

Service Learning in a Professional Writing Course

Public Writing

To engage students in writing projects that reach beyond the classroom to benefit both them and the community

Students benefit because they...

- Learn how communication helps build communities and achieve social and civic purposes
- Participate on a team and manage a team's work through writing and oral presentations
- Work outside the box of classrooms and classroom exercises to address real rather than fictional readers
- Learn how to be flexible writers who can respond when things go wrong, as they will, in real projects
- Work with sponsors who have their own deadlines and priorities
- Meet little kids (a major benefit cited by many project teams)

Sponsors gain...

- Assistance on their own projects
- Access to writing and technical skills, especially Web skills, possessed by the students
- Increased attention to their work in a larger community

Projects and Sponsors

Fall 2005 – Spring 2006

Projects

- Accessibility studies
- Activities guides
- Analyses
- Brochures
- CD-based guides
- Databases
- Directory of services
- Grant applications
- Internet guides
- Kiosk presentations
- Marketing plans
- Marketing studies
- Newsletters
- Online newsletters
- Reports
- Research reports
- Summary reports
- Surveys



Sponsors

Center for Disabilities Studies (11 projects)
 Delaware Aerospace Education Foundation (DASEF)
 Delaware Association of Volunteer Administrators
 Delaware Autism Society
 Downes Elementary School
 Fatherhood Initiative of the New Directions Early Start Head Start Program
 Hagley Museum
 Hummingbird Society
 Parent Information Center
 Read Aloud Delaware
 UD Continuing Education
 UD Marine Studies

Implementing this Approach

- Develop partnering agencies and sponsors through the Office of Service Learning as well as personal connections
- Try for a continuity of placements and projects over several semesters
- Negotiate the scope of projects to fit both your needs and the sponsor's; be flexible
- Stay in touch; keep a rich line of communication among you, teams, and sponsors
- Prepare for students to be confused, even angry, as they navigate the muddy waters of unbounded problem solving.
- Provide class time for group work and field work; get students into the community
- With students, foster explicit discussion about how the project is going and document your work
- Do not expect sponsors to be grateful

