

STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING PLANNER

Primary Subject	United States History		
Grade Level	High School		
Project Title	Operation Backpack		
School	Great Mills High School		
Types of Service	☐ Direct	☒ Indirect	☐ Advocacy
Project Description	Operation Backpack represents our joint effort to support the most vulnerable children in our communities. Through a partnership with the St. Mary's County Department of Student Services and student-led organizations, our goal is to provide backpacks to students in grades K-12. This service-learning project aims to boost students' confidence as they start their academic journey, allowing them to focus on their studies.		

BEST PRACTICE 1: What recognized community need will be addressed by your project?

The 2022 American Community Survey Report, published by the Census Bureau, has revealed that approximately 12% of children in the state live in poverty. Additionally, close to 600,000 Maryland residents are beneficiaries of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, with 37% being under 19 years of age. Further data from 2023 indicates that 68% of nearly 77,000 Marylanders who received temporary cash assistance were children. These statistics underscore the persistent challenges of poverty in Maryland. This is corroborated by school-based data from the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) website, where 45.7% of our students are economically disadvantaged and 55.7% are identified as eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs). In light of these pressing realities, an initiative has been launched to procure new backpacks to support families unable to afford them for their children, thereby alleviating the financial strain of purchasing school supplies.

BEST PRACTICE 2: How will the service-learning experience connect to the Maryland State Department content and disciplinary literacy standards?

The student service-learning project addresses content, disciplinary literacy, and taking informed action standards. The standards defined by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Organization are outlined below.

MSDE Content Standards

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the political, economic, and social reforms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

MSDE Disciplinary Literacy Standards

- Evaluate various sources by identifying and defining the type, origin, and authority of a source, examining the historical context, and assessing the corroborative value of a source.
- Communicate and critique conclusions by constructing well-organized arguments containing multipart theses supported by various sources, utilizing historical reasoning skills, and addressing opposing points of view/counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

College, Career, and Civic Life Framework Standards - Taking Informed Action

- Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.
- Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning
- Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts.

BEST PRACTICE 3: How will students reflect on their experiences throughout the service-learning experience?

There are various opportunities for reflection, divided into pre-, during, and post-actions.

In the pre-reflection phase, students will learn about the characteristics of poverty, its impact, and how it affects their community and other communities. This part of the learning progression includes identifying potential organizations within the community to expand and improve our operation.

Next, students will brainstorm and summarize what they have learned to determine how they can help with implementing Operation Backpack. This involves setting a goal and outlining how they will measure their success. Students will finish this learning phase by creating an S.M.A.R.T. goal and developing an action plan.

Example of S.M.A.R.T. Goal Template

Goal

Specific. What am I going to do? Why is this important to me?	
Measurable. How will I measure my success?	
Attainable. What will we do to achieve this goal? How will we accomplish this goal?	
Relevant. Is this goal worthwhile? How will achieving it help with the service-learning project?	

<i>Time-Bound.</i> When will I accomplish my goal? How long will I give myself?	
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Identifying Barriers

Barriers	Solutions

Responsibilities—Who is responsible for completing each goal?

Once this stage of the embedded service-learning project is completed, the students will engage in a reflection activity. Possible reflection questions include:

- What issue are we addressing, and why is it important to our community?
- What action is your team proposing to take?
- What are you most passionate and excited about in your action plan?
- Why is goal-setting important, and how can you imagine using goal-setting techniques in your life, future action plans, or other activities?
- How does your action goal relate to this course?
- What leadership qualities do you hope to develop as you continue to take action?
- Why is teamwork essential to effective service projects that address local issues?

The final reflection step is during and after implementing the embedded service-learning project. Students will compile and showcase their work. They will create a product that best explains and represents the embedded service-learning project. This may include a PowerPoint presentation, a blog, a website, a poster, a video presentation, etc.

Additionally, we will reflect on planned questions. Examples of questions that may be considered are:

- What were our most important team successes, and what factors helped us accomplish those successes?
- What obstacles did we overcome, and what strategies were important in navigating those challenges?
- Changing the world is hard work! What are the top three lessons you have learned during your service project?
- How is the community a better place because of your actions?
- What is your story as an agent of change?

The class will celebrate their achievement by composing a newsletter informing the school community of the project. This will occur through the Hornet Buzz Update on the school's website.

BEST PRACTICE 4: How will students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the service-learning experience?

Students are tasked with formulating an action plan for the embedded service-learning project. This includes establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goals, identifying project resources, and fostering awareness about the initiative within the school, families, local businesses, and non-profit organizations. Engaging with community stakeholders, students will articulate the rationale behind collecting backpacks and underscore the significance of addressing poverty. These engagements will serve as a platform for students to reflect and advocate for poverty alleviation with the general public. Additionally, students will play a proactive role in the logistical aspects concerning the planning, coordinating, and collecting of backpacks for dissemination to non-profit organizations and the Department of Student Services.

BEST PRACTICE 5: What community partners will work with on the student service-learning experience?

Multiple partnerships will help the service-learning to be successful. Our primary partnership is with the St. Mary's County Public Schools' Department of Student Services, which assists with backpack distribution. The school also partners with other stakeholders, such as student-led organizations and local businesses. Currently, we are exploring the potential expansion of Operation Backpack through collaboration with local non-profit organizations. They would help to distribute the backpacks to the local community throughout the school year. A decision on this matter will be contingent upon a thorough evaluation of local non-profit organizations to determine the viability of this option.

BEST PRACTICE 6: How will you prepare and plan for the student service-learning experience?

Students will deepen their understanding of the Progressive Movement and its relevance to local, state, and national poverty. This thorough understanding will empower them to create and implement an action plan. Students will also work with school administrators, staff, and community members to coordinate efforts to gather backpacks and advertise the noteworthy project. The advertisements will include designing handouts and posters.

BEST PRACTICE 7: How will the service-learning experience equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to take informed action?

The service-learning experience will help students develop organizational skills and provide an opportunity to learn how to conduct a direct-action service project, making them aware of the effects of poverty on communities. Students will also gain knowledge of the different ways to advocate, such as learning how to effectively email and craft letters to reach out to community partners. Through these experiences, students will learn how active citizens can affect the community and that one person can make a difference.

Student Service-Learning Rubric

Score	
	1. Meets a recognized community need 0 – No need identified. 1 – Need identified, but its relevance to the community is not explored in depth. 2 – Need and its relevance are clearly identified and focused upon throughout the project. 3 – Recognized need identified through research or a needs assessment.
	2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning (for both infused and independent projects) 0 – No link between curricular objectives and the project. 1 – Implied link made to curricular objectives, but not intentionally developed. 2 – Demonstrable link made to curricular objectives. 3 – Many demonstrable links made to curricular objectives, state standards, core learning goals, and other education reform initiatives.
	3. Service activities engage students in a significant portion of their service-learning time, meeting a recognized community need through direct, indirect, or advocacy service action. 0 – Little to no service-learning time, and the connection to a recognized community need through direct, indirect, or advocacy service action is unclear or absent. 1 – Limited portion of their service-learning time and only partially address a recognized community need through direct, indirect, or advocacy service action. 2 – Significant portion of their service-learning time meeting a recognized community need through direct, indirect, or advocacy service action. 3 – Significant and sustained portion of their service-learning time meeting a recognized community need through direct, indirect, or advocacy service action, with strong evidence of impact.

Score	
	4. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience. 0 – No reflection evident. 1 – Brief reflection evident at the conclusion of the project. 2– Reflection completed periodically throughout the project addressing root causes of issues. 3 – Reflection completed throughout the project addressing various learning styles and exploring causes of need, project impact, and personal and academic growth.
	5. Develop student responsibility. 0 – No student responsibility evident. 1 – Students given some choice in project development. 2 – Students share responsibility with the educator for project development and implementation. 3 – Students responsible for project creation, organization, and implementation.
	6. Establish community partnerships. 0 – No community partnership made. 1 – Limited contact with community partner(s) for information and resources. 2 – Students interact/meet with community partner(s). 3 – Students and community partner(s) collaborate as an action team on the project
	7. Plan ahead for service-learning 0 – No planning evident. 1 – Minimal planning evident. 2 – Adequate planning evident to meet the community need and curricular goals. 3 – Extensive planning evident to focus the service-learning project on meeting the need and curricular goals.

Score	
	8. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service. 0 – No attempt made to equip students with knowledge and skills. 1 – Minimal knowledge/skills provided about the community need and its cause. 2 – Knowledge/skills provided about the community need, causes, and civic engagement. 3 – Students equipped with demonstrable knowledge/skills about the community need, causes, and active civic engagement.

	Exceeds Expectations (24-21): The Student Service-Learning Project is aligned to Maryland standards and has strong evidence indicating high quality in the areas of academic preparation, service action, and structured reflection.
	Meets Expectations (16-20): The Student Service-Learning Project is aligned to Maryland standards and has some evidence indicating high quality in the areas of academic preparation, service action, and structured reflection.
	Partially Meets Expectations (7-15): The Student Service-Learning Project is aligned to Maryland standards and addresses academic preparation but demonstrates gaps in service action and structured reflection. ¹
	Does Not Meet Expectations (0-6) Little to no evidence indicates a high-quality student service-learning project or alignment to Maryland standards in academic preparation, service action, and structured reflection. ²

¹ A service-learning project that partially meets expectations can be implemented this academic year. It must be revised and resubmitted at the beginning of next school year and meet expectations.

² A service-learning project that does not meet expectations must address the areas of concern and resubmit for approval.