

Purposeful learning in the middle years

Young adolescents have a tendency to disengage from learning. They can find 'school' boring, devaluing and irrelevant. Community-based action projects can provide a learning context that reconnects students with school and that contributes to their development into lifelong learners.



- Make a list of at least 20 community-based projects that we could suggest to our middle years students.
- What extra information would students need to make a choice about the most suitable project for them?
- How would these projects link into our school curriculum?

'There is no shortage of useful things that need to be done within communities. And students have the skills and abilities to do these. Their learning, as well as meeting course objectives and requirements, can be authentic and productive and have outcomes of real, external and recognised value. At the same time, these approaches enhance the recognition of the present, active citizenship of young people – as they are given substantive and important roles within their communities. As students are asked to undertake tasks that **they** see as important and that are recognised by **others** as being valuable, engagement [in learning] is a natural consequence.'

Holdsworth, R (2004)

Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne

Second International Middle Schooling Conference:

Engaging students in purposeful learning through community action

<http://www.sapmea.asn.au/conventions/middleschool/papers/Holdsworth,%20Roger.pdf>

accessed 14.3.05

Some examples of community-based action projects include:

- making the local area safer
- developing a school approach to truancy
- developing a computer tutorial program for elderly people
- making a major contribution to a community cause such as a food drive
- rehabilitating a local natural area.