

What is PSL?

By Audrey Austin

Many schools are beginning to offer a service learning program to their high school students. Perry High School is one place where the class has been around for over a decade. When signing up for this class, many students may wonder, what even is service learning? They also may have no clue how beneficial being a part of this program can be for themselves and their future.

Mark Soeder and Allison Trentanelli are in charge of the PSL (Perry Service Learning) class at Perry High School. Trentanelli describes PSL as “academics in action.” She explains that the roles kids are given in this class are real life scenarios. For example, kids experience different fields of work through their volunteering; they deal with real contracts, interviews, applications, and more. Taking a class like PSL offers many opportunities for students. Soeder and Trentanelli explained that students are given the opportunity to have a “deeper role in their community.” They also have the opportunity to build their “leadership” skills and get a better idea of what they want to do in the future. Trentanelli explains that she has had many students change their future plans and majors simply because they enjoyed the work they did volunteering during PSL. Soeder added on that “at least one student every year volunteers at Broadmoor and [they say that they are] changing [their] major.” They have also had a few students get offered a paid job position or a higher role in some of the places where they volunteered.

Kids are also given opportunities outside of their required two hours a week through an app used in the class. The app, Innerview, has been used in the PSL classroom to log volunteer hours and get honest reflections from students. Innerview is also beneficial because of its future

impact on the students. The app is a free interview management for service. Innerview is used to determine scholarships for students. It allows kids to create a good service resume for college or other opportunities. Trentanelli and Soeder have heard from a few graduates that the app itself is actually being used in future businesses and organizations as well.

Other than all these opportunities that students have, what makes this class so unique from a regular classroom is the setup during the week. Although the class is run all week, it is not necessarily always in the classroom doing “normal classroom activities.” Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are traditional academic days where students do classroom-based activities such as, talk about a book they are reading or learn about specific service topics. Tuesdays and Thursdays are used as volunteer time. If a student volunteers, for example, in the elementary school during their PSL block on Tuesday and Thursdays, that’s what they will be doing during that time. If they do volunteering outside of school hours, then kids can use the time on Tuesdays and Thursdays as an opportunity for other needs.