Establishing Curricular Connections: Points of Entry

1. **Identify an existing program or activity to transform into authentic service-learning.**

   - Identify an activity or project already existing on campus.
   - Examine it for learning opportunities.
   - Exchange resources and ideas with teachers, students, and community partners.

   Examples: Canned Food Drive
   Before students began bringing in cans of food, teachers integrated meaningful academic activities related to the food drive in their class curriculum. Activities included studying nutrition, contacting the receiving agency to identify what foods were needed, visiting a food bank, encouraging student leadership in identifying the quality and kinds of foods to be provided (in partnership with the agency), having math students graph the food collected, reading books related to hunger and homelessness, and demonstrating to other schools how to connect the canned food drive to academics.

   Bookshelf suggestions: *The Can-Do thanksgiving, Soul Moon Soup,* and *The Other America*

2. **Begin with standard curriculum, content, and skills, and find the natural extension into service.**

   - Identify the specific content and skill areas to be addressed.
   - Select an area of emphasis that supports or adds to classroom learning and addresses learning objectives or state standards.
   - Look for additional learning opportunities in other subject areas.

   Example: Learning History through Discussion with Elder Partners
   Teachers wanted students to be better informed about current events and to improve their listening and communication skills. This led to a partnership with a senior center and weekly interactions between students and older adults. Activities included studying recent historical events; learning about aging; practicing interviewing skills; interviewing older people to learn about their knowledge and experiences; collaborating on articles, stories, and photo essays; and displaying the results in the school and public library.

Bookshelf suggestions: *Stranger in the Mirror, Growing Older,* and *We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History*

3. **From a theme or unit of study, identify content and skill connections.**

- Begin with a broad theme or topic, often with obvious service implications.
- Identify specific content and skill areas.
- Select a service application.

Example: The Individual's Role in Society
As teachers identified ways for students to learn about the individual's role in society, they encouraged students to consider how they could participate in social action. Curriculum included reading nonfiction stories of contributions made by adults and young people to their communities, researching the needs of local agencies, providing regular assistance to one of the agencies, and publishing an informative pamphlet on the agency for young people.

Bookshelf suggestions: *Sisters in Strength: American Women Who Made a difference, Generation Fix,* and *Free the children: A Young Man's Personal Crusade Against Child Labor.*

4. **Start with a student-identified need.**

- Identify student skills, talents, and interests.
- Students define a problem, a need, and solutions.
- Students lead implementation as teacher facilitates, adding learning opportunities.

Example: transform an Empty Lot into a Community Garden
At the beginning of a class, a student initiated a conversation about starting a community garden in an empty lot near the school. The teacher guided the students in identifying a local government agency to contact about the property, conducting Internet research to find funding sources, partnering with special needs youth at the school to plant and maintain the garden, and donating the harvest to a local shelter.

Bookshelf suggestions: *Seedfolks, Just Kids: Visiting a Class for Children with Special Needs,* and *A Kid's Guide to Social Action.*

5. **Start with a community-identified need.**

- Community requests assistance, perhaps through an agency that has worked with the school before.

- Teacher, students, and community partners identify learning opportunities.

Example: Tutoring/literacy

A school received a flyer inviting the students to participate in a city-wide book collection to benefit local youth service agencies and organizations. Teachers in several grades collaborated on cross-age projects in which older students helped younger children to write and illustrate bilingual books on mutually agreed-on themes. The books were donated to libraries, hospitals, and day-care facilities; and student representatives served on a city committee regarding literacy.

Bookshelf suggestions: *La Mariposa, Just Juice,* and *Thank You, Mr. Falker*

❑ From *The Complete Guide to Service-learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum & Social Action* by Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A...