Service and Service-Learning Interventions

Service and service-learning interventions encourage students to volunteer, serve as a mentor, and/or engage in a service-learning project. These activities are backed by research that highlights the impact of service-learning on early indicators of dropout risk, including students' commitment to school, academic achievement, and attendance (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000; Scales et al., 2006).

Facilitating a service project

"I am currently working on a service project revolving around dental health. I have a student group that works with me on doing research and designing informational posters, handouts, and buttons. When we were first talking about doing this project I didn't know if students would be interested in it since it revolved around doing a lot of research and the topic wasn't the most exciting.

I was pleasantly surprised at how many students were interested in doing the project, I was also really impressed at how eager the students were about doing the research. They all expressed topics that they were interested in and we let them just take it from there. I have had students approach me about going into the computer lab and doing research if they were caught up with their school work and many of the students got a lot of good information that they were excited about. It was especially great to see students who are not typically engaged in school get excited to participate. It was a good feeling to see the students get involved in a service project and show leadership."

Starting a student organization

"I got to know the interests of many students over the past two semesters, and four juniors have stepped forward with an interest in leading a group. These four students applied for a grant today, proposing the creation of a student organization whose mission is to raise awareness of global poverty and the varying effectiveness of different methods to a sustainable global poverty solution, by organizing a monthly Giving Game. The plan for the Giving Games: (a) set-up a table in the lunchroom that shares the stories of three Kiva borrowers (kiva.org), (b) provide the student body with the choice to vote for a borrower to receive $100 of the student organization's funds, and (c) lend $100 (which will ultimately return to the student organization within two years) to the borrower with the most votes. Notably, the student body would be actively involved in the choice to contribute to a non-profit that promotes a sustainable, evidence-based approach to global poverty, without actually lending any of their own money. Additionally, the group would present statistics and research on global poverty while facilitating the Giving Games, educating youth on the nature of global poverty and sustainable development. I am beyond excited about this student organization!"

Developing a service-learning course

"A highlight of my past month has been the development of the Essentials of Service-Learning online course. A coworker and I developed a course and had over a dozen Promise Fellows pilot the course. Now that we've received feedback, we are editing and modifying based on suggestions and I'm excited to see the end result. This course is unique in that it can be taken anytime, anywhere, which will be helpful for students and teacher to have flexibility in their learning. EoSL is a short learning experience, but will prove useful for folks starting to develop projects for the first time. We received some excellent feedback, like providing scripts and close-captions to help folks who have hearing difficulty. I'm really excited for this course because it can be used for a long time and I feel as though it will be something that is easily marketable and will greatly increase revenue over time."

Holding a service event

"This April we held an event for students to write letters of hope and encouragement to people in the school and community. The idea stemmed from the movement of www.moreloveletters.com, where we would make creative letters, write an encouraging note inside, and then we would drop them in various places around the school for random students to find. A few weeks prior to the event, Netflix's original series "13 Reasons Why" was released, bringing attention to teen depression and suicide. One week before the event, a school-wide project led to hundreds of posters being put up in the school- each one said anything a student wanted to write on it. Many of these had very honest and vulnerable accounts of students' own pasts and pain.

Having both of these happen before my event was actually really helpful because it helped people see and recognize that there are so many people around them who need encouragement and might just need to know that someone cares. So during the event, I had conversations with students about this, and then I also mentioned the posters when I was explaining the project. It was neat to see that some students wrote their letters to people who had written really honest posters, and then I delivered those letters anonymously to their lockers the next day.

The turnout of the event was inspiring to see. All together we created 45 different letters that went around the school for someone to find randomly and receive a little encouragement and hope. In addition to that, I was able to have multiple conversations with students about mental health, depression, and my own experiences with losing a friend to suicide, which led to very beautiful honesty from the students that needs to happen to start helping people know that they are not alone. I believe this seemingly small actions spread hope and awareness, and they start impacting how society views and talks about these topics."