

2005

## Recycling Service-Learning Project

Cesar Chavez Foundation

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**National Youth Leadership Initiative  
Los Angeles Unified School District**

**School:** South Gate High School    **Local Dist:** J

**Title of Project:** Recycling Service-Learning Project

**Community Need Identified:** Excess Trash/Budget Needs



**Standards Connections:**

- 11.2.2 Describe the changing landscape, including the growth of cities linked by industry and trade, and the development of cities divided according to race, ethnicity, and class.
- 11.2.5 Discuss corporate mergers that produced trusts and cartels and the economic and political policies of industrial leaders.
- 11.2.6 Trace the economic development of the United States and its emergence as a major industrial power, including its gains from trade and the advantages of its physical geography.
- 11.4 Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.
- 11.8.6 Discuss the diverse environmental regions of N. America, their relationship to local economies, and the origins and prospects of environmental problems in those regions.



**Teachers Involved:**

Ron Davis 11<sup>th</sup> grade US History  
Dick Farber 11<sup>th</sup> grade US History

**Partner Organizations:**

Los Angeles Conservation Corps

**Service Group:**

South Gate High School

**Number Served:**

5,000 high school students

**Number Engaged:**

200 high school students



**Project Description:**

11<sup>th</sup> grade students identified needs related to excess campus trash and a school budget crisis. They chose to tackle both issues by expanding South Gate’s recycling program. Students partnered with the LA Conservation Corps’ recycling program to set-up a large recycling bin, arrange for pick-up and disposal, and generate proceeds for school improvement. The students were responsible for a major education campaign on campus as well as the logistics of the project including the location of the recycling bin. The education campaign included: making and distributing posters and flyers, classroom and PowerPoint presentations on recycling, intercom announcements, and information on the school’s scrolling marquee.

*“This is so cool. We really needed a recycling bin and we can make money off of it.” - HS Student*

Service-learning is a method of teaching and learning that engages students in a more personal and community-oriented learning process than traditional classroom learning. For this project the students were involved even more than usual by including them in a process-oriented approach to service-learning. For these projects students themselves were responsible for choosing and planning the project they would be doing, therefore it was imperative that the project began with an engaging introduction to the service-learning process so that students understand their role in the project. This introduction should highlight what service-learning is and most importantly, what the students' roles will be in the planning and implementation of the service project. The students should be introduced to the history of Cesar E. Chavez, and his legacy of social justice to set the context for the project.

## **Step 1**

### **Community Needs Assessment**

It is vital that your service-learning project meets a community need. Therefore, the students' first assignment will be to do a local community needs assessment. At the end of the introductory presentation distribute a community needs assessment survey to students. This survey should ask what the needs/problems of the community are and possible approaches to addressing them. The teacher should decide whether the students themselves should complete the needs assessment or if students should reach out to the community and have family, friends, and neighbors complete the survey. The completed needs assessments must be collected and tallied to determine the top needs identified by the community. With this information proceed to brainstorming project ideas that would meet this need.

## **Step 2**

### **Setting the Context**

Students should be involved in the project brainstorming process, however the teacher may choose to do this on their own to ensure the feasibility and academic standards connections of the service project. While determining a list of possible projects the teacher must set the context for the students. For instance, from the community needs assessment the identified need in this project was school improvement. Schools, of course, can be improved in countless ways so the service-learning coaches engaged the students in discussions and explorations of the roots of schools' problems. We talked about funding on national, state, and local levels, focusing particularly on the current California budget crisis. Students also learned of other problems that plague schools such as large school size and difficulty providing adequate maintenance. From these discussions the students had a more complex understanding of schools' problems and identified the budget as their primary focus for improving schools. This deeper understanding of school improvement was a direct result of the teacher and coaches' emphasis on setting the context. A revenue-generating recycling program was then chosen to address not only the budget issue but also the need for school beautification.

### **Standards Connections**

Throughout the planning process the teacher must make academic connections to the

work that students are doing. This 11<sup>th</sup> grade history class we worked with was studying immigration and Westward expansion in American History. The issue of recycling and using resources responsibly fits well within the context of a history of resource domination in this country and a false idea of limitless resources. This idea, or this vantage point from which to learn history, integrates well with the students' lessons. Other connections can be made in the following standards:

**11.1.4** "Examine the effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction and of the industrial revolution, including demographic shifts and the emergence in the late nineteenth century of the United States as a world power."

Lead students in discussions about how Southerners' attitudes towards resources, production and other human life led to the Civil War. How did attitudes and actions change after the Civil War? How did the plantations of the South set the precedent for subsequent production throughout the nation and the world? Do we see any reflections of Southern plantation-style production and exploitation emerge later in US History? This discussion should lead to an acknowledgement of a long history of US domination over resources and labor. Slavery in the South was an early step in the exploitation of labor and resources and resulted in the false notion of limitless resources that have led to most of today's environmental problems.

**11.4** "Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century."

How did this country's domination of resources domestically and abroad aid our rise as a world power? To help students better understand US domination show them with statistics about the country's use of resources and labor compared with other countries. For example:

- With just five percent of the world's population, the U.S. consumes a quarter of the world's oil. (<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/oil/fordtop10.html>)
- In China, some workers making clothing for Disney receive as little as 16 cents per hour. The federal minimum wage in the United States is \$5.15 per hour, in California it is \$6.75. (<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops/>).
- Workers in El Salvador earn about 24 cents for each NBA jersey they produce, which then sell for \$140 in the U.S. (<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops/>)

**11.5.7** "Discuss the rise of mass production techniques, the growth of cities, the impact of new technologies (e.g., the automobile, electricity), and the resulting prosperity and effect on the American landscape.

What were the environmental conditions of rapidly growing industrial cities such as New York and Chicago? What environmental and health legacies have we inherited from this time of rapid growth and production?

To set a wider and more global context for environmental action we showed the students parts of a film about the World Trade Organization protests that took place in Seattle in 1999. This film, entitled "This is What Democracy Looks Like," was helpful in illustrating for the students the importance of working on behalf of environmental issues and also showed them that students their own age are at the forefront of the movement.

Information about the film can be found online:  
<http://www.thisisdemocracy.org/index2.html>

Time: Minimum 2 class periods  
Materials: Video, handouts, historical information on time period

### **Cesar Chavez Values**

- **Respect for Life**—Cesar Chavez believed that all life, humans, animals, and plants must be respected. People must think about their impact on the world, taking only what is necessary and always giving back to, and respecting nature.
- **Innovation**— As Cesar Chavez proved by his myriad ways of caring for and supporting the farm workers, new and thoughtful approaches to problems are necessary for solving them. Living in a world inundated with environmental problems it is the role of all people to devise innovative ways of effectively caring for and protecting the earth.

### **Step 3**

#### **Choosing and Planning the Project**

A class vote on what service project to perform or a class brainstorming session helps to ensure youth voice, another important aspect of a service-learning project. Once the teacher and/or students choose a project the planning begins. Students should be involved as much as possible in this process to make the project their own. For the recycling project, students decided that outreach and education would be the most important aspects of successful campus recycling. Therefore they planned their own outreach methods including: making posters, flyers, a PowerPoint presentation, and making presentations in classrooms about the new recycling program and the reasons why students should participate.

#### **Teacher/Coach Responsibilities**

The teachers and coaches have their own planning responsibilities at this point in the project.

##### **Identify project partners**

After speaking with other schools that had successful campus recycling programs we identified the Los Angeles Conservation Corps as a project partner. LACC runs a program that gives recycling bins to schools, picks up the recyclable materials, and sends a check each month to the schools with the revenue earned from recycling. All of these services are provided free of charge to the school.

##### **Arrange for set-up**

The coaches made the arrangement for bin delivery and coordinated with school administration and facilities management. LACC provided educational information, tips for making recycling successful on campus, and also offered to make classroom presentations.

Project partners are important, if not necessary, for a successful service-learning project. They provide students with exposure to local groups who are targeting community needs. Partnering with such organizations allows students to understand the larger context of their work and foster relationships for ongoing service.

## **Step 4**

### **Service**

The service may happen in one culminating event when all students participate in a joint event or it could be a process, happening over many days with multiple results. The “look” of the service will depend on the project and its desired outcomes. There are benefits of each approach. One culminating event provides a shared experience for all students, it also provides an opportunity for parents and community members to observe or participate in the service. An ongoing service with multiple components allows students to experience the project over more time and gives the teacher multiple opportunities for diverse standards connections. This approach also increases students’ participation and time to develop personal and academic connections to the service-learning project, likely resulting in greater student involvement with and enjoyment of the project.

The recycling project used the ongoing approach to service. The outreach and education identified as the service outcomes by the students seemed best accomplished by using multiple outreach methods rather than one event, such as an assembly or presentation. The work of the project was divided into two teams, “logistics” and “education.” Each class became a “team” and did their project work in one of these areas.

#### **The Logistics Team**

Fewer classes should focus on logistics because there is less work to do in this arena. These classes are responsible for deciding where the large recycling bin will be placed on campus. They make diagrams of the campus and draw traffic patterns, depicting where the majority of students congregate during lunch and nutrition breaks and then use that information to determine the best placement of the bin. Students also should talk with school administration and custodial staff regarding the new recycling program.

Teachers should bring the recycling project to the attention of administration and facilities services long before the project planning begins. Support of custodial staff and administration is vital for the success of the project. When the students get to the planning phase, key people will have already been notified of the recycling program and thus, the students will find their jobs easier to accomplish.

#### **The Education Team**

These classes focus on outreach to other students. Students could break off into different projects and design posters to hang up around school advertising the new bin and encouraging students to recycle. Other participants should write announcements for the daily bulletin and make an announcement over the intercom. Another group would plan classroom presentations and over the course of a week visit classes throughout the school, telling students and staff about the new recycling program. A more technologically savvy group might put together a PowerPoint presentation or make a video about the need for recycling. In the end, each student contributes to a greater whole. The scope of the project is diverse and the students are able to launch a successful money-making and earth-saving campus program.

## **Posters**

An effective way to spread the word about recycling is with posters. Students can make dozens of posters to be hung around the school. These are intended to spread awareness of the new recycling program and also educate the school community about why they should recycle. The students should research statistics on the internet and incorporate those into their posters. An internet search of “recycling facts” will result in dozens of websites with helpful statistics.

Time: Minimum 3 class periods  
No. of students: No limit  
Materials: Poster paper, pens, paints, tape, internet access.

## **Group Presentations**

Students could research and plan presentations to give to classes about the new campus recycling program and reasons why students should recycle. Students should decide on the most important topics to cover in a brief (5-10minute) presentation. They can use the library and internet to do research.

Once the presentation is planned, students must speak with teachers and get permission to present for their classes. It is helpful to have at least eight presenters so that not each student is missing the beginning of their own classes each day. The presentations should happen over the course of a week, giving teachers and students ample options for scheduling presentations. The presenters must get the permission from their own teachers whose classes they will be missing the start of. The teacher sponsoring the service-learning project can make this easier by informing the school staff about the upcoming project presentations.

Time allowed: 3 days minimum  
No. of students: 8-16  
Materials: Research tools, i.e., Internet access

## **Bulletin/PA Announcement**

A handful of students can write announcements for the school’s daily bulletin. Adding statistics may be a good way to get students’ and staff attention. Students will have to submit announcements on their own. If the school has a PA system, students can request that an announcement about the new recycling program be made. Make sure they have a script written before making the announcement.

Time allowed: 2 class periods  
No. of students: Aprox. 5  
Materials: School bulletin forms, statistics.

## **Day-to-Day Plan for Service**

### **Day One**

Assign students or allow them to choose groups.



### **All Groups**

- Class presentations, posters, etc. have students begin planning what they will be doing.

### **Logistical Team**

- Begin to figure out what logistical work is needed.

### **Report Back at End of Class**

## **Day Two**

### **Posters**

- Bring supplies to begin making posters. Students design and create posters.

### **Bulletin/PA Announcement**

- Research how to place announcements in the bulletin and messages on the intercom, write the announcements.

### **Group Presentation committee**

- Research the topic of recycling and begin planning presentation.

### **Logistical group**

- Make a map of school and decide where the bin will be placed. Identify school administrators or staff that must be notified of project.

### **Report Back at End of Class**

## **Day Three**

### **Posters**

- Complete posters and hang them around school

### **Bulletin/PA Announcement**

- Announcement should be written, planned, and submitted.

### **Group Presentation committee**

- Complete presentation planning and contact teachers about scheduling a presentation.

### **Logistical group**

- Meet with school officials to inform them about recycling program. Have bin delivery scheduled.

### **Report Back at End of Class**

## Step 5

### Reflection

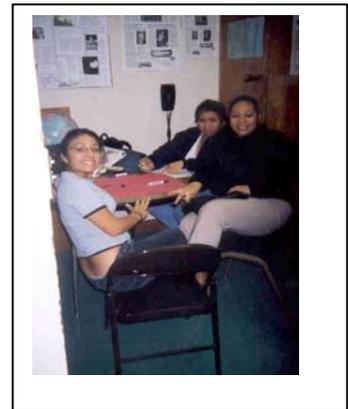
Reflection is a highly important aspect of the service-learning process. It can happen before, during an after the project; with most successful reflecting taking place at all three points. Mid-project reflection is a time when learning and process can be assessed and changes can be made to the project and curriculum if needed. Post-service reflection is the time when students and teachers discuss the process in its entirety. After the service is performed the students will be able to appreciate the project as a valuable and unique learning tool, as they can reflect on the process in its entirety. The reflection activity should give students time to share their thoughts on the project, and also give them the opportunity to express what they learned and how it was connected to their academics.

Students in the recycling project were engaged in a discussion about the task they had recently completed. They were reminded of the standards connections and also the connections to Cesar E. Chavez. We also asked them to complete a brief evaluation of the project for our future use.

Time: Minimum one class period  
No. Of Students: All students.  
Materials: Survey

#### Sample In-Class Questions for Reflection Activity:

- Was the project interesting?
- What did you learn by performing the service activity?
- Did this project make a difference at school?
- How do you feel about your role in the project?
- How does this project relate to Cesar E. Chavez?



### Celebration

Celebrating the end of the service-learning project not only gives the students something fun to look forward to throughout the project but it also reminds them at the end just how important the project was. The celebration event for the recycling project was a small event but quite important in leaving the students with positive memories of the service-learning process. The teacher set aside one day of class during which to celebrate. The coaches provided snacks and most importantly, brought certificates for each of the students. Upon receiving a personalized certificate, each student realized that their role in the project was important. Remind students that Celebration of Community is one of Cesar Chavez's core values, this way they keep in mind the project's connection to Chavez.

Time: One class period  
No. of Student: All Students  
Materials: Certificates and snack foods.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation of the project and the service-learning process is highly important, particularly for those schools who want to make service-learning part of their permanent curriculum. If done correctly it will inform evaluators of the success of the program—success can be defined in any way that the evaluator choose. You may look at learning outcomes, community impact, cost, feasibility, virtually anything.

Questions should be developed at the start of the project focusing on desired end results. Thorough evaluation should take place at the beginning, middle, and end of the project. Evaluation does not need to be complicated, students can fill out short survey forms about their thoughts on the project

Time: One class period  
No. of Student: All Students  
Materials: Survey

## **Recycling and Environmental Resources**

### **Los Angeles Conservation Corps**

2824 S. Main St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
Phone: (213) 749-3601 Fax: (213) 749-4301  
<http://www.lacorps.org/>

### **Communities for a Better Environment**

5610 Pacific Blvd.  
Suite 203  
Huntington Park, CA 90255  
Phone: (323) 826 -9771 Fax: (323) 588-7079  
<http://www.cbecal.org/>

### **Generation Earth**

An environmental program of the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, includes a school campus waste reduction program.  
(626) 458-3541  
[www.generationearth.com](http://www.generationearth.com)

### **County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works**

This website offers information about waste management, safety, and recycling in LA.  
[www.888CleanLA.com](http://www.888CleanLA.com)

### **California Integrated Waste Management Board**

This website provides educators with K-12 standards-based interdisciplinary curriculum for teaching students about environmental issues.  
<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Schools/>