

# Community Service and Social Justice in the RCCSS

– Updated July 2009 –

## **Rationale—Why service is important:**

- Acts of service promote moral, personal and social development.
- We meet Christ in those we serve, especially the least (Matt. 25:40).
- Jesus invited us to imitate his life as a servant (Mk 10:43-45; Phil 2:5-8).
- Service benefits our community.
- Service benefits our students:
  - It helps students develop compassion for the less fortunate and learn that they can impact societal forces that cause oppression.
  - Service provides transferable skills and commitment of heart noticed by employers and colleges.
- Service benefits our school:
  - As a Catholic school, we have a responsibility to uphold Catholic social teaching.
  - The presence of our students serving the community reflects positively on the school and our students.

## **The 5 year plan seeks to accomplish the following:**

- Increase in personal commitment: 8<sup>th</sup> graders start by serving hours; STM graduates leave having made a difference in a community.
- Increase in time commitment (slightly): 8<sup>th</sup> graders start with 30 hours per year; STM graduates leave with a habit of serving weekly.
- Increase in level of personal risk: 8<sup>th</sup> graders start by serving the community that directly affects them (family, school, church); STM graduates leave having developed a relationship with someone whom they otherwise would not have known.
- Increase in level of depth of experience: 8<sup>th</sup> graders start with developing the habit of serving others; STM graduates ideally leave with compassion for the less fortunate and a desire to challenge societal forces that cause oppression.

## **Developmental Timeline of Service and Justice and RCCSS:**

### **Year 1 (8<sup>th</sup> grade):**

- Service focus: 10 hours of serving family; 10 hours of serving school community; 10 hours of serving church (30 hours total).
- Academic focus: What does it mean to be part of a community? Identification of communities to which students belong. What are the differences between service, charity, tithing, volunteering? What does the Bible say about serving others? What does the Catholic Church teach about service?

### **Year 2 (9<sup>th</sup> grade):**

- Service focus: Continue the 30 hours established in Year 1, add 10 hours of service outside of their personal community (40 hours total). Students should seek opportunities to serve larger Rapid City community (a list of ideas will be provided to the students).
- Academic focus: Research two different organizations that serve the Rapid City community (some ideas might include United Way, Catholic Social Services, YMCA, Love Inc, Cornerstone Mission, etc). How did the organization get started, what is their mission, where do they get their funding, whom do they serve, how are they staffed, how can you help them, and what kind of challenges do they face?

(From this point forward, continued service to family/church/school is stressed, but no longer tracked for school purposes)

### **Year 3 (10<sup>th</sup> grade):**

- Service focus: Class project – *Kids Against Hunger. Develop committees (project management; fundraising; educating community on hunger/poverty/Honduras; Rapid City project development; marketing and public relations). Parents could help to co-chair committees with students.* From this experience, students will learn to provide leadership and work with others to accomplish a large service- oriented goal. (Time commitment is difficult to determine.)
- Academic focus: Research hunger and poverty in third world countries. Research local hunger and poverty—how are they the same/different? Integrate Biblical and Catholic Social teaching into the experience.

### **Years 4, 5 (11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades):**

- Service focus: Develop a two year relationship with a service site (The instructor helps to identify solid service opportunities; students can develop their own under the supervision of instructor.). Each student meets with service site coordinator and/or a mentor bi-monthly (4 times per year). A mutuality of service begins—the student takes as much from the experience as they bring to it. Students give on average 2 hours per week to the site (50 unpaid hours per year).  
\*Development of mentor/site coordinator expectations is highly important.
- Academic focus: Research your site. Research the social ills addressed by your site (such as violence/abuse, illness, disability, racism, poverty, etc). Reflect on what you are learning from the experience. How can you make a difference? How is the experience making YOU different? Describe your relationship with your mentor. Write a biography on a famous servant leader. Interview the leader/s of your site—how did they get started in a career of serving others? Integrate Biblical and Catholic Social teaching. (*Have an essay contest out of one of these topics during National Catholic Schools Week and include the essays of the winners in the weekly parish bulletins.*)
- When possible, have juniors choose a site where a senior is working. This will help with training a junior, senior leadership, building relationships with the sites, etc.