



Giving Back to the Mts

Level:

Grades K-12

Time:

1 hour to several weeks or months depending on the project

Environment:

Indoors for discussions, but service learning project will take place outside on the trail, or in the community or school.

Size:

Group or Individual

Materials:

- Anything needed to complete service-learning project (will vary depending on project)

Objective:

To foster a sense of community and connection to a student's local natural area, through stewardship and service.

Procedure:

1. To stimulate discussion, ask the group these questions:

- a. What is our local environment? What does it provide for us?
- b. Why should we be concerned with our local ecology and environment? How important are trees, streams, mountains and forests to our existence?
- c. Does our local environment impact other environments, towns, states and beyond?

2. Read *The Lorax*, by Dr. Suess or show the movie to the group. To debrief the book or movie ask the following questions:

- a. What parts of your own environment would you be sad to lose?
- b. Why do you think the Lorax "spoke for the trees?" Would you do the same if you were in his position? What are ways that we can "speak for the trees" in real life?

3. Discuss threats to our natural environment. Brainstorm some ways that our natural landscapes are becoming threatened. Some examples might include; development, logging, climate change, erosion, littering, motorized vehicles on trails, etc.

4. Ask students if there is anything they can do about it! Explain to students that as a class you're going to think about and decide on a service learning project that will help to protect and enhance your local mountain or hiking trail.

5. Have student's think of ways they could give back to the mountain and choose an activity that they can implement within their community. Some ideas:

- Adopt a trail and learn about trail maintenance
- Engage in a vegetation restoration project
- Raise funds for the protection of the mountain
- Raise awareness within the community about why the mountain is important in the community and culture

- Serve as mentors for other children in the school who are learning about the mountain
- Explore various environmental impacts that could negatively affect the mountain
- Create a marketing campaign for protecting local natural areas/mountain

6. Once students decide on what they'd like to do, encourage them to start thinking about how they will carry-out their project. How much time will it take? Is there someone in the community they can connect with to help. Help the students design and implement their project. It may be helpful to contact local outing clubs or outdoor organizations such as the Green Mountain Club, the Boys and Girls Club or a local Scout Troop. Get the kids excited about how much power they really have to make lasting change.

7. Implement the project.

8. At the end of the project, have the students reflect and report on their experience. What went well and what didn't? Do they feel that they made a difference and helped to protect or give back to their environment? What are ways to keep involved with their project?

Extensions:

- For older students, discuss basic/general concepts of symbiosis, interconnection, photosynthesis, etc. during the initial discussion.
- Older students can take on specific research projects related to the larger project - water quality, botany, wildlife habitats, zoology, weather/meteorology, cultural history, history of land use in the area, etc.

