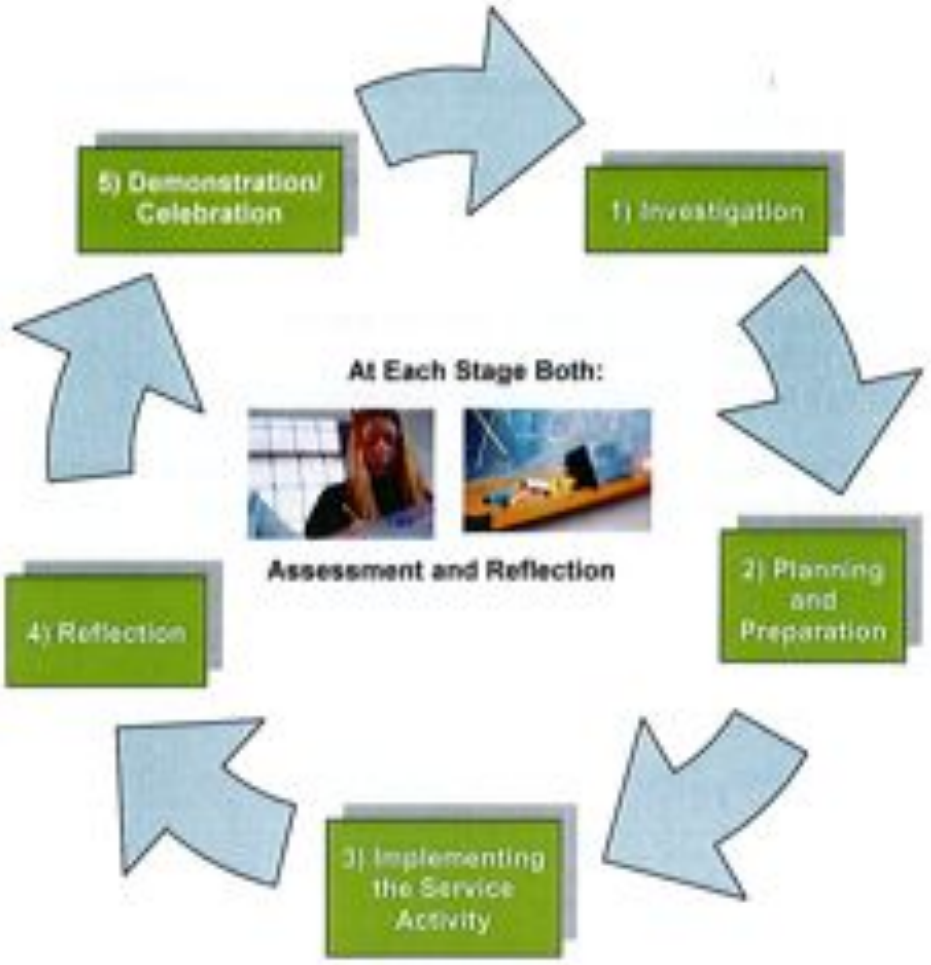
Service-learning: An Overview

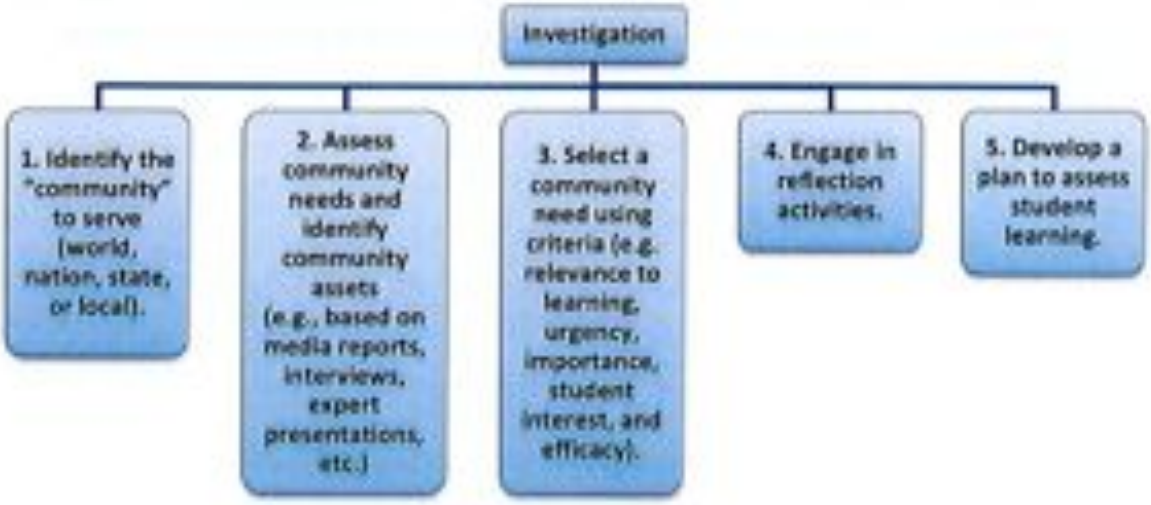


A typical service-learning project includes five components:

1. *Investigation*: Teachers and students investigate the community problems that they might potentially address. Investigation typically involves some sort of research and mapping activity.
2. *Planning and Preparation*: Teachers, students, and community members plan the learning and service activities, and address the administrative issues needed for a successful project.
3. *Action* (Implementing the Service Activity): The "heart" of the project: engaging in the meaningful service experience that will help your students develop important knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and will benefit the community.
4. *Reflection*: Activities that help students understand the service-learning experience and to think about its meaning and connection to them, their society, and what they have learned in school; and
5. *Demonstration/Celebration*: The final experience when students, community participants and others publicly share what they have learned, celebrate the results of the service project, and look ahead to the future.

Chapter 1: Investigation

In the first phase of service-learning, Investigation, you and your students work to identify the community problem that will be addressed. The following graphic shows the steps in the Investigation phase.



There are many approaches teachers use to work with students to investigate community problems. Often students engage in a *community mapping activity*. In this type of activity, the students walk through the community using a set of questions to guide their observations. They note what is going on in the environment (Are the sidewalks or pathways littered? Does the stream look and smell dirty? Are there community agencies around the school that serve people in need? Are there places for the elderly to sit? Are there homeless people sleeping on benches?). Community mapping activities often lead to selection of issues such as working with the environment, the homeless, senior citizens, hospitals, and other agencies that are in the neighborhood. Some people use a school mapping activity with younger children, where they investigate the issues around the school, such as how the outside of the school looks (walls, cafeteria, etc.) and discover that they may wish to engage in recycling or school beautification. Resources you can use for community mapping are in the Resource section.

Another common approach to investigating community problems is to *review the newspaper*. Collect newspapers for about a week or two in advance of the activity, and then distribute them to the students. Have the students identify the various strengths and challenges at the global, national, state, and local level by cutting out the articles in the newspaper and listing them. Newspaper investigations tend to lead to working on service activities that are more global in nature, such as environmental issues, policy-related issues such as transportation, job training, technology-based projects, and working with children of prisoners, helping infants, and so forth.

A third approach that some teachers use is some sort of *brainstorming activity*. Students may be asked to whom they would give money if they were a philanthropist, or which global, national, or state problem they think is the worst and that they would like to do

something about. There are several tools you can use for this purpose, as listed in the forms section.

No matter which of these approaches you use, it is good to do two other things. First, you should add a research component. Students should be helped to document the nature of the problem that they identified. Younger students can count the amount of litter they see, weigh the waste in the cafeteria, or otherwise document a problem. Older students can research the issue on the Internet or by conducting surveys of neighborhood people, their parents, or others. The idea here is to teach the students how to gather evidence. *This evidence should be used to determine a baseline against which they can measure their impact.* Being able to do this helps young people realize how much of a difference they can make and raises their sense of efficacy and desire to volunteer again.

The second thing you need to do is help students come to a consensus on what community problems they will address. It's good to have the students work in groups because they learning teamwork and collaboration skills and they are more likely to be successful. However, the students need to feel that they "own" the problem, so teachers need to use some way to have the students identify the one or two problems they will address. Some ideas for helping students come to consensus are in the Resource section.

In helping students to decide, you may wish to keep four criteria in mind:

- relevance to academic learning – tie in to the curriculum or standards/objectives you want to cover during the school year;
- urgency and importance;
- student interest/engagement in the project; and efficacy (anticipating that students will actually be able to make a difference).

Also be sure that students have voice in making the decisions and that they plan something that will be meaningful to them and to the community.

Example: High School - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
At a high school in Philadelphia, the community partner assisted the teacher in helping students to develop a short community survey asking middle school students and community members to identify the top five problems facing their neighborhood and community. The students identified multiple problems and narrowed their interests down to two: helping children who were in the foster child system due to abuse or neglect or helping young people avoid underage drinking. The community partner then arranged for guest speakers on the two topics. The guest speakers on the foster care system included an agency representative that worked to place foster children and a person who had been a foster child and now was a successful lawyer and child advocate. The guest speakers on underage drinking included a community agency representative who discussed the extent of the problem and a physician who discussed how drinking affects the brain and impairs driving ability. After the speakers presented to the class, the students engaged in a dialogue about what to do and what they could best affect in the time they had available within the school year. They decided to see what they could do for foster children. The community partner helped the students brainstorm by reviewing a survey of foster

children's needs and the students also conducted Internet research and interviews of children living in a homeless shelter. The students found out that the children often were rescued in the evening or night time and removed from the setting with only the clothes they were wearing, so in the new setting, they had only used clothing and little of their own. The students decided that the foster children needed to have their own things, so they developed a service project to collect used suitcases to give to the workers who rescued the children. In addition, they collected stuffed animals and storybooks, and raised money to buy t-shirts and other clothing of various sizes.

Guiding Questions

As you and your students engage in Investigation, answering several questions may help guide you through the process:

1. What is the overall purpose of the service-learning project? What impacts do you hope the project will have on students and the community they serve?
2. How will you facilitate student choice of the "community" they want to serve?
3. What activities and resources will you provide to assist students in assessing community needs?
4. How will you use the criteria of relevance to academic learning; urgency and importance; student interest/engagement; and efficacy to help students select the problem for the project?
5. What content standards and benchmarks will working on this problem allow students to meet?
6. What civic and other learning goals do you hope to meet within the project?

Ways to tie the project into academic, civic, and other goals and other aspects of planning are presented next, in Chapter 2: Planning and Preparation.

Resources

1. **The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse** (www.servicelearning.org). The Clearinghouse is a repository for books, research, tools, program descriptions, and many other ideas for planning and implementing your service-learning project.

2. **Kaye, C. B. (2004). The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, and Social Action, Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.** A comprehensive guide to all aspects of planning and implementing service-learning projects, this book provides background information about service-learning, ideas for projects in a variety of areas (e.g., the environment and social justice) and a "bookshelf" of youth literature appropriate for different grade levels and service-learning projects.

Chapter Two: Planning and Preparation

In the second phase of service-learning, planning and preparation, you, your students, and the community members with whom you work will identify the community concern, determine the specific service that will be provided, develop an action plan, identify the academic and other goals the project will meet, engage in reflection, and develop an assessment plan. The following graphic shows the steps in the Planning and Preparation phase:



Students should have considerable voice in planning and preparation, making most of the decisions with guidance from adults. The action plan should have a detailed plan for how services will be provided, along with persons responsible, team members, timeline, resources needed, and indicators of success. An assessment of readiness for service and training activities should be included in the action plan. Many teachers use this as an opportunity to teach students how to organize projects or work and relate the planning to other relevant aspects of students' lives. It is also good during this phase to weave in perspective-taking activities so that the students think about what it will be like for the service recipients, community partners, and others involved in the project.

Administrative Tasks

Making arrangements for students to carry out service-learning projects involves many administrative issues, such as scheduling, obtaining parent permission and involvement, gaining administrator agreement to let students miss traditional classes, arranging for transportation, and managing risk. Forms for organizing these tasks appear toward the end of this chapter.

Elementary School - Wirtz, Virginia

Fourth and fifth grade students decide to conduct a spring service-learning project that will benefit their local historical park. Some students customize and present a play by a local author about the history of their area, while others serve as tour guides for the park. To prepare students for the project, teachers engaged in several activities, including identifying the Virginia Standards of Learning in literacy, communications, history, and citizenship that the project would meet; forming partnerships with park staff, members of the Historical Society, and the original author of the historical play; planning lessons to teach students about the story, script writing, and public speaking;

and familiarizing the children with the park. In collaboration with the service-learning coordinator, teachers also completed several logistical tasks, such as obtaining parent permission for park visits, scheduling transportation and chaperones, arranging a class visit from the author of the historical play, requesting parent assistance in making costumes, organizing children's story boards, and writing a coherent script.

Guiding Questions

As you and your students engage in Planning and Preparation, you may wish to address the following questions:

1. Once you and the students identify a potential problem area, what questions about the problem and possible solutions should they try to answer through their library and Internet research?
2. What is the specific service to be provided? How does the service relate to the overall purpose of the service-learning activity? How does it address the areas of impact that you hope it will have on the students and the community? Will it successfully address the area that you measured to establish the baseline of the problem?
3. How will you facilitate student decision-making about the specific type of service to be provided and the division of labor that is needed to implement the project?
4. What content standards and benchmarks will be met as students plan and provide the service activities?
5. What civic goals will the project address? What civic knowledge, skills (e.g., informed decision making, listening, expressing their opinions), and dispositions (e.g., tolerance, sense of responsibility for others, believing they can make a difference in the world) will be developed?
6. What other learning do you hope students will gain from the project (e.g., social skills, career exploration, learning to manage conflict, and/or learning about themselves)?
7. How can you ensure that the community partners are part of the vision, planning, and preparation phases?
8. How will you assess the students' readiness for the project? What do your students need to understand about the social problem, the community and organizations with whom they will work, the recipients of service, and themselves? What skills do they need to have (e.g., communicating with others, conducting experiments, planning activities)? What attitudes and values should they have? What strategies will you use to ensure that students have the prerequisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values?
9. How will you weave reflection activities into this component?
10. What types of assessment will you use to determine progress toward meeting specific service-learning project goals and learning objectives while they are working on this phase of the project?

Chapter Three: Action - Implementing the Service Activity

Once you have completed the investigation, planning, and preparation, the next step in service-learning is to implement the service activity. Because it is the focal point of your project, it is crucial that you, your students, and the community members implement your service activities well. Typically the implementation phase includes training and service provision, along with the reflection and assessment that should be integrated into every phase. A good idea for reflection and assessment is to ask questions to help link the service to academic and civic learning and ask how students feel about the service and their abilities to make a difference.

Even if your action plan is excellent, you should anticipate the types of problems that may occur and how you will address them. Many teachers include this in the training that occurs before the service.

During the action phase, you want to be sure that the students are:

- Engaged, actively exploring, using inquiry and hands-on approaches
- Given opportunities to work with an adult other than a family member or teacher
- Engaged in perspective taking
- Given the opportunity to see that the service is genuinely meeting community needs

High School – Humble, Texas

At a high school in Humble Texas, seniors participate in a comprehensive, year-long project that meets all the criteria for high quality service. After participating in service-learning projects through 9th, 10th, and 11th grades, 12th grade students enroll in a Senior Seminar, a capstone service-learning course. During the fall semester, students identify and conduct research on a global social issue about which they feel passionate concern. During the second semester, they work in teams to develop and implement action plans that address the global issue. Action plans must build awareness of the issue, include research, address a community need, and be sustainable after the end of the school year. Specific requirements within the Senior Seminar include:

- *A formal research paper;*
- *Frequent advisory meetings;*
- *Regular group meetings;*
- *Three oral presentations, including a subtopic speech, social action speech, and a self-portrait (see below);*
- *Reflection assignments including a social action directory, project selection sheet specifying service-learning objectives mastered or practiced, project design sheet, and project evaluation sheet;*
- *A journal with at least one entry per week;*

- *A log of hours spend on designing, planning, implementing, and evaluating the project;*
- *Analysis of group dynamics as they related to workplace tools;*
- *A self-portrait completed in a format of the students' choice, including video, poetry, sculpture, painting, or another medium; and*
- *A portfolio including all of the research project components: academic samples from each discipline, the self-portrait, a wellness plan, career shadowing reflection, and a social action plan.*

At the end of the year, students must give a formal presentation using multimedia in which they highlight their individual research and the project itself.

Questions

Answering the following questions can help you in the Service Activity Phase:

1. In direct service activities, students interact with recipients of service or the physical environment they have targeted for improvement. Given the service problem, what types of direct service activities could the youth perform?
2. In advocacy service activities, students try to address the underlying causes of a social problem by attempting to influence policymakers or elected officials. Could an advocacy component be added to the project to enhance the learning and help students feel an even greater sense of efficacy?
3. How can you adopt, adapt, or create a rubric for students to use that ensures the service activity they select demonstrates the standards and indicators of high quality service-learning?
4. How can you ensure that all students benefit from the service activities and that all students find them to be meaningful?
5. How can you ensure that students understand and find mutual benefit with service recipients?
6. How can you make sure that your community partners are playing a significant, positive role in the lives of the students? How can you maximize the potential for the partners to serve as role models?
7. How will you address diversity issues within the service project, both before, during, and after service?
8. How can you keep students engaged in the service over time?
9. How can you implement service-learning so that teachers and other adults also find the service to be fulfilling?

Resources

The resources recommended for other phases are also pertinent in this phase. In addition, you may find the following resources helpful, especially those that have guidelines or examples for implementing service projects.

1. **Chicago Public Schools Service-Learning Website,**
   www.servicelearning.cps.k12.il.us/Curriculum.html
   This site provides a toolkit for teachers with background information on service-learning, a planning tool, rubric for assessing the quality of service-learning

Chapter Four: Reflection

As previously discussed, reflection should be woven through each of the phases. In the reflection phase that occurs after the service, your goal is to name and solidify the learning. During this phase, reflecting on the service-learning experience can encourage your students to:

- Connect classroom learning with learning from service, giving both greater meaning;
- Question their assumptions both about the causes and solutions of social problems and about those different from themselves;
- Improve their problem solving skills; and
- Develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society.

Good reflection activities are continuous, connected, guided, allow feedback and assessment, and help to clarify student values. As the following diagram indicates, teachers have options for reflection assignments that can meet these criteria.


Prompts
facts about the service issue, quotes, diaries of those affected by the issue, music, etc.
Criteria for evaluation
academic, civic, social-emotional goals of the project; quality of presentation
Mode of responding
reading, writing, doing, telling
Options for Reflection
Audiences
teachers, peers, recipients of service, community partners, public officials
Length
short, in-class responses, journal assignments, reflection sections of final projects
Authors
student; student & peer, community partner, or recipient of

Chapter Five: Demonstration/Celebration

Demonstration and celebration of learning and impact are important parts of your service-learning project that can provide you, your students, and your community partners with a meaningful conclusion to the project and an opportunity to think ahead to the future. In an effective demonstration and celebration, students show influential others how they impacted the community and how they themselves have changed as a result of their service-learning activities. A high-quality demonstration and celebration event recognizes and rewards students' sense of efficacy and motivation to serve and reinforces community members' commitment to your program. It provides a public forum for students to display their knowledge, which encourages them to synthesize what they have learned through service, provides an authentic context for assessment, and builds community members' expertise with respect to the community problem. Finally, a high quality demonstration and celebration event engages participants in analyzing and developing potential solutions to the new set of social issues signaled by the end for the service-learning project, further enhancing their problem solving skills and dedication to service.

Teachers have several options for demonstration and celebration events, including

Demonstrating Impact on the Community	Demonstrating Impact on Self	Celebrating Accomplishments
• Measurement on a neighborhood quality index • Poster exhibition • Showcase • Portfolio fair	• Self portraits • Autobiographies • Story Boards • Pre/post measures of knowledge, skills, or behaviors	• Recognition at a school-wide ceremony • Awards • A tour of the service site to observe progress
• Development of products such as Power Points, oral presentations, websites, videos, booklets, before/after pictures of the community • Testimonials by service recipients	• Evaluation of student work by experts, community partners, recipients of service, or panels of judges • Sharing insights through issues forums	• Letters of recognition from community partners, elected officials, etc. • Service credits on the students' transcripts • Creation of a fund to support future service around the issue • Recognition during a traditional ceremony such as graduation

WM. H. Turner Technical Arts High School

At WM. H. Turner Technical Arts High School, teachers Chris Kirchner and Jose Ugarte, who work with seniors in the school's Academy of Information Technology and Entrepreneurship, assign a service-learning project designed to improve students' writing ability, information technology skills, and civic dispositions and competencies. Early in the year, groups of students select a particular social issue (in 2003-04, for example, issues ranged from AIDS in Africa, to Miami's civil rights movement, to Social Security). Students investigate the issue, and their research provides the basis for an interview that is conducted with local volunteers and/or community activists. At the same time, students gather documents (e.g., newspaper articles, historical images) related to their issue. Research findings, videotapes of the interviews, and excerpts of documents are woven into a documentary, and the documentaries are refined and presented at a culminating event that includes students, teachers, interview subjects, senior citizens, district administrators, and the district's service-learning staff. Students begin their presentations by acknowledging what they learned from the interview subjects and their project. For example, a student who had interviewed a civil rights volunteer commented, "I learned that history is all around us. It's not just something in books, but it's all around us. We just need to unlock it." Documentaries are shown. At the end of the presentations, in keeping with tradition, students from each group "pass their project on" to a younger student to "keep the legacy going" and donate their videos to an archive in the library for community use.

Questions

Answering the following questions can assist you in planning your culminating event.

1. Who should plan the demonstration and celebration and what roles and responsibilities will each participant have?
2. What combination of demonstration and celebration activities would be the most meaningful for your students and community partners, and why?
3. What plans for demonstration will best allow your students to meet the academic goals of the project?
4. In what ways could the demonstrations be used as summative assessments? If they are used this way, who will evaluate student performance and what criteria will they use?
5. Which options for planning would contribute most to your students' civic and social-emotional learning? Which options would contribute most to the community?
6. How will you evaluate the success of the demonstration and celebration events and engage in continuous improvement?

Resources