



**POINTS
OF LIGHT
FOUNDATION**
&
Volunteer Center
National Network

AGE APPROPRIATENESS IN YOUTH SERVICE ACTIVITIES

GRADES 6-8

The service of young people is an important resource in solving community problems. But like any volunteer, they need to be matched with volunteer opportunities that are appropriate. Developing age appropriate service activities will ensure that they and the agency they are serving receive the most out of their experience. Depending on the age of youth, concrete developmental features must be present to retain a youth's interest and energy in service.

This Resource Packet includes resources that give a brief overview of the developmental themes for youth in grades 6-8, projects ideas for this age group, and a list of other resources.

The following two pages on developmental themes are adapted from the following materials:

A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning

Contact: The Points of Light Foundation, Youth & Family Outreach
1400 Eye Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005
202-729-8135
www.pointsoflight.org

The Power and Potential of Youth in Services to Communities, "Service Experiences Through the Eyes of Youth"

Contact: Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services
117 University Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55155
1-800-234-6687

Learning By Giving

Contact: National Youth Leadership Council
1910 West County Road B
St. Paul, MN 55113
651-631-3672
www.nylc.org

DEVELOPMENTAL THEMES

YOUTH GRADES 6-8

Each young person develops at a slightly different rate and in a slightly different way. However, general patterns can be seen within different age groups of youth. Here are some major developmental themes to take into account when designing appropriate ways to include youth in grades 6-8 in service.

Physical Development

- Rapid physical growth and development
- Wide range of developmental differences
- Improved coordination
- Highly energetic and active
- Short attention span

Identity Development

- Emerging self-consciousness
- Looking for a sense of group identity
- Preoccupying themselves with appearance
 - Self-concept is influenced by bodily changes
- Needing affirmation from parents, peers, adults
- Facing pressures to conform to “masculine” and “feminine” roles
- Facing self-esteem issues-particularly girls (This is the time young women are encouraged away from math and science, which lowers their income power and choices for employment)
- Wanting to be heard
- Wanting independence, frustrated by lack of opportunity
- Having feelings of ineptness
- Developing likes, dislikes, attitudes
- Rebellious
- Having emotional outburst; feelings are on the surface

Social Development

- Strong need to fit in
- Susceptible to peer pressure
 - Loyal to friends and peer group
 - Peers become source of behavior standards and models
 - Team games popular
 - Tendency to conform to peer group standards of dress
 - Value acceptance by peer group
 - Tendency to be intolerant of those who are “different”

- Facing decisions regarding alcohol and drug use
- Learning relationship skills
- Egocentric
- Idealistic
- Self-conscious
- Need to challenge status quo and authority
- Have ability to be empathetic

Intellectual Development

- Transition from concrete to abstract thinking
- Emergence of independent critical thinking
- Can apply logic to solve problems
- Can solve problems by considering alternatives
- Need to be allowed to make mistakes and try again
- Beginning to be aware of future and life-planning issues
- Need to look beyond self
- Value exploration
- Asserting and developing own value system
- Understands ethical abstractions (example: justice, honesty)

Values

- Beginning to be aware of social issues
- Have desire for social action and responsibility
- Want to be socially engaged, to make a difference, to give hope

*Adapted from A Practical Guide for Developing Agency/School Partnerships for Service-Learning, Points of Light Foundation, The Power and Potential of Youth in Services to Communities, Minnesota Office on Volunteer Services, and Learning By Giving, National Youth Leadership Council.

WHAT IS AND IS NOT AGE APPROPRIATE SERVICE FOR YOUTH IN GRADES 6-8?

IS AGE APPROPRIATE...

- Youth Action Councils, where they design service activities for other young people in their community
- Helping food banks with inventory
- Participating in a community clean up
- Volunteering at a soup kitchen, nursing home and day care centers.
- Starting a conflict resolution program
- Tutoring elementary students after school
- Planting a garden at a homeless shelter

IS NOT AGE APPROPRIATE...

- Self-directed and self-guided Youth Action Councils without adult supervision
- Delivering meals to homebound residents.
- Building a playground in an underprivileged neighborhood
- Making placemats for soup kitchens, nursing homes, or day care centers.
- Starting a peer counseling program
- Tutoring youth in juvenile justice centers
- Renovating a homeless shelter

PROJECT IDEA STARTERS AND EXAMPLES OF SERVICE PROJECTS FOR GRADES 6-8

- Hold a multi-cultural, gender-fair, disability-aware career and life-planning fair.
- Plan an intergenerational cultural exchange
- Gather oral histories
- Get training for peer tutoring and conflict resolution
- Develop water quality projects
- Plan and execute environmental protection awareness campaigns
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or nursing home
- Help with literacy and voter registration campaigns
- Serve on boards for non-profits that affect youth issues
- Research handicap issues
- Do a community needs assessment survey
- Plant and maintain a community garden
- Sponsor a school wide drive for canned food, small toiletries, and clothing
- Volunteering at a soup kitchen
- Sorting and packing food at a food bank
- Plan and sponsor a “dog walk” to raise money for local pet shelters
- Make or donate bird houses for parks and walking trails
- Tutor younger students after school

Developed by Youth & Family Outreach, Points of Light Foundation

OTHER RESOURCES FOR AGE APPROPRIATENESS IN SERVICE

The Big Help sponsored by Nickelodeon is an ongoing campaign to encourage and support kids volunteering. Toolkits are available that explain how to get help with organizing, promoting and running a Big Help service project.

Contact: The Big Help
PO Box 929
New York, NY 10108
212-258-7080
www.nick.com/inits/bh_dev/index.html

National Youth Service Day sponsored by Youth Service America, encourages communities to celebrate and recognize the power of young people’s involvement in community problem solving. A toolkit is available that explains how to plan and organize a community service project including volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and publicity.

Contact: Youth Service America
1101 15th Street NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005-5002
202-296-2992
www.servenet.org

Make a Difference Day “the national day of doing good” sponsored by USA Weekend in partnership with the Points of Light Foundation, is a way for all citizens to get involved in solving serious social and environmental problems. Specific planning guides are available for young people, teachers, employers, and families are great organizational tools that can help anyone plan a great Make A Difference Day project.

Contact: Amity Tripp
Points of Light Foundation
1400 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
202-729-8122
www.pointsoflight.org OR www.usaweekend.com/diffday

The Giraffe Project has developed the **Standing Tall Teaching Guide** for students grades K-12. The teaching guides contain lessons and activities to inspire students to stand tall for the common good. It also lists sample service projects and a bibliography of books that contain concepts of caring, courage, service, and action.

Contact: The Giraffe Project
197 Second Street
PO Box 759
Langley, WA 98260
206-221-7989
www.giraffe.org

The Maryland Student Service Alliance has developed service-learning curriculum guides for elementary, middle, and high school. These instructional guides were developed to help teachers to engage students in service-learning.

Contact: Maryland Student Service Alliance
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
(410) 333-2427