

# Community Service as an Alternative to Suspension

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## A Practical Program Toolkit





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# Introduction

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Suspension has historically been the most serious sanction a school district can impose on its students short of expulsion. Although still a relatively low-frequency event, this penalty has profound consequences on both the school climate and the young people involved in the incidents.

A variety of evidence has led many to question the effectiveness of suspension, including indications that suspension increases students' likelihood of dropping out of school, has limited effectiveness on their behavior, and may be applied disproportionately to Black and low-income students.

As the advent of zero-tolerance policies increased suspension rates in the mid-1980s, educators began experimenting with alternatives to traditional approach of excluding students. Many alternative to suspension (ATS) programs have been proposed and implemented in schools across the country. This toolkit is designed to provide assistance to educators, administrators, counselors, ATS program coordinators, or other school personnel who would like to implement a unique alternative approach for suspended and disciplined students—community service.

Community service is unpaid work that benefits the school, neighborhood, or community in meaningful ways by providing necessary and productive labor. Ideally, community service is a win-win situation, in that youth have opportunities to learn a variety of skills and give back to the community, which benefits from the work they do. Typically, community service is a voluntary activity, but in the context of a disciplinary action, it may be a mandated consequence for an infraction of school rules.<sup>1</sup>

The No Child Left Behind Act provided funding for state-level demonstration projects involving community service for suspended students. The state of Arizona funded 15 community service programs in districts throughout the state. Through careful process and outcome evaluation of these projects we have gained insight into how best to implement community service in an ATS program, as well of the potential for this to be an effective ATS.

Of the 15 programs, 7 achieved full operation and provided sufficient student data for analysis (see chapter 1 for a description of these programs and their outcomes). Following their participation in these programs, students showed statistically significant reductions in tardies and days absent, disciplinary referrals, and disciplinary infractions. Thus, we feel confident in stating that, unlike traditional out-of-school suspension, an ATS that incorporates community service can have measurable positive effects on students' behavior.

In addition, the successful programs served a variety of students in a range of contexts. Some served short-term suspended students who performed only one or a few days of service; others served long-term suspended students for up to three months. Students attended some programs full-time instead of going to their regular classrooms. In other programs students continued to attend some or all classes and do their regular schoolwork, often completing community service outside of school hours.

Students ranged in age from fourth through twelfth grades and attended schools in a variety of urban, suburban, and rural settings, including one boarding school on the Navajo Nation.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms community service and service-learning are often used interchangeably. Technically, service-learning is tied into the curriculum and is designed to teach academic content and civic responsibility through productive work. Service experiences may be designed to reinforce curricular lessons, or the students may undertake a project, such as a community garden, and learn the academic content they need to conduct the project successfully.

Although to our knowledge none of the programs served students in special education, we have no reason to believe that such a program could not be designed. Most programs included some type of counseling or skill-building component that complemented the community service. Thus, we can say with confidence that community service can be an effective disciplinary and skill-building tools for students in diverse settings and circumstances.

This toolkit provides step-by-step guidance and materials for educators who would like to implement community service as part of the ATS in their school or district. Although we have tried to present information according to the order in which major decisions must be made, all the aspects are interconnected, and a decision regarding one aspect often influences what decisions are possible.

Chapter 1 gives background and a short literature review on community service and alternatives to suspension. Chapter 2 outlines decisions a planning group would need to make before implementing a community service-based ATS program. Chapter 3 gives direction on how to recruit support for your program. Chapter 4 discusses program operations, including the target population, program components, and service sites. Chapter 5 addresses program evaluation, including staffing issues and how to deal with staff turnover. Chapter 6 focuses on how to develop and maintain productive communication and relationships between the ATS program and various stakeholder groups. Chapter 7 outlines policies and guidelines that are essential for a smooth-running program. The appendixes provide a decision chart, assessment tools, and sample documents from effective programs.

We encourage you to copy materials from this book to help you design a program that will meet your unique circumstances and needs. For more information and a PDF version of this document, please visit our website at [www.serviceoptions.org](http://www.serviceoptions.org).

# chapter 1

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## Background



This chapter is designed to give you information you can use in a presentation to administrators when advocating for an alternative to suspension program (see appendix A for a list of talking points). It also outlines the basic models of ATS programs and features that are important to a successful ATS, information you will want to take into account when planning the broad outlines of your community service ATS. Finally, it describes the seven successful Arizona demonstration projects—which provided much of the empirical information on which this guide is based—with a view to illustrating their diversity.

Out-of-school suspension has historically been the most serious sanction short of expulsion that a school district can impose upon its students. Suspension rates have roughly doubled in the past 20 years, from just under 4% to nearly 7% (Office for Civil Rights, 1998; Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2000; “What the Numbers Say,” 2000). Two factors seem to be responsible for the increase: the advent of zero-tolerance policies (see, e.g., Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2000; Gordon, Della Piana, & Keleher, 2000; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002), and increasing numbers of students who are dysfunctional due to such issues as difficulties in their home situations, subtle deficits of various types, and substance abuse.

## 1.1 Why Does Suspension Have Limited Effectiveness?

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The evidence is quite clear that traditional school exclusion is arbitrarily imposed, increases students’ chances of dropping out, and is not very effective.

### Suspension Is Unevenly and Inconsistently Applied

Students of low socioeconomic status and Black males are more likely than other students to be suspended. Black males are suspended up to three times as often as other students, even after factoring out the effect of socioeconomic status. (The evidence for Latino students is mixed, showing no nationwide patterns.)

Importantly, Skiba and colleagues (2002) did not find any evidence that administrators were biased in their handling of cases involving Black students. Instead, it appeared that Black students were being referred to the office more frequently and for relatively subjective, nonserious infractions that may have cultural roots, such as disrespect, excessive noise, or loitering. Students who commit minor offenses repeatedly are particularly likely to be suspended (Skiba et al., 1997).

In addition, the sanction of suspension is inconsistently applied, both across districts and within the same school. For example, in one middle school, 33% of disciplinary referrals resulted in out-of-school suspension, whereas in another, only 6% of referrals did (Skiba and

Peterson, 1997). Students who attend schools facing shortages of personnel and resources are at higher risk of suspension (Hayden et al., 1996; Imich, 1994). In one review of written discipline records, 20% of suspensions did not conform to the written school discipline policy (Morgan-D'Atrio et al., 1996).

Another review found discrepancies between the severity of the documented offense and the assigned consequence (Skiba & Peterson, 1997). Apparently, administrators were taking individual mitigating circumstances into account. Yet, if students and teachers believe that the discipline code is applied arbitrarily and unfairly, it is not likely to be effective.

Even more troubling, Bowditch (1993) documented that one inner-city school used suspension as one means to pressure marginal or disruptive students to transfer or otherwise leave school. Thus, school exclusion became a means of pushing out students with low grades and poor attendance.

### Suspension Lowers School Completion

Suspension is also correlated with dropping out of school. In one survey of students who either dropped out or completed high school, the percentage of students who had ever been suspended or placed on probation was 21% higher for the dropout than the school-completion group. Of students who dropped out, 13% of males and 5% of females gave having been suspended as one of their reasons for leaving school (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986).

### Suspension Does Not Deter Misconduct

Costenbader and Markson (1998) asked students how much in-school or out-of-school suspension had helped them resolve whatever issue had gotten them in trouble. On a four-point scale, 31% of in-school suspended, and 33% of out-of-school suspended students reported that suspension had helped them “not at all; I will probably be suspended again.” Only 12% and 25%, respectively, agreed that “I will never be suspended again.”

Through a review of discipline records, Atkins and colleagues (2002) found two distinct subsets of students: one whose behavior generally improved following a suspension in the fall quarter, and another whose misbehavior continued to escalate despite repeated punishments.

Similarly, in another study, more than a third of suspended students were suspended three or more times in the year (Morgan-D'Atrio et al., 1996). Clearly, then, there is a group of students who are regularly suspended and whose behavior does not change as a result of that experience. In fact, Costenbader and Markson (1998) argue that suspension may be a reward for those students who do not want to be in school or who are seeking a way to avoid difficult or unpleasant educational tasks.

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## 1.2 Who Gets Suspended?

If you are designing a community service ATS program, it is helpful to know what the “average” student who gets suspended might look like. Based on the research, here is what you might see:

- For reasons related to child development, middle-schoolers are more likely than younger or older students to be suspended (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).
- The student is three times more likely to be Black than White (e.g., Skiba et al., 2002). Both Black males and females are suspended at rates two or three times higher than their White or Hispanic peers beginning as early as elementary school (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).
- Black males are the students most likely to be suspended, often for relatively minor infractions, but males of all races are more likely to be suspended than their female counterparts (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba et al., 2002)

- Students of low socioeconomic status are more likely than other students to be suspended (Skiba et al., 2002).
- Students are likely to have a history of being persistently disruptive in relatively minor ways (Skiba et al., 1997; Brooks et al., 1999).
- Almost three-quarters of suspended students have deficits in academic or social skills or both. Percentages were fairly equally divided among those with academic deficits, social skills deficits, and academic plus social skills deficits (Morgan-D'Atrio et al., 1996).
- Teachers are significantly more likely to rate frequently suspended students as hyperactive, aggressive, and lacking in social skills (Atkins et al., 2002).
- Students who are frequently suspended are likely to be alienated from school. Students who have been internally suspended have lower school interest scores than never-suspended students, and externally suspended students have the lowest school interest scores of all (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

## 1.3 Alternatives to Suspension

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Alternative-to-suspension programs fall into three general types: (a) custody-style in-school suspension, where the student usually sits silently in a designated room or the hallway and receives no academic or social skills programming; (b) in-school suspension programs that incorporate structured skill building designed to strengthen academics, social skills, or both; and (c) short- or long-term alternative school placements.

The Arizona demonstration programs represented both skill-building school-based models and alternative school placements, so these two general types are described for the purpose of giving educators background to make decisions about how they might structure their community service ATS program.

### In-School Suspension

With an in-school ATS program, a student continues to attend his or her home school but is separated from the regular classroom environment and his or her peers for a specified period of time. Sheets (1996) describes such ATS programs as fitting into four models: (a) punitive, (b) academic, (c) therapeutic, and (d) individual. These models are reviewed here because the most effective Arizona demonstration projects included academic, therapeutic, or individual components that complemented the community service.

The **punitive model** assumes that punishment will eliminate misbehavior. Probably the most common in-school alternative to suspension, it is characterized by strict rules and isolation. If it includes community service, the activity is specifically designed to be punitive and humiliating. *This is not a model of community service we recommend, because a wealth of evidence shows that a focus on punishment alone will not affect the students who are most frequently suspended or who commit the most serious offenses* (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

The **academic model** assumes that learning difficulties cause frustration, which leads to poor social behavior. Academically oriented ATS includes instruction in basic academic skills.

The **therapeutic model** recognizes several possible root causes for misbehavior, including family or social issues. The purpose of ATS is to identify the reason for a particular student's misbehavior, then to help the student develop problem-solving skills to address that issue. It usually involves such strategies as reflection essays and counseling.

The **individual model** is based on the premise that each student has unique reasons for misbehaving. It incorporates all three of the preceding interventions in various combinations, depending on the individual's needs.

The literature contains multiple recommendations for structuring a school-based alternative-to-suspension program. You may want to consider these when deciding how to structure your overall ATS program:

- The goals of the ATS program must coincide with the school’s overall education philosophy (Vanderslice, 1999).
- Everyone in the school should understand that the ATS program is designed to accomplish particular interventions, not just a place to park unruly students (Vanderslice, 1999).
- The key components of a successful ATS program are (a) having effective staff who become mentors and people students can trust, (b) isolating the student from the rest of the student population, (c) scheduling visits by school administrators, (b) and incorporating sessions with the school counselor aimed at improving “at-risk students’ awareness of self-defeating behaviors and attitudes” (Vanderslice, 1999, p. 35).
- It is important to incorporate protective factors into an ATS program to reinforce student resiliency, that is, the ability to overcome factors that place the student at risk for educational or life failure (Gootman, 1998).
- Essential components in the success of ATS are (a) a clear statement of purpose, (b) written referral procedures, (c) clear expectations for the students, (d) an academic component with a requirement that teachers provide daily assignments, (d) counseling services, (e) provisions for engaging the parents, and (f) provisions for monitoring the student after completion of the program (Sanders, 2000–01).

### Alternative Schools

Beginning in roughly the mid-1980s, some school districts began placing students in alternative schools or alternative programs in place of traditional out-of-school suspension. During this period, two new types of alternative schools evolved to meet the needs of suspended students: “last chance schools” to which the alternative is expulsion and “remedial schools” that focus on helping the student catch up academically (Raywid, 1994). In alternative schools, discipline and procedures may be very strict, often based on a behavior modification approach. Students often work through levels, earning privileges as simple as bathroom breaks through demonstrating appropriate on-task behavior (see, e.g., Bauman, 1998; Davis, 1994). Alternatively, other schools may be very lax in terms of rules in an attempt to retain students until graduation. Class sizes are typically small. Academic instruction may be remedial or geared to preventing the student from falling farther behind rather than providing an intellectual challenge. Typically, a significant portion of each day is devoted to group or individualized counseling interventions (e.g., Davis, 1994) or social and emotional skill development (e.g., Bauman, 1998).

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## 1.4 Effectiveness of Alternatives to Suspension and of Community Service

The literature describes numerous theoretical ATS models and specific ATS programs but experimental studies that document what makes ATS effective or what types of ATS are the most effective are sorely lacking. Several case studies have demonstrated that specific interventions can have significant effects on students’ behavior, anger management, commitment to school, and so on, but there is no information that would allow us to say that certain structures or types of interventions are more effective than others.

No Child Left Behind (P.L. 107-110) included a \$50 million allocation for programs requiring suspended or expelled students to perform community service. In proposing this amendment, Senator Byrd (D-WV) argued that community service would give youth “structure... promote a work ethic, and send the message that being suspended from school is not a vacation.” Moreover, it would “point troubled students toward true service to their communities, their country, and help them to become good, productive citizens” (Congressional Record S492,

15 May 2001). Unfortunately, the Arizona demonstration project described in this chapter is the only evidence yet published showing that mandatory community service can be effective as a disciplinary measure in the school setting. There are a few studies showing either that community service is a deterrent to the types of behaviors that cause students to be suspended or that it is a feature of effective prevention programs for academic failure. More indirectly, some criminal justice research suggests that sentencing juveniles to community service has a rehabilitative effect.

Evidence supporting a deterrent effect of community service on delinquency is limited. Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates (1999) used data from 1988 to 1993 Monitoring the Future surveys to examine the correlation between high school seniors' self-reports of marijuana use and involvement in community or civic affairs. Drug use was slightly lower among students with high involvement levels. They concluded that by contributing to a normative sense of identity, community service is a "developmentally helpful influence" (p. 257) but could not say whether such experiences may lead to lower drug use.

Hoffman and Xu (2002) investigated the impact of involvement in school activities and voluntary community service on delinquent activities, including frequency of in-school and out-of-school suspension. They relied on self-reports of involvement in delinquent behavior collected as part of the 1992 National Educational Longitudinal Study. According to their findings, students of all racial groups who engaged in either a high number of school activities or a high number of community activities were less likely than other students to engage in delinquent behavior. (Note that involvement in both community and school activities had no greater impact than involvement in either one alone.) Community service appeared to have a stronger effect on delinquency in schools where perceptions of school safety were low, whereas school activities had a stronger effect in those where perceptions of safety were high.

Teen Outreach, a broad-based and well-researched program targeting prevention of teen pregnancy, dropping out, and academic suspension, provides some evidence that community service can be an effective component of prevention programs. Those Teen Outreach sites faithfully implementing a volunteer service component had lower levels of student problem behaviors on program exit (Allen, Philliber, & Hoggson, 1990), a finding that led to systematic incorporation of volunteer service in the Teen Outreach program. This program significantly reduced course failure and school suspension among high school students, a finding that held regardless of gender, racial group, or family status. Moreover, the program was more powerful in reducing the risk of future suspension among previously suspended students than among those never before suspended (Allen & Philliber, 2001). In an earlier study, Allen and colleagues (Allen, Kuperminc, Philliber, & Herre, 1994) found that students' ratings of the quality of their volunteer experience had a greater effect on program outcome than the raw number of hours of volunteer service, which led them to conclude that there may be a minimum threshold of volunteer work beyond which additional service does not yield greater benefits.

Based on balanced and restorative justice goals, Bazemore and Maloney (1994, p. 8) provide six principles of effective community service in juvenile corrections. Many of these principles are applicable to suspended students as well (for an adaptation to school-based community service, see section 4.6.):

- The service is meaningful in that it meets a clearly defined need obvious to the participant.
- The service is performed locally and at least symbolically links the participant with the offense and its victims.
- The service facilitates bonding and role modeling by linking the participant with prosocial adults.
- Through a focus on the quality and completion of assigned work, the participant is treated as a necessary resource for completing a needed job.
- To promote commitment to and learning from the service experience, participants participate in planning and carrying out the project.
- The project has a clear beginning and end, enabling the participant to feel a sense of completion and accomplishment, and to receive acknowledgment for a concrete contribution.

To give “added value” to the community and participant, Bazemore and Maloney suggest supplementing these principles with (a) mentoring and intergenerational service, in which youth and adults work together to improve their community in a format that promotes mutual learning; (b) visibly enhancing the quality of life in the community; for example, through projects that promote economic development; (c) reinforcing civic values through addressing pressing community social issues; (d) helping others, which builds empathy and commitment; (e) performing work that aids crime prevention (such as having drug offenders rehabilitate former crack houses); and (f) having participants who are successful “give back” by helping future participants.

Virginia Department of Education contracted PolicyWorks, Ltd. to provide external evaluation to the implementation of their Community Service Grant Program from the NCLB Legislation. The final product is a report on Virginia’s experience that includes a thorough background on the funding, working definitions of community service, review of current research, steps on how to create community service opportunities, elements of high quality service programs, and a model for evaluation. The report, in its entirety, can be found at [www.policyworksltd.org](http://www.policyworksltd.org).

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## 1.5 Arizona Demonstration Projects

The Arizona demonstration projects were very diverse, as the following program descriptions reveal, yet they showed broad efficacy. (Table 1.1 provides a summary description of all seven programs.) Thus, we cannot give a “cookbook” for how to set up the ideal ATS program, only identify those features common to all the successful programs. These descriptions provide a context for the more abstract principles presented in the remaining chapters, and may give you ideas for structuring your own program. Note that only 7 of 15 programs achieved operational status within six months, indicating the difficulty of fully implement-ing a community service ATS program.

### Make the Grade, Make a Future

Make the Grade serves three affiliated charter schools in an urban area. Attendance is optional for all short-term suspended middle schoolers and high schoolers, resulting in an average participation level of 1–15 students at a time, with one full-time and two part-time staff.

Because a majority of incoming students lack communication and social skills needed to work relatively independently in community sites, their preparation for service involves one to eight hours of leadership training in a workshop format.

This training occurs after school hours Monday–Thursday on school grounds, with each student being assigned to attend one day per week. Students were allowed to continue attending their regular classes during the school day.

Community service occurs all day on Fridays, with students completing an average of 15 hours of service, either doing clerical tasks on the school campus or being transported to a variety of community settings, including the local fire station, via a school-owned van. Post-service, students reflect on their experience informally with the service-site supervisor.

Mentoring is informal through staff and community volunteer interactions, although the program coordinator tries to help students recognize and develop their innate talents. There is no academic component.

The length of participation varies from student to student, depending on how long each spends in the leadership training component.

Unique features of the program include the presence of a parent liaison to communicate with non-English-speaking parents, exceptionally strong administrative support, and the full-time presence of a coordinator. Parents were asked to attend a three-hour “Positive Parenting” workshop addressing behavior management, effective discipline, and how to provide academic

support. However, parent participation was low until a Spanish-speaking staff person was hired to do parent outreach. Overall, this component was unexpectedly labor intensive.

### Training and Skills for Students (TASKS)

TASKS operates at an urban charter school for grades 9–12. Students may be referred by the principal, faculty, or staff for any violations except alcohol or drug violations, largely dress code, attendance, or fighting violations.

Because attendance is an issue at the school, most students continue to attend their regular classes, although some cases result in short-term out-of-school suspensions of one to three days.

A full-time coordinator and two full-time staff, one male and one female (in order to promote relationships with both male and female students) serve an average of six to eight students mandated to attend the program.

The focus of the program is on building neighborhood relationships, and the school has joined the neighborhood association, so service involves adopting a local park, assisting elderly residents, cleaning up the school grounds and surrounding neighborhood, and volunteering at the local Goodwill and Community Food Bank.

Students work in a group on Saturdays, completing an average of 23 hours of service, with transportation, when necessary, being provided by staff members in their private vehicles (something that would probably not be an option for most public schools).

A second focus is a youth crime watch. Preparation involves a verbal overview of expectations given by program staff a few days in advance of service; each student completes a three-part reflection survey after completing the service requirement.

The staff uses an adaptation of the Positive Behavior Supports model for behavioral intervention. Tutoring and anger management services are arranged as needed.

A separate Youth and Family Center at the school provides a variety of family support and abstinence programs. Mentoring is largely informal, although the staff took the 20 students who passed all their courses on a camping trip.

Notable is the enthusiasm and dedication of staff, who are committed to developing positive relationships with students; reportedly, nonsuspended students even come voluntarily to help with neighborhood cleanup on Saturdays. TASKS enjoys broad support from administrators, teachers, parents, and neighbors.

### Get Out And Learn

This program is housed in an alternative school serving short-term suspended students (three or more days) in grades 6 and above from several school districts in an urban area.

Student participation is voluntary and contingent on agreeing to abide by program regulations. A part-time coordinator and one full-time staff person serve an average of 10–15 students at a time.

Community service takes place at a variety of community sites, particularly neighborhood centers, where students assist with setting up, serving food, and cleaning up for community events.

Each student completes either 12 or 24 hours of service in 4- to 6-hour chunks under the supervision of the program staff person. Transportation is arranged via school van.

Prior to service, program staff verbally brief students, and after service, reflection occurs through group discussion.

Students complete a commercially available cognitive behavior change curriculum,

focusing on cultivating personal change, decision making, and making constructive use of leisure time. In exchange for participating in the program, students are allowed to keep up with their regular coursework, which is sent to them at the school, under the close supervision and support of program staff.

Mentoring occurs only incidentally through interactions with program and service-site staff.

Because the community service program enhanced an existing alternative school program, it was implemented relatively quickly and easily.

### Lend A Hand

Lend A Hand program serves students in grades 4 to 8 at risk for suspension.

Because suspension is an infrequent sanction at elementary levels, the focus is on intervening before behaviors become serious enough to warrant suspension. Thus, some students do not get a suspension on their records if they participate in the program for one to three days after school, doing an average of five hours of service.

This bare-bones program is run by one part-time staffer who relies heavily on support from community service sites to serve an average of six students per day.

The major community service partner is the local Lions Club, where students assist members in sorting donated goods or doing park cleanup. Students are transported via school van to the site, where they receive informal verbal instructions from the staff member and Lions as preparation.

The staff member and Lions members work alongside students, providing informal mentoring and modeling the tasks.

For post-service reflection, the staffer leads a conversation with students as they are being transported back to the school, where parents pick up their children around 5:00 p.m. Students also journal about the infraction that got them suspended and how they would handle things differently in the future.

### Student Service

Student Service targets middle schoolers and high schoolers serving short-term suspensions for any offence except those related to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged, with students “working off” their suspensions with four hours of community service equaling one day of suspension. (The average student completed 16 hours of service.)

The program operates during the school day, after school, and on Saturdays. Students attend all or most of their classes during program participation, occasionally leaving early to go to a service site.

A full-time program coordinator supervises an average of eight students at a time. The primary service sites were a local senior center, where students served food to the elderly people, and a fire station, where students did light custodial and maintenance work. These two sites became the focus for community service because the staff there were dedicated to supporting and informally mentoring the students. For service sites that were not within walking distance, parents generally provided transportation.

Service site staff prepared students by disseminating verbal or written instructions and monitoring students’ work. Following service, the students discussed their experience with the program coordinator, then completed a written survey.

To promote life skills, students also complete a variety of written questionnaires designed

to promote thought about shoplifting, the judicial process, and so on. A notable strength of the program is the commitment and support of school administration, the program coordinator, and the adults at the two main service sites.

### The Choice Program

Choice operates at a Bureau of Indian Affairs- boarding school enrolling grades 9–12 in a rural setting on the Navajo Nation.

Students who would otherwise be short-term suspended may choose to participate in this eight-week program as an alternative. One full-time and one part-time staff member serve an average of eight students in a comprehensive all-day program.

Students complete six hours of community service for each day of suspension (average 42 hours per student) during the school day on Fridays, as well as on Saturdays and holidays.

A key feature of the program is connecting students with their culture and community through the participation of Navajo elders both in the classroom and as site supervisors during community service.

Service takes place either on school grounds (landscaping and custodial work) or at one of several chapter houses (i.e., community centers) in the area, to which students are transported and where they are supervised by their elder-mentors.

These students help with such tasks as cleaning, setting up for and cleaning up after community events, serving food to seniors, and delivering hay to families in remote areas. Prior to service, the program coordinator gives each student an individual orientation geared to the service he or she will be performing. Feedback and reflection are informal and the responsibility of the elder-mentor.

Choice is a comprehensive program in which students are individually assessed on entry. Those with failing or near-failing grades are offered tutoring, and those with personal issues are referred to counseling on an as-needed basis.

The program is grounded in the Navajo culture and community, with the elder-mentors providing an exceptional degree of mentoring, support and guidance, and career encouragement.

### Digital Futures

Digital Futures, located at an alternative school for long-term suspended students, promotes students' academic and career goal-setting through teaching them to use digital video technology.

All middle school and high school students suspended for 45 or more days may apply for the program, although participation is limited to 10 students at a time.

Students participate in the program two mornings a week for 8 to 10 weeks, spending the remainder of their time in the regular alternative school programming.

Under the instruction of a part-time coordinator and assistant coordinator, students learn to use video production and editing equipment and software. Then students are assigned a video project, such as completing a public service announcement for a nonprofit organization or a student-produced news segment about a school- or district-related issue for broadcast on local cable television. A part-time assistant (an aspiring filmmaker with former gang connections) provides transportation and on-site supervision as needed.

The focus of the program is giving students marketable professional skills (e.g., preparing for job interviews, journalism skills) to promote reconnection to school and career paths. Students receive academic and counseling programming through the alternative school.

Mentoring is informal, but the staff are notably professional, knowledgeable, and dedicated. Preparation occurs through extensive training on the video equipment and software, followed by a verbal description of the project to be completed.

The reflection component is the most developed of any program, with students completing a self-reflection survey for each day of participation and participating in group discussion with program staff weekly.

**Table 1.1. Summary Descriptions of Arizona Demonstration Projects**

	<b>Make the Grade</b>	<b>TASKS</b>	<b>Get Out and Learn</b>	<b>Lend A Hand</b>	<b>Student Service</b>	<b>Choice</b>	<b>Digital Futures</b>
<b>Setting</b>	urban	urban	urban	suburban	urbanized cluster	rural	urban
<b>Long-/short-term susp.</b>	short	short	short	short	short and long	short	long
<b>School type</b>	individual charter	public	district-wide or group charter	district-wide or group charter	district-wide or group charter	BIA school w/ state charter	public
<b>Grades served</b>	4-12	9-12	7-12	4-8	7-12	9-12	7-12
<b>Males (%)</b>	55.6	62.4	71.6	67.3	72.7	56.5	81.2
<b>Program length</b>	5-12 weeks	3-15 days	1-2 weeks	1-3 days	3-10 days	8-12 weeks	8-10 weeks
<b>Days per week</b>	1-2	5	5	1-3	depends on assignment	1	2
<b>Hours per day</b>	3	2-4	6	1-3	2-4	6-8	3-5
<b>Average hours service/student</b>	15.1	15.7	57.0	3.7	9.3	30.3	97.4
<b>Auxiliary components</b>	skill building, parenting workshop	life skills	academic support, life skills	journal writing for reflection on offense	life skills, informal mentoring	academic tutoring, counseling, mentoring	skill-building, informal mentoring
<b>Strengths</b>	leadership program	good student-staff relationships	quick implementation, dedicated staff	small budget, dedicated volunteers	variety of quality service sites with dedicated staff	community collaboration, comprehensive program	teaches technical work skills

# 1.6 Arizona Demonstrative Project Evaluation Results

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Each funded program was asked to provide the following data, which were collected by program personnel and entered into an online data collection system: demographic data (sex, ethnicity, grade level, academic standing, prescribed and completed hours of service) and pre- and post-program measures of discipline referrals, discipline infractions (because referrals to the office did not always result in an infraction being recorded on the student's records), absences, tardies, and average GPA for participating students. We do not provide data on individual programs because they are so different that direct comparisons between individual programs are questionable. Aggregate data for the seven programs that achieved full operational status are provided in tables 1.2–1.4.

**Table 1.2. Demographic Data on Participating Students**

Variable	Students	
	<i>n</i>	%
Participants ( <i>n</i> )	606	100
Male	380	63
Female	224	34
Gender not specified	2	3
Ethnicity		
American Indian	203	33
Asian	1	1
Black	72	12
White Hispanic	242	39.9
White non-Hispanic	88	14.5
Grade Level		
4–6	112	18.5
7–8	155	25.6
9–10	232	38.3
11–12	107	17.6
Retained in Grade		
No	171	28
Yes	259	43
Unknown	176	29
Community Service Hours		
Ave. no. of hours assigned per student	25.89 ( <i>n</i> = 560)	
Ave. no. of hours completed per student	24.56 ( <i>n</i> = 560)	

**Table 1.3. Independent T-Test for Gender**

	Male*			Female*			Mean Gender Difference	p
	Pre	Post	Dif_Mean	Pre	Post	Dif_Mean		
Referrals (M: n = 165) (F: n = 61)	3.25	0.82	2.43	2.30	1.27	1.03	1.40	.02**
Infractions (M: n = 192) (F: n = 93)	5.31	0.59	4.72	4.69	0.81	3.88	0.84	.31
Days Absent (M: n = 256) (F: n = 147)	7.40	3.46	3.94	7.46	4.13	3.33	0.61	.53
Days Tardy (M: n = 244) (F: n = 133)	6.43	2.18	4.25	5.09	2.36	2.73	1.52	.05**
GPA (M: n = 86) (F: n = 40)	1.93	2.37	0.44	2.07	2.30	0.23	0.21	.25

Note: Dif Means for referrals, infractions, absences, and tardies were obtained by subtracting pre-program mean from post-program mean.

Dif Mean for GPA was obtained by subtracting post-program mean from pre-program mean.

M-F Mean Difference was obtained by subtracting Dif Mean for male students from Dif Mean for female students.

\* All measures are per-student averages.

\*\* Significant at  $p \leq .05$

**1.4. Measures reaching significance (t-tests)**

Variable	Pre-Program (ave. per student)	Post-Program (ave. per student)	Mean Difference
Discipline referrals (N = 227)	3.00	0.95	-2.05*
Discipline infractions (N = 285)	5.11	0.66	-4.45*
Days absent (N = 404)	7.50	3.72	-3.78*
Days tardy (N = 378)	5.99	2.27	-3.72*
Ave. GPA (N = 127)	1.97	2.35	0.38*

Notes: Mean difference = time 4 mean – time 1 mean.

\* Significant at  $p \leq .001$ .

The following points are notable in the data:

- All measures for which data were collected reached significance.
- Overall, male students demonstrated greater positive change (i.e., decreases in discipline infractions and referrals, tardies, and absences; increase in GPA) than did their female counterparts. The post-program change in number of discipline referrals ( $p = .02$ ) and tardiness ( $p = .05$ ) was significantly different for males versus females. The gender difference in number of discipline infractions ( $p = .31$ ), days absent ( $p = .53$ ), and GPA increase ( $p = .25$ ) post-program were not significant
- Whereas the majority of suspended students are middle schoolers, 58% of participating students were high schoolers. This percentage reflects the fact that the majority of participating projects served high schoolers and probably reflects the relatively greater difficulty of arranging appropriate community service experiences for young teens. But it reminds us that a variety of ATS options is needed to meet the developmental needs of all suspended students.
- The fact that more than half of participating students were retained in their grade reflects the high prevalence of academic difficulties in this population. Academic support and tutoring should be top priorities in ATS programs.
- The fact that discipline referrals and discipline infractions declined significantly among students who successfully completed the community service ATS programs indicates that the programs did have a significant effect on students' future behavior, perhaps due to improvements in social skills and increased school attachment.
- The significant improvements in attendance and GPA among participating students suggest that commitment to school was substantially improved.



## chapter 2

### Prepare for Change

Before launching a community service option for suspended students, carefully consider the impact of making changes in your school. Making a change in one part of the system often has unexpected effects in other parts of the system. Some of the systems affected are obvious at the onset—such as the discipline referral process or relationships with community organizations—but changes may also ripple through transportation, insurance, school office responsibilities, teacher referral patterns, student attendance, and who knows where else.

Another factor to be aware of is that change, even positive change, is stressful. (How many of us have heard the warning that the first year of marriage is the hardest?) For some people, the known process of suspension may be preferable to the unknown future of trying something new. Fear of change may lead to resistance. Second, instituting a new ATS system is almost certain to alter the responsibilities of administrators, classroom teachers, counselors, and certain support staff, perhaps creating resentment. Tread lightly and be tactful when you might be stepping on toes.

Finally, many people have unrealistic expectations for change. Research has shown that it takes three to five years for an innovation to become fully embedded in a school and show its full potential. Thus, you need to have resources and support for the long term, not just a few-month trial. The overnight miracles will be few, with the daily reality being a lot of hard work, steps backward, and detours around roadblocks. Moreover, absence can be a lot less salient than presence: The week with ten discipline referrals will long live in a teacher's mind as the "week from hell." The week with only one or two referrals is far less memorable. To keep from getting discouraged yourself, and to maintain support from all the stakeholders in the program, you need to keep

“The teachers need to be told to give it a little time. You don't see the results overnight. Let us have [the difficult students] for a while.”

~ Community service program coordinator

*collecting information that reveals the subtle changes which show the program is on its way to success.*

Based on the literature on change and the experiences of the Arizona demonstration programs, the following factors increase the likelihood of successful long-term change.

## 2.1 Planning

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This toolkit will guide you through several essential planning steps as well as key decisions that staff needs to make before implementing this type of program. Be certain to review each chapter and examine the worksheets, sample forms, and policies in appendix E before getting started. Doing so will give you an idea of the road ahead.

Develop a written plan that sets clear deadlines for specific steps and identifies the people responsible for carrying out those actions. This document then becomes your guide to implementation. The plan needs to be flexible so that it can be adjusted to accommodate whatever unexpected situations arise during the implementation phase, whether they be resistance from students or faculty or just the opposite, that the program takes off faster than anticipated.

## 2.2 Administrative and Faculty Support

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Research shows that an administrator can manage only about three to five priorities for change in any given year. Other activities tend to be relegated to the back burner, where they gradually grow cold. To maximize the chances of its success, the community service ATS program needs to be one of the top five priorities for whoever has primary responsibility for discipline. To get and sustain administrator support, make sure to keep key people apprised of program plans and progress. Blindsiding an administrator is one of the fastest ways to lose support.

Administrators' support is critical for getting needed resources, in terms of both funding and time, for smooth implementation. Another key aspect of administrators' support is the verbal backing they can give you in faculty meetings, with the school board and district administration, and in meetings with parents and students.

### ↗ In Real Life ↖

#### **District 1**

In District 1, a top-level administrator became convinced that out-of-school suspension was ineffective. She sent out the mandate to all schools that henceforth no more students would be suspended and sought district funding for an ATS program. In conversations with school-level administrators, they expressed significant resentment at this change being imposed on them from outside. There was little consistency across schools in how the new policy was implemented. In addition, after establishing the program, the administrator did not continue to advocate for it. As a result the ATS teachers lacked the funding and backing they needed to be successful, and all felt stressed and burned out by the end of the first year of operation. The prognosis for long-term success of this program is poor.

#### **District 2**

In contrast, in another school, a teacher's aide became frustrated at the number

of students being excluded from the classroom. Having earned the respect of the principal and faculty alike through her service to the school and its students, she was in a good position to go to the principal and ask for the backing to try something different. She emphasized her willingness to support the teachers while helping their most difficult students learn more proactive ways to deal with their problems. This program helped teachers be more effective by reducing behavior issues in the classroom, helped parents by keeping their children in school, and helped troubled students by giving them a place to belong. Because it arose from within the school in response to a recognized need, enjoyed widespread support at all levels, and received ongoing backing from the principal, within only a few years, it was firmly embedded in the school and showing measurable success.

How can you integrate a community service ATS program with existing systems in your school to ensure grassroots support?

Faculty support can make a critical difference as well. When they make discipline referrals, your allies among the faculty can recommend that their students be considered for the ATS program. The anecdotes they share informally with colleagues about the changes they see in difficult students who complete community service may do more to create a groundswell of support than any advocacy from you.

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## 2.3 Importance of a Needs Assessment Process



A major building block of any plan is a needs assessment; that is, an objective determination of what needs of students, teachers, administrators, and parents are not being met in the current system and what changes might address these deficits. Section 2.3 discusses how to complete such an assessment. The data you collect showing that the current process is less than ideally effective gives you evidence that can persuade administrators and faculty of the benefits of a community service ATS.

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## 2.4 Monitoring

Be prepared to make midcourse corrections. In order to recognize when a correction is needed and how to make the necessary adjustments, you need data on the progress of program graduates. In addition, the data can prove that the program is having an effect, even if not the overnight miracles some stakeholders may have expected. Use it to encourage administrators, service site partners, teachers, parents, and others to stay behind the program for the long term. Many educators are intimidated at the prospect of data collection because it sounds frighteningly complex. Yet, monitoring can be quite straightforward, as we will discuss in section 7.3.

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## 2.5 Envisioning Your Ideal Program

Many of the most successful community service programs operated with a specific goal in terms of how they wanted to influence students: to increase leadership skills, to promote the benefits of staying in school by exposing students to careers, to provide mentors, to give students positive experiences of helping others, and so on. These goals were clearly reflected in students' feedback about their community service experiences:

- *"When you help someone, you feel good."*
- *"I've changed. I thought I wouldn't make it through high school. Now I will."*
- *"At first I thought it would suck. Then it turned out to be good. People are not really [jerks] as I thought."*

### In Real Life

The Navajo existence is grounded in culture and community. In recognition of this, staff of a community service ATS on the Navajo Nation decided that the best way to reach the students and get them back on track was to connect them with their cultural traditions. This theme reappeared throughout the program.

As one example, staff had students use their clan names. In Navajo, it is customary to introduce oneself not only by one's given name but by one's mother's and father's clans as well. This extended kinship creates a sense of connection with people who may have

been strangers moments before, as when, for example, a student and staff member might discover they are members of the same clan.

In another example, respect for elders and their wisdom is a strong value in Navajo culture. To tap into this, staff recruited elders of the Navajo community to mentor the students and volunteer their time as drivers and in other capacities.

How can you tie your program to your local culture or community, to increase its meaningfulness and student buy-in?

Depending on how it is structured, community service can have many benefits:

- The experience of working with peers and adults in a professional setting can increase social skills and promote peer and adult relationships, as well as introducing students to potential mentors in the community or school.
- Opportunities to help others in need can help students see their lives in a more positive perspective. They have an opportunity to make a positive contribution, instead of being branded “troublemakers,” potentially increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Meaningful work experience can help students learn job skills and set long-term goals for school, career, and life. Some may discover unknown talents or find the initiative to acknowledge and pursue positive dreams for their lives.
- If students see that they are making a difference—for example, they pack enough food boxes to feed 200 families who would otherwise go hungry—they can develop feelings of belonging to and investment in their community and school, potentially increasing their willingness to stay in school, overcome difficulties, and become responsible citizens.
- Many frequently suspended students are alienated and self-absorbed. By helping others, they can develop feelings of empathy and altruism, key values in civil society.

Knowing what benefits you want to emphasize can help you focus your program, in terms of the types of students you want to serve, the nature and length of the community service experience, preferred community service sites, auxiliary components of the program, staffing considerations, and all the other decisions you will need to make down the road. It can also give you talking points to “sell” your program to administrators, parents, and stakeholders in the community. Finally, a clear vision of what you want to achieve guides your outcome evaluation. Conversely, without a vision, an innovation is more likely to become mired down in conflicting priorities and directions.

## Points to Consider

- Planning is essential to successful implementation.
- Work out as many of the details as you can before you start the program.
- Identify the most powerful people in your school or district—either because of their position or because they are natural leaders—and enlist their support.
- If you encounter griping or negativity, do not take it personally. Remember that is directed at the changes you are making, not at you as a person.
- Generally it takes three to five years for a new program to become sustainable. Be patient and persistent in your support.
- The changes may not be immediately apparent. Do not expect a miraculous turnaround in a short period.
- Monitor students’ progress, both in school and at the site, in order to recognize when adjustments to the program are needed.
- Open lines of communication among program staff and administrators, teachers, site coordinators, parents, and students will maintain support for the program.



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# chapter 3

## Recruit Supporters

To get started, you need to determine the level of need for an ATS program, using simple measures such as attendance and suspension records. With these data, you have evidence you can use to back up your calls for change.

Take your campaign to your administration, and with their support, to other stakeholders in the school and community, such as parents, teachers, district officials, and community nonprofits. You'll need a person or team to cheerlead the efforts, so look for others who can help you champion the program and move the planning forward.

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### 3.1 Gain Administrative Support

If you want to start a community service program for suspended students, one of the first steps is to gauge the level of support from the school or district administration.

Including administrators and as many of the key players as possible from the very start—even before you draft the policies and procedures of your program—can ensure a successful program and smooth start-up. Usually an informal conversation with your superiors will suffice to grease the wheels as you explore options for incorporating community service into your school or district's current discipline policies.

The first people you may wish to approach, depending on whether you are conceptualizing a schoolwide or districtwide (and long-term versus short-term ATS, program), would be school principals

or the district superintendent, hearing officers, or other administrators responsible for overseeing discipline (see appendix A for a list of talking points you might use in recruiting support from administrators).

“A wealth of evidence [indicates] that a focus on punishment alone will not impact many of the most severe types of offences or reeducate the highest rate offenders.”

~ *Costenbader & Markson, 1998*

As chapter 2 shows, making community service a component of an alternative to suspension program is a win-win situation. Students receive support and guidance to turn a bad situation—a disciplinary sanction—into a positive experience. They have opportunities to develop work and life skills and to develop empathy for others, two areas in which

at-risk students are often deficient. Structured experiences of participating in community service typically result in fewer absences, tardies, and discipline referrals in the future. Additionally, the service sites, which may include the school itself, benefit from volunteer services.

Why might administrators or school board members be skeptical? It is helpful to try and see their point of view by exploring their reservations. Some may have a traditional perspective that discipline should involve punishment, and far from being a positive experience, should be one the students would wish to avoid.

In such a case it is important to emphasize that a community service program is a consequence. Students will be expected to follow through with their program requirements or face additional sanctions. Under traditional out-of-school suspension, a large number of working parents, faced with last-minute notice that their child cannot go to school, may have little choice but to leave the child with little or no adult supervision, essentially turning the intended punishment into a mini-vacation or opportunity to engage in delinquency in the community at large. For young people who do not like school anyway, as many frequent troublemakers do not, one may indeed question whether exclusion from school is a punishment or a reward.

Doing community service in place of traditional out-of-school suspension requires students to serve their suspensions by doing useful and meaningful work. Administrators can be assured that these students are engaged in productive activity under adult supervision. Thereby, they are developing prosocial relationships with peers and adults, learning useful life skills, and becoming more connected to their school and community, reducing the likelihood that they will get into trouble again.

## 3.2 Champion Your Ideas

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Any successful innovation starts with a person who is motivated and believes in it. You are it: the change agent who can make a community service program happen. Every successful program in our study had a champion—a person or team of people within the institution who shepherded it from concept to implementation.

The champion's role may simply be to guide the program through the development process, then turn the day-to-day operations over to others. Or the champion may be the person who ultimately coordinates all program activities or oversees the program once it's up and running.

Regardless of the champion's specific role, this person or team (a) works to gain conceptual support from school and district administrators; (b) identifies key players in program development, and (c) assesses the needs of the school or district.

### Points to Consider

#### For a Conversation with Administrators

1. Discuss what you want to do and why it will benefit the school, teachers, students, and the larger community. If possible, describe how your planned innovation might support or tie in to existing school or district programs or goals.
2. Show them data! For example, use the information in chapter 1 to support any information you have from your school or district showing that current suspension policies are not changing students' behaviors. Use results from our study to demonstrate the potential of community service to make a difference.
3. Invite discussion, especially of any reservations your audience may have.
4. Explore ways these reservations may be mitigated. If appropriate, commit to collecting further information and providing a report at a future meeting.
5. Discuss the possible options you have identified and reach consensus on what your superiors will and will not support. Clearly establish what authority you have to proceed and what backing you can expect.
6. Have multiple conversations with administrators to keep them up-to-date with developments and ideas.

The champion also actively recruits people and resources needed to support a program in getting off the ground. Here are some places where you may want to champion your program idea and seek supporters:

- teachers' meetings and parent-teacher association meetings
- school board meetings
- town halls
- business alliance meetings
- community service organizations, such as Rotary or Lions Clubs

## Key Points in Being a Champion

- Any new program needs momentum to get started.
- A champion, or champions, may play a critical role only in program development or in program implementation as well.
- In various programs, the champion ranged from a teacher to a principal, a vice-principal, a counselor, or a prevention coordinator.
- The level of authority and resources the champion has initially is less important than the person's commitment to the idea, ability to recruit the necessary resources, and success in developing the network of school-community relationships that underlie community service.

### 3.3 Assess the Need for a Community Service Alternative to Suspension

Just as one would never attempt to build a house without a blueprint, one would not implement a program without a plan. Just as a developer could not get financial backing for a new building without showing that it is needed and is likely to generate a profit, you can't succeed with implementing a new program unless people see that it is needed and potentially beneficial.

The way to show this is through a process called needs assessment. In this process, you analyze the current situation with regard to suspensions, as well as identifying shortfalls in the current policies that result in unmet needs (a needs assessment worksheet is provided in appendix B).

#### Key Points in Conducting Needs Assessment

Step 1: Review all written policies and procedures related to suspension.

Step 2: Examine how these policies are implemented in practice using school discipline records:

- How consistently are policies and procedures followed?
- How many students are suspended per month, semester, and year? What discernible patterns are there in the timing of suspensions (e.g., a rash of suspensions just before and after school vacations)?
- What types of infractions are students being suspended for?
- What patterns are there in the characteristics of students who are suspended? What schools or grade levels have the highest rates? What racial or socioeconomic disparities exist between the student body as a whole and the population of students who are suspended? What percentage of suspensions are repeat offenders? What is the average academic standing of suspended students?
- If possible, do a retrospective records review over several years to determine whether the number of suspensions, types of infractions, and student characteristics are relatively stable or whether the situation is improving or worsening.

Step 3: Determine the pressing needs of those who are most affected by student suspensions. What are the gaps or shortcomings in the current suspension practices? What would an alternative program need to accomplish in terms of goals or desired outcomes? You will want to consider input from as many types of stakeholders as possible, such as teachers, school administrators, students, parents, affected community members (such as school neighbors who may experience vandalism by suspended students), and potential community service sites.

Step 4: Assess the current level of support for a community service program as an alternative to suspension.

Step 5: Based on the information you collect, determine the broad outlines of your proposed program.

- Assess the advantages and disadvantages of designing a broad-based program, open to a variety of students, versus one targeted to a specific population.
- Decide whether any criteria should exclude students from participation (e.g., violent offenses).
- Consider whether to create community service opportunities relevant to the reason for students' suspensions (e.g., having students suspended for vandalism help repair low-income seniors' homes).
- Based on the level of support you have, evaluate where you want to start: with a small pilot program targeting a specific grade or set of students, with a program in one school only, or with a district-wide intervention.
- Find out what disciplinary actions, if any, are currently invoked with special education students. Consider whether to make certain special education students eligible to participate, if consistent with their IEP provisions.
- Identify your school/district's current policy for suspensions. How can you integrate the community service ATS program with current policies?
- Identify what if any sanctions, in addition to exclusion from school, are currently imposed on students. Can these be coordinated in some way with the community service ATS program?
- Examine the data on suspensions and expulsions in your school or district to identify patterns, unmet needs, and what the "typical" suspended student looks like.
- Determine what types of offenses students are most commonly disciplined for. What implications might this have for community service, in terms of level of supervision participating students might require, willingness of community sites to accept student workers, and other factors?
- Identify student population that are not being well served by the current discipline policy. How might community service help serve these students?
- Ask yourself who your program will serve, and how you will determine who is eligible to participate.

## 3.4 Involve the Right People

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Having assessed the level of need and the operational readiness of your school or district, you're ready to get down to the brass tacks. Your next job is to set up a group to guide the planning process.

You may want to create a formal advisory panel or simply get a group of stakeholders together. (A stakeholder is any party who has interest in the community service suspension program.) Either way, soliciting input from a diverse range of school officials and community members is critical.

### Key Stakeholders

From your active championing of your program, you will already have started building a network of colleagues from whom you can draw a planning committee. Here is a list of

stakeholders you may consider involving. Each has something different to offer and may be involved in a specific aspect of the planning process.

**School administrators** play a crucial role in ensuring that your proposed program adheres to existing policies and statutes, and that the focus of the community service remains discipline not student enrichment (especially if your school provides service-learning for enrichment).

**Educators** may be either existing staff or new employees hired specifically to implement the community service program. Generally the following types of professionals might be involved: teachers, counselors, special education teachers, and administrative or clerical staff. Although your program probably will not include special education students because their educational program cannot be disrupted, special education teachers and counselors are great resources if you wish to develop skill-building program components to complement the community service aspect, such as academic support, life skills and anger management training, counseling, and youth leadership (see section 4.2). Remember that academic and social deficits are common findings among frequently suspended students.

**Program coordinator and staff**, if you have already begun recruiting and hiring them at this point, can help guide the conceptual framework of the program, represent teacher concerns, and develop program components.

**Representatives of potential community service sites**, including business leaders and service agency employees, also have valuable input as you conceptualize your program. Seek information from them regarding the overall mission of each service site, the range of tasks available for students to engage in, and how best to prepare participants to function in a service-oriented environment. In discussing community service, many people automatically assume the service site will be in a charitable or nonprofit organization. It is important to think “outside the box” when locating potential community partners, including but not limited to the following:

- nonprofit organizations
- civic organizations
- neighborhood associations
- community centers
- city parks
- city or town government offices or the local fire department
- school district offices
- food/clothing banks
- faith-based organizations
- government/tribal agencies
- heads of school or district programs or operations that are short-staffed and would accept student workers.

**Parents** can provide input on their concerns as parents and on additional program components that could support parents of suspended students and address issues that frequently underlie discipline problem.

**At-risk students** may have interesting perspectives on how to influence change in their suspended peers.

## In Real Life

In one district, a grant writer within the administration applied for demonstration project funding. The application outlined what could have been an excellent program. However, because no one at the school level had the commitment to champion the program, it never got off the ground and the money was wasted.

How can you ensure that innovation comes from within the school and is consistent with the prevailing philosophy there?

# chapter 4

## Outline Program Operations



Now you can begin to determine what your program will look like, in terms of the students it will serve, how long they will participate, where they will do their community service, and the nature of the service experience.

You may also choose to develop ancillary components designed to address students' needs for mentors, life skills, counseling, and the like. With all of these decisions made, you can plan a preliminary budget and start seeking financing. These are the topics we address in this section. Appendix C contains a worksheet summarizing these decisions, which you may wish to use in planning.

### 4.1 Determine the Target Population and Eligibility Criteria

The results of your needs assessment should have given you a good idea of the pool of students likely to be referred to your program, in terms of their ages, sex (boys are typically suspended more frequently than girls), racial or ethnic composition, academic skills, percentage of repeat offenders, and other characteristics. The first, holistic decision is whether you will open the program to all suspended students, on either a mandatory or voluntary referral basis, or will you establish eligibility criteria that limit participation to certain types of students.

Ideally, when deciding eligibility criteria for your community service ATS program, your first consideration will be "Who would be best served by an ATS that uses community

#### Key Questions to Ask Yourself

- Who would be best served?
- Given the support and resources I have, how many and what types of students can participate?
- What characteristics of my community service partner sites may limit participation? How?
- What considerations, such as district policies or community safety, may preclude student participation under certain circumstances?
- If a student is resuspended after participating in the community service program, will the program be open to that student again? What sanctions or consequences will be imposed on students who do not complete their mandated community service?
- How will students be recruited to the program? Voluntarily as an alternative to traditional out-of-school suspension or by mandatory referral?

service?” Are there students who have not responded to traditional disciplinary actions, such as frequently suspended students, for whom a different approach might be warranted? Are certain types of students particularly likely to benefit from the social relationships, sense of belonging to a community, and life skills promoted through community service?

Realistically, a secondary consideration is, “Given the resources I have, how big can I start?” You may decide to restrict the program, at least initially, to students you feel are most likely to be successful. You can then use the evidence of their success to build support with administrators and attract additional resources to expand the program

Next, ask yourself about the *nature of the partner sites you have identified*. The *age or grade, as well as skill levels of the eligible students* will guide how your community service activities are designed and where students are placed. Most suspended students have repeated experiences of getting into trouble and struggling in the school environment for a variety of reasons. Therefore, your top priority is to design a situation where they can experience the feeling of doing something well and making a positive contribution. Some considerations in this regard are these:

- **types of jobs available.** For example, unloading and sorting food boxes at a food bank may involve heavy lifting that restricts participation to older students. Answering phones is probably not an appropriate job for a fifth-grader, but park cleanup would be.
- **degree of adult supervision and support available and the amount of time you have to prepare students for service.** Sending students who lack the social, emotional, or behavioral skills to work cooperatively and reasonably independently into a situation with little or no supervision is stacking the deck against them.
- **volunteer policies and requirements of target sites.** Sites may be willing to take students only at particular times or for a minimum number of hours or if they meet certain age and skill requirements.

“I liked learning about others, like the poor and the homeless. It helped me.”

~ Student feedback

**Should students who have committed serious infractions, such as those involving drugs or violence, be eligible to participate?** In many cases, these are the students who stand to benefit most from an intensive program. If you have the option to include them under school or district policies, you need to consider that they will need more than the average level of supervision and support, especially if they are to work in a community setting off school grounds.

You also need to decide whether to *give repeat offenders a second chance* in the program. If participation in the program is considered a privilege that students must live up to, participation would probably be restricted to a single time. Consider how others might view second chances with this population. If you are willing to give second chances, you probably want to have a decision protocol to determine eligibility on a case-by-case basis according to clear guidelines that are transparent to the faculty and student body.

Lastly, you will want to consider whether students enter the program by voluntary self-referral versus by mandatory requirement. Allowing the students to participate by choice has several advantages. Students who enter the program willingly are less likely to try to sabotage it. They may be more receptive to learning from the service experience. In addition, many at-risk students, particularly in middle school, feel they lack control over their lives. Allowing the student a choice of punishments gives them a measure of control, which is also likely to increase their cooperation. (The same principle applies in allowing the student a choice of appropriate service opportunities.)

Finally, we encourage you not to be too hasty in excluding certain students, and to revisit your eligibility criteria on an annual basis. Think creatively of solutions to any barriers that limit participation or success by certain students:

- Perhaps younger students or more serious offenders could complete their community service experience on the school campus instead of

in the community.

- Direct or phone supervision by parents, school volunteers, or community mentors may give more students the support they need to complete the program successfully.
- Increasing your network of community partners—perhaps to nontraditional sites or places where staff are accustomed to dealing with troubled youth—may provide more options for students with particular needs?
- Document evidence of success, such as such as reductions in disciplinary infractions or unexcused school absences, that you can use to lobby for more staff or resources to open your program to broader participation.

“One of the surprises in our program was that we used a [youth leadership curriculum] that has been used for students who have already been identified as leaders and are strengthening those skills. Yet some of the components worked very well with our youth because it kind of ignited in them the skills and talents they already had but just hadn’t labeled yet.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

## 4.2 Outline the Program Components

Every program would have some sort of preservice preparation prepares students to have a successful community service experience; we address this topic in section 4.7. The question at this point is, Do you want your program to consist entirely or primarily of community service activities, or will it include other components designed to address academic or skill deficits?

If students will be attending your program for the entire school day during their suspension period, there will likely be time to include an auxiliary component that reinforces other important skills. Such a component might complement the service aspect by building confidence and job skills. Or it might target academics or other areas of difficulty in the young person’s life that may be contributing to disciplinary infractions. There are four general categories of auxiliary components:

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Academic support | 3. Mentoring  |
| 2. Life skills      | 4. Counseling |

Academic support: Your suspension program may include time for tutoring or structured assistance with schoolwork under the supervision of program staff. (Providing tutoring to younger students may be a possible community service option for some students.)

### In Real Life

One ATS program served elementary-age students so faced particular logistical issues with regard to designing age-appropriate service activities. After school, the students would get on a district-owned bus or van and head to the service site with one to two program staff. The two most frequented sites were a local park for clean-up and a nursing home for socializing with the residents. Staff found that having students do service work in a group made supervising these youngsters more feasible. In addition, doing only a few hours of service each day kept the students interested and on target. Lastly, having the program staff work alongside the students, modeling the service, was the optimal way to teach younger children who might not be able to carry through with lengthy verbal instructions.

**Given the ages and maturity levels of your target population, how would you structure the optimal service experience?**

**How could the same (or similar) service experiences be adjusted up or down to accommodate a range of age and maturity levels?**

**Life skills:** A life-skills component could be designed in a number of ways. First, think about the kinds of skills you want to introduce or reinforce. Second, consider how to accomplish this in an age-appropriate manner. Some examples of life skills are youth leadership training, a packaged curriculum of social-skills lessons, or work skills. Other examples are conflict resolution or drug and alcohol prevention information.

**Mentoring:** Your program may also include a mentoring component, either peer-to-peer or adult-to-student. An excellent source of peer mentors is to have students who are already in the program, or have completed it, mentor and teach incoming students. One source of adult mentors is to ask retirees, members of community service clubs (such as the Lions or Rotary Clubs), or community volunteers to speak to the students, join them in service activities, or help them with schoolwork.

**Counseling:** Your school counselor may be willing to facilitate one-on-one or group counseling. Topics might include a group discussion about behavior in school, anger management, or building friendships. Or you may choose to refer students on a case-by-case basis to an outside counselor or agency. This may be especially helpful for students who are suspended on drug- or alcohol-related offenses or are going through difficult transitions such as parents divorcing.

Once you decide what, if any, auxiliary components you want to include in your program, consider the resources available to you:

- Do you have a room with desks and chairs where you could conduct life-skills lessons or tutoring?
- Do you have adequate staff to administer program components?
- Can you request money to purchase a life-skills curriculum or lessons? Or do you have the time to develop lessons yourself?
- How can you identify community mentors for the students?
- What counseling and other behavioral health resources are available to your students through the school or the community?

## In Real Life

In keeping with its focus on developing leadership abilities, one program had students complete a series of workshops on leadership skills prior to beginning their service experience. One student directly credited her service experience and leadership training with enabling her to get a part-time job at a fast-food restaurant. Within three months of starting the job, she was promoted to shift leader. Her ATS experience may well be a precipitating factor in helping her redirect her life in a more positive direction.

**What are (or are likely to be) the most common skill deficits among your students? Which of these, if remediated, could make substantial differences in students' lives?**

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## 4.3 Plan a Budget

Once you have made general decisions about the number of students you expect to serve and the program components available to them, you will have a good idea what your program will cost. The next step is to develop a budget proposal to get the funding you need (see appendix D for examples).

The two primary expenses are staffing and transportation to and from service sites. Auxiliary components might require staff with specific training, funding for outside services, or purchase of materials.

## Staffing

At the minimum, the program needs a program coordinator who runs and oversees the day-to-day operations. Duties include meeting with the students, setting up and maintaining service sites, coordinating transportation, and tracking student progress and completion of program requirements.

Whether the coordinator is full- or part-time will depend on the number of student participants, their level of need, and the structure of the program. Be aware that personnel requirements will be greater in the start-up phase of the program, when community partnerships are being established and program logistics fine-tuned (see section 5.2 for more on staffing requirements).

As the person who is spearheading the program in your school or district, you may become the program coordinator. Or you may choose to provide direction and oversight and hire a program coordinator to handle daily operations.

## Transportation

The second major expenditure is transporting students to and from their service sites. If you expect students to be doing most, if not all, of their work on the school grounds, then you can expect your transportation costs to be negligible. If students will be traveling to community sites, consider “in kind” options through the school. One program successfully used adult volunteer mentors to transport students; others made parents responsible for transporting their own children.

## Other Costs

While staffing and transportation costs proved to be the biggest financial expenditures for most programs, other costs associated with computers and equipment, food, various best-practice-derived curricula, and miscellaneous school supplies also need to be taken into account when estimating the costs of implementing and sustaining your program.

Some expenditures may not be immediately obvious. For example, many program coordinators discovered that the students were more comfortable and cooperative when they had healthy snacks available.

When justifying budgetary expenditures, consider the money saved through keeping these students in a school program rather than at home. If your school is funded on a per-student formula based on average daily enrollment, your school benefits directly from every student who is not out-of-school suspended. The indirect savings to society of keeping students in school are incalculable.

## In Real Life

One Arizona demonstration project decided to take advantage of public transportation by purchasing bus passes for students to use in commuting to and from their service sites. Although this might be a very cost-effective way to manage transportation costs and liability concerns, having students travel independently to community sites turned out to be a bad choice. Too many students failed to show up at the service sites or left early because they could easily do so. If you are considering using public transportation for your program, we strongly recommend that students travel as a group under adult supervision.

**How can you keep transportation costs down while ensuring that students safely get where they are supposed to go?**

## 4.4 Determine Program Length

Successful community service ATS programs varied dramatically in the length of service students performed, from an average of 4 to nearly 100 hours, and in how they were structured (see section 1.5 for more information). There are a number of options for structuring the ATS program, or the service component of it, in terms of

1. total number of hours
2. days of the week
3. number of hours per day
4. time of day

**Number of hours:** Obviously, the population your program serves will set parameters on the number of hours of service students can do, in that short-term suspensions require short time frames. Some programs had formulas requiring students to “work off” each day of suspension with a specific number of hours of service. Alternatively, service requirements could be based on the nature of the infraction.

**Days of the week:** You may want students in the program to perform service each day for the length of their suspension, or you may schedule the service to occur on only a few or even one day a week. Below are some advantages and disadvantages to each approach:

	<b>Advantage</b>	<b>Disadvantage</b>
<b>Consecutive days</b>	Less administrative time is required to track students.	For short-term suspensions, there is little time to build relationships with the students.
<b>Non-consecutive days</b>	<p>Because students may attend the program over a longer period, there may be more time to build trust and influence their behavior.</p> <p>Running the program, or the community service portion of it, only on certain days of the week may reduce staffing needs and save administrative costs.</p> <p>If your program includes auxiliary components that students must complete in addition to service, you may want to rotate small groups of students through various activities, rather than having everyone do the same thing at once.</p>	<p>Tracking which students are supposed to be performing service when may be more difficult.</p> <p>Students may be more likely to drop out of the program if they must wait days to serve their suspension.</p>

**Number of hours per day and time of day:** The program might run throughout the entire school day, so that students attend it in place of their regular classes.

On the other hand, the student might attend certain classes or be required to complete schoolwork for the first part of the school day, then spend the remainder of the time in the program, doing a combination of service and other interventions.

A third option is “Saturday suspension,” where the student attends regular classes and must complete the suspension time by attending the program after school or on weekends. This

often increases the consequence for students, because they have to give up their personal time.

When deciding on your program schedule, consider the advantages of students not missing academic programming. Students who are excluded from the classroom are likely to fall behind (or further behind) academically and, worse, may become more alienated from school, increasing their risk of dropping out. Some teachers may in fact find it less of a burden to have the student in class than to prepare independent assignments for the student to complete during out-of-class suspension.

### Your Choice

Number of Days		
short-term suspension	or	long-term suspension
performs service only	or	performs service in conjunction with other interventions
Days of the Week		
consecutive days	or	only on certain days
small groups of students rotate through different components	or	all students do the same thing at the same time
Hours per Day		
full school day	or	part of the day
student spends part of the day doing regular schoolwork	or	student does no schoolwork, focusing instead on service and other interventions (may include remedial tutoring)
Time of Day		
program operates during all or part of the school day	or	program operates after hours or on weekends
student attends all or some classes	or	student is removed from the classroom

## 4.5 Choose Service Sites

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As stated earlier, service is any activity that addresses a real need in the community. By “community,” we do not mean just a town or city. Successful programs have operated in a range of urban, suburban, and rural settings. The community could also be the school community or neighborhood.

The two basic choices for where service takes place are on campus or off campus. The former is any activity conducted on school grounds and benefiting the students and staff of that school. Off-campus service activities are conducted outside of school grounds and do not benefit the school directly, but rather meet larger community and social service needs. You might design your program to take advantage of either or both options.

On-campus service: On-campus service may be easier to facilitate because issues of transporting the students are eliminated or minimized, although school staff will have to commit to supervising and supporting the students doing service.

On-campus service may be the best option for students who face transportation difficulties or need particular supervision. If other district schools are contiguous or in walking distance, you may be able to set up service on campuses other than the student's home school. With the proper supervision and support, students can perform many meaningful activities on school grounds.

The first activities many people think of are upkeep of school grounds or light cleaning work. Consider, however, the broad scope of needs in the school: doing clerical tasks in administrative offices, supporting teachers with preparation of materials, preparing and distributing food in the cafeteria, or working in the library, for example. One school even identified seniors and low-income residents in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the school and involved students in helping them (a great way to increase your school's standing in the neighborhood while introducing your students to surrogate grandparents).

Off-campus service: Off-campus service exposes students to the needs of the larger community where they live.

Staff at the service site can provide much of the supervision and support that school staff would provide for on-campus service, but maintaining regular communication becomes critical (see chapter 6).

In addition to the obvious nonprofit organizations, almost any community organization could become a service site, for example, town or city government (e.g., maintenance of parks) or a community center (e.g., serving food to senior citizens). A possible advantage is that community sites may have other volunteers who might serve as informal mentors and may have formal volunteer trainings that students could attend for pre-service preparation (see section 4.7).

### Initial Communication with Service Sites

You may find service agency representatives more willing to get involved if they have a clear picture of the program and its goals, policies, and procedures. One program coordinator sent out letters soliciting formal applications from potential community partners to mentor students, and asked each site to designate a representative to attend program meetings as needed. Another reported success with scheduling an orientation meeting with each site's volunteer coordinator.

## In Real Life

The administration at one school felt strongly that any student who committed a suspendable offense should receive an immediate consequence of removal from school. Thus, the program coordinator was instructed to begin each student's community service experience on the day following referral to the program. In practice, this could rarely be accomplished because of the difficulty of making contact with site personnel and arranging the logistics of service on such short notice. As a result, many students ended up being given out-of-school suspension because the program coordinator could not accommodate them immediately. After a time, the coordinator and the school administrators agreed on a policy of allowing students to serve delayed suspension whereby they would continue attending classes for a few days after the offense until appropriate arrangements could be made for them. This was ultimately more effective in enabling a greater percentage of suspended students to participate in ATS.

**Given the logistics of your program, how much lead time would you expect to need in order to place students?**

**During this lead time, what will happen to referred students? Can they participate in preparation activities or other program components? Or is it consistent with the administrative philosophy in your school to allow for delayed suspension?**

1. An important legal consideration is to verify that someone at the site has the necessary fingerprint clearance to supervise minors and that this person (or people) is willing to take on the responsibility of supervision.
2. It is also crucial to communicate to potential sites the nature of experience you hope your students will have (particularly for sites that also accept adults doing court-ordered community service).
3. Make sure volunteer coordinators recognize that schoolchildren will require a greater level of supervision and job support than adults, even adults performing mandated community service.
4. Community sites must know that they have backup from the school. They should know whom to call if difficulties arise, preferably someone immediately available, for example, by cell phone. They should know what expectations there are for the students' behavior and participation, and that school personnel will intervene promptly if needed. Sites should also know what to do if a student does not show up when expected or if an emergency arises while a student is on-site.
5. The old adage about the devil making work for idle hands is especially true with suspended students. If the young people spend periods sitting around with nothing to do, or if they feel they are simply doing "busy work," they are more likely to cause trouble. Encourage sites not to hesitate to decline students if they cannot use them productively.
6. The nature of service experience you wish your students to have is a factor guiding your choice of service sites. That is the topic we turn to in the next section.

## 4.6 Plan Effective Service Experiences

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In planning community service for behavior change, how the service is structured is far more important than what the service activity is or where it is performed. For example, students can have a meaningful and positive experience, even if the task is cleaning windows, when they are taught how to do quality work, shown the value of their work and who they are helping, and thanked for their contribution. The same experience can be perceived as busywork if there is little oversight and guidance and the students feel the job is unnecessary<sup>1</sup>.

There are several important characteristics to an effective community service experience:

1. The work is performed in a context of human interaction: Students are more engaged when there are service site employees, community volunteers, or other students to work with. They are also more likely to feel connected to the community and to experience working together for a common purpose.
2. Students have input into what task they perform: Giving students input regarding the service activity they perform gives them some autonomy and shows them that their opinion matters, a particular developmental need for middle schoolers. Students need not necessarily decide where they conduct service. A simple choice of tasks at the service site can greatly increase cooperation and willingness to participate.
3. Students have appropriate supervision from someone who is committed to service: The person who is supervising the students should value service and understand that good service benefits both the provider and the recipient. A sense of the importance of service and of making a difference will be reflected in how the person supervises the students.
4. The project has a clear beginning and end, so that students feel a sense of completion: No one likes to leave a job unfinished. If students have a concrete goal to achieve, they can measure their accomplishments and gain a sense of pride in what they have achieved.
5. Students are adequately prepared for the work they are to perform, receive ongoing feedback during the service, and have an opportunity for reflection

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Bazemore and Maloney (1994).

“One mistake we made . . . is that we set the goals too high in the beginning, and the kids were starting to get frustrated. . . . It’s not so much that I lowered my expectations [for their service], but rather that I broke it up into smaller, more manageable goals—goals that they could achieve in a week. This meant that they felt better about what they were doing and that they could actually do it. So, one thing I suggest is to give them the same pie, but to take smaller bites. Eventually you’re going to eat the whole pie, but you take smaller bites.”

~ Community service program coordinator

can explain why the task is important and how it fits into the larger mission of the service site.

- about the experience afterwards: The three essential steps of effective service are explained in further detail in the following section.
6. The focus is on the quality and completion of assigned work, rather than on quantity: A job well done is more important and of greater benefit to the service site than churning out poor work. Again, producing excellent work allows students to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, bolstering the self-esteem that is so often low in this population.
  7. The service is meaningful: The service meets a clearly defined need obvious or demonstrated to the student. Students are more cooperative and willing to put forth effort if they see the purpose of what they are doing. Some tasks—like packing food boxes—are obviously meaningful. For others, site personnel

## 4.7 Plan the Three Stages of Service

Preparation, service with feedback, and reflection: Taken from a model of service-learning, these three stages are the foundation of service!

Preparation for service is important so that students begin work confident that they can do the job. Feedback during the service holds students accountable for doing a good job and either reassures them that they are doing the job correctly or helps them improve their performance. Reflection after the service allows students to recognize their contribution to the community site and process what they learned from the experience.

### Preparation

Students do better in service when they know what will be expected of them and that they can meet those expectations. Remember that students may act out to mask insecurity or fear of failure. Time spent to prepare a student for the service experience before it begins is time well spent. Preparation may be

- informal, such as a discussion between staff and students
- formal, such as training or role-plays addressing work or inter-personal skills
- a combination of both

Many programs have students sign contracts on entry specifying what they are expected to do as part of the ATS program, the conditions of participation, and the consequences of failing to complete the ATS program requirements or of not participating appropriately (see examples in appendix E). Preparation supplements this blanket agreement, covering such topics as

- choice: Giving a choice of tasks can dramatically increase students’ willingness and effort level by giving them a sense of control over their situation.
- logistics: Orient each student to the basics of where to go, when, how to get there, and what to do at the service site.
- expectations: Explain that students are entering a work situation and what behaviors and actions are appropriate in such a setting. Teach and role-play any specific job skills students might need.

- contributions: Discuss how the student’s work is important and meaningful, and the difference it can make to the school or service site. Even menial tasks such as scrubbing floors can have dignity if they are presented as necessary work.

### Feedback

During the service, program staff, site staff, or other volunteers should show students what to do and monitor them to ensure they are doing the task properly. Feedback and encouragement give students the confidence to do their best.

Another important aspect is to show in concrete terms what the student has accomplished and what difference it will make: “You packed 200 food boxes. That’s enough to feed 100 families.” This aspect is especially important if the student is doing a task such as opening mass mailings that may appear to be busywork.

In addition, many staff emphasized the importance of students being thanked for giving their time and effort. Site personnel can be encouraged to compliment whatever was positive about the student’s behavior or effort and invite the student to return as a volunteer, when appropriate.

## Examples of Preparation

Various programs had different ways of preparing students for service. Here are a sample of ideas:

- Some students were required to participate in skill-building workshops before beginning service.
- One program had a written manual on conduct and etiquette at service sites. Before students left for their service sites, the program coordinator would spend 20 to 30 minutes reviewing this document with them. Topics covered included
  - appropriate ways to address and interact with adults at the site
  - the importance of asking questions if unsure of how to do something
  - respect for private property
- A group of elementary-age students traveled together by van to the service site. En route the program staff would discuss what project the group would be doing and how to accomplish it. At the site, the staff would demonstrate the tasks then work alongside students. For these youngsters, physical demonstration and participatory learning were important strategies in teaching the activities and keeping them on task.
- Where the community service site had a volunteer orientation, the students attended it, perhaps in addition to other preparation at the school.

### Examples of Reflection

- Each student filled out a written form about the work experience and what he or she learned from it. The program coordinator used this feedback not only to evaluate students but to improve the service experience.
- Program staff would lead a group discussion about students’ service experiences. In the program where students traveled together, this occurred on the van during the ride back to school. Another program set a meeting time the following day.

## Reflection

A discussion after the service, between either site staff or program staff and the students allows students to process their experience: what they learned, what they would do differently next time, how the experience was positive, what could have made it better, and so on.

Students, service site staff, and program staff can all learn from this information. Some programs accomplish this step formally, by having students complete written reflection forms and discuss them or journal about their service experience. Site personnel can also be asked to provide a brief evaluation of the student, for example, via a short Likert-type scale with a space for comments (see appendix E for a sample agency evaluation form). Some programs encouraged site staff to offer letters of recommendation to students who did particularly well.

### ↗ In Real Life ↖

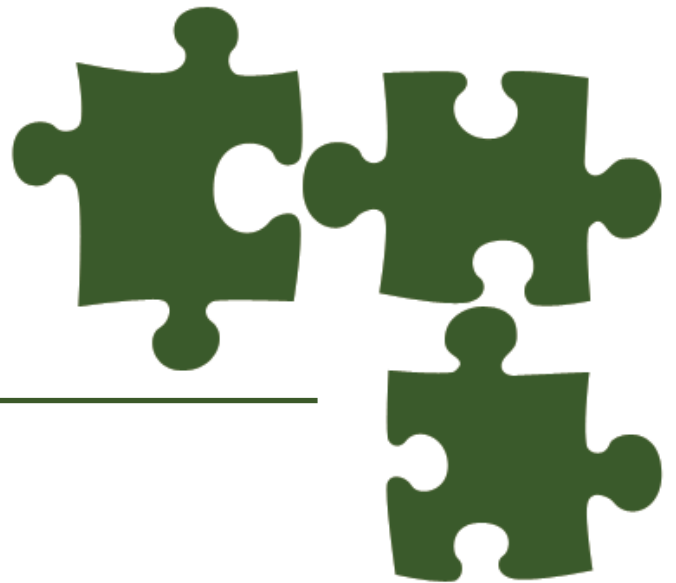
A program coordinator initially envisioned having multiple service options for students, ideally hoping to relate each service experience to the offense that had caused the particular student to be suspended. The coordinator spent a great deal of effort contacting various community businesses and social service agencies to see if they could accommodate her students. As the program took shape, however, she found that it was not feasible to coordinate with so many sites. Often it was difficult to get in touch with and arrange service at sites that had never taken students or had not done so in some time. Nor could she be sure of the quality of the experience at these sites. Two sites turned out to be exceptional, however: a senior center and the fire station. Her contacts at these sites were good and reliable; they were committed to the mission of the ATS program and to building relationships with the students who came there; they had the time and willingness to supervise the students; and they could accommodate varying numbers of students with fairly short notice. Because students who went to these sites consistently gave positive feedback about their experiences, the program coordinator eventually decided that the quality of service overrode other considerations and focused on establishing partnerships with these two sites.

**What feedback from students and service sites will indicate a high-quality service experience?**

# chapter 5

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## Plan Implementation



The previous chapters outlined the planning process and broad issues in program design. Section 3.4 touched on the various stakeholders and their roles during the planning process, but once your program is up and running, other parties may be brought on board as needed to help your program run smoothly. In addition, personnel issues are ongoing, from hiring well-qualified staff, to fine-tuning their roles and responsibilities, to creating smooth transitions when staff leave or shift roles within the program.

### 5.1 Establish Procedures and Outline Responsibilities

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A good place to start is to outline the process that will take place when a student commits a discipline infraction. Most likely, a teacher will send the student to the principal or vice-principal, or whatever administrator has primary responsibility for discipline. This person will probably make the preliminary decision regarding the consequence for the infraction and whether referral to the community service ATS program is appropriate. Let's walk through this process:

*The student commits an infraction and is sent to the administrator's office.*

□

*The administrator refers the student directly to the community service program.*

or

*The administrator has a conference with the parents to discuss possible consequences, including the option of the community service program.*

□

*The administrator may determine how long the student will participate in the program.*

or

*The length of participation may be predetermined by program operations.*

□

*On referral to the program, the student meets with the program coordinator or staff. The parents may be involved at this step.*

□

*The days and times the student should report to the program are set, contracts or intake paperwork are completed, and parental permission forms signed (see appendix E for examples).*

□

*The student fulfills the program requirement, with supervision and feedback from program staff as dictated by program operations.*

□

*Optional: The program coordinator conducts an exit interview to debrief the student and identify ways the experience might have been improved.*

Once you have established the referral and program completion process, think about other players and define their roles in program operations:

**The planning group:** If you established a planning committee, this group may continue to meet periodically to provide oversight and monitoring for the program. This may be particularly important in the first several months of program operations, when procedures are being smoothed out and adjusted.

**School administrators:** Among other roles, administrators reinforce the program implementation and ensure that students are being referred to it as appropriate. They may also wish to track student progress and post-program outcomes (such as future disciplinary infractions, attendance, grades) to monitor the program's effectiveness. They also are typically the conduit through which financial and other resources are directed to the program.

**Program coordinator:** The program coordinator has the major responsibility for overseeing program operations, establishing the conceptual framework of the program, representing teacher concerns, and developing program components. A job description might contain these functions:

- Manage all aspects of program operations.
- Develop procedures and guidelines.
- Coordinate students' entry into and progress through the program.
- Identify and make initial contacts with potential service sites.
- Develop relationships with representatives of service sites.
- Develop service agreements outlining the responsibilities of service site personnel, program staff, and students during community service activities.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of any auxiliary components.
- Meet regularly with school administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that all needs are being met and maintain avenues of communication.
- Coordinate transportation to and from all service sites.
- Ensure that students receive proper preparation for, feedback during, and reflection after service.
- Maintain all program records and ensure that school, district, service site, and legal policies and guidelines are followed.
- Represent the program to the school, district, neighborhood, and community.

**Program staff:** Depending on the size and staffing needs of your program, other paid or unpaid program staff might interact with students or share some of the coordinator's duties. Regular school staff, such as counselors, may have part-time appointments with the program to provide auxiliary components, such as life- skills lessons or group counseling.

**Teachers:** Ongoing involvement from teachers and other educators enables students to continue completing academic assignments during their program participation. Teachers play an important role in keeping students connected to the school and on track academically so that they are less likely to drop out of school. Teachers also may spend time with students after school hours or during program-related activities.

## Sample Staffing Ratios

One full-time coordinator managed a program that provided primarily community service for students in a joint junior high and high school (total enrollment 2,000).

A program in three sister charter schools (total enrollment 800) that featured mentoring, parenting, and life-skills components in addition to community service had one full-time coordinator, plus two part-time staff to teach the parenting and life-skills classes.

**Community partners and service site representatives:** Community partners, including business leaders and service site representatives, may assist with preparing students for service and overseeing work needs at the service site to minimize students' idle time. Agency representatives may also participate in mentoring and supervising students, and evaluating their work.

**Parents:** Parents are expected to support their child's participation in the program. This may include transporting the child to and from worksites, maintaining an open dialogue with program staff about the child's progress, and perhaps attending parent conferences or parenting classes.

**School and community champions:** The program coordinator continues to network with supporters in the school and community, and to publicize program successes, in order to attract more resources and backing.

## 5.2 Determine Staffing Requirements

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Two factors largely determine program staffing needs:

1. the number of students expected to enter the program, and
2. the structure of the program in terms of the intensity of the service and auxiliary components.

**Number of students:** The historical data on number of suspensions collected during the needs assessment phase should yield a reasonable estimate of the number of students to be served.

When predicting the number of students to be served, don't forget to take into account whether all suspended students—in terms of grade levels, infractions committed, etc.—will be eligible to participate. In addition, numbers are likely to be smaller if student participation in the program is optional rather than mandatory, or is at the discretion of the school disciplinarian.

**Program characteristics and intensity:** Staffing needs will generally increase with the number of interventions in the program. One full-time employee might manage a program that consists entirely or mostly of community service activities. Multi-component programs generally had at least two full-time staff members, perhaps assisted by several part-time staff and even unpaid volunteers.

“It's a people profession. You have to enjoy working with people in order to be effective.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

## 5.3 Hire the Right Staff for the Job

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We have seen over and over again that the right staff makes all the difference in the success of the program. Obviously, you will need to decide on your desired qualifications, such as

- whether the candidate needs a teaching credential
- whether a social services background is advantageous
- what background in terms of degree and experience is desired
- whether to hire within the district or out of district

In addition, try to look beyond the obvious criteria of career background and enthusiasm to the more intangible people skills that can enable the candidate to earn the respect and cooperation of students at risk.

- The right person also has a dedication to service and believes in the mission of the program—qualities that will come through in his or her work and be noticed by the students.
- Some program coordinators tried to hire a balance of male and female staff, feeling that many youth were more likely to relate to someone of the same gender. (The same may be true for ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and the like.)

What personal characteristics should you look for when recruiting your program staff? Here's a comprehensive, but by no means exhaustive, list of important traits:

- has a positive attitude
- believes in a mission of service and helping
- believes that youth can learn from their mistakes
- believes that all youth have something positive to offer
- likes working with young people, particularly those deemed at-risk
- has energy, commitment, and dedication to student success
- is a good, nonjudgmental listener
- can respect the students and earn their respect in return
- is thick-skinned, able to remain calm and in charge even when students try to test or challenge his or her authority with insults or negative behavior
- is able to develop a positive rapport with students, perhaps through having a background similar to that of your target population of students.
- is someone students will perceive as trustworthy: fair, honest, reliable, consistent, not one to sugar coat the truth or promise more than he or she can deliver

“Many folks will come in and give a good presentation, but when it’s time to apply, that person might as well be working in a computer lab by themselves because that’s how personable they are, they just don’t interact well with people.

~ Community service program coordinator

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## 5.4. Be Prepared for Staff Turnover

An unfortunate reality is that staff may leave the program. Whatever the reason for staff turnover, the program coordinator and other champions need to be prepared to keep the program running smoothly through the time of transition. If students have bonded with a staff member who leaves, they may experience something like a grieving process as that relationship is broken and replaced with a new one. Even other faculty and staff may experience stress and sadness in a transition. Two situations that proved particularly damaging in the demonstration projects were when turnover caused a change in the climate of the program either (a) because due to poor training and orientation, new staff interpreted their role differently than their predecessors had, or (b) because a new coordinator was hired who fundamentally changed the nature of the program in midcourse.

Here are some suggestions for preparing for and managing transition:

- Make sure the program vision and mission are in writing and that administrators, the planning committee, and whoever might make future hiring decisions understand and support the fundamentals of the program.
- Make sure all job descriptions are kept up-to-date and reflect all the activities staff people do, as well as the personal qualities that are important for success. Also leave a clear “paper trail” that documents the process, policies, and procedures in place so that incoming staff don’t have to scramble to re-create the wheel.
- Make sure staff training and orientation procedures are in place so that new staff learn the program vision and mission and their job expectations promptly.
- Stress the importance of staff giving as much notice of their departure as possible, to allow for a transition period. Outgoing staff may be willing to orient and train their successors.
- During the initial hiring process, retain the resumes of any promising candidates who were not hired at the time. You may want to begin the search process by seeing if these individuals are interested in reapplying for the position. We do not mean to suggest circumventing the

“Change isn’t always bad, but it’s always tough.”

normal hiring process, only using both formal and informal means of recruitment.

- Similarly, use your network to spread the word that a vacancy exists or is upcoming. Your community partners or planning committee may know individuals who would be a good fit and refer them to the job opening.
- Work to build strong relationships among program staff, school faculty and staff, and administrators, and involve them in the program as much as possible. If the program is strongly

integrated into the school, it is in a better position to survive a difficult

“Last year [with other staff] there was more mediation, and community service was more fun. Now [the new staff] is judgmental and does not help to mediate problems.”

~ Student Feedback

“I wasn’t the one to start our program. When I got there, there were no policies and procedures in place. We went to a conference where I found good [ideas]. Then I met with the staff and the teachers and the principal and . . .we started implementing [the program] from there.”

~New Community service program coordinator

- Work to maintain a positive and flexible attitude among everyone involved in the change. A “that’s not the way we do things here” attitude is everyone’s worst enemy.
- If you are an incoming coordinator, or have authority over

the person who is, consider the merits of a staff mini-retreat or focus group for team-building and group input into what has and has not been working well in the past. A lack of autonomy isn’t any healthier for adults than for teenagers, so if staff feel they have at least had input into the change, the transition will go more smoothly.

- Look for ways to maintain continuity between the old and the new.

## ↗ In Real Life ↖

Being based in rural Arizona where community service options outside the school were limited, one ATS program coordinator elected to start a bookstore and gift shop within the school. The bookstore was to be a combination community service and service-learning endeavor; suspended students would work in the bookstore, maintaining inventory, placing orders, and making sales, thereby learning business skills and practicing math while providing service to the school. After several months of purchasing inventory and setting up the store, the program coordinator left for another position. The new coordinator who was hired the following school year had very different views of how the program should be run. She completely abandoned the store concept, and the efforts and expenditures of the initial coordinator were entirely wasted.

**What aspects of your ATS program would you most want to continue in the event of staff turnover?**

**What steps could you take to ensure continuity of those aspects?**



# chapter 6

## Nurture Productive Relationships

Communication is the key to any successful relationship. Fostering and maintaining consistent, clear, and timely communication with the various stakeholders both inside and outside the school greatly increases the chances for program success.

The range of relationships includes those between program staff and school administrators, service site representatives, teachers, students, and parents, as well as those between students and service site staff.

### Relationships with Administrators

You may want to establish regular meetings with administrators to keep them apprised of student progress, the status of the program, major accomplishments, and any obstacles it is facing. Asking them for their feedback and documenting that discipline issues are being addressed may help increase their investment in the program. Memos and emails may be efficient forms of communication, but are also more likely to go unread by people juggling busy schedules.

### Relationships with Service Sites

Regular communication with the service sites will help both with clarifying expectations and with identifying problems quickly, before they escalate. It

is important that the volunteer coordinator know what is expected of service site personnel and what they are committing to.

For example, what responsibility (if any) do they have for training and preparing students, supervising, and completing post-service evaluations in writing or by email, etc.? How many students do you expect to send, on what days, and for how long? If the number of students and days are likely to be variable, the volunteer coordinator needs to understand and be able to accommodate this.

From the volunteer coordinator you need to find out how many students the site can accommodate, when, for what types of jobs, and any criteria for volunteers (such as age limits), so that you can refer appropriate students.

“If I don’t send any students to a site for a while, I’ll phone. I’ll let the coordinator know, ‘The program’s still going, and we still want to have you on board. We just haven’t had any students who are right for your needs.’ Then, when I do have a student to place, the call doesn’t come out of the blue.”

~ Community service program coordinator

Some programs drafted written memos of agreement with service sites (see appendix E for a sample). Service sites are more likely to agree to a partnership if they can terminate the arrangement at any time if it's not working out. Some may want to participate on a trial basis initially.

In addition, program staff will obviously communicate with the volunteer coordinator (probably by phone) to schedule specific students for service. This is often a good opportunity to get feedback about how the students are doing and how the arrangement is working out from the site's perspective. Small problems caught early can be weeded out before they grow.

“If you're showing a kid that all he's doing is bad things, then all he's gonna do is bad things. When you show kids good things, and that they can be part of good things, then they change, and every child deserves that chance to change.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

### Relationships with Teachers

If students are to remain current with their regular coursework this will require coordination with teachers. Several program coordinators emphasized important points in their conversations with teachers:

- We all share the same priority: to keep students in school and progressing academically. We want to improve students' behavior and help them reconnect with school by seeing the payoffs of academics.
- Give the program a little time, you may not see the results overnight.
- More important than how students behave in the program is how they behave with you in the classroom.
- Please let both us and the student know if you see changes in the classroom.

### Relationships with Students

Your relationship with a student starts immediately when he or comes into the program, and we all know how powerful that first impression is.

“We talk the talk and we walk the walk, and I think the students really respect that.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

Most programs have some sort of intake interview or orientation session for students and sometimes parents. At its most basic, this is an opportunity to make sure students clearly understand their responsibilities and obligations during their time in the program. Students may come in with a negative attitude

either about community service or because they got in trouble.

Being fair and showing a willingness to hear their side of the story helps establish trust between program staff and students.

Being willing to work alongside the students, rather than watching over them like an overseer, demonstrates to students that you believe in service. This helps to mitigate resentment they may feel over having to do work that may be unpleasant at times.

In establishing relationships with students, try to lead by example, and use experiences from your own life to promote program goals and objectives.

“Through our actions and our words, we have proved that when you do something bad, we're going to get right on you, and you know it's going to be bad. But when it's good, it's going to be real good.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

“It’s very important that you establish yourself as a person of your word with students. . . . If you say something, and what you say is a promise, make sure you follow through with it. [These students] know a three-dollar bill a mile away.”

~ Community service program coordinator

Many program staff have emphasized the importance of earning students’ respect by being reliable, fair, and nonjudgmental. An environment where students feel safe, respected, and recognized for their contributions paves the way for them to open up and talk about what is going on in their lives. Such are the relationships where adults can serve as mentors and role models, or occasionally become aware of issues that merit referrals to other services, such as counseling or family support.

Encourage staff to recognize occasions for informal mentoring during daily program activities. Such moments often arise when students are reflecting on their activities.

Many programs also included either a formal or an informal mentoring component in which older students supervised younger program participants. Although this strategy may be more applicable in a long-term program, try to identify the natural leaders among your program participants and find ways to give them more responsibilities and opportunities to develop leadership within your program.

### Relationships with Parents/Guardians

Chances are that you will have some direct contact with students’ parents, whether through a meeting, in arranging transportation, or in talking to them about the program and helping them to support their child. At the very least, you will certainly have indirect contact with them through the students. Developing a trusting relationship with the parents shows the child a unified front, which may be important in encouraging the young person to complete the program and change his or her behavior long term.

Many, many parents or caregivers of suspended students are accustomed to receiving a litany of negative communication about their child from the school. Taking a few moments to notify them when you have positive feedback about the child can pay huge dividends in earning their goodwill. So can conveying an attitude that the student has potential talents and deserves a chance to learn from his or her mistakes.

## ↗ In Real Life ↖

A community service ATS program was based out of one elementary school within a district of four elementary schools. During the planning process, the program coordinator received verbal agreements from the principals of all four elementary schools that they would refer students to the program. As the program got up and running, however, fewer and fewer referrals came from the schools outside the one where the program was based. After this continued for a number of months, the program coordinator contacted the principals of these other schools to find out why they had stopped referring their students. She discovered two reasons: (a) the vice-principals were the ones who typically handled disciplinary issues, and they were not informed about the ATS program, and (b) because the administrators at the other schools did not see the program’s daily operations—such as students doing community service—and had not received ongoing information about its progress, they were unsure of its status and thus were wary of referring their students there. Because of the program coordinator’s failure to identify the administrative structure of these outlying schools, and to communicate regularly with the administrators in charge of discipline, their involvement was minimal.

**Who needs to be kept informed of your ATS program?**

**What information do they need to know?**

**How can you maintain ongoing communication to sustain their involvement and support?**

# chapter 7

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## Document Your Program and Establish Evaluation Procedures



Establishing clear policies and guidelines in the beginning of the program helps ensure that everyone is on the same page.

They also serve to orient any new program staff to the logistics of the program and to inform school personnel about it. Depending on your situation, it may be preferable to develop policies and procedures from scratch or to adopt and adapt existing guidelines at your school.

The policies and procedures you establish (with staff and administrative input) will then guide what forms should be developed. Appendix E contains sample policies and procedures as well as a variety of forms. The Internet is another great place to find a wide variety of forms. Of course, seek administrative approval for all policies and documentation in the program.

### 7.1 Draft Policies and Procedures

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Procedures are the protocols that describe how the program runs and who is responsible for what. Policies outline the rules by which the program operates.

Policies and procedures can be drafted as one document or two separate documents. Effective policies and procedures

- are comprehensive
- are drafted with input from all stakeholders
- are documented in writing
- are available to all interested parties, including school faculty and administrators, students, parents, and service site personnel
- are reviewed periodically and modified as needed to reflect actual practice or changing circumstances

#### Procedures

A comprehensive document would have the following components:

- a short description of the program, including target population and times of operation
- the process for referral and entry into the program
- daily procedures for program participation (a step-by-step outline of the activities)
- how students exit the program (a) on satisfactory completion of the requirements, or (b) if terminated by program staff for noncompliance

- short descriptions of the nature of the community service and participating sites
- where and when students report, and how they will be transported to sites
- procedure for resolving disputes
- contact information

### Policies

Policies would address the following issues:

- the program requirements and responsibilities of
  - the student
  - parents or guardians
  - program staff
  - service site partners
- the rights of all the above parties while participating in the program (including the right to due process, if relevant)
- rules for conduct
- consequences of misconduct or failure to complete program requirements
- limitations on liability

You may want to create a space for the students, the parents/guardians, or both to sign this piece of paper as a contract.

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## 7.2 Create Supporting Documents

All aspects of your program must well documented for both the staff and participants. A paper trail for each student also provides essential information for monitoring and evaluating program success. Useful forms include, but are not limited to, the following (one form may fulfill several of these functions):

- student referral/intake form (completed by referring administrator)
- student contract
- program overview
- policies
- parental permission form
- liability waiver
- emergency contacts
- daily, weekly, or end-of-service community service evaluation form (completed by site personnel for each student)
- daily, weekly, or end-of-program evaluation of student participation (completed by program staff for each student)
- post-service student reflection surveys (for community service and the program as a whole)
- program completion form/certificate
- memorandum of agreement (for service sites)

You may find that versions of many if not all of these forms are already in use in your school or district. Using existing school or district forms whenever applicable not only saves re-creating the wheel, but also emphasizes the connection between the ATS program and the school.

If you can't find a form to suit your needs, take the one that best approximates what you're looking for as a template and make the necessary changes.

## 7.3 Evaluate the Effects of the Program

Evaluation is critical if you want your program to be accountable to administrators, parents, and the students it serves.

The results you get may help you improve the way your program is run, reducing costs or increasing its effectiveness for future students. In addition, you can use the information you

collect to promote the program throughout the school, district, or community.

Many educators find the concept of evaluation intimidating. But a program evaluation need not involve a full-scale outsourced exami-nation. More likely, your evaluation plan will consist of reviewing data collected as part of normal school or program operations, such as attendance data, discipline records, and student feedback collected during post-service reflection.

“Our goal is to keep kids in school, to do whatever we have to, to get them to stay in school and love to learn. . . . We are trying to get kids to buy into their futures.”  
~ Community service program coordinator

**Step 1. Formulate evaluation questions:** The first step is to decide what you want to find out. For example, do you want to know about students’ experiences? Do you want to know whether the program is reducing suspensions in your school? The evaluation questions you develop reflect what you want to find out. For example you may want to find out, Does your ATS program

- reduce the number of school or district discipline referrals?
- improve teachers’ perceptions of behavior?
- give students more positive perceptions of school or of their possible futures?
- develop students’ life skills in the areas addressed by your program?
- improve students’ behavior, as measured by students’ conduct violations?
- improve community relations?
- strengthen school-community ties?

You may choose to draft broad (primary) evaluation questions and under each of them more specific, secondary evaluation questions.

In keeping with the principle that one can only focus effectively on three to five priorities, however, select no more five questions to evaluate. When determining the evaluation questions to focus on, consider your main uses for the information:

1. How do you want to use the information? (For example, to advocate for program continuation? To recruit additional community partners?)
2. Who is the audience for the results? (For example, parents of suspended students? School administrators? Funding sources?)

## Ask Good Questions

It is important that your evaluation questions be open-ended, that is, a question that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no.”

For example, instead of just asking, “Does the program help students?” you might ask,

- How many program graduates are referred for future disciplinary actions (compared to students who do not participate (if applicable)?)
- How do teachers rate the graduates’ classroom behavior before and after the ATS intervention?
- How do parents rate their children’s behavior at home before and after the ATS intervention?
- How do program participants’ attendance, grades, or participation in school activities change after participation in the program?
- How many program partici-pants continue community service voluntarily after completing the program?
- How do students subjectively rate their community service experience and how it helped them?

**Step 2. Determine what kind of information you need:** What data will provide the answers to your evaluation questions? The number of discipline referrals? The number of community service hours completed? The community projects completed?

**Step 3. Determine possible sources for this information:** Depending on what you want to find out, you might review and tabulate school discipline and attendance records, have teachers fill out questionnaires or rating scales about participating students' classroom behavior and schoolwork completion, obtain student feedback on their service experiences, interview volunteer coordinators about their experiences, and so on.

**Step 4. Determine how best to collect the data:** Is it most efficient to conduct a retrospective review of school data? To develop (or locate) a behavior rating scale for teachers to complete? To have all students fill out a standard feedback form as part of their post-service reflection? To conduct phone interviews with volunteer coordinators using a standard set of questions? To have a focus group with selected stakeholders?

“Our target student is a middle-school or high-school student that has had issues with absenteeism, suspension, or discipline issues that will lead to suspension. . . The emphasis of the program is to develop leadership skills in these students.”

~ Community service program coordinator

A useful approach to evaluation is to measure success in meeting the goals and objectives established for the community service ATS program. The planning committee or program staff probably developed these at the outset. If you have not established formal goals and objectives for your program, now is the time to ensure they are in place.

**Goals** are broad statements of what you want to accomplish (for example, to *reduce*

*the number of students who are repeatedly suspended or very simply to provide a constructive alternative to out-of-school suspension).*

**Objectives** are specific, measurable steps toward actualizing the goals. Your goals and objectives might look like the following:

- **Goal 1:** To reduce the number of repeat suspensions  
Objectives
  1. Reduce the number of students who are suspended two or more times during one semester by 20%.
  2. Reduce the overall number of school suspensions by 10%.
- **Goal 2:** To provide a constructive alternative to suspension.  
Objectives
  1. To have all eligible students enrolled in a constructive ATS program within one semester of program planning and start-up.
  2. To make an ATS program that provides at least 20 hours of meaningful community service activities available to all suspended students within three months.

# Online Resources for Community Service and Service-Learning —

Here are useful sites in existence as of the summer of 2006. The Internet changes rapidly, so you may need to do some searching if you find that a URL is no longer current. In addition, try doing a web search using the name of your city or state and “community service” to find local resources. Your local city government, visitor’s bureau, or chamber of commerce websites may also list local nonprofit organizations, which can help you identify possible community service site partners.

Community Toolbox: <http://ctb.ku.edu/>

The Community Toolbox is designed to support your work in promoting community health and development. The site provides more than 6,000 pages of practical skill-building information on more than 250 different topics, including leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, grant writing, and evaluation. Sections contain step-by-step instructions, examples, checklists, and related resources.

Community Service.org: [www.communityservice.org](http://www.communityservice.org)

At this website, you can enter your zip code to find service opportunities within a specific radius of miles and geared to young children, teens, or groups.

Teen Ink Community Service: <http://www.teenink.com/Community/>

Teen Ink is a monthly print magazine, website, and a book series, all written by teens for teens. The Community Service page contains more than 500 essays on teens’ experiences doing community service.

Janus Foundation Grant Application:

<https://ww4.janus.com/downloads/janushome/pdf/GrantApplication.pdf>

The Janus Investment firm maintains a charitable foundation that provides grants to fund innovative programs throughout the United States that (a) aid at-risk youth through education or (b) support community service and volunteerism. Applicants must be qualified nonprofit organizations.

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: <http://www.servicelearning.org/>

Although geared toward service-learning (i.e., “a strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities”) the site has a wealth of information you can adapt to community service. There are links to listservs, information on Learn and Serve America grants, starter kits, and links to resources about service-learning with at-risk youth. There is also a bibliography on service-learning with at-risk youth <[http://www.servicelearning.org/lib\\_svcs/bibs/cb\\_bibs/at-risk/](http://www.servicelearning.org/lib_svcs/bibs/cb_bibs/at-risk/)>.

Roots & Shoots: <http://www.rootsandshoots.org/>

Founded by Dr. Jane Goodall, Roots & Shoots inspires youth to make a difference by becoming involved in their communities. It emphasizes the principle that knowledge leads to compassion, which inspires action. All Roots & Shoots groups show care and concern in three areas: the human community, animals, and the environment.

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## Appendixes



# Talking Points for Justifying a Community Service ATS

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## Why should we not suspend students?

Although still relatively low-frequency events, suspensions are becoming more common.

1. Not surprisingly, students who are frequently suspended or expelled also appear more likely to be alienated from school (Costenbader & Markson 1998). In fact, they argue that suspension may be a reward for those students who do not want to be in school.
2. Suspension is also correlated with dropping out of school. Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, (1986) conducted a path analysis of factors in dropping out, concluding that behavior problems were the number-one determinant. Although cause-and-effect relationships are difficult to show, suspension and expulsion clearly are symptomatic of a general disaffection with school.
3. Suspension is ineffective with some students. Atkins and colleagues (2002) found two distinct subsets of students: one whose behavior generally improved following a suspension in the fall quarter, and another whose misbehavior continued to escalate despite repeated punishments. Suspension by itself does nothing to help students resolve the issue or deficit that got them in trouble.
4. In addition, suspension is disproportionately applied to students of low socioeconomic status and Black males.

## Objectives of Community Service Suspension Programs

1. To provide suspended students with meaningful activities to occupy their time during their absence from school
2. To help students avoid negative behaviors
3. To increase students' sense of connection to school
4. To teach students the value of service and community connection
5. To expose students to adult mentors, and build social and career skills

## Why use community service with suspended students?

- Community service reduces further discipline infractions among participating students.
- Community service improves school attendance (both absences and tardiness) among participating students.
- Community service improves participating students' GPA, especially for males.
- Community service gives students an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with peers and adults.
- Community service introduces students to positive role models.
- Community service builds competency.
- Community service can break or prevent a cycle of failure.
- Community service teaches responsibility, altruism, and empathy.
- Community service can be provided in a variety of formats, lengths, and structures, allowing it to be integrated with other programs for at-risk or suspended students.

## What will the school get in return for its investment?

- Improved community relations
- Pleased principals, teachers, and parents
- A connection with hard-to-reach students
- Increased funding through improved attendance and lowered school exclusion rates

## And students who

- stay in school and academically on track
- learn to care about their community
- have improved attitudes and behaviors
- learn multiple ways to succeed



# Needs Assessment Checklist

Step	Task	Completion Date	Comments
1a	Obtain school/district policies and procedures related to suspension.		
1b	Review policies and procedures related to suspension.		
2a	Obtain aggregate suspension and discipline data for the school and district.		
2b	Review school/district suspension and discipline data.		
2c	<p>Examine how these policies are implemented in practice, using school discipline records, and write up findings. In particular, note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How consistently are policies and procedures followed?</li> <li>▪ How many students are suspended per month, semester, and year?</li> <li>▪ What discernible patterns exist in the timing of suspensions?</li> <li>▪ What types of infractions are students being suspended for?</li> <li>▪ What are the characteristics of students who are suspended?</li> <li>▪ What schools or grade levels have the highest suspension rates?</li> <li>▪ What racial or socioeconomic disparities exist between the student body and the population of students who are suspended?</li> <li>▪ What percentage of suspensions involve repeat offenders?</li> <li>▪ What is the average academic standing of suspended students?</li> <li>▪ If possible, review records over several years to determine if the data are stable.</li> </ul>		



**Needs Assessment Checklist, page 2**

3a	<p>Determine the pressing needs of those who are most affected by student suspensions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the gaps in the current suspension practices?</li> </ul>		
3b	<p>Identify the desired outcomes of an alternative program.</p>		
3c	<p>Solicit input from as many types of stakeholders as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ teachers</li> <li>▪ school administrators</li> <li>▪ students</li> <li>▪ parents</li> <li>▪ affected community members</li> <li>▪ potential community service sites</li> </ul>		
4	<p>Assess the current level of support for a community service program as an alternative to suspension among the previously listed stakeholders.</p>		
5a	<p>Assess the advantages and disadvantages of designing a broad-based program versus one targeted to a specific population.</p>		
5b	<p>Decide whether any criteria should exclude students from participation (e.g., violent offenses).</p>		
5c	<p>Consider whether to create community service opportunities relevant to the reason for students' suspensions or in other ways target the service experiences.</p>		
5d	<p>Evaluate where you want to start: with a small pilot program targeting a specific grade or set of students, with a program in one school only, or with a districtwide intervention.</p>		
5e	<p>Consider whether participation by special education students is appropriate</p>		



**Needs Assessment Checklist, page 3**

5f	Consider the types of offenses that most often result in suspensions. What implications might this have for community service?		
5g	What student population(s) is not being well served by the current discipline policy? How might community service better serve these students?		
5h	Who will your program serve, and how will you determine who is eligible to participate?		
	Consider input from as many types of stakeholders as possible, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ teachers</li><li>▪ school administrators</li><li>▪ students</li><li>▪ parents</li><li>▪ affected community members</li><li>▪ potential community service sites</li></ul>		

**Notes**



# Assessment of Readiness to Implement A Community Service ATS Program

Are you interested in implementing a community service–based alternative to suspension program in your school or district? Fill out this checklist, using a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest, to gauge your school or district’s current level of preparedness and support.

	High			Low	
	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Administrative Support</b> <i>(Level of potential administrative buy-in)</i>					
<b>Leadership</b> <i>(Presence of someone willing to assume responsibility for the program)</i>					
<b>Staff Support</b> <i>(Level of potential staff support)</i>					
<b>Community Support</b> <i>(Level of community support and relationships with community and potential service sites)</i>					
<b>Financial Support</b> <i>(Sufficient funding to cover staffing, transportation, supplies, etc.)</i>					
<b>Parental Support</b> <i>(Level of parental involvement in school)</i>					
<b>Additional Program Components</b> <i>(Life skills, anger management, or other character-development curriculum)</i>					
<b>Total</b>					

How did you score? Total your ratings and use the following guidelines to determine next steps.

Score	Current Status
<b>1–11</b>	Your school/district is just beginning— Identify your lowest-scoring areas and focus start-up efforts there.
<b>12–23</b>	You have many of the essentials already in place— Identify the highest-scoring areas and build on those resources when starting your program.
<b>24–35</b>	Your school/district currently has a high level of support! Use all resources from all areas to implement your program.



# Program Operations Decision Worksheet

Target Population	List
Eligible grades:	_____ - _____
What, if any, infractions are ineligible?	1. 2. 3.
Are repeat offenders eligible?	
Are short-term suspended students eligible?	
Are long-term suspended students eligible?	

Program Components	Notes
<b><i>Will the program have</i></b>	<b><i>Briefly describe</i></b>
Academic support?	
Life skills?	
Mentoring?	
Counseling?	



**Program Operations Decision Worksheet, page 2**

Resources for Auxiliary Components	Notes
What physical resources does the program need (e.g., a room, desks, etc.)? Where can you obtain them?	
What staff are needed to administer program components? Will new hires be necessary?	
What curricular materials or lessons do you wish to implement? Can you obtain them by purchase or sharing with other programs? Or can you develop lessons yourself?	
How can you identify community mentors for the students?	
What counseling and other behavioral health resources are available to your students through the school or the community?	

Budget	Notes
What expenditures are associated with salaries and other staff expenses?	
What costs will be incurred for transporting students to and from worksites?	
Are there equipment costs?	
Are you purchasing a curriculum or other learning materials?	
Will there be food costs or other incidental for the students?	
Does the program need school supplies or other materials?	
Can any of the expenses be covered through in-kind contributions?	



**Program Operations Decision Worksheet, page 3**

Program Length	Notes
How many total hours will students attend the program?	
How many hours will students attend the program per day?	_____hours
How many hours of service will students perform (or how will requirement be determined)? What days will the students participate in service?	
What days of the week will the program be active?	Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat Sun
What times of day will the students complete service and other program activities?	

Service Site Partners	Notes
If on-campus service will be used, what on-campus service options are available?	1. 2. 3.
If off-campus service will be used, what off-campus service options are available?	1. 2. 3.
Do prospective off-campus sites have a supervisor with fingerprint clearance?	
Does the contact person at each site understand the nature of the community service experience you want students to have?	
Do site supervisors understand the level of supervision needed?	
Are procedures and backup support in place in case difficulties arise?	
Is enough age-appropriate work available for all students?	



**Program Operations Decision Worksheet, page 4**

Service Experience	Notes
How will a context of human interaction be built into the service?	
How can students be given autonomy and input into their service experience?	
How will staff ensure that students have appropriate supervision from a person committed to service?	
Does the work have a clear beginning and end, so that students feel a sense of completion?	
How will students be prepared for the work they are to perform, receive ongoing feedback during the service, and reflect about the experience afterwards?	
Is the focus on the quality and completion of assigned work, rather than on quantity?	
How is the service made meaningful?	

Stages of Service	Notes
What kind of preparation will the students have before service (formal, informal, both)?	
Who will prepare the students?	
<p>Does the preparation include</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A choice of tasks?</li> <li>2. Logistical information (e.g., where to go)?</li> <li>3. Student expectations?</li> <li>4. Service site expectations?</li> <li>5. A discussion of how the student's work will contribute to the service site?</li> </ol>	
Who will give student feedback during service?	
What kind of reflection will the student do?	
Who will guide the reflection process?	



# Sample Budgets

## Sample Budget 1

<b>Item and Brief Description</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Project director (0.1 FTE)	\$5,000
Projector coordinator (1.0 FTE)	32,000
Overhead and benefits for both positions	7,400
Program supplies: drinking water, snacks, name tags, office supplies	1,500
Transportation: students are able to walk to off-campus sites or transportation is provided in kind by the school	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$17,100</b>

## Sample Budget 2

<b>Item and Brief Description</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Projector coordinator (1.0 FTE) + overhead	\$50,000
Part-time tutors, hourly @ \$9.00 x 500 hours	4,500
Training workshop for staff and service site staff, 8 @ \$150 each	1,200
Program supplies: commercial curriculum and office supplies	2,200
Transportation: fuel and rental costs for district van	5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,900</b>



# Community Service Partnership and Agreement

This agreement is entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of 200\_\_, by and between  
(*Business/Organization name*) and the (*School/District name*).

The Business/Organization named is willing to participate, and agrees to the following terms and conditions:

To allow the students of (*School/District name*) to participate in community service activities in or around the above listed place of Business or Organization, in order for the students to reduce or eliminate the sentencing of off-campus suspension. The participating Business/Organization understands that they bear no responsibility for injuries incurred while these activities are being completed. The Business/Organization also understands that they are not required to participate in the newly introduced Community Service Program, but voluntarily do so. The above listed Organization/Business agrees to supervise students when deemed necessary and report to the presiding Community Service Director when students display inappropriate behavior or are uncooperative. The volunteering Business/Organization is aware that this program was developed in part to improve the community through these assignments and to provide skill-building experiences for the students, along with the development of character.

This Agreement may be terminated as follows: The Business/Organization may terminate this contract at any time. However, we would greatly appreciate four days notice whenever possible.

Time shall be of the essence in the performance of this Agreement.

If any part of this Agreement is held unenforceable for any reason, the remaining portion of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect, and shall be carried out in a manner which is consistent with the intentions of the parties hereto.

This Agreement is entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_ in the City of \_\_\_\_\_, the County of \_\_\_\_\_, State of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Organization/Business Representative

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of School Representative

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_, has been referred to \_\_\_\_\_ community service program to fulfill discipline requirements. Please see the attached program description. Below is the location where your child needs to be dropped off and the time s/he will need to arrive. I have also listed the time when your child will be finished with the service work and you will need to pick up him/her.

Your child will need to wear appropriate clothing and shoes for the service s/he will be performing. In most cases, neat, clean shorts or pants and closed-toe shoes will be acceptable. The student will need to bring a lunch if scheduled to work through the lunch hour. Also, if your child has a cell phone, please remind him/her to turn it off during the time s/he is working.

Your child will also be required to write a one-page essay about the community service experience. This essay needs to be word processed or handwritten neatly.

If you have any questions, about the discipline charges, please contact the school principal, \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. If you have any questions about the \_\_\_\_\_ community service program, you can reach me at: \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your support of the students at \_\_\_\_\_. We are working together to ensure success for the next generation.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title



# MEMORANDUM TO PARENTS

TO: \_\_\_\_\_ FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
RE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_, is required to attend the COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM as a condition of school suspension.

The program is located at the Quincie Douglas Center on 1575 East 36th Street, Tucson, AZ. Phone: 622-3651 x513. Normal hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday–Friday.

This letter will inform you about our program and the services that will be provided for your child and you.

Students are to work in collaborative relationships with community service agencies in the Tucson area, and are provided instruction in informed decision-making, basic life skills, and the positive use of leisure time.

Here is a description of the services provided:

**COGNITIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** An instructor will teach cognitive skills to address effective problem solving, anger management, and creative thinking.

**LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** An instructor will teach specific skills for effective communication alternatives to aggression.

**LEISURE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** An instructor will teach leisure skills development to identify any interest in sports or other activities that will subsequently occupy your child's leisure time in a constructive manner.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE DEVELOPMENT:** An instructor will match the student appropriately with the community service activities to ensure the needs of the community are met and to reward the student for his/her positive contribution to the community. Students working in the community will develop an awareness of the importance of collaboration, teamwork, and their value of service to others and the community.

**TRANSPORTATION:** An arrangement will be made during the initial interview regarding transportation. This arrangement is to be approved by the students' parents (s)/guardian (s) and program staff. The Tucson Urban League, Inc will utilize bus passes for transporting participants to and from the program.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Paul Lyons

Program Coordinator



# COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

## Client Agreement

I understand that as a participant in the \_\_\_\_\_ COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM, I am expected to attend all scheduled educational sessions and community service activities, and I agree to cooperate with all applicable staff, as well as with COMMUNITY SERVICE WORKSITE personnel. Along with this, I understand that I must respect all property at the Quincie Douglas Center.

I further understand that my participation in this program will be under the supervision of \_\_\_\_\_. I am required to adhere to the conditions of my suspension, as well as all rules and regulations of the \_\_\_\_\_ COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM, or I will be removed from this program and my home school will be notified of my removal.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
CLIENT'S SIGNATURE

## Parent/Guardian Agreement

I agree to support my son/daughter in all activities related to the \_\_\_\_\_ COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM. I have received an explanation of the program objectives and approve of the activities in which my son/daughter will be participating. I agree to cooperate with all persons providing my son/daughter with services that are related to the \_\_\_\_\_ COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE



# Rules for Community Service Work

**The following rules will be strictly enforced:**

1. Arrive on time at the assigned location for all scheduled dates.
2. Dress appropriately for work and wear appropriate shoes (no sandals).
3. Safe work habits are very important and will be expected at all times.
4. You will perform all tasks assigned to you by the supervisor.
5. Your work must meet the standards of the supervisor or you may not receive credit for the full day.
6. You will remain within the sight of the supervisor at all times, unless given permission to be elsewhere.
7. No visiting or socializing while participating in the program.
8. There will be no smoking or chewing tobacco per A.R.S. 13-3622
9. Absolutely no shouting, whistling, or horseplay while working.
10. Fellow members and supervisor will be respected; therefore, there will be no harassment or profanity.
11. You will be responsible for lost or damaged tools while you are enrolled in the community service program.
12. Transportation to and from community service work will be arranged with the community service coordinator and is to be arranged as soon as the student signature is obtained on the agreement.

**Note: failure to comply with all the above rules while under the community service program will result in the assignment of additional hours and parent contact will be made.**

I have read and understand the above rules and agree to abide by them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

## Program Rules and Discipline Policies

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Upon arrival to the program students will check in by signing the attendance sheet.
2. Students are expected to treat fellow students and all \_\_\_\_\_ employees and Community Service Worksite personnel in a respectful and courteous manner. Defiant and/or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.
3. Students will not come to the program under the influence of drugs, alcohol, and/or inhalants or appropriate action will be taken.
4. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified if a student has an excused or unexcused tardy or absence. If a student is going to be absent, we require a phone call from a parent/guardian before the start of the program day.
5. Students are required to wear neat and presentable clothing. No sleeveless or muscle/half shirts. No clothing portraying alcohol, drugs, or inappropriate sexual phrases is allowed. Clothing considered gang-related by program staff is also prohibited.
6. No items are allowed that can be identified as a potential weapon (e.g., pocket knife, chain, etc.).
7. Restrooms and the water fountain are to be used during breaks, at lunchtime, and before/after program hours.
8. No writing (graffiti) on walls, books, worksites, program property, etc. Restitution will be required from all students (or their parents) who destroy or misuse program property.
9. Swearing is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action (e.g., work detail, written assignment).
10. Students sent home due to disciplinary actions will be dismissed from the program and their home school will be notified.
11. No smoking is allowed on the \_\_\_\_\_ grounds, or the community service worksites. Smoking materials are as follows: cigarettes, lighters/matches, chewing tobacco. Violation of this rule may result in termination.



# COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

## Here Are Your Important Rights

- **You have the right to learn:**  
This means that you should be able to pay attention to what teachers say without being bothered or distracted by others. In addition, it means that you should be able to study and work without interruptions from others.
- **You have the right to be respected and treated with kindness in the program:**  
This means that others should not laugh at you, make fun of you, or hurt your feelings. No one is to embarrass you in front of the group.
- **You have the right to a safe program:**  
This means that your school should provide safe classrooms, equipment, and rules to ensure your safety.
- **You have the right to express yourself:**  
This means that you may talk freely about your ideas and feelings when appropriate.
- **You have the right to tell your side of the story:**  
This means that you may tell your side of the story when accused of breaking a rule.

## Here Are Your Important Responsibilities

There are some things you should do without being told. Some of these things you do for others and some of these things you do for yourself.

- **You have the responsibility to allow others to work without being disturbed:**  
This means that you quietly make good use of your time and do not disturb others.
- **You have the responsibility to complete your classroom assignments:**  
This means that you do your best with your class assignments, being sure to hand them in on time.
- **You have a responsibility to help make the program a good place to be:**  
This means being thoughtful, respectful, and courteous to others.
- **You have a responsibility to take care of property:**  
This means that you take care of program and worksite property and respect the property of others.
- **You have the responsibility to obey program rules:**  
This means observing all safety and program rules.



# Consequences upon Violation of Program Rules

## EXPULSION FROM PROGRAM

**My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the program rules. I also understand that if I am found in violation of these rules, I may be terminated from this program. In addition, I further understand that in the event of my termination from the program, my home school will be notified.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Staff Signature



# Student Service Hours Log

Community Service Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Service Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time In</b>	<b>Time Out</b>	<b>No. of Hours</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Staff Initials</b>

If you have any questions, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at (     ) -

Thank you for your time!



# Agency Evaluation of Student Worker

Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Participation: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please give a brief description of the activities the student participated in.
2. Was the student cooperative in completing all assigned tasks?
3. How did the student positively contribute to your agency/site?
4. How would you describe the student's attitude upon arriving?
5. How would you describe the student's attitude at the completion of the assignment?
6. Did the student arrive on site in a timely manner?
7. Was the student dressed appropriately? (If no, please describe)
8. Overall, how would you rate this student's service participation?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Poor

Excellent



# Student & Community Connections Self-Reflection Survey

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## *PART I: Rating the Impact of the Service Experience*

Please indicate the degree of impact this community service experience has had on you in the areas listed below. Use a scale of 1–6, with 1 being not at all helpful and 6 being extremely helpful.

	Not Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6 Very Helpful
The Community Service experience helped me:							
1. Become more knowledgeable about my community.							
2. Attain a higher level of awareness of needs/problems found in typical communities.							
3. Think about things in new ways.							
4. Understand more fully the factors that create those problems and needs.							
5. Learn how to do better in dealing and communicating with people.							
6. Learn to work cooperatively on a team.							
7. Develop leadership skills.							
8. Become more aware of the resources my community provides.							
9. Become more aware of the resources my community needs.							
10. Realize I can be a productive and giving member of my community.							



## *PART II: Open-Ended Questions*

1. How strongly are you committed to improving the quality of life in the community in ways which do not necessarily affect you directly?
2. Did you learn anything about how to do a better job in dealing with the type of people you worked with? If yes, please explain your answer.
3. Did you receive any benefit from participating in this service experience in addition to avoiding off-campus suspension? If yes, please explain.
4. Has this community service experience caused you to change your attitude toward people who are different from you? If yes, please explain how your feelings have changed.
5. Relative to other kinds of assignments, how useful was the community service program in helping you place classroom topics into a meaningful context?



### *PART III: Evaluating the Agency of Participation*

1. What is the name of the agency at which you volunteered/were assigned?
2. Briefly list the responsibilities given to you by the agency.
3. Considering the short amount of time you served, do you feel that the agency did a good job of assigning you meaningful responsibilities?
4. Would you recommend the agency at which you were assigned to other students who choose community service? Please explain your answer.
5. Do you have any suggestions for the Community Service Coordinator on how to improve the program?



## Community Service Program Contract Completion Statement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the Community Service Director for the \_\_\_\_\_ Unified School District,  
do hereby certify that \_\_\_\_\_ has successfully completed the  
assigned \_\_\_\_\_ hours of the community service program. This student is released  
from any further community service activities at this time and is expected to return to  
school on \_\_\_\_\_ at the regularly scheduled time.

Thank you,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Community Service Director  
\_\_\_\_\_ School District





