

Challenges and Strategies Brainstorming Session Results

Recently some Florida Learn & Serve grantees & training participants brainstormed the primary challenges to project implementation. Then they brainstormed strategies to overcome these challenges. Here are the results:

LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE/TEACHER SUPPORT

- Tie into School Improvement Plan and SAC and FCAT
- Tie directly to SSS and other standards
- Demonstrate passion for your project (never complain)
- Get other positive support
- Seek awards: recognize dedication
- Use your kids! Present, talk up kids/project
- Build influential Advisory Committee
- Hold trainings and workshops for admin and school board
- Present at staff meetings
- Win over your department chair
- Invite L&S staff to present
- Tell success stories
- PR-positive, newspapers, local TV, school bulletin boards, school newsletters
- Tie in project to business partner of school
- Parent pressure
- School board buy-in
- Community: visible support
- Demonstrate the benefits to teachers
- Provide teachers with support and logistics
- Start a youth council to disseminate mini-grants to teachers throughout your district (ask L&S for more information)
- Provide sample lesson plans and SSS correlation (see L&S website)
- Provide incentives for teachers (in-service hours for attending trainings, writing mini-grant applications, writing L&S grants)
- Appreciation for participation
- Financial support and food
- Demonstrate concrete outcomes
- Curriculum connections
- Ready-made projects available
- Allow participation in an of specific interest
- Invite them to your celebrations/recognitions
- Give administration credit (even if they weren't active before, this could win them over for next year)
- Invite teachers to participate through small efforts at first

- Invite admin and school board to visit/participate in your project and to your celebration
- Share info at faculty meetings
- Make individual appointments with admin, name dropping
- Volunteer to do PTO presentation with your students
- Utilize project press, etc. to make the school/principal look good
- Provide an information system to principal and teachers (brochure/flyer about what is going on and when)
- Add to school program/curriculum and school calendar

LACK OF TIME

- Build on project from year to year
- Organization: teachers cover for one another
- Delegate responsibilities –ask for help
- Utilize subs (paid for with grant \$), volunteers, parents, students, VISTAs
- Use of partners, outsourcing
- Team work
- Team planning time
- School-wide/team focus/consideration
- Student directed activities
- Allow planning team to be exempt from some meetings= free up their time with e-mails/memos
- State Farm – they are trained as subs and have to do service to schools
- Do less, be selective
- Don't reinvent: network, borrow, share
- Bring more partners on board
- Set up leadership teams (adults and students)
- Prioritize
- ONE thing at a time, then the next one...
- This is life, serenity prayer
- Better planning, more efficient use of time
- Careful planning which shows that you are teaching subject area through your project
- Have students create a timeline and To Do lists
- Have students maintain computer log of progress
- Set specific time limits
- Designate time keeper
- Consider out of school time to work on project (limited)
- Collaborate with others who have worked on similar projects
- Multi-task: combine fieldtrip with project

DAILY SCHEDULE ISSUES: HOW YOU FIND TIME IN THE CLASSROOM TO IMPLEMENT SERVICE LEARNING?

- Block scheduling-team teaching
- Designate a homeroom teacher and science lab as an area to focus on service learning
- Thematic units-integrated into the curriculum
- Lesson plan training
- Administrative support during the day
- Release time
- Create a club/extra-curricular time
- Sub time for planning
- Friday night sleepovers-parental involvement
- Interns are very helpful
- VISTAs of SaYes volunteers

FCAT

- Work FCAT standards into project goals
- Plan well- avoid scheduling conflicts
- Use “class time” to address/answer FCAT related questions and issues
- Student research/develop FCAT questions
- Use L&S standards materials found on website
- Keep good data (previous year/current year)
- Use students to create FCAT related reflection pieces

BUDGET CUTS/FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Celebrity spokesperson (Oprah)
- Seek donations
- Business partners
- Community support
- Volunteers
- Fundraisers (sell product, Student Council)
- Prioritize
- Grants-teach kids to write
- SAC
- Tie in to School Improvement Plans
- Contact foundations
- Have students research funding options, brainstorm
- ASK! It pays to advertise-tout your own project- toot your own horn
- Seek parental donations/PTO funds
- Use teacher time as a match in FL&S grant

- Adopt-a-classroom program in your county (businesses provide \$500 to a classroom to be used at teacher's discretion)
- Borrow equipment from people or businesses

ORGANIZATION/PAPERWORK

- Delegate responsibility to VISTA, SaYES or students
- Train students as assistants
- Use existing personnel/services/CBOs
- Learn from experts
- Use project portfolio- teacher students how to do them
- Use standard forms
- Plan ahead
- Dedicate computer for project
- See the big picture/goals, objectives
- Create timeline/set deadlines
- Take a class on grant-writing
- Think more, stress less
- Set aside time consistently to stay on track
- Have an area of classroom set aside

PURCHASE ORDERS

- Prior planning
- Order ASAP to have enough time to fix problems
- List of P.O.-accepting vendors
- Use business partners for in-kind donations as well as purchases
- Contingency funds (how flexible are funds? Matching? Trade outs)
- School credit card, you can turn in receipts
- Have a backup plan
- Order in advance
- Follow up weekly, constantly to monitor progress
- Hold others accountable
- Keep copies, be organized and confident
- Be flexible, cooperative and creative

TRANSPORTATION

- Approved charter bus company to donate service
- Get teachers/volunteers certified to drive the bus
- Churches/partners provide transportation (parents?)
- Go in small groups
- Plan far in advance
- Business partners

- Have experts come to you
- Teleconferencing
- Service recipients come to you
- Neighborhood impact area
- Minivans for parents
- City bus cheap or free for students
- Bus supplied by school board
- Budget transportation at a flat rate
- Donation of bus- fleet rollover
- Partner with private contractor
- Sheriff bus/van, Police Athletic League to donate use
- Private organizations to provide transportation (Big Bend Services)
- Navy/military services may help
- Write into grant

FINDING APPROPRIATE PARTNERS

- Contact Chamber of Commerce (national, state, local/regional)
- Contact associations (civic, garden, historical societies, professional)
- On-line resources: educational business partners.com
- Contact local colleges and universities (volunteerism is often a requirement of fraternities, sororities, other clubs)
- Investigate local and federal government and agencies
- Network with parents, friends, students, professional associations
- Let your need be known (newsletters, media)
- Military
- Consider other schools
- Local businesses
- Community based organizations
- Vocational institutions
- Faith based organizations
- Parents/students/PTSO/PTA
- Seek out organizations with same interests and goals

LIABILITY

- Notarized forms, liability release
- Legal advisor
- Don't ask permission, ask forgiveness
- Permission slips
- Communication
- Flow chart for safety procedure
- CYA
- Bring risk management/personnel along on trip
- Certified, paid security officer

- Get itinerary approved with school board/PD
- Invite parents to supervise
- Have plenty of chaperones
- Explore all options: be prepared
- Persistence
- Patience
- Positive attitude in all you do: catch flies with honey
- Educate parents/volunteers

MAINTAINING STUDENT INTEREST/BUY-IN

- Student charting
- Celebrate steps to completion
- Student planning “people support that which they help to create”
- Hands on opportunities
- Change of environment
- Group journaling
- Non-traditional setting
- Tie to curriculum
- Discussion of problems
- Incentives (a No Homework Pass, Pizza, etc.)
- Verbal encouragement, positive feedback
- Competition among students
- Understanding the need (of the group being served)

SCALE OF PROJECT (too large of an under-taking)

- Start small!
- Create a timeline
- Prioritize- K.I.S.S. (Keep it Super Simple)
- Divide project into phases
- Divide among classes
- Let students decide their part
- Logical sequence components
- Long term/short term goals should be set
- Delegate jobs
- Keep focus
- Investigate similar projects