

Essential Elements of Service-Learning

Research suggests that there are seven essential elements of high-quality service-learning: preparation, collaboration, service, curriculum integration, reflection, celebration, and evaluation [Adapted from Rahima C. Wade, ed., *Building Bridges: Connecting Classroom and Community through Service-Learning in Social Studies* (Washington, DC: National Council for Social Studies, 2000)]. A brief description of each follows:

- 1. Preparation.** This phase addresses such questions as, How much time do teachers want to devote to the service and reflection activities? Are there funds and transportation to support an out-of-school experience or would it be better to focus on school-based needs or problems? What community agencies will cooperate? Is there a particular issue that is of concern to teachers, the students, or the community? What types of service activities easily connect with the teacher's curricular goals?
- 2. Collaboration.** Students will collaborate with one another. Teachers will collaborate with colleagues and with community agencies. The two school districts will collaborate. People will get tired of hearing the word "collaborate." Yet researchers have identified several democratic skills that students typically use in conducting collaborative service-learning projects: respectful deliberation and dialog, coalition building, developing creative solutions that meet everyone's needs, and gathering support from a broad audience in the community.
- 3. Service.** True service is more than an action; it is an attitude, a relationship, and a way of being in the world. There are several types of service projects suitable for the social studies curriculum. Direct service involves working with others in the school or community. Students may work with senior citizens, younger children, individuals who are learning English as a second language, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, or public officials who administer community programs. Indirect service activities are fund-raisers or collection programs that generate money or resources that can be contributed to an organization working on a community problem. Advocacy service gives students opportunities to share what they have learned with others in the community, to work for community improvement through social and political channels, and to learn a variety of methods for public communication. Advocacy activities include creating public displays, writing editorials, making public service announcements, lobbying public officials, speaking at public meetings, setting up a public hearing, writing a grant, circulating a petition, and so on.
- 4. Curriculum Integration.** Curriculum integration is what distinguishes a valuable service-learning project from useful community service activity. It is essential that the project be connected with academic skills and content. Examples for high schoolers follow: work with a local group to conduct a voter registration drive; research, develop, and distribute a brochure in the languages used locally to alert teens to their civil and criminal rights and responsibilities; develop and distribute a petition for change in a local community policy that concerns teens; or, analyze school board meeting agendas and participate in meetings with agenda items of concern to students.
- 5. Reflection.** Reflection is a means for recapturing an experience in order to make sense of it, to learn from it, and to develop new understanding and appreciation. Reflection takes place throughout the project and may take the form of a student journal or periodic classroom discussions.
- 6. Celebration.** Celebrating students' service-learning efforts is not just a way to have fun at the end of the project. Celebration also serves other goals: publicizing the project, thanking those who helped, developing new support for the program, and renewing the commitment of those who will continue to be involved.
- 7. Evaluation.** First, it is important to assess what students have learned from the experience. Was the particular service activity effective in enhancing course content and goals? Are students aware of the civic participation skills they used or developed? What are students' views about the community impact of their efforts? In general, did they believe their efforts were successful? Do they plan to continue to volunteer or participate in civic life? Second, evaluation provides the basis upon which to improve the service-learning project.

SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS

Social Studies – 7th – 9th Grades

Evergreen Junior High

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Curriculum Integration. Curriculum integration is what distinguishes a valuable service-learning project from useful community service activity. It is essential that the project be connected with academic skills and content. Examples for high schoolers follow: work with a local group to conduct a voter registration drive; research, develop, and distribute a brochure in the languages used locally to alert teens to their civil and criminal rights and responsibilities; develop and distribute a petition for change in a local community policy that concerns teens; or, analyze school board meeting agendas and participate in meetings with agenda items of concern to students. **TEACHERS WILL HELP MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WHAT THEY ARE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM TO SERVICE POSSIBILITIES.**

Reflection. Reflection is a means for recapturing an experience in order to make sense of it, to learn from it, and to develop new understanding and appreciation. Reflection takes place throughout the project and may take the form of a student journal or periodic classroom discussions. **AT THE END OF EACH QUARTER, STUDENTS WILL SUBMIT A WRITTEN REFLECTION THAT ANSWERS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- 1. What did I do?**
- 2. Why did I choose this project?**
- 3. How did this project help other?**
- 4. What problems did I encounter?**
- 5. What might I do differently next time?**
- 6. Parent or Adult Signature verification**

Principles of Nonviolence

The following principles have been distilled from the teachings of great peacemakers. They form the basis of responding to life's difficulties in a nonviolent way.

- Honoring the dignity and inherent worth of every human being.
- Believing that our lives are linked together, that what we do impacts the lives of others. Therefore, we are responsible to and for one another.
- Dedicating ourselves to guaranteeing the fundamental rights of every human being - justice, equity and equality.
- Recognizing the power of the human spirit to triumph over injustice, social inequity, and suffering.
- Choosing non-violence as a way of life by practicing peace daily:
- Embracing the spiritual belief of our heart in our own personal and reflective way.
- Enlarging our capacity to embrace differences and appreciate the value of every human life.
- Strengthening our resolve to be loving in our thoughts, words and actions.
- Practicing compassion and forgiveness for ourselves and others.
- Cultivating moral strength and courage through education and creative nonviolent action.
- Using our talents to serve others as well as ourselves.
- Finding a goal that serves humanity and dedicating our life to it.

Gandhiji's Talisman

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

RECALL THE FACE OF THE POOREST AND THE WEAKEST MAN WHOM YOU MAY HAVE SEEN AND ASK YOURSELF IF THE STEP YOU CONTEMPLATE IS GOING TO BE OF ANY USE TO HIM.

Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away."

Mohandas K. Gandhi was convinced much of the violence in society and in our personal lives stems from the passive violence that we commit against each other. He described these acts of passive violence as the "Seven Blunders". Grandfather gave me the list in 1947 just before we left India to return to South Africa where my father, Manilal, Gandhi's second son, and my mother, Sushila, worked for nonviolent change. In the Indian tradition of adding one's knowledge to the ancient wisdom being passed on, and in keeping with what Grandfather said and wrote about responsibility, I have added an eighth item to the list of blunders. - Arun Gandhi