

Mentoring at the Youth Center

Frederick County Service Learning Advisory Board (SLAB) is a unique countywide board comprised of youth leaders who engage in meritorious service projects and help provide technical assistance to teachers and community organizations on service-learning. The Youth Center is an after-school program for at-risk children. It is the Service-Learning Advisory Board's (SLAB) goal to send members to the Center every day. We hope our presence supports and enriches the existing program by creating positive relationships between SLAB students and the kids. We help by tutoring, chaperoning, and entertaining the children. At the center, there are about fifty elementary school students from three of the area's schools. From 3:30 p.m., when the children arrive, until about 5:00 p.m., SLAB members help the students with their homework, read with them, make posters or play games. And after everyone finishes their homework, snacks are served and everyone gathers upstairs for a group activity, such as a movie, guest speaker or a game.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental, or public safety need)? Our project meets the community's need for better education of children. At the Youth Center we tutor the children to help improve academics and school performance. In addition, the Center will hopefully decrease youth crime, sexual activity, and drug abuse in the area. We befriend the children at the center and become someone they can look up to as a role model. We became aware of this need in the community when the Youth Center's director spoke at one of SLAB's meetings. We then visited the center.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum? The project is not within a class, but is sponsored by a county board of high school students. This project enhances all student academic learning (tutors and tutees) as schoolwork is reviewed and homework completed.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project? At SLAB's monthly meetings we have discussions on how the members felt when they were at the Youth Center and how their visit affected others.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility roles for the success of the project? Students have taken leadership roles in the project by putting their complete dedication and commitment into their efforts of helping the children at the center. The president of SLAB has especially put forth a great amount of leadership in organizing with the Youth Center director. In addition, SLAB is planning to take the children of the Center on an environmental day with a service-learning project involved in the field trip.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project? With this project, besides the coordination with the Youth Center, we have also worked with the Plamondian Enterprises, the owners of Frederick's Roy Rogers, to set-up fund-raisers in which members of SLAB worked for a portion of the restaurant's profits of the night to support the Center project.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? After coordinating the details with the Youth Center, SLAB members sign-up to volunteer on days they are available to help. In addition, we are all now aware of the events at the center throughout the week which helps with planning to sign-up to volunteer, best times, materials and the number of students needed to help. There are currently about ten students involved with the Youth Center Projects. The project's hours are from 3:30 to 5:00 every day after-school. Help is needed whenever students are available. Some go two or three times a week, while

others go once a month. Several SLAB members are very committed to our project and really enjoy being at the Center.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Throughout the project, we have learned dedication, responsibility, and leadership. We have also learned to work with people of any age and capability. As with all service-learning projects SLAB organizes, we aim to help others and in turn help ourselves grow as leaders and individuals.

For more information on this project, contact Hillary Lerner at Hillsey@aol.com.

