S NEXT?

- ✓ Remember to keep track of your volunteering. Log your hours and where you helped. Your VolunteerMatch account is an easy way to keep that information. Use the information when applying for jobs, scholarships, or college!

Appendix B: “What is AmeriCorps” (2011) Handout Page 1 of 2 (Grades 9-12)

What Is AmeriCorps?

Every day across the nation AmeriCorps members are making a powerful impact on the most critical issues facing our nation. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for more than 80,000 Americans to give back in an intensive way to their communities and country each year. It consists of three main programs: AmeriCorps State and National, whose members serve with national and local nonprofit and community groups; AmeriCorps VISTA, through which members serve full time fighting poverty; and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps), a team-based residential program for young adults 18-24.

What Do AmeriCorps Members Do?

AmeriCorps members recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit groups to become self-sustaining, among many other activities.

What Benefits Do AmeriCorps Members Receive?

In exchange for a year of full-time service, members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award equal to the maximum amount of the Pell Grant that can be used to pay for educational expenses at qualified institutions of higher education, or to pay back qualified student loans. For positions approved in 2011, the amount will be \$5,550. Awards are prorated for part-time service. Some members also receive a living allowance and health care.

How Do I Join?

Go to AmeriCorps.gov to get started!

Appendix B: “What is AmeriCorps” (2011) Handout Page 2 of 2 (Grades 9-12)**Nevada AmeriCorps Fast Facts---Making a Difference in our State**Basic Human Services: Hunger, Supportive Services, Homelessness

- **Prepared and packed 15,600 sack meals**, which **fed on average 300 homeless individuals weekly** by distributing the prepared sack lunches
- **Packed 300,923 backpacks** for weekly distribution **providing 10,7000 children with ready to eat meals** on the weekends
- provided **3,489 families with food**
- helped **500 homeless teens** connect with community resources

Senior or Disability Services:

- facilitated **health and aging programs for 7,499 senior citizens**
- provided transportation or other services to **551 individuals**, allowing them to **live independently**

Educational Progress and Support: Tutoring, Mentoring, Out-of-School Healthy Engagement

- provided **case management/academic support** to **286 students and families**; **80%** of those students showed **improved attendance**
- **3,427 children and youth** engaged in in-school or after-school **physical education activities** with the purpose of **reducing childhood obesity**
- coordinated **15 substance abuse prevention events** and **23 training sessions** targeting **478 youth**
- provided **natural science-based lessons** to **15,677 students** in Humboldt County (NOS)
- **1006 children received no cost immunizations**
- **facilitated 291 GED prep courses** for **849 unduplicated participants**
- Early intervention services to **36 at-risk pre-kindergarten children**. **100% improved in reading readiness**, while increasing **parental involvement by 90%**

Environmental Stewardship and Safety:

- **2,20 acres** of public land and waterways were **restored and improved**
- **145 miles** of trails were **built and maintained**
- removed **140 tons of trash** and **3,480 pounds of recyclable materials**
- planted **16,991 plants and trees**
- removed hazardous fuels from **321 acres** of public land
- Removed invasive species from **10,598 acres** statewide
- **cleaned or improved 4,575 acres** of national parks, state parks, city parks, and county parks or other public lands and tribal communities

Appendix C: Student Activity Worksheet Grades 7-8

How Can I Get Involved?

Student Name: _____

Teacher/Period: _____

"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

---Winston Churchill

Name five ways that volunteering helps the community and you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Name three volunteer experiences you would like to try:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Appendix D: Student Activity Worksheet Grades 9-12

Connecting Your Skills to Volunteering

Student Name: _____

Teacher/Period: _____

"Volunteering shows that a person has matured beyond his/her own self-interest. It provides lots of great experience in team building, leadership, and skill development. For a student with little work experience, I think solid volunteer experience is almost equivalent." ---Karen Ross, NV Energy, Manager of Community Relations

Name three skills you have or want to develop:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Name a way that volunteering could help you build or further develop at least one of these skills:

Name an agency or interest area where you might like to volunteer:

Professional Skills Matrix

Experiences gained through volunteer work can enhance personal and professional development. This matrix is designed to provide a structure in using volunteerism to develop skills. It can also strengthen your recruitment efforts if you highlight the skills volunteers can gain through service with your organization

Skill/Development Area	Ways to Develop or Enhance Skill
Assertiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a fundraiser, solicit pledges or support • Recruit others to support a cause or organization
Budget Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan or chair events with a budget • Volunteer for a board position with finance responsibility
Change Management/ Strategic Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on an organization's board • Participate in a focus group • Help write a group's vision
Computer Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a database for an organization • Provide data entry for a group or project
Conflict Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve on a board • Manage a function or event, serve as a subcommittee chair
Cultural Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a tutor or mentor • Volunteer in an activity that works closely with people unlike yourself
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer at a children's arts and crafts project
Delegating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair a committee • Assume a leadership role in an organization
Event Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate volunteers • Sit on a planning committee for a big event
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a chair on a committee or event • Be a spokesperson for a group or organization • Work with young people as a mentor
Managing People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage volunteers at a project or event • Coordinate an event
Motivating Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a mentor • Chair a committee • Coordinate volunteers • Recruit friends/colleagues to join you in a project or event
Negotiating Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain resources for an event or organization • Be on a committee
Organizational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan an event • Provide clerical services • Sort donations
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate an event or activity • Sit on a committee for an event or project
Presentation Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead an orientation for a group/organization • Be spokesperson for an organization • Serve as a Project Leader or Team Captain
Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an on-site manager for a big event • Be a project leader
Project Management	• Coordinate an on-going project
Pr Selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising • Soliciting resources for an event or organization • Recruiting volunteers for an event or organization

Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate volunteers• Work on a rehab or building project• Plan an event
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair a committee and run the meetings• Manage resources for an organization or event
Verbal Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer for an activity that uses the phone• Chair an event• Be a spokesperson• Lead volunteers in an activity
Written Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a newsletter for an organization• Write a press release• Develop letters for fundraising• Take meeting minutes• Serve as the Secretary for a group or board.