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Tip Sheets: Risk Management in School-Based Service-Learning

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Tip Sheets: Risk Management in School-Based Service-Learning

Prepared by Lisa Gray
LaVenture Middle School
Mount Vernon School District
August 1995

Included in packet:

- ✓ Risk Management and Liability Tip Sheet
- ✓ Service Learning Program Coordinator Job Description
- ✓ ASLER Standards for School-Based Service-Learning
- ✓ Students In Action (SIA) volunteer application
- ✓ Service Learning Volunteer Contract
- ✓ Student Progress Report
- ✓ Parental Approval form
- ✓ Medical Release form
- ✓ Service Learning Agreement and Release form
- ✓ Volunteer Driver Checklist

*All samples are from LaVenture Middle School
Students In Action (SIA) Service-Learning Program
Mount Vernon School District #20
LaVenture Middle School
1200 LaVenture Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98273 (360) 428-6116*

Risk Management & Liability

Tips for School-Based Service-Learning

Be Prepared

Risk management is an important component to school-based service-learning programs. Placing students out in the community in volunteer settings automatically means taking prudent risks. It is essential to be able to identify those risks in advance and develop policies and procedures that guide the response of service-learning administrator, coordinators, and teachers to those inherent risks.

Thoughtfully developed policies and procedures can assist service-learning teachers and administrators with managing risks effectively. Once liabilities are identified, policies and procedures should follow.

Liability rules and laws vary by state. It is essential that risk management policies be reviewed and endorsed by the administration and school board. "Documents of agreement" which attempt to reduce and/or transfer responsibility for harm are governed by state law. Therefore, it makes good practice to review written consent and/or liability forms with the administration's risk manager and/or legal counsel.

Steps to managing risk

1. Utilize school district's **risk management professionals** and/or legal department to review policies, procedures, and forms. Consider recruiting legal pro bono consultation.
2. **Identify risks** and liabilities and develop policies, procedures, and training for students and staff, and develop goals, objectives, and curriculum for service-learning program.
3. Assign a **qualified service learning coordinator** to manage and supervise the service-learning program (can be an employee or volunteer).
4. **Articulate and publish** service-learning policies, procedures, goals, and benefits for students, parents, staff, agencies, and service recipients.
5. **Keep** administrators, parents, students, and community informed of program goals, outcomes, and policies.
6. Require parental/guardian **permission** (in writing) for student involvement. Note, however, that in terms of liability, these forms are not considered to be binding by the courts.
7. Require all adult volunteers to submit to a **screening process** that includes volunteer application, screening, reference letters, Washington State Patrol check, and disclosure form.

8. Keep accurate and up-to-date student and service site **files** (computerized if possible).
9. Require participants to wear **identification badges** and to sign in and out with each visit. Labor & Industry standards require volunteers to sign in regularly. Become familiar with child labor laws and Labor & Industry standards. Student I. D. cards are helpful when placing students out in the community.
10. Assign **student supervisors** at each service placement site if possible (employee or volunteer position). College students are often eager to gain experience and build professional references through volunteer efforts.
11. Maintain **regular contact** with all parties involved. Be mobile and alert. Be responsive to the needs of individuals. Telephone monitoring and regular site visits are crucial. Document contact and site visits. Utilize phone logs.
12. **Collaborate** within the community to address needed changes to accommodate youth volunteer programs. For example, transportation and supervisory issues can be addressed by contacting local transit providers and recruiting local college students to volunteer as supervisors at the service sites.
13. Develop a service-learning **advisory group** which includes students, alumni, parents, educators, agency personnel, community members, and service recipients.
14. **Survey, evaluate and monitor progress** on an ongoing basis. This includes students' progress and satisfaction as well as the service-learning program's effectiveness in reaching goals and meeting actual community needs. Be thorough when seeking feedback. Survey all stakeholders. For example, seek the parents' input about the impact the service experience has on their child. Have the recipient of service share the impact that the service has had with them. Complete ongoing student progress reports to be completed by the service site supervisor and teachers.

This type of detailed information can be time consuming to create, distribute and record, but it can be very telling. Surveys and evaluations can yield valuable information that will assist with risk management and liability issues. In a court setting, thorough monitoring and evaluations demonstrate that an effort was made to thoughtfully monitor the students' involvement. Respond to information collected and make changes as needed. As you monitor the program, be sure to make plans for future improvements.
15. Develop **training and handbooks** that cover health, safety and emergency crisis plans. Training should include information about inherent risks. Include this information in the student handbook and service site procedures handbook. Include health, safety, and emergency crisis plans in all orientation and training. Be sure to document student participation in such training. Require that service sites have a first aid kit, copies of the student's medical release form, and clear instructions on what to do if the student is injured. (Note: first aid kits can be assembled as a service project).
16. **Transportation** policies for students to travel to and from service-learning site should follow all school district requirements and state laws governing student

drivers and school transportation safety laws. Schools and agencies typically have guidelines and forms in place for student drivers. Be sure to check with your district administration and service site.

If students are carpooling and/or volunteer drivers are utilized it is imperative to document automobile insurance coverage, driving records, and possible automobile safety checks. It is considered good practice to utilize a travel permission form that allows parents/guardians to designate how their child will travel to and from service site.

17. Each student should have a **personalized job description** that includes a list of duties, responsibilities, skills needed, and a supervisor's name.
18. Basic **first aid training** and child abuse reporting information should be covered in orientation and training. Document and record all data.
19. Develop **individual files** for all students and volunteers assisting with program. Each file should contain the following forms:
 - ✓ Volunteer application which includes references and parent approval, if applicable
 - ✓ Volunteer contract agreement which outlines the agreed upon days and times at the placement site, agreed upon tasks, purpose and goals to be achieved, and orientation and training
 - ✓ Medical release form
 - ✓ Travel agreement and automobile insurance form
 - ✓ Parent approval form for student involvement in service-learning program
 - ✓ Written progress reports and evaluations
 - ✓ Reflection questions

Managing Risk in Service-Learning: Bibliography and Resources

Legal Issues for Service Learning Programs: A Community Service Brief From the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, by Anna Seidman and Charles Tremper, 1994. Order through Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 785-3891. Cost: \$3.00.

No Surprises: Controlling Risks in Volunteer Programs by Charles Temper & Gwynne Kostin, 1993. Order through Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 785-3891. Cost: \$9.95.

State Liability Laws for Charitable Organizations and Volunteers, 1993. Order through Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 785-3891. Cost: \$12.50.

Risk Management: Strategies for Managing Volunteer Programs by Sarah Henson and Bruce Larson, 1988. Order through Macduff/Bunt Associates, Inc., 821 Lincoln, Walla Walla, WA 99362. Cost: \$24.00.

Pool Cues: Risk Management is Our Middle Name; School-to-Work Transition Programs by Puget Sound Schools Risk Management Pool, Vol. 9 Number 5, January 1995.

Order through Puget Sound Schools Risk Management Pool, P.O. Box 66838, Burien, WA 98166-0838 Note: Future articles will address the issues of transportation and screening staff in businesses which provide work/service experiences.

The Service-Learning Program Coordinator

What the job involves

- A. *Recruitment:*** Distributes application, emergency medical release, parent approval, volunteer contract, transportation agreement, hold harmless agreement, written job descriptions, and any other pertinent forms.
- B. *Screening:*** Interviews, checks references, reviews students' skills and goals and matches with volunteer positions.
- C. *Orientation:*** Reviews policies and procedures, offers site tour, makes introductions, and reviews goals, job description and expectations.
- D. *Training:*** Includes communication skills, leadership skills, confidentiality, professional standards, crisis plan, public speaking, problem solving, refusal skills, conflict resolution, peer mediation, and critical thinking. Schedule regular reflections and training to discuss students' success, problems, personal growth and awareness, and strategies for meeting goals and objectives.

Design training to fit the service experience and provide training at placement site when possible. This helps establish credibility and cooperation between school-based service learning coordinators, placement site supervisors, service participants, and service recipients.
- E. *Evaluating*** program and agency, and include ongoing student progress reports. Evaluate youth and have them evaluate their site supervisor, the service site, and impact of their service project.
- F. *Meeting*** with students on a regular basis to encourage, recognize and assist with problem solving issues that develop with the volunteer position.
- G. *Being prepared*** to support students when they become bored with their placement. Ongoing motivation, supervision, and support is essential.
- H. *Making*** regular service-learning placement site visitations.
- I. *Matching*** students' interests, hobbies, skills, and special needs with service opportunity or position. Utilize individual educational plans (IEP) when available. Seek input from team of educators (counselor, teachers, psychologist, intervention specialist, nurse, occupational therapist, etc.) when placing special needs students.
- J. *Being knowledgeable*** with Labor and Industry child labor laws, Affirmative Action, Americans With Disabilities Act, employment standards, and personnel management strategies, practices and regulations.
- K. *Providing*** ongoing recognition activities for students involved in service.

Mount Vernon School District #320

Students In Action (SIA)

LaVenture Middle School Service Learning Program

Are interested in joining Students In Action (SIA)? In SIA you will work for peace and justice and serve humanity while learning new career skills. Please fill out both sides of this application. Parent permission required. USE PEN ONLY!

Student Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Grade _____ Core _____

Special interests, hobbies, skills, experience _____

What school did you attend in 6th grade? _____

Have you participated in Students In Action before now? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, where: _____

Are you interested in tutoring at your elementary school? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, write down the names of 3 teachers /grades that you would like to work with.

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Are you interested in helping in an Elementary School Office? Yes _____ No _____

There are other placement options available beside the elementary schools.

CIRCLE all the activities that you would consider getting involved with:

LaVenture Options: Peer tutoring & mentoring Office helper teacher assistant

Elementary Schools: Tutoring & mentoring in K-6th grades

Community Options: Environment Stream restoration Recycling

Daycare Centers & Headstart Facilities Senior Centers Friendship House

Animal Shelters/Veterinarian Clinics Food & Clothing Drives

Fundraisers Other: _____

What languages do you speak? _____

Have you participated in peer helper, natural helper or conflict managers programs?

If yes, please describe where and when: _____

Do you have previous tutoring experience? _____

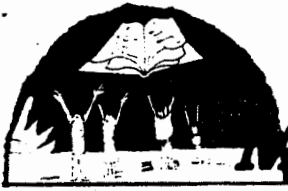
REFERENCES: Please list TWO people, other than family members, who would recommend you to work as a volunteer with Students In Action (teachers, neighbors, friends, parents).

Name _____ Name _____

Address _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Phone _____

Handwritten notes at the bottom of the page.



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 Cathy F. Pelland
 Antonio G. Rodriguez
 Maryl E. Skjei

Mount Vernon School District

"All Children Can Learn"

Dr. Dolores J. Gibbons
 Superintendent

LaVenture Middle School 1200 LaVenture Road • Mount Vernon, Washington 98273-2782
 (206) 428 6116

John S. Clark, co-principal
Margaret Thompson, co-principal

Students In Action (SIA) Program Service Learning Contract

I, _____, understand that my placement as a volunteer in the Students In Action Program is a non-paid position. I agree to complete an application, attend a screening interview, orientation, and on-going training as applicable. I agree to communicate regularly with the teachers, staff, and service learning coordinator. I have read the Students In Action Handbook and agree to adhere to the policies and procedures of the Students In Action Program, Mount Vernon School District, and the service placement site.

 Student Volunteer Name

 Date

 Service Learning Coordinator

 Date



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Superintendent

LaVenture Middle School 1200 LaVenture Road • Mount Vernon Washington 98273 2782

(206) 428-6116

Students In Action (SIA) Program John S. Clark, co principal
Margaret Thompson, co-principal

Medical Release Form

Name of Student: _____
Last First Middle

School: _____

As parent or legal guardian, I authorize the team physician or, in his absence, a qualified physician to examine the above-named student and in the event of injury to administer emergency care and to arrange for any consultation by a specialist, including a surgeon, he/she deems necessary to insure proper care of any injury. Every effort will be made to contact parent/guardian to explain the nature of the problem prior to any involved treatment.

Name: _____ Date: _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian

Parent/Guardian Home Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Work Phone: _____

Emergency Contact Person: _____

Emergency contact person phone number: _____

Relationship to contact person: _____

Family Physician: _____

Family Physician Phone Number: _____

Name of medical insurance company: _____

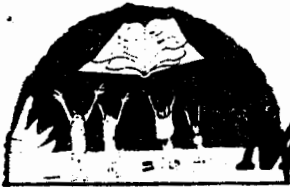
Medical insurance policy number: _____

Parent Guardian social security number: _____

Note: Student should return form with appropriate information and signature to Service Learning Coordinator. Questions may be directed to the service learning coordinator by calling 360/428-6116.

School Use Only

Completed form received on _____ by _____
Date Name



"All Children Can Learn"

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Students In Action (SIA) Program Service Learning Release Permission Slip

In order to participate in service learning activities, certain students need to be released from school to travel to locations in Skagit County. I recognize and support the fact that my child _____, is enrolled in a service learning class at LaVenture Middle School and wishes to participate in off-campus service learning activities related to _____ class and/or project. As a requirement for participation, my child and I agree to the following terms:

- 1) I will not hold the Mount Vernon School District liable for any action that takes place away from the school campus.
- 2) I will not hold the agency, organization or individual(s) at the volunteer service site liable for the responsibility of my child.
- 3) I verify that my child is covered my medical insurance:
 Company Name: _____
 Policy Number: _____
 Parent Social Security Number: _____
- 4) I give permission for my child to use the following transportation to and from the volunteer placement sites (please initial appropriate options):
 _____ (A) My child may ride with the designated adult drivers as listed below:

 _____ (B) My child may use public transit to travel to their placement site.
 _____ (C) My child may walk or ride their bicycle to their placement site.
- 5) I understand that my child may be transported to the volunteer placement site via school district transportation.
 (Please turn over and complete side 2)

- 6) I agree with the guidelines that my child must adhere to in order to participate in the service learning activities with this class:
- a) the student is properly insured
 - b) travel release is solely for the purpose of service learning activities
 - c) the student will request permission from teachers/staff and make appropriate arrangements with those teachers if they must miss any classes/assignments
 - d) the student must notify their placement site supervisor on days when they are absent
 - e) the student's parent/guardian and the student must sign this permission slip/release form prior to the student being released from school to participate in service learning activities
 - f) permission to participate in service learning activities may be rescinded at any time due to inappropriate behaviors or failure to comply with all policies and procedures

******* Student and Parent/Guardian signature required below *******

STUDENT: I have read this release form with my parent/guardian and I agree with all conditions pertaining to this release form and I understand that I will have my privileges revoked if I fail to comply at any time.

Students Signature

Date

PARENT/GUARDIAN: I have read this release form with my child and I agree with the conditions pertaining to this release form and I understand that my child must comply to all policies and procedures or lose privileges.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Note: Student should return form with appropriate signature to Service Learning Coordinator.

Questions may be directed to the service learning coordinator by calling 360/428-6116.

**Mount Vernon School District
Students In Action (SIA)
Service Learning Progress Report**

Student Name _____ Agency/School _____

Supervisor's Name _____ Phone Number _____

Evaluation Period from _____ 19__ to _____ 19__ Hours Volunteered _____ Date Completed _____

Please evaluate the progress and achievement so that the student volunteer can be assisted in improving.

(Check appropriate boxes)	Needs				Comments
	Improvement	Average	Good	Excellent	
Punctual/Calls when absent					
Dependability: prompt, trustworthy follows directions, meets expectations					
Adaptability: follows instructions, can switch jobs					
Ability to get along: cooperative, well-mannered, socially appropriate					
Attitude: enthusiastic, a good team worker, willing to learn new tasks					
Initiative: self-motivating, able to work independently					
Accepts suggestions: eager to improve, seeks assistance					
Communication skills: listening, speaking and writing					
Demonstrates awareness and concern for needs of others					

If there have been any problems, describe the circumstances and the outcome (use back if necessary).

Thank you for your cooperation and prompt response. The student will go over this evaluation with the service learning coordinator. Return completed evaluation to: Lisa Gray, LaVenture Middle School, 1200 LaVenture Rd., MV 98273