

Service Learning Policy (Reviewed 2014/2015)

A constituent of Vilnius International School mission is to inspire students to become responsible world citizens. We believe that learning and personal development take place not only in the classroom but it is also enhanced by interacting with community in meaningful ways as well applying academic knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real life situations. Service Learning is a method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines the academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service throughout the community. These different elements are unified in a mission to promote collaboration of our school's policy and service learning's pedagogical principles. The Service Learning Policy provides guidelines for MYP Community and Service projects and other actions taken on by the PYP and throughout the whole school community.

Service Learning at Vilnius International School

At Vilnius International School we have embraced Service Learning as a teaching approach to help students develop the following values and skills:

- engage students in learning experiences that enable them to demonstrate their commitment to the learner profile through community action;
- provide opportunities for students to step out of their comfort zone as a means of gaining new perspectives;
- raise awareness of global issues by connecting it to our local community;
- encourage students to reflect on their willingness to express compassions, care and empathy;
- promote school cohesion.

Criteria of Service Learning at Vilnius International School

Service Learning is integrated in VIS according to the following criteria:

- globally relevant;
- anchored to curriculum in theme and skill;
- provides opportunity for long-term commitment;
- links school to the community;
- increases local awareness.

Service Learning Project Content:

A project contains the following 5 stages:

1. Inventory and Investigation

With guidance from the teacher, students:

- inquire into their community and identify a need, issue or a project;
- conduct research and collect data;

2. Preparation and Planning

With guidance from the teacher, students:

- analyze the underlying problem, need or project;
- cooperate with community partners;
- elaborate an action plan .

3. Action

Through direct service, indirect service or advocacy, students carry out action plan that:

- is purposeful, meaningful and offers unique learning experience;
- enables students to apply previously learned knowledge as well as newly acquired academic skills and knowledge.

4. Reflection

Students are expected to:

- reflect before, during and after service;
- reflect alone, with classmates and community partners;
- consider project improvement.

5. Communication

After the service experience, students:

- communicate the outcomes of the action to selected members of the school community. This could mean your own class, a section of the school or a specific group of interested individuals.
- continue working with their service-learning project and develop for appropriate next steps.

Project Outcomes:

Students are expected to complete one project each school year. The outcomes of a project could be the following:

- students learn about civic responsibility;
- students become aware of different social issues in the community;
- students can gain communicative skills and critical thinking ;
- students acquire knowledge of how to apply their academic skills to community service.

Responsibility Areas:

Subject area teachers:

- help the students select an appropriate project;
- identify themes and skills;
- integrate the project into the curriculum;
- assure that activities are structured in way that promote learning;
- monitor students' activities as well as facilitate students' reflection of their experiences.

Students:

Students are expected to

- be active participants;
- use the service learning/action cycle to guide their work;
- address the service needs;
- achieve curricular objectives;
- take meaningful actions;
- reflect throughout the service learning experience.

Examples of Service Learning Projects:

1. *School Initiated* Long-term partnerships have been established with Street Child in Sierra Leone, Transparency Internatioanl, Bernadinu Sodas, and the European Institute for Gender Equality.

2. *Class initiated* In conjunction with Bernadinu Sodas, students created an informational stand to educate the public about the importance of the oak tree as a symbol in Lithuanian culture. The tree

itself if over 600 years old and VIS students participated in the measurement of the tree with local arborists in preparation for the project.

3. *Individual initiated* A six grade student organized series of basketball events over the course of the school year. His initiative included teaching basketball skills to PYP students weekly, organizing a mini-tournament to promote relationships between classes, and finally he organized a student vs. staff game. The student actively took advantage of the opportunity to hone his communication, organizational, conflict-resolution and leadership skills. The initiative was respected by all members of the school community and events promoted interaction between mixed age groups.

4. *Community initiated* VIS participates in the Vilnius City (mini) marathon every September to raise money for UNICEF and to promote a healthy lifestyle. VIS also participates in the annual Vilnius community clean-up event, Darom, which takes place in the spring.

5. *Other short-term projects* These included visits by Roma activists, workshops with Transparency International on corruption, Africa Days, etc.

Additional materials will be added to this document upon complete of the Service Learning Workshop scheduled for August, 2014.

The Service Learning Coordinators for the 2014-2015 school year are Irma Brazaityte-Mehagnoul (MYP) and Jasper Mehagnoul (PYP).

Service Learning/Action Cycle

