

Values in Action: Learning through Service Learning Projects

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Abstract

Delta Senior School, catering to students 17 to 21 years old with mild intellectual disability (MID), aims to produce dignified and contributing graduates. As students with disability, they are often seen as beneficiaries, on the receiving end of help and assistance. There is a need to provide the appropriate opportunities for students to be able to contribute to the family and society before they leave the school. The “Values in Action” approach was embarked on, where students were engaged in structured platforms to give service to the community. A series of programmes were designed to involve students in activities that promote learning outcomes through giving service. Life skills such as communication, project management and social skills were built into the learning objectives of these activities, customised to the varied abilities of the students. Values of respect, responsibility, caring and sharing, were emphasised throughout the programme design. One such service-learning programme took the form of a collaborative project called “From Delta with Love”. By harnessing the strength of community partners and grassroots organisations, we were able to reach out to the more vulnerable in the community like the elderly, under-privileged families and other special needs communities. In one particular activity, parents were involved in contributing items for students to make gift hampers, to be distributed to the elderly residents in the surrounding area. While teachers relate with students on what was being learnt from the project in the classroom, parents could further reinforce the learning at home. Students expressed a sense of accomplishment in being able to contribute to the society, and exhibited higher levels of motivation and confidence, and increased self-esteem. Community stakeholders gave positive feedback on the programme, and are keen to strengthening partnership with the school in providing community-based learning opportunities for students. The project yielded positive outcomes for students, as they realise their ability to contribute to society as dignified individuals. It presents great potential for the facilitation of independent living as they transit to post-school life and workplaces.