

How have students made community progress?

CCSSR2—clarify the main/central idea of a passage; analyze a passage to identify relationships; support important ideas with examples.

Read about three Chicago service-learning projects. In each project, students decided how to help their community. They learned skills. They learned about their community. They helped their community. After you read all three reports, answer the questions.

A Garden in Lawndale

Eighth grade students at a school in Lawndale on Polk Street saw new buildings. Families were moving into the community. But they saw vacant lots, too. They saw trash there. Even when they picked up the trash, the lots did not stay clean. Wind blew trash there from the street. “No one can do anything about this,” said one student. “Yes, we can,” said another. Their teacher agreed. They would plant a garden in a vacant lot.

The students met with the principal. They asked if they could create a community garden in the vacant lot closest to the school. She told them that was a great idea, but they would have to volunteer their own time and work on it every week. The students agreed. They promised they would donate their time every Saturday until it snowed. Even then they would keep the sidewalk cleared near the lot.

The students needed to collaborate with the community. They wanted to be sure that everyone in the community wanted the garden. They met with block clubs and told them their plan. The block clubs applauded the project. They said they would help.

The students went on the Internet to learn about plants. They looked for plants that would grow well in Chicago. They chose some evergreen plants. They chose some bulbs, too. They learned a lot about plants and gardening.

The students needed money to get the bulbs and plants. They needed tools, too. They made a budget. They sent that budget and their plan to get funding. The Steans Family Foundation funded their plan. The Steans family has been supporting progress in Lawndale for many years. The students got \$300 to buy what they needed.

They are 8th graders, so this spring they will meet with the seventh grade. They will ask them to take over the garden. It will be their legacy to the school community.

Recycle Here

Students at an elementary school in Pilsen studied ecology. They learned that there was so much trash that it was a world-wide problem. They asked their teacher if they could do something to help solve the problem. “It is a very big problem,” she said, “but if every community helps, that would really make a difference.”

The students decided to set up a Saturday Recycling Center. They would collect trash. Then they would get it to a city of Chicago recycling site. The students used the Internet to find out more about recycling in Chicago. They found that there are 15 “drop off” sites, places where people can bring trash to get it recycled. The students had to figure out how to get the trash to the site. They went to talk with the minister of the church near their school. They know that he drives a van and helps people. They went to ask him to help with their plan.

The minister agreed to help. He said he would pick up the recycling one Saturday each month after the student pack it. He said it was such a good plan they could use the churchyard for the Recycling Center. They decided it would be once a month, on Saturday afternoon. They chose the first Saturday of the month.

So everything was organized. All they needed was trash to recycle.

The students made posters to put in stores in the neighborhood. The minister announced the new recycling program at the church service and put up a poster, too. The community center put a note about the recycling in their monthly newsletter. The students went into the other classrooms at their school and asked children to tell their families about the Saturday recycling.

The first Saturday was a great success. In fact, they got so much trash that the minister had to make two trips to take it all to the drop off site. The students still send reminders home, but now most people in the community know that if it's the first Saturday it's time to recycle.

A Better Environment

A school on the north side of Chicago had an opportunity. They could get a grant from the Burnham Plan Centennial if they could make a great plan. It had to be a plan to make a lasting change that would improve the community. Students and teachers talked about what they could do. They had a nice environment. But they wanted to make it really beautiful.

They decided to create a very big beautification project. They would change the landscape. They would make their own botanic garden with many different kinds of plants and flowers. They would go to visit the Botanic Garden to research. Then they would start their project. They got the grant. They got \$1,000 from the Polk Bros. Foundation to carry out their big plan.

Students told parents about the plan. Parents thought it was a great idea. They would help. They would help with the planting. They would help raise money, too. The \$1,000 would pay for the bus trips. They would need more money to pay for the plants and supplies. The PTA raised \$10,000. They made sure this plan would be even bigger.

The students, parents, and teachers are going to make a big difference. They have partners helping them: the Chicago Park District and the Botanic Garden. The plan is so big it is going to take a few years to finish. The students who start it now will be in high school when it is finished. But they will see this progress every day because they live near the school. Everyone in that community will have a better environment because of this plan.

Complete this chart for these three reports.

Problem	Solution	What Students Learned

All three of these selections have the same main idea. What is it?

- ☐ it takes money to make progress
- ☐ students have good ideas
- ☐ it is important to collaborate for community progress

Underline the information in each report that supports the idea you chose.