



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

MASTER OF NONPROFIT ADMINISTRATION

Private School, Public Purpose

Social Responsibilities of Independent Schools

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NPA 662: Nonprofit Data Analysis - Capstone

Spring 2022

Instructor: Marco Tavanti Ph.D.



Source: Athenian Community Service. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/athenian.communityservice/>

INTRODUCTION

Independent schools

- Tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
- Private, but not all private schools are independent
 - Governed by independent board of trustees
 - Funded primarily by tuition & charitable contributions (\$16,000 average/year)
- Determines its curriculum, educational philosophy, and pedagogical practices without external interference
- Accreditation stricter with the National Association of Independent Schools

(PUBLIC) PURPOSE

Independent schools' public purpose programs serve:

- Students → future leaders committed to a life of service
 - Only 1.5% of students nationwide
- Community → external organizations and youth & teacher education hubs

This study explores the idea of “private school, public purpose” and asks, as a wealth of resources, what responsibilities do independent schools have to their communities?

A portrait of Al Adams, a man with grey hair, glasses, and a beard, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

“Independent schools are uniquely positioned to make a difference in the public domain. Given the societal turf independent schools occupy, the considerable resources they command, and the powerful network of caring and influential people they attract, independent schools have the opportunity—and, I believe, the obligation—to do more than educate 1.5 percent of our nation’s children exceptionally well.”

- Al Adams (2000)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the characteristics of successful public purpose programs in independent schools?

RQ2: What is the role / relationship of religious philosophies and Round Square membership in service programs?

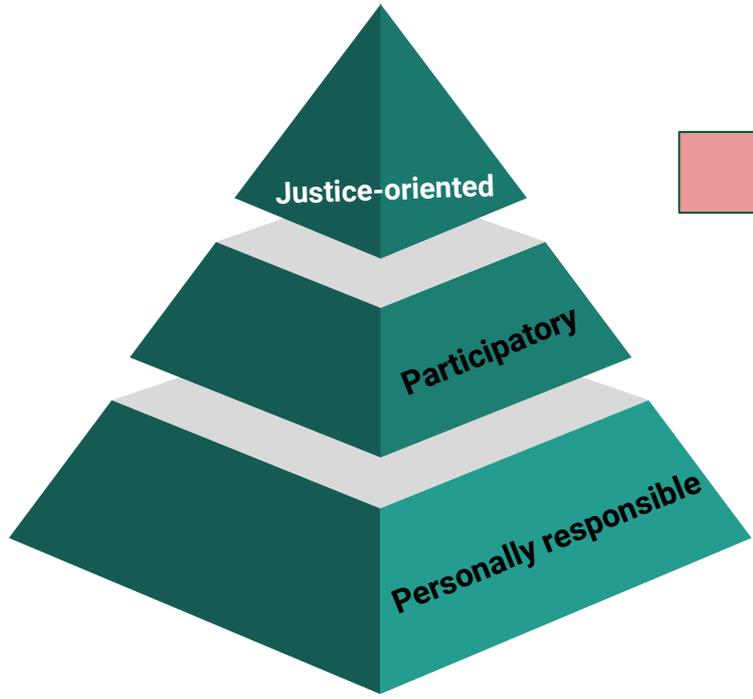
RQ3: How could The Athenian School and other independent schools deliver on their mission to graduate students who integrate “service as a way of life”?

METHODS - APPROACHES

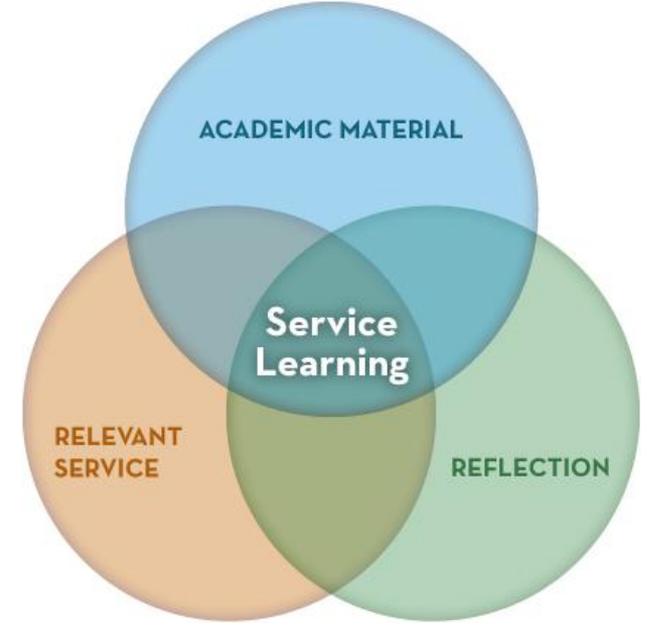
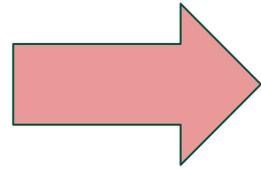
- NAIS 2013 Study on Public Purpose
- Comparative Analysis: Public Communications
 - Round Square schools
 - Website & Facebook posts 2019-2022
- The Athenian School Focus Group
 - Jamboard content analysis
- Expert Interviews
 - Al Adams



STUDENTS



Kahne & Westheimer (2004)



Source: Loyola University New Orleans, Office of Academic Affairs (2022)

FINDINGS

Community Service

- Food Bank volunteer shift
- Beach Clean Up
- Writing Valentine's Day cards to seniors
- 5k fundraiser

Service-Learning

- Environmental Science class doing ecological restoration on Mt Diablo
- Architecture class builds tiny house & donates to NPO

Community Engagement

- High school acapella group goes to public elementary school each week to run a choir class where public arts funding has been cut.

FINDINGS

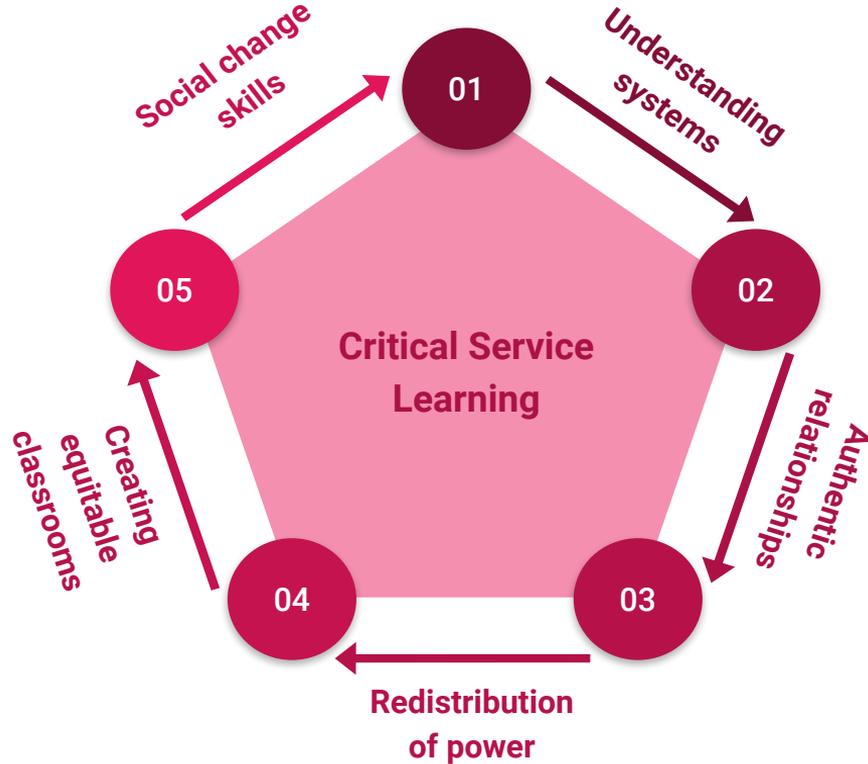
Community Service

Service-Learning

Community Engagement



STUDENTS & COMMUNITY → Community Engagement

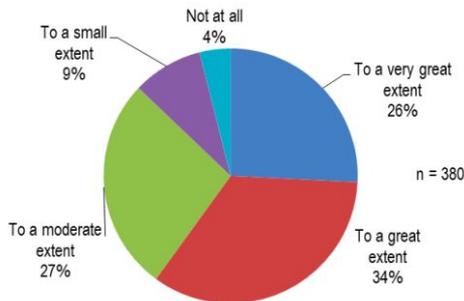


FINDINGS

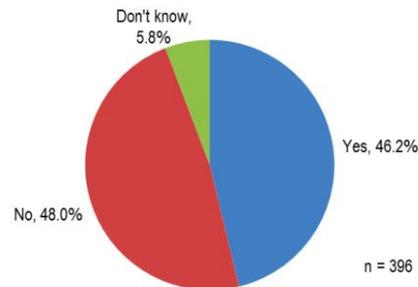
2013 NAIS Public Purpose in Independent Schools Report

- Some type of public purpose program exists at 98% of schools surveyed (n=402)
 - 95% = green programs: recycling, gardening, waste reduction, etc.
 - 93% = social service volunteering: senior centers, food banks, etc.

To what extent is public purpose reflected in your school's mission and priorities? (Check one only.)



Does your school currently work with a local public school or school district on a public purpose program/initiative?



- 75% facilitate service-learning programs
 - 72% = partnerships / collaborations with NPOs
- Less than half have relationships with local public schools
 - Only 20% collaborate on enrichment programs, such as art, music, APs, etc.

FINDINGS

Comparative analysis (n=10) = website & Facebook posts (2019 - 2022)

- There is no evidence of Round Square (n=8) & religious institutions (n=5) having increased or more impactful public purpose programming mentioned to the public
- Service programming resource input ≠ mission delivery & values on service

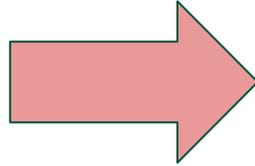
The Athenian School Focus Group (n=228)

- Faculty and parents want deeper service experiences for students
- Service activities are idiosyncratic, often dependent on individual faculty and dissolve when people leave
- Faculty want double the partnerships with external organizations
- Parents overwhelmingly don't know what's happening



COMMUNICATION GAP

**sell
olive
oil**



IMPLICATIONS

- Assessment and measurements of impact for service programming are not well documented internally or from school to school
- Only insiders know what's happening with public purpose programming at schools
 - Families, perspective students, & community organizations knowing is a marketing tool that is untapped in these schools
- Community engagement via critical service-learning is becoming best practice for service programming

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build capacity for community engagement.

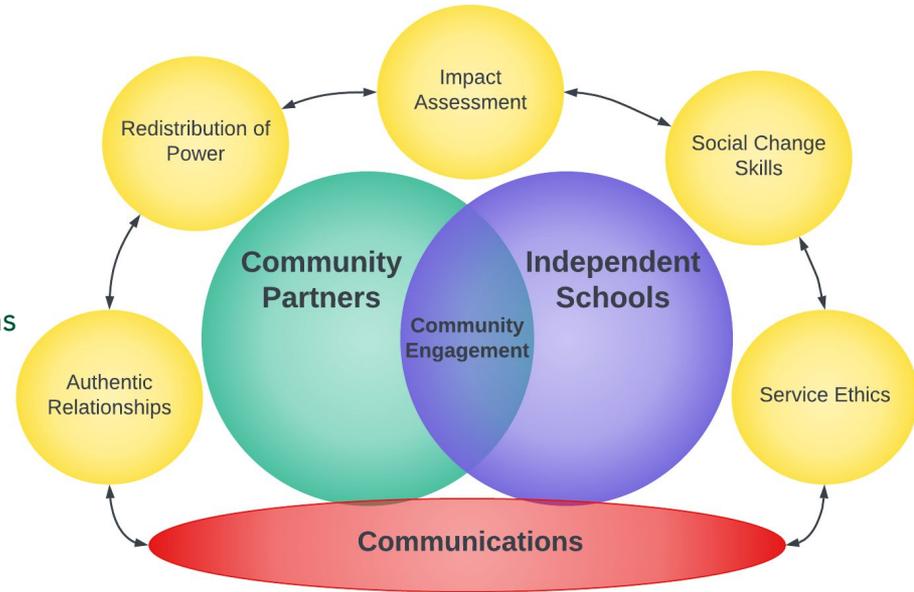
Schools who value public purpose need to invest in people to steward relationships with organizations and regularly coach teachers on integrating service-learning into their curriculum.

Extend the reach.

Share resources. Summer programs & after-school programs for all students, community nights, inclusive teacher learning institutes or exchanges, etc. Community engagement is bringing people on campus and working together off-campus.

Yell it from the rooftops.

Photos, blogs, videos, and links to resources on the website. Families, students, nonprofit partners, and the community at large should know what's happening and the full context in which its happening!



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SUMMARY

Independent schools' can and should serve the communities around them. Public purpose programs mainly serve:

- Students as future leaders committed to a life of service, although only 1.5% of students nationwide
- Community via relationships with external organizations and youth & teacher education hubs

PURPOSE

This study explores the idea of “private school, public purpose” and asks, as a wealth of resources, what responsibilities to independent schools have do their communities?

RESEARCH

RQ1: What are the characteristics of successful public purpose programs in independent schools?

RQ2: What is the role / relationship of religious philosophies and Round Square membership in service programs?

RQ3: How could The Athenian School and other independent schools deliver on their mission to graduate students who integrate “service as a way of life”?

METHODS

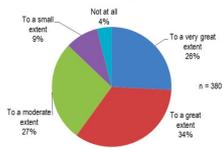
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DATA AND ANALYSIS

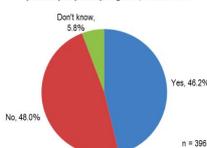
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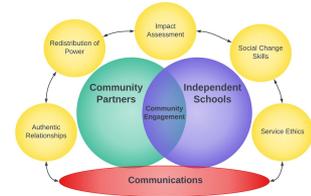
- Faculty and parents want deeper service experiences for students
- Service activities are idiosyncratic, often dependent on individual faculty and dissolve when people leave
- Faculty want double the partnerships with external organizations
- Parents overwhelmingly don't know what's happening

RESULTS

- Goal = Justice-oriented outcomes for students
- Assessment and measurements of impact for service programming are not well documented internally or from school to school
- Only insiders know what's happening with public purpose programming at schools. Families, perspective students, & community organizations knowing is a marketing tool
- Community engagement via critical service-learning is becoming best practice for service programming

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand Capacity
2. Extend Reach
3. Communicate!



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