Community engagement project ideas

It’s great when community engagement projects are initiated by your students! Below are a few project ideas.

- **POPEYE**—With the help of school administrators, cooks and family/community members, implement two best practices for preventing school cafeteria waste: 1) Recess before lunch; 2) Giving foods creative names like “Popeye” for spinach and “X-Ray Vision Carrots.” Study the impact through pre-implementation measurements and post-implementation measurements.

- **7 DAY PLEDGE**—Families take a pledge to go without __________ (e.g., paper and plastic grocery bags) for 7 days and then student interviews parents/guardians about what they discovered.

- **COLLECT AND GIVE**—Students, with the help of families, collect __(name of product)__ and ___(what you will do with them)__________. (e.g., shoes/donate to Soles for Souls)

- **H2O on your MIND**—Get school to install water bottle refill stations.

- **DIGITAL DETOX**—Students and their families take a digital detox for 24-72 hours. During that time, they get their families out in nature. Here’s a great resource for ideas for all types of digital detoxes: [http://www.nextavenue.org/30-day-digital-detox/](http://www.nextavenue.org/30-day-digital-detox/)

- **DREAMING OF NATURE**—Students share what they like about nature. Then, the students, in partnership with a non-profit such as a nature center, learn how they would like to improve outdoor spaces to make them more inviting. They also learn from parents and community members. They then implement at least one improvement.

- **PARTNER WITH PARENTS**—Engage parents/families in multiple at-home activities. I.e., reading *Agatha's Feather Bed* together or watching a video read-aloud of the book, identifying two products and the natural resources used to make the products.

If you are planning to do some type of collection (such as a used clothing or shoe collection), be sure to contact the agency you are planning to work with and make sure that the project will work for them. You’ll want to ask about donation policies, transportation for the donated goods (some places will pick up donations, but many need you to drop them off), and be clear of the official name of the organization you donate to for any notes you send home with your students. It is always good to write down the name of the person you talk with at the agency, as well.

Remember to document activities with photos and share on social media sites as allowed. The more you have your students do the work, the more they will learn! **You must engage families and/or the larger community—not just your school**—to be eligible for the teacher stipend. (The stipend is available only to teachers in the Secret Lives of “Stuff” course.)

**Project idea:** Google “Tool Library”

**Project idea:** Google “Toy Library”
**Project idea:** Google “Little Food Pantry”

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