

Case Study: Service Learning Program of Distinction Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola, Puerto Rico

the program

The Service Learning program at Colegio San Ignacio de Loyola, Puerto Rico's only Jesuit school, is focused around one key tenet: to labor with and for others in building a more just world.

More than 40 years ago, the Jesuit Priest Pedro Arrupe, SJ, called on leaders of Jesuit schools to emphasize service to others within their school communities.

Colegio San Ignacio, serving boys in grades 7-12, responded to Father Arrupe's call to action by launching a service program for high school juniors. The program quickly became popular and students from other grades requested opportunities to volunteer.

Students are taught lessons in service throughout history, especially those rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church. They are also challenged to put values to action by conducting volunteer service in their community both during and outside of the regular school day.

Lessons in service are woven into all aspects of school life and in most subject areas. The importance of the service learning program became especially clear in September 2017, when two hurricanes landed on Puerto Rico, devastating lives and destroying communities.

Students from Colegio San Ignacio sprang into action, crossing the island numerous times to deliver water-purifying devices to remote parts of the island. On a weekly basis, students were excused from class so that they could distribute food and supplies to affected communities.

Out of the hurricane response a new service initiative was born: Red Ignaciana en Acción, or, Ignatian Network in Action.

the process

In 2006, 10 students and a staff person visited a Jesuit school in New York in order to learn more about their service learning program.

The trip energized the group and led to a major overhaul of Colegio San Ignacio's program. Focus groups and committees were formed to help refine the mission, vision and standards of the service learning curriculum.

Eventually, several goals for growth were adopted:

- Design and provide service experiences to each grade level based on the need in the community, grade-level and curriculum and student interests.
- Increase the amount of class time allotted to service learning projects. Give students the opportunity to volunteer in their communities during the school day.
- Recruit volunteers and alumni to help support the program.
- Partner with state and local agencies and non-profit organizations to help develop and carry out service learning projects.
- Conduct a curriculum review to identify ways in which reflection time and social analysis may be blended into traditional areas of study.
- Educate students and teachers about the program during orientation activities at the start of the school year and when possible, throughout the year.

Today, service learning is the main component of student life at Colegio San Ignacio for students at all grade levels.

The graduating class of 2018 had 110 members. Together they logged more than 20,000 hours of service during their high school careers.

110 graduates → 20,000+ service hours

Lessons learned

- Develop clearly defined goals of the service learning program and identify a group early on that is willing to offer buy-in and support for the concept.
 - Start small. Target one grade at a time. Once the program is successful and well established with a small group, expand to another group of students.
 - Make the experience meaningful for students by building in reflection time following volunteer work, so that they may share and consider their experience.
 - Tap into your alumni network. Connect alumni with students so that they may describe their experience with service learning and its long-term impact on their lives.
- Once the program is fully operational, make sure that all
- stakeholders participate. This should include students, parents, teachers, administrators and alumni.



Program of distinction benefits

- Since receiving the Program of Distinction, we have
- noticed an uptick in the number of schools reaching out to us for advice on how to establish or grow their service learning programs.
- The Program of Distinction is a value-add for Colegio
- San Ignacio. We've long been able to attract new students and families because our classes are academically rigorous. Now we can also highlight the strength of our service learning program.
- We are able to talk about the award in recruitment
- pieces, on social media and in outreach to prospective students.

for more information

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