Service-Learning Standards and Educational Framework

Enduring Understandings:

- There is such a thing as the common good. Individuals can strengthen the common good through various forms of citizen action.
- Service matters. People in our community volunteer to make a difference.
- You can make a difference in your community in a number of ways.

Essential Questions:

- What does the "common good" mean, and why does it matter?
- How do people in our community work for the common good?
- Why serve?
- Why does service matter?
- What can we do to support the common good in our school and community?
- What do I have to give? How has the service of others helped me?
- How far am I willing to go to make a difference?

Service-Learning Standards and Criteria

- Standards of Quality for School-Based and Community-Based Service-Learning
- Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform
- Essential Elements of Service-Learning
- Wingspread Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning (http://www.tcc.edu/students/specialized/civic/servicelearning/principles.htm)
- Coverdell World Wise Schools Service Learning Rubric. (This rubric is taken from the World Wise Schools publication *Looking at Ourselves and Others*. Washington, DC: Peace Corps, 1998, p.6)

Worksheet #6: Service-Learning Rubric

Note to Students: Service learning is a teaching method that combines academic instruction, meaningful service, and critical reflective thinking to enhance student learning and civic responsibility. Use this rubric to evaluate your progress during your service-learning project, and once you've completed it.

	Strong Impact	**Good Impact**	**Some Impact**	**Minimal Impact**
1. Meet actual community needs	Determined by current research conducted or discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by past research discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by making a guess at what community needs may be	Community needs secondary to what a project teacher wants to do; project considers only student needs
2. Are coordinated in collaboration with community	Active, direct collaboration with community by the teacher and/or student	Community members act as consultants in the project development	Community members are informed of the project directly	Community members are coincidentally informed or not knowledgeable at all
3. Are integrated into academic curriculum	Service learning as instructional strategy with content/service components integrated	Service learning as a teaching technique with content/service components concurrent	Service learning part of curriculum but sketchy connections, with emphasis on service	Service learning supplemental to curriculum, in essence just a service project or good deed
4. Facilitate active student reflection	Students think, share, produce reflective products individually and as group members	Students think, share, produce group reflection only	Students share with no individual reflective projects	Ran out of time for a true reflection; just provided a summary of events
5. Use new academic skill/ knowledge in real world settings	All students have direct application of new skill or knowledge in community service	All students have some active application of new skill or knowledge	Some students more involved than others or little community service involvement	Skill knowledge used mostly in the classroom; no active community service experience

6. Help develop sense of caring for and about others	Reflections show affective growth regarding self in community and the importance of service	Reflections show generic growth regarding the importance of community service	Reflections restricted to pros and cons of particular service project regarding the community	Reflections limited to self-centered pros and cons of the service project
7. Improve quality of life for person(s) served	Facilitate change or insight; help alleviate a suffering; solve a problem; meet a need or address an issue	Changes enhance an already good community situation	Changes mainly decorative, but new and unique benefits realized in community	Changes mainly decorative, but limited community benefit, or are not new and unique

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Source: This rubric is taken from the Coverdell World Wise Schools publication Looking at Ourselves and Others (Washington, DC: Peace Corps, 1998, p.6).

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICE

Cluster I: Learning

Essential Element 1: Effective service-learning establishes clear educational goals that require the application of concepts, content, and skills from the academic disciplines and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.

Essential Element 2: In effective service-learning, students are engaged in tasks that challenge and stretch them cognitively and developmentally.

Essential Element 3: In effective service-learning, assessment is used as a way to enhance student learning as well as to document and evaluate how well students have met content and skills standards.

Cluster II: Service

Essential Element 4: Students are engaged in service tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs in the school or community and have significant consequences for themselves and others.

Essential Element 5: Effective service-learning employs formative and summative evaluation in a systematic evaluation of the service effort and its outcomes.

Cluster III: Critical Components That Support Learning & Service

Essential Element 6: Effective service-learning seeks to maximize student voice in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the service project.

Essential Element 7: Effective service-learning values diversity through its participants, its proactive, and its outcomes.

Essential Element 8: Effective service-learning promotes communication and interaction with the community and encourages partnerships and collaboration.

Essential Element 9: Students are prepared for all aspects of their service work including a clear understanding of task and role, the skills and information required by the task, awareness of safety precautions, as well as knowledge about the sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.

Essential Element 10: Student reflection takes place before, during and after service, using multiple methods that encourage critical thinking, and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.

Essential Element 11: Multiple methods are designed to acknowledge, celebrate and further validate students' service work.

STANDARDS of QUALITY

for

School-Based and Community-Based

Service-Learning

Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform
March 1995

Introduction

School-based and community-based service-learning initiatives have much in common, and both are served by attention to standards of good practice. Each desires to serve and educate young people. Both are strengthened by community service activities that are recognized by the community and the youth as meaningful. Subtle differences exist, however. Where school-based initiatives can benefit from intentionally linking the service experiences of students to what they are studying in the classroom, community-based initiatives can be strengthened by developing specific learning objectives fitted to the mission of the sponsoring or recipient agency. Yet, even when these differences exist, school-based and community-based service-learning initiatives can each be strengthened by better understanding the language, objectives, interests, and issues faced by the other. The presentation of the two sets of standards together helps identify areas of significant overlap and subtle divergence, and underscores the opportunities for schools and community agencies to work together for common goals.

Community service is a powerful tool for youth development. It facilitates the transformation of a young person from a passive recipient to an active service provider and consequently helps redefine the perception of youth in the community from a cause of problems to a source of solutions. When combined with formal education (school-based) and/or when thoughtfully organized to provide concrete opportunities for youth to acquire knowledge and skills and to make a positive contribution (community-based) service becomes a method of learning or "service-learning." Service-learning enables teachers and youth development professionals 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 empowers youth to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize these concepts through practical problem-solving, often in service to the community.

Service-learning connects young people to their community, placing them in challenging situations where they associate with adults and accumulate experiences that can strengthen traditional academic studies. Service-learning also makes classroom study relevant, as young people apply their skills in the world beyond the school's walls with work in math, social studies, language arts, and science.

Service activities provide an opportunity for youth and adults to work together in solving community problems and improving the quality of life. In the process of working toward common goals, youth and adults engage in meaningful dialogue and develop trust and respect for each other. They recognize both have needed skills and knowledge to contribute to society. Awareness and acceptance of significant roles for youth in the community are powerful forces in dispelling the sense of isolation and alienation so many young people suffer today.

Although the terms "service-learning" and "community service" are sometimes used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Community service can be, and often is, a powerful experience for young people, but community service ripens to service-learning when there is a deliberate and explicit connection made between service and learning opportunities which are then accompanied by conscious and thoughtful occasions to prepare for and reflect on the service experience.

Effective service-learning responds to the needs of the community as well as to the developmental and learning needs of youth. Duration of the service role, type of service, desired outcomes, and the structure for reflection must all be designed to be age-appropriate. Service-learning is most effective when it combines community needs and youth's interests and is compatible with their skills and abilities.

The following standards of service-learning are not a list of absolutes or even a complete inventory of the elements that contribute to high quality. In developing these standards, recognition was given to the wide diversity of regions, populations, communities, and programs they will embrace. They are designed to be broad-reaching in their scope, yet concrete enough to be translated into action as a measure of success in the use of service-learning.

What is Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized experiences that...

School-Based

- **Meet actual community needs.**

- **Coordinate in collaboration with the school and community.**

- **Integrate into each young person's academic curriculum.**

- **Provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity.**

- **Provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities.**

- **Are a practical application of what is taught in the school.**

- **Help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.**

Community-Based

- **Meet actual community needs.**

- **Coordinate in collaboration with the school and community**

- **Support the learning objectives of the organizations.**

- **Provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity.**

- **Provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities.**

- **Expand the young person's learning environment to include the broader community.**

- **Help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.**

The Standards

School-Based and Community-Based

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

II. Model service-learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence.

III. Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service-learning.

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

V. Youth are involved in the planning.

VI. The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

VII. Effective service-learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

VIII. Service-learning connects the school or sponsoring organization and its community in new and positive ways.

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

X. Skilled adult guidance and supervision are essential to the success of service-learning.

XI. Preservice training, orientation, and staff development that include the philosophy and methodology of service-learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.

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

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

The examples that follow demonstrate that service can be linked to academics in many ways and at all grade levels. Even in the primary grades (school-based) and/or their earliest years (community-based), when the youngest children are learning about their own school or neighborhood, they can engage in conservation or recycling projects. Children in elementary school might plan safe routes for the walk to and from school to by applying mathematics, observation and map skills. In secondary school (school-based) and/or when they are older (community-based), adolescents can explore issues such as hunger through virtually every academic discipline: crop rotation and rainfall in science and geography, computing individual and collective nutritional needs in mathematics, the economics of food distribution and efforts of governments to address these problems in social studies, and so on. Service at a food distribution center could reinforce all this learning by placing it in the context of community needs.

II. Model service-learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence.

The experience of serving in the community, however laudable, is not an end in itself. By performing meaningful work, young people can develop and apply new skills, try on different roles, and plan -- constantly reinforcing connections between academic learning and the "real world."

In making the immediate world their laboratory, service-learning has the potential to enable students to develop increased self-reliance in real settings. They learn to work cooperatively and to relate to peers and 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.

Students/youth who work at a senior center learn about aging, the demographics of community, available social services, government policy, history, and human relations. Those who help supervise young children at a day-care center learn about child development, parenting, and social policy. School students/youth who develop a plan for school or community recycling and investigate local services develop an understanding of the promise of recycling as well as the challenges it poses. In each circumstance, students/youth learn to plan, analyze problems, and test out new and challenging roles.

III. Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service-learning.

Two essential elements that give service-learning its educational integrity and inherent quality are preparation and reflection. Preparatory study of the context, problems, history, and policies enriches student/youth learning as do deliberate discussion and other classroom (school-based) or related (community-based) activities. Preparation also should introduce the skills and attitudes needed for the service to be effective.

Reflection is the framework in which students/youth process and synthesize the information and ideas they have gained through their entire service experience (school and community-based) and in the classroom (school-based). Through the process of reflection, students/youth analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and form opinions -- all in the context of the school curricula or the pre-determined learning goals of the community-based organization.

Engaging in structured reflection also assists young people to gain a greater sense of themselves. For example, when learners are asked to think about their own goals and progress in a service-learning experience, they have the opportunity to master self-assessment skills that can help them to become more independent learners. They acquire insights that allow them to build on their strengths and set goals in areas where they know they need further development. Reflection also offers teachers/youth development professionals an opportunity to identify the knowledge students/youth have gained through service. The methods used can assist students/youth with portfolio development or other assessment techniques (school-based) or self-assessment (school or community-based).

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

In large and small ways 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 children and youth perform reinforces the significance of the enterprise and the worth of the young people.

In a society that values work and measures people's importance by the jobs they do, young people, especially adolescents, are perceived as non-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.

This recognition can be done through the school, the school district (school-based), youth organizations or in the community (school or community-based). For example, local newspapers can publicize the work done by youth, recognizing individual achievements while increasing awareness of learning through service.
Whether a culminating activity is a presentation about the service, a book of essays, pictures, a party, a picnic, or an outing, there are many forms that end-of-project recognition may take. Student/youth creativity and energy should be utilized in the planning and execution of the event.

V. Youth are involved in the planning.

When young people are given the opportunity to work in after-school and senior centers, tutor young children, or lead an effort to clean up a local stream, they are being entrusted with important work with the expectation that they have the ability to perform it. Building that trust is essential to the success of the effort. That is why it is critical to involve young people at the very beginning of the work. Moreover, it provides teachers/youth organization workers with important opportunities to encourage curiosity and foster planning and analytical skills.

Instead of being told that they will be helping in the community, youth might be asked to determine the needs of the community in which they live. Even if it has been concluded that there are certain sites that are open to receiving young people, the youth might be polled to find out how they would like to participate. For example, if there is an interest among teachers/youth organization workers in environmental issues, the student body/the youth might be interviewed by a core group of student/youth information-gatherers to find out what concerns peers have and what ideas they have for addressing these concerns. Teachers and advisors/youth organization workers then serve as facilitators who make the tasks realistic and doable, but the engine is driven by the youth, not by the adults.

Just as it is necessary to build consensus and support for any group effort in the adult world, it is also necessary to gain the support of young people in reaching out to the community.

VI. The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

The service roles or projects that involve students/youth in service-learning will differ widely, depending upon the age of the young people, the needs of the community, and the specific learning goals that have been determined. However, whatever the activity, the following features are shared by high quality approaches/effective strategies:

- The service must be *real*; it must fill a recognized need in the community or in the school (school and community-based).

- The service activity must be developmentally appropriate. For example, an effort to refurbish a park could consist of the following projects: Younger primary students/the youngest children study plants, grow flowers from seeds, and plant them in the park. Older primary students/older children research what types of birds live in the park's trees and build bird houses or feeding stations which they continue to maintain throughout the year. Intermediate-age students/youth extend the school's/community's recycling program to the park -- learning about and working with city agencies to institute it, decorating collection bins, and designing posters to increase community awareness. High school students for health science classes (school-based) and older students interested in health science (community-based) design and build an exercise path; in art class (school-based) or in art (community-based) they create a mural for park buildings; in social studies (school-based) or as a social action project

(community-based), they survey the community to find out what neighbors would like the park to be used for and report their findings to the appropriate government agency.

- The school may also be part of what makes up "the community." Agencies, alone, may not be able to absorb all the student placements, so meaningful service can be performed at schools as well.

- A tangible or visible outcome or product results from the service and when possible demonstrate the learning outcomes.

VII. Effective service-learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

All learning programs, especially relatively new ones, can benefit from systematic evaluation. While anecdotal evidence of a program's effectiveness is useful, more systematic methods for assessing the impacts of service-learning are needed, particularly since the field of service-learning is growing rapidly and demand for in-depth understanding of program models and approaches is high.

Such assessment includes detailed documentation of program components and processes; the outcomes identified by, and expected of, all participants (i.e., students/youth, community members, schools); and the impact of the service-learning program on individual participants, youth organizations, schools, and the community.

Assessment processes can vary in extent and complexity, depending on the nature of the questions asked and on available time and resources. For example, if one question is, "Do students' attitudes toward school change (school-based) or education/learning (community-based) as a result of involvement in service-learning?" attitudinal measures can be taken at various points, or indirect measures such as school attendance can be used.

A question like, "How does service-learning affect civic responsibility?" would require measures that assess components of civic responsibility such as values, behaviors, and attitudes to be administered over an extended period of time. If the question is, "In what ways can the experiential learning pedagogues associated with service-learning help to bring about education reform?" then assessment methods need to focus on the relationship between experiential teaching techniques and their multiple effects on learning and development.

A major benefit of formative (ongoing) assessment is program improvement. Ongoing data supplies necessary information regarding program design in relation to program purpose and pinpoints where modifications might be necessary or desirable.

Summative assessment also affects program development and in addition provides aggregate information on the overall effectiveness of a particular program model. A combination of formative and summative assessment, whether done on a small or large scale, helps ensure that programs remain responsive to their purposes and participants.

VIII. Service-learning connects the school or sponsoring development organization and its community in new and positive ways.

Service-learning can reduce the barriers that often separate school/youth and the larger community. Students/youth 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 throughout the community in traditional and non-traditional settings -- libraries, public agencies, parks, hospitals, etc. Relations are enhanced as agencies, citizens, and local government officials find that their expertise and counsel is sought by the school (school-based); whereas learning occurs as youth-serving agencies, citizens, citizens, and local government officials collaborate by sharing expertise (community-based). Through service-learning, schools and an array of community institutions become genuine partners in the education and development of youth.

Just as school administrators/youth workers have an obligation to support the coordinated implementation of service-learning in the community, the community must be committed to supporting service-learning in the schools (school-based) and the educational goals of service for the young people (community-based). For school-based service-learning, communities must recognize and respect the curricular goals strengthened in the schools by service-learning. Communities must work with the schools/youth-serving agencies to ensure that students' service opportunities are structured to be consistent with learner outcomes.

IX. 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 institutional support for its philosophy and its financial requirements. School-based service-learning needs the support of both district and building administrators. Too often, educators enthusiastic about service-learning are offered token support, largely in words of praise for the "wonderful work" that is being accomplished.

Community-based In order for service-learning to be accepted and succeed in any setting, it must receive institutional support. Too often, youth serving agencies enthusiastic about the results of service-learning offer professionals token support, large in words of praise for the "wonderful work" that is being accomplished.

School-based and community-based While spoken recognition is important, what is significant is the provision of the time that goes into exemplary service-learning. Teachers/youth organization workers who implement service-learning, either as a discrete class/project, as a part of their subject area lessons, or with thematic or interdisciplinary learning, must be supported with planning and implementation time as well as a reasonable budget for student/youth incentives, expenses such as transportation and training, and other outside resources that can be crucial to the success of the effort.

The development, implementation, and coordination of service projects in the community/outside the classroom require a level of support that must extend beyond the efforts of any individual or group of teachers/youth organization workers. Service-learning can enhance school-community partnerships, but to do so, it must be presented to the community in a manner that does not conflict with community interests.

To ensure the stability of these school-community (school-based) and community (community-based) partnerships, schools and school districts/youth development organizations implementing service-learning must provide continuing and visible oversight as well as coordination among community interests and classroom teachers/youth organization workers.

Administrators should ensure that the climate of the school/organization is open to service-learning. Even those who are not directly involved in service-learning should understand its significance.

Teachers and students/adults and youth must understand why some students/young people have different schedules and may appear to be receiving special treatment as a result of doing service. The whole school/community must be aware of the learning and service goals that enable students/youth to pursue these goals.

Similarly, when there are placement sites, even those who do not have direct contact with students/youth must understand and welcome the young people. Students'/youths' roles must be clearly articulated and their tasks carefully defined with the awareness of the administration and clients of the agency so that the work the youth perform is respected.

The learning and service goals must be clearly defined and understood by all involved. Parents play a critical role in the service-learning equation. At the minimum, their permission must be obtained in order for the young people to serve. But they must be brought into the process at an early enough stage so that they fully support the notion of service and the unique learning opportunities that service provides.

Communication of the benefits of service and its impact on attitude toward school or education/learning, and the relationship between work and service should be communicated so that support from the home is forthcoming. Service also provides a wide variety of options for parental involvement, as students/youth learn about the community of which their parents are adult members.

Parents with busy schedules might offer ideas of resources or potential placement sites, and when appropriate, share with the students/their children how their work and volunteer experience affect the larger community.

X. Skilled adult guidance and supervision are essential to the success of service-learning.

The need for service-learning is compelling, but the task of sustaining service-learning is challenging. Teachers/youth organization workers employing service-learning in their classrooms must have opportunities for professional development. They must be given the tools, the training, and the technical assistance necessary to implement meaningful service-learning experiences.

Issues of type of service, site selection, curriculum connections, reflection, recognition, tangible outcomes, and evaluation must be considered along with the ever-present concerns of insurance, liability, and logistics.

Learning takes place during all stages of service-learning. Youth must be afforded supportive supervision at placement sites. Supervision at the site should extend beyond the basic elements of taking attendance and keeping track of hours worked.

With such rich opportunities for youth to grow, to learn about others, and to take on responsibility, a caring person must assume responsibility for overseeing youth activities and supporting these efforts.

XI. Pre-service training, orientation and staff development that include the philosophy and methodology of service-learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.

If service-learning is to assume real importance in educating students/youth for the 21st century, it must be incorporated into preservice and inservice training and staff development. It will be critically important, especially in this transitional period as service-learning begins to find a place in the educational process, to provide high quality training.

Many of the teaching strategies and behaviors essential to high quality service-learning are in sharp contrast to what has been taught in "methods" courses. It will not be enough to offer course work at educational institutions; potential teachers/youth development professionals and volunteers should engage in service-learning as part of their own training.

The Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform

These standards of quality for school-based service-learning were compiled for the Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform by the Standards Committee in May 1993. They were revised in November 1994 to integrate standards of community-based and school based service learning. Special thanks in this effort are extended to Jim Pitofsky, National Association of Partners In Education, Inc.; Joe Follman, Florida Department of Education; Barbara Gomez, Council of Chief State School Officers; Jack Newhouse, West Virginia Department of Education; and Michael Barron and Donna Power of the Close Up Foundation.

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