

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF ZAGREB PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A Day for Coaches

Service Learning Meeting, September 16, 2010

By Amy McLean, Service Learning Coordinator

Service learning is new to our school and we are working hard to promote the practice of it. Part of our attempts to “get the ball rolling” is the creation of a Service Learning Leadership Team. This team is comprised of eight people who volunteered out of the belief that Service learning is a worthwhile and valuable teaching method and/or, they are in positions of leadership around CAS or Student Counsel.

The first meeting held was an all day event whereby our aims were to create a mission statement, develop a long range plan for service learning at AISZ, and to explore the ways in which we can support other staff members as they make their own steps in the SL process. We met off campus with our consultant Cathryn Berger Kaye as a leader who could guide us toward these answers. Please note that this day was in addition to three other consulting days led by Cathryn for our school community, with two of the days attended by educators from other international schools and Zagreb area schools.

Of the three goals, we focused primarily on our roles as coaches. The role of the coach is central to everything. In order to optimize our effectiveness, we must make ourselves familiar with all of the materials that are available to help with planning, most specifically, the printable sheets found on *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* CD-ROM. We discussed finding our own “comfort level” or strength within the service learning process and, as coaches, promoting our strengths so that people needing a coach could get one according to which step they were in the service learning process or where they may be facing obstacles. Another topic discussed around coaching was how to make common time to be available. Since then, we have talked to our director about this and she has agreed to make planning/coaching time available during part of our regularly scheduled staff meeting time. During those times, those who need assistance in creating a service learning plan would be able to meet with a team of coaches so as to get many different ideas and find which works best for what they are teaching.

The most powerful piece of coaching which I perceive is the idea of modeling. This, I believe, will be the cornerstone of our roles as coaches. We need to model what we are doing with our own students and publicly share what we are doing with other teachers. Additionally, we need to create a venue whereby other teachers can publicly share what is going on their classrooms so that, together as a staff, we celebrate the processes, learn from others work, and support/recognize the changes that we are attempting to make. With this, I propose that again, during a whole staff meeting time, we take time to share work that is going on around service learning.

An additional role as coaches is the creation of data base of contacts. This is something that one of our members had created through CAS however we also discussed using a common form that students could also use so that they can be a part of making community contacts as well. We also will need to encourage others to refer to the data base and make additions as contacts are made.

[Note from Cathryn Berger Kaye: A form Community Contact Information is available on *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* CD-ROM and provided on this DVD for your use as well.]

In creating a mission statement, we brainstormed for some time but never came up with a final version. We also looked at student work whereby they summed up service learning in 10 words or less during a workshop session conducted by Cathryn Berger Kaye on the previous day. Some of these ideas we can incorporate into a mission statement. When we do have a mission statement, we would like to create a Service Learning link on our school website so that we can inform parents what we are working towards as well as having a potential place to recognize, celebrate, and show others what we have accomplished in this area.

For the long term plan, we discussed having an annual focus for Service Learning. This year's goal will primarily focus on developing the role of coaches, developing our mission statement, developing relationships in the community, and documenting what is going around Service Learning at AISZ. Additionally, it was recommended that we pick "student voice and choice" as our element of Service Learning to focus on this year. In future years, we would select other aspects of Service Learning such as: reflection, literature connections, transformation of CAS, making partnerships with other schools, and having teachers present at conferences and workshops.

In the end, the day went by very quickly. I have more substantial ideas for promote Service Learning at our school and how to make changes in my classroom to move towards the Service Learning pedagogy.