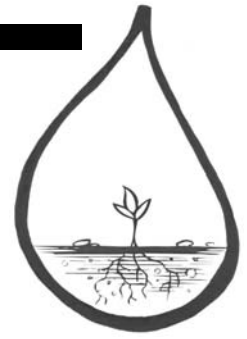


Building Environmental Youth Leadership

A High-School Service-learning Curriculum



TOPIC:

Background research,
Action-planning

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will define information requisite to planning their service project.
- Students will gain expert advice to use in planning their service project.

LENGTH:

2 to 3 hours

ENVIRONMENT:

Indoors in an area appropriate for a group presentation.

MATERIALS:

- An expert associated with the service project that is willing and prepared to speak with students.

Expert Advice

Background:

Due to the technicality of some environmental service projects, it is often helpful to introduce an expert speaker that can provide background detail and advice concerning action planning. In this activity, students prepare for their presentation by brainstorming details and questions that might be useful to ask an expert. Provided these details beforehand, the expert can plan a more focused presentation and better advise project planning.

Activity Outline:

Beforehand:

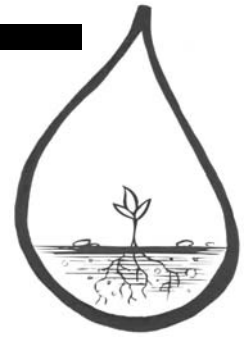
An expert speaker may be an appropriate addition to various points in the service-learning process: background research, project selection, action planning, project work days. In fact, it is advisable to enlist the help of one or more experts for the duration of the project. However, selecting an appropriate speaker is important. Depending on the demand and accessibility of experts, booking the engagement weeks or even months in advance is worthwhile. Contact representatives from organizations like Soil and Water Conservation Departments, Natural Resource Conservation Services, University Extension Service, Department of Natural Resources, etc. for help identifying appropriate speakers. Provide the following criteria when asking about possible presenters:

- Describe your goals and expectations for the speaker. What kind of background information should he or she be prepared to provide? Will the presentation be canned or open student direction? Are you looking for motivation? Etc.
- Decide on a timeframe for the presentation. When do you need the speaker? How long will he or she be expected to speak? Is this a one-time presentation or multiple engagements? The more flexible the timeframe the easier it will be to secure a speaker.
- Determine the budget for speaking fees. Announce upfront any funds available. Although many experts will speak for free, it is also important to note that he or she will volunteer the presentation.
- Describe the speaking arrangements. How large will the audience be? Where will the presentation take place? Will access to an internet capable computer be available? Will there be a projector?

Enlist students to help determine goals for the speaker. Ask them to consider what kinds of information they need to keep moving forward with their project. Do they need to know certain background information? Where to look for a suitable project? How much work will be involved in completing a potential project? Brainstorm a list of broad topics for the presentation. Split students into small groups, and assign each a topic. Provide a few minutes for groups to translate their topic(s) into specific questions that a presenter may be asked. These questions can then be used to describe presentation goals to prospective presenters.

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One to two weeks before the engagement, send a short reminder letter to the presenter with the following information:

- Start and stop time
- Location with specific directions about parking, entry procedures, etc.
- Any fee that has been negotiated, including meals, mileage, etc.
- Name of the individual(s) who will meet her or him
- A brief summary of the room setup with a list of speaking aides provided like microphone, LCD projector, dry-erase board, lectern, etc.
- An agenda, including any meals before or after the event that presenters are invited to attend

Enclose with the reminder the questions previously generated by students. Offer to answer any questions or concerns before the presentation. Also, ask the presenter to send a short biography as soon as possible that can be used for introduction.

The Presentation:

Select one or two students to greet the presenter and make sure she or her is signed into the facility appropriately. Upon arrival, take a moment to orient her or him to the setting. While the presenter is setting up, students gather for the presentation. Remind them of the goals they identified and suggest they listen professionally. Finally, assign each student one question from the brainstorming list. Ask them to listen for and record the answer during the presentation.

When he or she is ready, introduce the speaker. During the presentation, sit in a location that affords silent and easy access to mitigate student interruptions. Thank the presenter when she or he finishes. If time allows, ask for student questions.

Once the presenter has packed, select one or two students to lead her or him to the appropriate exit.

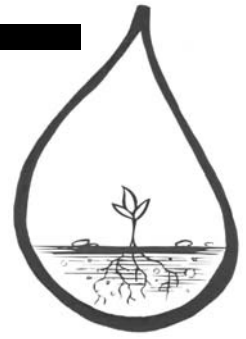
Afterward:

Students gather for discussion. As a group, take turns providing answers to questions asked of the presenter. Discuss any questions that were not answered. Have students note any other lessons learned from the presentation. Then, consider application of the information. How can it be used as intended to keep the group moving forward? Can decisions be made based on the new information?

Send the presenter a thank-you note immediately after her or his presentation. Detail some of the answers, lessons and applications identified by the group.

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References:

- Illinois Farm Bureau. (n.d.) *Guidelines for Securing a Speaker*. Retrieved 7/12/06 from www.ilfb.org/databases/ifbdatabases/speakers/Guidelines.asp.
- VanHooser, P. (n.d.) *Selecting a Speaker*. Retrieved 10/28/03 from Vanhooser.com.