

Developing Service Learning

CPLC

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Teachers: Personalize a letter similar to the one below and give it to each student. The most important part of this section of the course – is for students to know they matter and that they can make a positive difference.

Dear Students:

Here is the opportunity for you to take charge of your future.

Service-learning offers you the time to:

- **Learn to be a leader**
- **Take action that will improve your community, the nation and the world**
- **Accomplish something meaningful**
- **Build new friendships**
- **Learn about the world in a dynamic and interactive way**
- **Fulfill and exceed Academic Standards**
- **Gain a sense of inner satisfaction that comes naturally from doing something meaningful for others.**

Today there are over four million students throughout the United States giving their time and expertise to a Service-Learning project. Think of it – you are taking part in one of the most powerful programs in the world. Millions of your peers are joining with you to create a better future for this nation and the world.

By taking responsibility and taking action you will become a driving force to truly make a difference. Your voice and actions matter – in more ways than you know...now is your chance to use them to make our world a better place!

Thanks for being you.

Developing Service Learning Projects

High quality service-learning can contribute to student academic achievement and civic and social development. However, for these outcomes to occur, service-learning projects must be organized to maximize the meaningfulness of both service and learning.

Service-learning is considered a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Constructivists (e.g., Brooks & Brooks, 1999) advocate allowing students to actively create knowledge by grappling with essential academic ideas in a personally and socially relevant context. Many constructivists also recommend that instruction be organized around a problem, and that students acquire knowledge and skills within the problem-solving experience. Service-learning shares this emphasis on active learning and problem solving. However, it is unique in that the problems that students encounter are real community needs, and the knowledge and skills gained, those needed for informed, engaged citizenship.

Although there are several useful models for organizing service-learning projects, in a constructivist framework, service-learning is viewed as a cyclical process with four interlocking phases: problem identification and preparation for service, the service activity itself, reflection, and celebration and future planning. The following figures explain these steps in more detail.

1. Problem identification and preparation for service
 - a. Identify the goals and objectives
 - b. Define the service need and project
 - c. Determine the scope and sequence of activities
 - d. Tackle logistical issues
 - e. Gain orientation and training
2. The Service Activity
 - a. Should meet an actual community need
 - b. Can be
 - i. Direct: Involve contact with service recipients
 - ii. Indirect: A process or product intended to benefit an organization or community
 - iii. Advocacy: Produce social change through expression of voice
 - c. Reflection on service learning process and program should occur throughout the program
3. Reflection
 - a. Reading, writing, doing and telling about the experience. Reflection should encourage students to:
 - i. Link class concepts to experience and vice versa
 - ii. Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the service experience
 - iii. Gain increased academic learning, self-awareness, moral development and social responsibility
4. Celebration and future planning

Why Service Learning

Community service is a power tool for youth development. It has the ability to facilitate the transformation of a young person from passive recipient to an active service provider and consequently helps to redefine the perception of youth in the community from a cause of the problems to the source of the solution. When combined with State Standards and formal education and when thoughtfully organized to provide concrete opportunities for youth to acquire knowledge and skills to make a meaningful contribution – students become empowered to act positively and engaged in the learning process.

Service learning enables teachers to employ a variety of effective teaching strategies that emphasize youth-centered, interactive, experiential education. Service learning integrates curricular concepts with real life situations and motivates youth to analyze evaluation and synthesize these concepts through practical problem-solving as they plan and initiate their project. Finally, the awareness and acceptance of significant roles service learning allows youth to plan in the community, and across the globe, are powerful forces in dispelling the sense of isolation and alienation so many junior high school students suffer today.

School-Based and Community Based Service Learning Standards
Adopted from the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform

1. Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.

Service learning efforts should begin with clearly articulated learning goals, to be achieved through structures preparation and reflection – discussion, writing, reading, observation and service itself. Learning goals – knowledge, skills, attitudes – must be compatible with the developmental goals of the young person.

Journal/Scrapbook: Students should take pictures of their efforts, including plans and journal in a formal manner along the way. Each scrapbook should begin with a five paragraph persuasive essay that responds to: Describe your service learning project and convince your audience of the benefits it has to the school or community.

2. Model service learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, to test new roles and to encourage positive risk-taking. It also rewards competence.

The experience of serving is not the end in and of itself. By performing meaningful work, students can develop and apply new skills, try on different roles and experience engaging planning – thus reinforcing connections between academic learning and the “real world”.

With the world as their laboratory, students have the potential to develop increased understanding and self-reliance in real settings. They learn to work cooperatively and to relate to their peers and to adults in new and constructive ways. Their self-image improves in a legitimate way, not because of imagined good feelings but rather as a result of increased competence and positive experience.

3. Students' efforts are recognized by those served, including their peers, the school and the community.

During the period of service as well as with a culminating event, students should share with the community and their peers what has been gained and given through service. Recognizing the work that students perform reinforces the significance of the enterprise and the worth of said students.

In a society that values work and measures people's importance by the jobs they do, students, especially adolescents, are perceived as not-contributing members.

Credit for their achievements, affirmation of the skills they have mastered and appreciation for the time they have devoted to the community should be acknowledged publicly – at the site level, in the newspaper, on television and other places.

Whether the culminating activity is a presentation about the service, a book of essays, pictures, a party, a picnic, or an outing, there are forms that end of project recognition may take. Student creativity and energy should be utilized in the planning and execution of the event. For example, students should write press releases, fill community service spots and or contact other organizations or members of the community informing them of the project and the culminating event – whenever appropriate.

4. Students own the project

When students are given the opportunity to develop and implement a project – they own it. From beginning to end – this must be their project. Adults can help to guide discussion, provide ideas and facilitate the process, but the actual idea and project must be the idea of the students involved.

Instead of being told that they will help the community or world, students should be asked to determine the needs of the community in which they live – or the world in which they live. Teachers must serve as facilitators who make the tasks realistic and doable, but the project must be driven by the students, not by the adults.

5. The service students perform make a meaningful contribution to the community.

The service roles students take and/or their projects will differ widely, depending upon the age of the students, the needs of the community and the specific learning goals that have been determined. But, whatever the activity, the following aspects are shared by high quality approaches and effective strategies:

- The service must be real. It must fill a recognized need in the school, community or world.
- The service activity must be developmentally appropriate.
- A tangible or visible outcome or product results from the service – and when possible – demonstrates the learning outcomes.

6. Effective service learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

All learning programs can benefit from systematic evaluation and service learning is no different. This type of evaluation includes assessments that provide a

detailed documentation of the program components and processes, the outcomes identified and expected of the participants and the impact the service learning program has on the individual participants, school and community.

7. Service learning connects the school with the community in new and positive ways.

Service learning can reduce the barriers that often separate students and our schools from the community at large. Students learn that they can move beyond their small circle of peers and take their place as contributing members of the community as they discover that learning occurs through both traditional and non-traditional means.

8. Service learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school or sponsoring organization and its community.

School based: In order for service learning to be accepted and succeed in any setting, it must receive school support for its philosophy and its financial requirements. School-based service learning needs the support of both the district and school site administrators. Support must not be “token” – but rather authentic and backed with actions that support individual and group projects.

Community based: In order for service learning to be accepted and succeed in any setting, it must receive institutional support. Too often, students serving agencies enthusiastic about the results are only offered again token support. If your project is community based, please make sure you have authentic support before you and your students invest hard work and dedication to it.

School and Community based: Well spoken recognition is important, what is significant is the provision of the time that goes into exemplary service learning. Teachers who implement service learning must be supported with planning and implementation time as well as a reasonable budget for student expenses.

The development, implementation and coordination of service projects that are outside of school require a level of support that must extend beyond the efforts of any individual or group of teachers. Service learning enhances the school community partnership, but to do so, it must be presented to the community in a manner that does not conflict with community interests.

The Project Plan

Each project is unique to the needs of the community. The purpose of these pages is to help you clarify your community service project goals and keep track of project details. You will need to determine the specifics on your own. You can use all of these pages or none of these pages – as you see fit. This is by no means comprehensive, nor is it the only way to approach a community service project.

This Project Plan divides the work into four key areas.

1. Preparation – including project identification and planning
2. Action
3. Formal Evaluation
4. Outline Resources

Success in developing something new takes time and it takes practice. Reflecting, and keeping good notes as the project proceeds, will assist you with evaluating the process and its outcome.

PREPARATION

Preparation for a Service-Learning Project consists of two parts: project identification and planning.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Consider this first step as a needs assessment to determine what kinds of service will benefit the community and what skills your students can learn in this context.

Brainstorming a Project: Community Needs

Finding a meaningful and useful project may require some investigation. Are there community groups that could use a helping hand? What are some niches in your community that need development?

Brainstorm with your students about possibilities.

They could be aware of resources and needs that you are not. The following people may have needs or ideas about possible projects. They also could have resources available, including assistance, sponsorship or expertise.

- Business people
- Personal contacts
- Community groups
- Public agencies – forest service, library, Homeless Shelter

List your ideas for projects below. This is a great opportunity for you and your students to discuss the possibilities and weigh the merits of each. Projects that are not selected may be explored another time – either as spin-offs or parts to an ongoing series of service-learning projects).

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

PLANNING

The following checklist provides an overview of the main considerations for planning the project. Your project may or may not require all these considerations. Details of each detail follows.

- Budget Requirements
- Celebration and Demonstrations
- Curriculum and Assessment
- Goals and Objectives
- Liability Issues
- Media Coverage
- Participating Roles
- Scheduling
- Supervision
- Timeline
- Training
- Transportation
- Reflection

DETAILS AND DEFINITIONS

Celebration/Demonstration: Celebrating the accomplishments of your project is imperative...you deserve...plus it allows students to step back and see what they've achieved. Considerations:

- What will you demonstrate or exhibit?
 - Presentation of concepts learned during the project and how they relate to the service
 - Demonstration of the service or "product"
 - Possibility for further service-learning

- Who will be invited to the celebration
 - Parents
 - Schoolmates – possibly at an assembly
 - Community Partner
 - District Office
 - Local news media
 - Business and community members

Curriculum: Service-learning will provide an alternative context for your existing curriculum. There is no format – no right or wrong way to approach it. However, including the following in the development of the learning opportunities should provide a rich learning experience:

- Activities that stimulate the acquisition and application of course concepts and skills
- Promotion of high levels of thinking and construction of knowledge
- Communication of information and ideas – both random and directed
- Assessments that are integrated with instruction

Develop multiple methods for students to demonstrate their successes. Assignments that students complete for course credit may include:

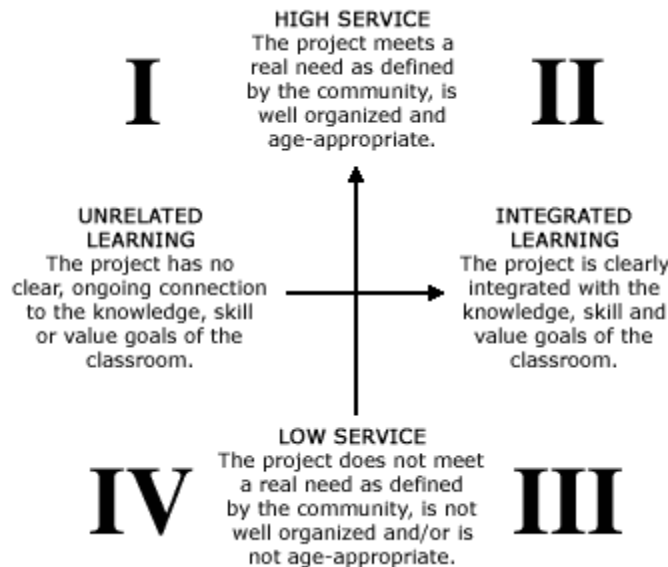
- Journals kept for the duration of the project
- Oral presentations or demonstrations
- Essays
- Products developed for the project – or photographs of them
- Diagrams that map out solutions to the defined problem
- Research papers on relevant background information
- Student self-evaluations

Include several of the above in a portfolio.

Goals and Objectives: Tying project goals to specific outcomes of the project is imperative to the planning process. Whether you begin with a service idea and seek learning objectives to match – or vice versa – you must clearly develop goals for both. It is paramount to involve students in this process to give them ownership of the project.

First, define where the project falls on the service learning map below. Consider the levels of both service and learning outcomes of the project. Some projects may be high levels of one but not much of the other. For example, students may be student a local watershed (high learning), but they do not assist in its needed restoration (low service); such a project would fall into quadrant III. Likewise, some projects may have high levels of service but do not consider an academic component (quadrant II).

While all projects are valid – aim for the top right quadrant, (II), which will provide participants with a good balance of learning and service.



Your overall goals can be outlined as follows:

Service Goals	Learning Goals (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities)
Benefit to students: _____ _____	Students will know: _____
Benefits to the school or community partner: _____	Students will understand: _____
_____	Students will be able to: _____ _____

Learning Needs Assessment

What do you want your students to learn, and how can it be linked to the project? Organize this by breaking down the learning goals into objectives that are clearly linked to your students' objectives so curricular outcomes become clear. The U.S. Department of Labor offers a framework that integrates well with the principals of service learning.

Five Competencies

1. Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans and allocates
2. Interpersonal: Works with others
3. Information: Acquires and uses information
4. Systems: Understands complex interrelationships
5. Technology: Works with a variety of technologies

Three Part Foundation

1. Basic Skills: Reads, writes, performs math, listens and speaks
2. Thinking Skills: Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn and reasons
3. Personal Qualities: Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty.
4. Use the tables on the following pages to establish student learning objectives and their connections to curriculum and/or state/local standards. *Post these on large sheets for your students to use in reflection and evaluation of the project as it progresses.* Students appreciate knowing exactly how they will be assessed.

Why write out your objectives?

1. They can assist you with your learning assessment
2. Clear objectives guide the evaluation of project outcomes
3. Tracking the objectives keeps students on track

Competency	Objective	Corresponding Curriculum
Resources	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	
Interpersonal	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	
Thinking Skills	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	
Technology	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	
Basic Skills	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	

BUDGET

Service learning does not need to be expensive; however, sometimes funds are required for materials or transportations. What parts of the project require funds?

AREA REQUIRING FUNDING	ESTIMATED COST
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL	\$

Potential funding sources include:

- Community partner sponsorships
- Grants
- Business sponsorships
- Fundraising
- Sweet-talking your principal

Liability

Talk with your school administrator about all liability requirements. Some of these include:

- Permission slips, releases for minor participants
- Drivers insurance for those providing transportation
- Emergency binder to take with you to community sites – with student home and emergency contacts etc.

Media

Will you involve the local newspaper or television station in recording the project? Don't forget to send picture, call for coverage, have students sent press releases and letters to the editor describing the progress of the project.

Participant Roles

Roles of participants vary from those in a traditional classroom setting. Here is an example...but it is not in any way all inclusive:

Participant	Multiple Roles
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ planners▪ risk takers▪ collaborators▪ independent workers▪ valuable contributors
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ facilitator▪ community resource expert▪ public relations director▪ architect of safety▪ leader▪ mentor
Community Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ teacher▪ leader▪ supervisor▪ information source▪ mentor
Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ facilitator▪ extra support▪ information source▪ mentor

Scheduling

How much time will you need for each component of the project?

Will you need blocks of time? Does it cover a curricular span of another teacher and can you combine classes and aspects of the project?

Plan each session carefully and try to involve all of your students.

Align your needs with your timeline.

Structure

How will you implement the project into your class(es)? How many teachers are involved? How does this effect scheduling? Is this project a stand-alone? Or is it part of a larger project?

Supervision

The ideal number of students for each adult varies with the age range of the students, complexity and difficulty of the project, and the service site. What is the student to teacher ratio? Is this sufficient to carry out the goals of the project?

Timeline

Map out the timeline for the project. Include start and end dates, onsite activities and any classroom instruction or reflections related to the project. Projects that involve frequent site visits and/or are relatively intensive may be more difficult to pinpoint.

Training

Preservice training is a good idea for all participants. It gives participants a better understanding of expectations and procedures, and may alert you to other needs.

General training needs of students

- Effective communication
- Problem solving
- Base knowledge required
- Cooperation and collaboration
- Appreciation for community and diversity
- Safety and workplace rules
- Understanding expectations of community members
- Philosophy and methodology
- Base skills/knowledge

Tailor the general training needs to your project.

Reflection

What are strong points in the service learning project?

What needs more development? What are some possible solutions?

Action

Go for it! Review your plans for each session to keep on track with goals, reflect on progress and problems, and continue striving for solutions. General questions to consider during the action phase:

- Is the timeline realistic?
- Have unseen needs arisen? Involve students in finding solutions. (Such reflection can assist in modifying the project.)
- How are students feeling about the process?
- How are community partners feeling about the process?
- How can you maintain/strengthen the connection between service and learning?

Reflection and Evaluation During the Project

Reflection can be written, oral, or large group dialogue. It can be a self-evaluation done by students or evaluation of the project by the group. Suggested questions for reflection:

What kinds of things are we doing? How do our actions match our goals and objectives (both as a group and as individuals; refer to posted goals and objectives)

- Do they match our expectations? If not, should we revise expectations? Or the project?
- Are leaders emerging? Who?
- What is the most difficult part? The most rewarding?
- What is your main contribution?
- Did we miss something in our planning? What?
- What kind of skills and/or knowledge do we need to make this project a success?
- What have you learned?
- How have we helped solve the problem that is the basis of the service component of this project?
- Are there any other needs arising that might be a good second project?

Formal Evaluation

The formal evaluation process can be broken down into three major areas: student learning, student service, and student experience. Evaluation is crucial in order to assess the success of the project and also give feedback for improvement in future projects.

1. Assessing your Students' Learning

Linking your assessment of the service and learning components to your earlier goals and objectives will give you the best picture for both summative and formative (for future projects) evaluations. It also eliminates surprises for students, provided that you have included them in the entire development process (see Goals and Objective section).

There are several ways to evaluate the success of the program. Using rubrics allows you to clearly link outcomes to objectives. Students, teachers and community partners can use these to evaluate the process as a whole, the project outcomes, or individuals (e.g., self-evaluation or teachers evaluating students). Students may also want to evaluate the community partner on willingness to work with them in positive ways.

An example of using rubrics for each participant is given below. Scoring occurs on a high-to-low scale. Scales can measure performance, satisfaction, learning, etc. Scales should be clearly stated at the top of each rubric.

It is essential if you are going to use rubrics that you also include a section for written comments so that students and the community partner have a chance to express additional thoughts or to refer to a tangible outcome (e.g., an assignment for the project; see Curriculum section).

Check one for each objective.

4=Outstanding; 3=Very well; 2=Satisfactory; 1=Needs Improvement

Objective	4	3	2	1	Comments

2. Assessing Your Students' Service

Design an instrument to collect information from your community partner. You may want to ask about:

- Perceptions of students' willingness to participate
- The extent to which students met expectations

Share and discuss the information you receive with your students.

3. Assessing the Experience for Students

Design an instrument to collect information on your students' attitudes about the project. You may ask them:

- What do they think they learned?
- What do they think they contributed to the community?
- What are their attitudes about service learning? Have they changed?
- Do they have any other ideas for projects?
- What is their perception of the community partner and their involvement?

Online Resources

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Learn and Serve Project

www.nwrel.org/ruraled/learnservice/index.html

This site is designed to provide contact information, highlight rural schools with service learning programs, and provide links to local and national service-learning resources. It includes links to the Northwest Rural Learn & Serve Network and information on upcoming grants.

Corporation for National Service

http://www.nationalservice.gov/home/site_map/index.asp

The Corporation for National Service (CNS) is a federal agency that works with state governments and community organizations to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve through Americorps, Learn and Serve, and National Senior Service Corps programs.

Close Up Foundation's Service Learning Quarterly

www.closeup.org/servlern.htm

The Close Up Foundation's Service Learning Quarterly is a web-based resource for educators. The resources include three project plans that incorporate service into standards-based curriculum. The plans address issues such as tolerance of cultural diversity, prevention of cruelty to animals, and service for senior citizens. The disciplines addressed by the projects include English, Social Studies, History, Science, and Art. Additional project plans are included each quarter.

Learn and Serve America Exchange

www.lsaexchange.org

If you need assistance implementing service-learning programs, have questions, or simply want to speak with someone who has "been there," you can utilize the Exchange as a resource.

Learn, Serve and Surf

www.edb.utexas.edu/servicelearning/index.html

The Learn, Serve and Surf Web site is project completed by a master's degree student in the Instructional Technology Program, of the University of Texas at Austin. It showcases some of the most effective, educationally sound, service-learning resources and tools on the Internet.

Learning In Deed

www.learningindeed.org

Learning In Deed is an initiative which aims to make service-learning—a teaching strategy that integrates service to others with classroom instruction—a part of every K-12 student's experience. The Web site offers information geared toward policymakers, educators and students, researchers, service-learning leaders, and members of the media. The initiative is sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

LEARNS

www.nwrel.org/learns/index.html

Linking Education and America Reads through National Service (LEARNS) is a partnership of the following organizations: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), Southern Regional Council (SRC), Bank Street College of Education (BSC). LEARNS provides training and technical assistance to America Reads and other Corporation for National Service projects focused on literacy and education.

National Service Resource Center

www.etr.org/nsrc

The National Service Resource Center (NSRC) is a training and technical assistance provider to programs funded by the Corporation for National Service. NSRC is your one-stop shopping destination for information specific to community service programs.

National Youth Leadership Council

www.nylc.org

The National Youth Leadership Council's mission is to engage young people in their communities and schools through innovation in learning, service, leadership, and public policy. As one of America's most prominent advocates of service-learning and youth service, the NYLC is at the forefront of efforts to reform education and guide youth oriented public policy.

Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)

<http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCAN>

Provides valuable information for individuals and organizations involved in education and workforce development.

Project Ideas

This list is just a starting point – a place from which to begin brainstorming.

- Start a community garden
- Put an initiative on the ballot
- Think global – help refugees, feed the hungry...look at Darfur, the Congo
- Work on children's rights issues
- Work on human rights issues
- Clean a part
- Start a local museum
- Film and present public service announcements
- Save an endangered species
- Local Watershed
- Start a solar energy project
- Democracy Wall
- Donation Stations
- School violence prevention
- Lobby congress
- Renovate an area
- Clean a community
- Survey your neighborhood to find out what people think are the leading crime causes and do something about it
- Organize a reading hour for children at your local school or library
- Make a care package with mittens, socks, T-shirts, etc. for a child at a homeless shelter
- Arrange for the local health department to conduct neighborhood health checks.
- Volunteer to teach classes on a sport you enjoy and know a lot about.
- Contact Habitat for Humanity to see how you can support them in your community
- Work with the local health department to set up an immunization day or clinic to immunize children against childhood diseases
- Organize a newcomers group in your neighborhood to welcome new families.
- Produce a neighborhood newspaper
- Make maps of local parks, libraries or historic sites
- Research local historic sites and provide the research to visitor's bureau