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Grade: 12
Topic: Community Service

How many of you have participated in community service and didn't understand the purpose of it or couldn't engage? I definitely have. One day I was participating in an environmental conservation activity. Instead of cleaning litter or assisting at a nursing home, I would have rather spent time with cuddly puppies at an animal shelter where I would have more interest in the service. During our annual day of service, my school has only 4 options. Limited options for community service create problems because students are less engaged and don't get as much from the experience. Therefore, school administrators should provide more options that better align with students' interests, so they can fulfill their community service obligations and become socially responsible citizens.

This is especially important, because if students don't participate in community service it can affect them in college, networking, or even finding a job opportunity. Without community service "we wouldn't have a strong quality of life- be able to grow and develop," states the Kalamazoo Gazette. Furthermore, "students who volunteered had a 27% better chance of finding a job than those who didn't." The consequences of not participating in community service are clear. Students should be able to choose so they can engage with an organization of their choice.

And it's not only disengaged students who stand to lose something! This also creates problems for students who get so involved that they "easily become frustrated that others don't share their passion," states James - a reporter on school-based community service. To get students more interested, it would help if they felt their friends were also interested. This creates a spark of engagement when seeing their peers excited about volunteering. And on the flip side, seeing their peers disengaged will cause them to be less interested in volunteering. It's sad for me to see students not engaging in their community.

Some people believe that mandated community service is a bad idea because if you make something mandatory students will "lose the joy of volunteering" (Stewart). However, the benefits of mandating community service far outweigh the potential negative effects. WM Consulting shows that students who volunteer are "19% more likely to graduate from college than their non-volunteering peers."

To increase engagement in community service, schools need to offer more options. One way to do this is if schools offer students the option to fundraise to donate to "a cause of their choice plus it's a thoughtful way [to] show commitment to a charitable organization," according to Samantha, a community service blogger. Also, schools have the power to do this - all it takes is more community service options.

Word Count: 436