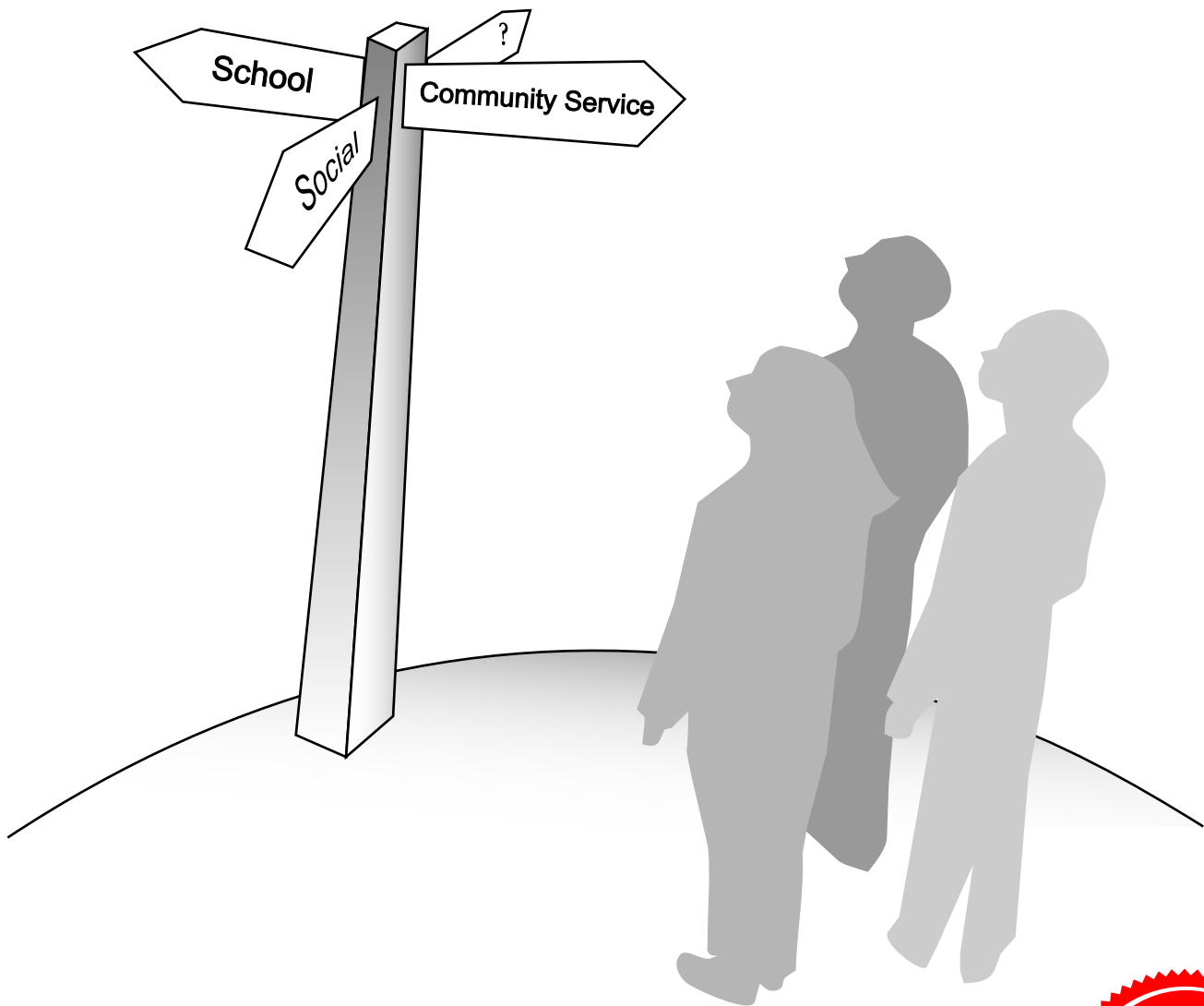

LEADING THE WAY

Exploring Leadership Opportunities
within a Community



by Dawna Raposa



About Leading the Way...

In this study, students explore the importance of community, assess its needs, and implement a strategy to strengthen it. As students work through the task, they increase their understanding of the importance of community and their role within it. By taking a leading role in a community service, students learn to be responsible, active citizens, and through this experiential learning develop personal self-worth and confidence.

Projects could involve any level of community: school, neighbourhood, district, province, country, etc., however, students should concentrate on a community that is easily accessible or with which they are familiar.

Students decide on the community they wish to address, take on specific roles, and develop their plan. Their plan can be the basis for a small task or a major community effort, depending on the time available and the scope of the planned project.

In developing their plan, students complete tasks that set the stage for a culminating activity in which they can apply their learning in a practical, relevant situation. They engage in activities in which they practise leadership, group decision-making, and conflict management skills, guided by the teacher as facilitator.

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Curriculum Links

This study can be used in many discipline areas and can be integrated across the curriculum, e.g. civics, guidance and career studies, language and leadership courses.

Students:

- gather information through research or discussion with community leaders;
- develop critical thinking skills;
- analyse data to reach consensus;
- make decisions;
- develop written and oral communication skills;
- collaborate with team members;
- take responsibility for specific tasks.

Culminating Activity

The culminating activity involves planning a community project. This activity is introduced at the beginning to set a context for the students' learning.

Skills that students develop over the course of planning the project are designed to link with various subjects, thereby creating a learning environment that is cross-disciplinary in nature.

Assessment Opportunities

Each step in the project has a specific focus that sets the stage for assessment. Students have multiple opportunities to assess the success of their project, and at each reflection stage, they contemplate whether or not to take the project one step further.

1

Setting the Stage

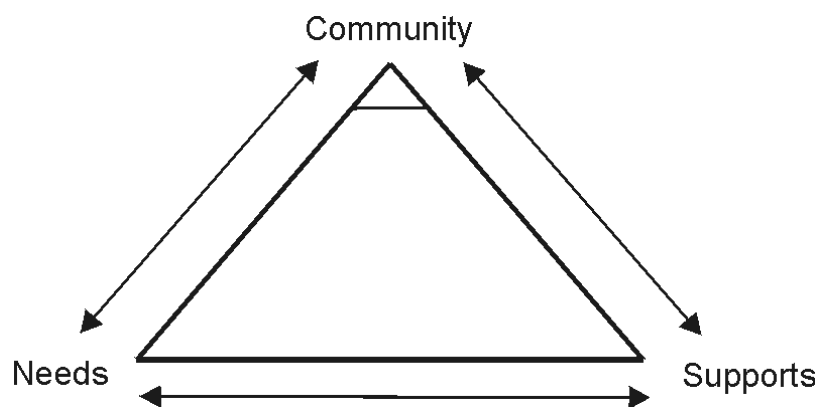
Skills

critical thinking
analyzing decision
making

Methodology

Using a graphic organizer, develop the concept of community (see diagram). Through questioning, form a class definition that includes the concept of “Community” being made up of people.

Students record their personal thoughts about community in their journals. These may be used for formative assessment.



- With students, brainstorm the importance and the meaning of the diagram. How do the three points work together? Where do people fit into this picture?
- Have students identify various communities. List these beside the diagram, e.g., the school, a youth group, members of a club, the town or city, the neighbourhood, the province, the country, etc.
- In small groups, students select one community from the list and complete a graphic organizer that displays this community's needs and the support it requires.
- When students have completed their discussions, they report their findings to the class. What does each community have in common in terms of needs and support?

2

Researching Communities

Skills

gathering information
analyzing
critical thinking

Methodology

Tell the students they are to plan a project to benefit a community.

As a class, they must agree on the community and the project they want to undertake.

- Students conduct research in small groups. Each group chooses one community from the class list. Students could go out into the selected community and speak to its members, visit local sites and services, or conduct their research in the library, on the Internet, etc.
- Provide guidance for organizing the information as students prepare their research:
 - the community
 - its specific needs
 - its strengths and weaknesses
 - the role of its members
 - community services to improve the quality of life
 - other contributions that could improve the community

Ensure groups are considering a project that provides sufficient scope for all students to take part.

Examples of projects:

Students researching their neighbourhood community might determine that it could use a Youth Centre.

Alternatively, students focusing on the school community might determine that the school would benefit from more student clubs, e.g., camera club, newspaper club.

Follow Board and school policies regarding out of class research and community visitations

3

Choosing a Community Project

Methodology

Explain the concept of “lobbying” and that, in order to reach consensus, a process of “give and take” is frequently necessary. Provide specific examples before students lobby for their cause.

- Once groups have completed their research and have identified the community and the project, they present their findings to the class. As part of their presentation, each group prepares an argument for supporting a specific project to benefit the chosen community.
- As a class, summarize the ideas for each project. Students consider which project to undertake and reach consensus on their decision.
- Students actively lobby their peers before voting on the class project.
- As a class, they consider what they like among the presentations, and how they might combine elements from each to create a class project that appeals to all of them.
- Students vote on the projects. You may wish to conduct a secret ballot and eliminate the bottom two choices. Then continue with a second ballot, and follow the same format until a single project emerges.

Skills

synthesizing
persuading
communicating –
listening and speaking
reaching consensus
decision making

Lobbying helps students develop persuasion, compromising, and communication skills. As a link to Canadian Studies, remind students that political parties in Canada follow this format when choosing a leader.

Videotape the presentations and reserve them for future use.

4

Choosing the Roles

Skills

collaboration
leadership
responsibility
team-building

Methodology

Students identify and select the roles that must be filled in completing their project.

- Students look at leaders with whom they interact on a regular basis, e.g., family members, teachers, the principal, members of the School Council, friends, peers, coaches, community leaders, etc.
- In groups, students identify the skills these people possess, how they lead, what motivates them, and why they are successful or unsuccessful.
- Once students have identified leadership skills, invite them to link these to the class project.
 - What are the leadership opportunities in the project?
 - What leadership qualities would benefit the group in planning and implementing the project?
- Brainstorm with students the various roles needed for the success of the project, e.g., in a community fund-raising project, there are a number of roles and functions that groups of students can perform: community liaison, budget control, promotions, fundraising, designers of a project logo, project name, letterhead, etc.
- As a class, brainstorm the tasks for which each group is to be responsible.
- Each group elects a manager who is responsible for overseeing the group's tasks, and who meets periodically with the other managers.
- The managers choose a project leader who chairs regular meetings with the task manager from each group to assess needs and concerns. The project leader also attends all meetings with community leaders.
- Minutes are kept of the management team meetings and posted for everyone to see.

Students note their leadership capabilities and weaknesses in their reflective journals.

Set a time frame for the project with the class.

Allocate a classroom bulletin board to record the process the project is following.

A calendar recording proposed daily activities leading up to the final project day can be used to keep the group on task.

Display a list of team members and their roles.



Preparing the Plan

Skills

effective
communication
leadership
group consensus

Methodology

Discuss the many items that have to be tracked and recorded as students plan the project.

- Groups consider different components of the plan and the communication tools they will use to present them effectively.
- Students create a template for minutes of meetings, budgets, letters for fund-raising requests, ads in local or school newspapers, press releases, etc.
- They discuss the templates and what must be included in each communication.
- Once students have followed all the steps for their plan and have edited and finalized documents and communications, each group makes a trial presentation to the class.
- As a class, students consider missing elements that are needed to complete their plan. They also comment on the effectiveness of the completed plan.

Encourage students to consider a name for their project, a logo, letterhead, etc.

6

The Plan

Skills

communicating
presenting
persuading

Methodology

Students revise their plan in preparation for presenting to an outside group. They are also ready to implement the project.

- Students formally present their plan to an outside group, e.g., the Student Council, another class, invited staff, community leaders.
- As a class, students de-brief and consider what was well done, and what they might change if they were to do this again.

The formal presentation as the culminating activity can be the summative assessment.

If the project is implemented beyond the plan, this could be the summative assessment.