

# **Service-Learning Student Handbook**

**Jacobsen Center for Service and Learning**

**Provo City School District**

“We need to remember that though we make our friends, God has made our neighbors – everywhere. Love should have no boundary; we should have no narrow loyalties.”

-Howard W. Hunter

LDS General Conference, October 1985

When ye are in the service of your fellow men ye are only in the service of your God.  
Mosiah 2:17

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One of the four aims of a BYU education is lifelong learning and service (<http://www.byu.edu/about/aims/>). The Jacobsen Center for Service and Learning is devoted to helping BYU students fulfill this aim.

### **What is the purpose of the Center?**

- To help students to see service as a valuable part of their learning experience, to better understand their responsibility to extend the benefits of their learning to members of the Church in all parts of the world, and to create friends for BYU and the Church;
- To better organize, coordinate, and support the many service efforts of the University.

### **When did the Center begin?**

The Jacobsen Center officially opened during the first week of October, 1999.

### **What is the scope of the Center?**

The Jacobsen Center is involved with the full spectrum of student involvement in service and learning.

- Non-credit: The Center provides office space and support to BYUSA's Community Service programs (currently involving 28 projects) and assumes functions of the Campus Involvement Center.
- Programs for credit: Academic internships in more than 60 departments as well as international internship programs managed through the Kennedy Center International Study Programs (some of which have existed for up to 25 years and are well established) and the recent pilot programs in LDS institutes in Latin America.
- Service-learning course assignments: These are the newest initiatives and are being developed with help from the Faculty Center.

### **Service-Learning**

What is service learning? Service learning gives students an opportunity to provide meaningful service to the community while simultaneously increasing their learning. Service-learning student volunteers expand their education through hands-on, experiential activities related to their coursework or major discipline.

## Reflection

In order to increase the learning associated with their volunteer experiences, students should participate in some form of reflection. Reflection, in general, means to think about, to ponder, and to reflect on something. Without reflection students may just have an overall impression, such as "That was fun, or fulfilling." However, by analyzing their experience they will gain new insights and make connections to past learning.

There are two types of reflection frequently coupled with service learning:

- Reflection journal or log keeping
- Group reflection

A reflection journal or log is an accumulation of writings regarding service-learning experiences and, especially, insights related to that service. Journal entries should be made shortly after each service-learning experience and be done on a consistent basis. The collected journal writings document the service-learning student's learning process and growth.

Group reflection allows service-learning students to share their insights and learn from each other. Often a facilitator asks questions that encourage the group to look for deeper understanding than is first evident.

## Building Volunteer-Student Relationships

### Getting Acquainted

- \$ Introduce yourself to the student and let him/her know how to address you.
- \$ Learn to pronounce the student's name correctly. You might write it down for your records and get the correct spelling from the teacher or site coordinator, if necessary.
- \$ Establish that the student will be able to count on you, and let him/her know you will be coming on a regular basis.
- \$ Be warm and friendly. Smile!
- \$ Accept your student as he or she is—be nonjudgmental. The at-risk student may try to shock you at first.
- \$ Use positive reinforcement as much as possible:
  - AI like the way you did that.
  - AI appreciate your help.
  - AWhat a nice smile you have.
  - AI've enjoyed meeting you and look forward to next week.
- \$ Let the student know you'll see him/her next week at the same time.
- \$ The second visit can begin with a review of the past week's or day's progress.
- \$ End on a positive note.

## **Tutoring Tips**

- \$ Determine your attitudes about school, teachers, and learning. Don't let them influence the session in a negative manner.
- \$ Be prompt. Your student is waiting!
- \$ Know where you will be meeting with your student.
- \$ Be patient, respectful and honest in working with your student. Honor your commitment to confidentiality.
- \$ Students make mistakes and need to know this is part of the learning process. Do not be afraid to share your mistakes or to say, "I don't know."
- \$ Use encouragement with your student.
- \$ Support the school's rules regarding behavior.
- \$ Work in short meaningful steps toward the goal.
- \$ Always end the time spent with your student on a positive note. Smile and recognize every success no matter how small.
- \$ The students will thrive on your enthusiasm and they love new faces.

## **Job Description**

The Service-Learning Volunteer will be a role model for the student, demonstrating values of punctuality, dependability, and reliability. They will help the student appreciate the importance of education, both personally and professionally.

### *General Philosophy of Helping*

- All students are deserving of respect.
- Students can be responsible for their behavior.
- Students are lovable and capable; their actions may not be.

### *Model the Behavior You Desire*

- If you want respect and courtesy from your student, display them yourself rather than merely preach about them.
- A student is impressed and influenced far more by your example than by your words.

## **Role Models**

Schools emphasize remedial activities as the student falls farther and farther behind. The student can plunge into an on-going pattern of failure and self-depreciation while particular issues pertaining to his/her self-esteem can be ignored. Students with low self-esteem experience depression and anxiety. These emotions interfere with their ability to learn. When these students are assisted in developing a more positive self-esteem, anxiety and depression are diminished and they have a greater motivation for learning.

Many students have a greater need for role models than for critics. Students who possess a poor self-esteem can greatly benefit from positive role models. University student tutors can be

extremely effective sources of learning for these students. Their roles can assist the student in numerous ways including:

- Providing a model of correct behavior for the student to emulate
- Developing a positive belief in the benefits of education
- Clarifying values which lead to a more positive attitude
- Developing problem-solving skills
- Providing consistency in chaotic situations

Changing a student's behavior requires much time and energy. Changing feelings or attitudes involves even more. In order to successfully alter any previous pattern (behaving, thinking or feeling), a student must experience a new model.

### **Working with Elementary Students**

#### *Incentives*

Limit the use of incentives. It is important that the student work toward the goal of being self-motivated. Some incentives that might be used include:

- Smiles
- Words of encouragement
- Handwritten note or card

Children learn early how to manipulate the significant people in their lives. As the tutor, you will discover what works with your student.

#### *Communication*

As the weekly meetings progress, check with the site coordinator to see how things are going. Address concerns as they occur.

#### *At-Risk Students*

While not all students are at-risk as potential dropouts, many may need the extra attention a volunteer can provide to achieve their best. Establishing a positive attitude toward education in the formative stages may be a preventive measure toward dropout rates in later years.

An elementary student may be considered at risk for a variety of reasons:

- Failing grades
- Poor attendance
- Behavior
- Absence of a role model
- Shyness

## Steps to Effective Listening

- \$ Above all, stop talking! Bite your tongue and really hear what the student is saying.
- \$ Avoid labeling or judging what a person is telling you. It is not important initially whether you agree or disagree with what the student is saying; it is more important to hear what the student is saying as objectively as possible.
- \$ Empathize with the student. Put yourself in his/her shoes. Center around concerns of the student, not your own.
- \$ Recognize that the student is someone who is separate from you. Don't get too emotionally involved.
- \$ Don't be preparing your answer while the student is talking. Withhold evaluation until he/she is finished. Know what he/she is asking. Avoid premature conclusions and interpretations.
- \$ Focus on the person who is talking. We do this with our verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Establish eye contact. Present a *concerned* body posture. A lot of energy and mental concentration is required.
- \$ Respond to feelings rather than intellectual content.
  1. Feelings are the common denominator in communication with youth—adults *intellectualize,* kids *feel.*
  2. Accept the student's feelings—as his or hers, not yours.
  3. Increase your *feeling* vocabulary—words that express how you feel, instead of what you think.
  4. Ask yourself *What is this person feeling?* Label it and share it.
  5. Trust in the student's capacity to handle his/her feelings, to work through them, and to find solutions to his/her problems.

## Do's of Helping

- Do work for gradual progress.
- Do take time to establish rapport.
- Do keep the student's information confidential, as long as he is not planning to hurt himself or others.
- Do be prepared for the student's appearance and language. Be aware of your possible negative feelings about student's hair, use of profanity, and clothing fads.
- Do be aware of limitations. You cannot change the student's home situation.
- Do remember that everyone has some strengths. You may need to look hard to find them. Remember to give positive reinforcement.
- Do remember everyone needs to feel valued in order to act responsibly.
- Do be yourself. If you are uncomfortable in a situation, seek help from a

school-based person.

- Do be aware that the student's value system may be different from your value system.
- Do realize that you may not be able to reach every child. Some students may not make any progress. Responsibility for change lies with the student, not you.

### **Don'ts of Helping**

- Don't get discouraged if your student's progress does not meet your expectations.
- Don't get discouraged if you offer caring and the student doesn't respond. The student's self-esteem may be so low that he may believe he is unworthy of your concern.
- Don't get discouraged if the student gets worse before he gets better. He may be testing you.
- Don't take ownership of the problem. The problem belongs to the student.
- Don't expect the student to make quick changes in attitude or academic achievement.
- Don't feel you need to have all the answers. Admitting to not knowing an answer does not mean that you have failed your student.

### **Principles for a Good Student Volunteer Experience**

What are the individual qualities that make the kind of person who really gets things moving? As we asked former volunteers this question, we came up with a variety of answers. Below is a compilation of advice that previous volunteers have offered at the end of their student volunteer experiences.

Take initiative. Be a problem solver. Look for ways you could improve the effectiveness of the program and volunteer to do them. Ask for opportunities to do more. Make sure that your responsibilities are always fulfilled.

Have a sense of direction. Know what you want to accomplish and find out how you can make it happen.

Let your volunteer supervisor and site coordinator know your career goals. When the site coordinator knows what you are interested in, he or she may be able to offer you experiences in the areas that interest you most.

Learn what career you want to pursue. Use your volunteer experience to gather ideas about the kind of work you would like to go into when you graduate.

Take advantage of training. Your volunteer opportunity provides you with valuable experience. If your school offers a specific training course, take that opportunity. You will become more marketable in the job world if you do.

Have no fear. It is natural at the beginning of your experience to feel like you're in over your head. Because your experiences are new, you may be afraid to make a mistake. Realize, however, that even if you do make a mistake, the consequences are not likely to be catastrophic, and you

will have gained a learning opportunity. (Remember: An error becomes a mistake ONLY when you refuse to correct it).

Be consistent, responsible, and dependable. Make sure that those you work with see you as someone they can depend on to get the job done, and done well. Show up on time. Complete your assignments on time.

Learn from your challenges. Almost every good volunteer experience will provide challenges that allow you to grow. As you experience challenges, ask yourself, "What can I learn from this experience?"

Learn from others around you. Watch what the people around you are doing to make the most of their volunteer experiences. Doing so will give you ideas about how you can make the most of yours.

Be flexible. You may not end up learning and doing the things you expected you would learn and do at the beginning of your experience. Be willing to do whatever needs to be done, and to learn whatever you can.

Maintain confidentiality. Use pseudonyms when writing reports about your volunteer experience. When you go home, do not tell stories about the students to family and friends. By taking these measures, you respect the privacy of the children and are more trustworthy.

Avoid compromising situations or unnecessary risks. Stay within supervised settings whenever possible.

### **Helpful Hints for Student Volunteers**

- Try continually to relate course work to school or volunteer activities.
- Keep records.
- A student volunteer position is much like a job. You will be treated like a newly hired staff member and will be expected to play the role of an employee in many ways.
- Roll with the punches and enjoy the experience at the school!
- Be responsible and punctual. Always call your volunteer supervisor to let him/her know of emergencies that will prevent you from being on time.
- Be positive: don't react to preconceived ideas or stereotypes regarding students or school personnel.
- Be a problem-solver, not a complainer.
- Be enthusiastic and take appropriate initiative.
- Maintain respect for others with whom you associate. Look for the good in them.
- Don't be easily frustrated; patience is a virtue. Many times your appropriate initiative will open up new possibilities for added experiences at your school.
- When given a responsibility, carry it out. If you need help, or for some reason would rather not do it, work it out with your supervisor.

- Some Amenable labor is connected with every job; remember you are doing a needed service.
- Know when to use formal and informal communication chains.
- Be personable but maintain professional relationships.
- Have a sense of humor.

### **Substitutes**

A situation may arise that would make it impossible to go to your assigned school. In this case, you are expected to provide a substitute. Your Volunteer Supervisor will give you a list of all student volunteers who are serving at your school, including their phone numbers and email addresses. Use this list to find a student who volunteers on a different day than you and arrange a trade. For example, if you normally go on Tuesdays and you find a fellow student who normally goes on Wednesday that is able to substitute for you on Tuesday, you will take his/her place on Wednesday.

If something arises suddenly, such as illness, and there is not time for you to find a substitute, please call your school and leave a message that you will be unable to come that day. This is important information for the school to be able to run their program efficiently and for BYU to maintain its relationship of trust with the schools.

### **Volunteer Standards and Ethics**

- \$ Use a professional and courteous attitude toward the students at all times. If a situation develops which you are unable to handle, refer the person to the supervisor on hand.
- \$ Be sure to sign in and out when you come if the school requires it.
- \$ Please understand the children need stability and consistency. The schools count on you keeping your commitments and plan accordingly. Arrange for a substitute and contact your volunteer supervisor if you will not be able to come during your scheduled time.
- \$ Represent BYU appropriately by always complying with the Dress and Grooming Standards.

### **Confidentiality**

Students have a right to privacy and schools require that all volunteers respect this privacy. Remember to not reveal any child's name or identifying characteristics when out of the school setting. If you would like to write about your experiences concerning a specific child, or include them in a presentation, use a pseudonym for the child and change the descriptive features so no one familiar with the child would recognize him/her from what you have to say.

### **Character Education**

The Provo City School District is committed to a standard of responsible thinking and behavior. Everyone associated with the Provo School District is expected to exemplify and to encourage responsible thinking and behavior at all times.

Persons act responsibly when they are:

- Dedicated: They pay the price for excellence.
- Cooperative: They work well with others.
- Dependable: They are in control and can be trusted.
- Respectful: They respect other persons, including their ideas, agency and property.

### **Restrictions on Work**

In order to protect volunteers from hazards and guarantee that volunteers do not replace paid staff, there are some restrictions placed on the type of work you can do. This also helps to reduce the training time for you. Volunteers may not:

- Discipline students
- Administer first aid except in extreme cases of emergency
- Transport public school students in your car
- Use buildings for personal use
- Use the school's telephone

### **Problem Solving**

Work to solve an issue while it is still a small concern. It is a volunteer's right to report any concerns regarding the program to their volunteer supervisor, program coordinator, or school's site coordinator.

### **Protecting Yourself by Keeping a Daily Log**

You may want to keep a personal service-learning log and make an entry for each day you volunteer. The purpose of this log is to protect you in the event that any accusations are made against you. This way you will have a record of what actually occurred.

Include:

- Date
- School where you volunteered
- Time you were there
- Names of any children you interacted with
- Types of activities you engaged in with the children
- Any unusual circumstances or situations