

21st Century Skills

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Studying Geography, Economics, and Citizenship

Lesson 3 *Practicing Citizenship*

Leadership and Responsibility: Plan a Service Project

Learning the Skill

Your textbook describes three responsibilities of citizenship that you can carry out as a young person. You can become informed on an issue, you can respect the rights of others, and you can volunteer in your community. For this activity, you will identify a specific example of an issue in your community that matters to you. Then, you will write a short plan for a volunteer service project that will help address this issue. The plan will tell other people about the issue, describe what you think should be done about the issue, and ask for other volunteers to help you achieve your goal.

First you need to identify your topic. Is there a problem in your community that affects you? You may need to do some research. You can watch the local news, read the newspaper, walk around your neighborhood, and talk to family, friends, and neighbors to learn about issues. Many local government offices have Web sites with more information on projects they are planning or problems they are facing in the community. You can use these sites to find contact information if you want to ask local government officials more questions.

Once you have identified an issue or a problem that matters to you, think about how people in your community could work together to address it. Could they write a petition to the local government? Could they create signs asking voters to support or oppose a new law? Could they get together to help out by volunteering their time?

After you have found an issue and thought of a way to try to solve it, you are ready to write your plan. Follow this basic outline when writing your public service project:

- 1. Identify** the issue or the problem you want to address. Look for issues that matter to you, but be realistic about what you can do.

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2. Explain why it is important to your community. This explanation will help convinced people to help with your project.

3. Describe a way to address the problem or settle the issue. This is the plan of action for the project.

4. Ask for other people to participate. Getting help from others, such as volunteers or local officials, will increase the chances of achieving your goal.

You want to be persuasive but truthful. Do not make up facts to help your case. Do give your point of view about why your topic is important. Remind people that they can make a difference, but also think about whether you are asking them to do a reasonable amount of work.

Practicing the Skill Read the following example of an idea for a neighborhood project. Then answer the questions that follow.

There is a neighborhood park close to a school. Unfortunately, this park is full of litter. Some parents in the neighborhood are also concerned that the park is also not a very safe place for young children to play. The equipment is very old, and a lot of it is broken. They decide to do something about it. Cleaning up the park would make the neighborhood look nicer. It would also give children a place to play. If the city government saw people taking care of the park, they might be more willing to make improvements to it. The students would like to organize volunteers to clean up the park and then write a petition to the city council asking if they can replace or remove some of the old equipment to make the park safer. If enough people volunteer a little bit of their time, it should not take long to clean up the park. A few volunteers can get a lot of local signatures for a petition.

1. What is the issue that has been identified?

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2. Why should this matter to people?

3. What will the plan ask people to do

4. How will this plan help the situation?

Applying the Skill

Find an issue or a volunteer opportunity in your community and write a public service announcement encouraging people to take action to address it. You can use the graphic organizer on the following page as a roadmap for organizing your ideas.

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