

# Planning for Service Learning

**Group/Class:** Middle School Grade Level

**Topic:** Refugee/Immigration; Culture and Inclusion

## Prepare

### **Essential Purpose or Question for Service:**

Can student-learning move from simulation to making a real community impact?

### **Service Need to Community or Others:**

Becoming a U.S. citizen requires dedication and hard work that deserves to be honored by the community, which can increase tolerance and understanding between cultures.

<b>Service Idea: In Honor of New Citizens</b>
Sponsor a citizenship swearing-in ceremony at school.
<b>Investigation of the Need:</b>
Interview an official from Migration & Refugee Services of Catholic Charities and Des Moines U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) to find out about the need for swearing-in ceremonies and community involvement.
<b>Preparation and Planning:</b>
Meet with community partners, read about the countries of origin of the people being sworn in, meet with school administration, plan the event, get food donations, decorate auditorium and library, arrange for coverage by an educational television channel.
<b>Action:</b>
Plan an event with community partners and establish needs. Coordinate plans with school leaders and invite guests to event. Set up rooms, greet guests, interview the new citizens, and take photographs.
<b>Reflection:</b>
Write in journals, lead discussion groups. Identify needs for written materials and resources for children of these families. Read and share letters received from new citizen families expressing thanks for the special event. Write a letter to community partners to share what has been learned and suggest ideas for next time. Send evaluation forms to community partners for feedback
<b>Demonstration to Others:</b>
Compile interviews and photographs for each family. Make "welcome kits" for the children of these families with: a cartoon-style area map, recommended places for sports and entertainment, a list of after-school and weekend activities, a guide to youth idioms, a small journal, and a pen.

## Organize

### **Service Learning Project Parameters:**

Once initial meetings have been had with community partners, ask what financial needs should be expected. See if they have room in their funds to support the service project. If not, see if they have other organizations or individuals who may be interested in supporting. Check with student council, PTA, or Principal for alternative funds. Determine budget to see what type of a ceremony we are able to have.

### **Duration/Timeframe of Service Learning Project:**

Roughly 2-3 months, with more time spent at the beginning and right before the event.

### **Youth Voice and Choice:**

Listen to community partner guest speakers; then brainstorm and develop the details within project idea. Establish partnerships, organize into committees, plan interviews, design and make welcome kits for children and families. Establish how they would like to demonstrate their service project and future needs to community

# Facilitator Reflections

## Skills Developed

### **Experiencing and Exploring Diversity:**

Students researched the immigrants' countries of origin as they were making plans for the swearing-in ceremony. They held discussions about the many different reasons people immigrate to the United States and the specific circumstances related to people seeking refugee status. They saw the differences in needs from one generation to the next.

### **Involvement with Project Management:**

Students communicated with school administrators and officials to schedule the ceremony and use school facilities.

### **Learning About Careers:**

Students learned about careers in nonprofit organizations related to refugee assistance.

### **Strengthening Social, Emotional, and Character Traits:**

Students replaced stereotypes with accurate information about people within their community. They also gained empathy, compassion and open-mindedness.

### **Making Global Connections:**

Students increased their knowledge of why people immigrate and gained awareness of contemporary global issues in many parts of the world.

### **Developing Leadership:**

This experience presented a tremendous opportunity for youth initiative and creativity. Students had fun learning about other cultures and creating a welcoming environment. They showed initiative in their studies and showed exemplary leadership in making complex issues easier for their peers to understand.

## Additional Attributes

### **Curriculum Connections:**

- English/Language Arts-Wrote for donations and thank-you letters, kept journals, read literature about the immigrants, wrote press release, learned new vocabulary
- Language- identified greetings in the languages from the countries studied
- Social Studies/History- Heard guest speaker from community partner; researched the countries of origin of the people being sworn in-their history, current events, and culture (food, music, traditions); interviewed immigrants about their transition to citizenship
- Art and Music- Collected music from the many cultures; school choral group participated by singing a melody with cultural references.

### **Public Awareness or Presentation:**

Students sought donations from the community and educated local businesses about their work and about the need being addressed. Students wrote press releases and invited media to attend the swearing-in ceremony. Students also invited local elected officials and school board members. The event closed with a celebration for the new citizens.

### **Other:**

The service learning experience evolved from student interest and initiative resulting in community partnerships with Migration & Refugee Services of Catholic Charities and Des Moines U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI); these city offices were essential components.