



Service-Learning Research and Practice

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DEAR READERS

With this issue of *The Generator*, we focus on curriculum integration as a key element in effective service-learning practice. As I write, service-learning practitioners, participants, researchers, and advocates are participating in panels to fine-tune proposed Standards for Pre-K-12 Service-Learning — which include curriculum integration. The research-based standards and indicators of effective



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practice emerging from these efforts will be released at *The 19th Annual National Service-Learning Conference* in Minneapolis, April 9-12, 2008. To learn more about the effort, visit www.nylc.org/standards.

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Maine Incorporates Service-Learning into Social Studies Standards

In a unanimous decision on October 10, 2007, the Maine State Board of Education voted to adopt revised content standards mandating the inclusion of service-learning in social studies curricula—an exemplary approach for states struggling with how to encourage the institutionalization of service-learning as a learning method.

As in many states, service-learning has been an integral teaching method in Maine for some years, fostered by the nonprofit KIDS Consortium, which has been honored nationwide for its innovative approaches to service-learning and civic engagement. Increasingly, Maine students have taken service-learning projects to scale — expanding projects on gun safety, working against alcohol advertising at family-friendly events, and teaching about shaken baby syndrome (pictured in the photo above).

With the inclusion of service-learning in the standards, “Students will plan and design a service-learning project, and analyze its effectiveness—that’s the gem in the whole thing,” says Glenn Nerbak, Distinguished Educator for Service-Learning and Civic Education. Charlie Hartman, Maine’s Director of School-Based Service-Learning, adds that including such language in the standards will make service-learning a more integral “part of the fabric of education in Maine.”

The new social studies standards require that all students be able to apply “social studies

processes, knowledge, and skills” in “authentic contexts.” As part of meeting this standard, students in each grade span must complete a service-learning project or civic action.

The Maine standards also require educators to increase both the reach and the complexity of service-learning

experiences as students move toward graduation. Elementary school students focus on addressing a classroom or school need, while high school students focus on community, school, state, national, or international needs.

In terms of complexity, elementary students must “select, plan, and **participate** in a civic action or service-learning project” and “**reflect** on the project’s civic contribution.”

In contrast, high school students are asked to “select, plan, and **implement** a civic action or

The standards require students in each grade span to complete a service-learning project or civic action.

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Curriculum Integration

Embedding service-learning experiences in curricular goals and standards that drive student learning of concepts, content, and skills in academic disciplines and cocurricular settings.

Draft Standards for Pre-K–12 Service-Learning*

As the service-learning field moves toward adopting standards, the following are under consideration:

- Curriculum Integration
- Cognitively Challenging Reflection
- Youth Voice
- Diversity
- Meaningful Service
- Process Improvement
- Intensity/Duration
- Reciprocal Partnerships

*Results of the Service-Learning Standards-Setting Professional Judgment Group Meeting, June 5–6, 2007, Denver, Colo.

RESEARCH

Curriculum Integration Turns Service into Service-Learning

For at least 25 years, supporters of service-learning have been emphasizing the difference between service-learning, other forms of experiential education, and volunteerism.

Curriculum integration differentiates service-learning from other service experiences by connecting service to clear learning goals and outcomes. As *Understanding by Design* developers Wiggins and McTighe note, educators who have clear expectations for student learning are better equipped to help students meet expectations. Effective service-learning focuses on clear curricular goals.

Evidence Supporting Curriculum Integration

Davila and Mora's analysis of data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, which tracked a nationally representative sample of eighth graders from 1988 to 2000, suggests that including service in the curriculum promotes positive participant outcomes. They found when students did service as part of an educational requirement or as an activity required in an academic program, they made more progress in core academic subjects



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than peers who did not. They also found that students who reported doing service as part of an educational requirement between 1990 and 1992 were 22 percent more likely to have a four-year degree in 2000.

Another recent study of 1,052 high school students found that service-learning projects with clear educational goals and strong links to academic standards were positively related with the following student outcomes: civic knowledge, community attachment, civic dispositions, efficacy, and civic engagement (Billig, Root, and Jesse, 2005).

Aligning Service-Learning with Academic Standards

A gathering body of evidence increasingly shows that to maximize the academic results of service-learning, teachers must explicitly align service-learning activities with standards and curriculum content. Some aspects of high-quality service-learning, such as youth voice and meaningful service, make it difficult to predict what academic content students will cover during a project. To address this challenge, service-learning practitioners might consider first developing learning objectives focusing on process and communication skills that cut across academic disciplines and then allow students to uncover relevant content as they work through a project.

Proposed Curriculum Integration Standard

As the service-learning field moves towards adopting practice standards, panels of experts have suggested the following standard and indicators for high-quality curriculum integration.

Standard:

Embedding service-learning experiences in curricular goals and standards that drive student learning of concepts, content, and skills in academic disciplines and cocurricular settings.

Practitioner Indicators:

1. Clearly articulate learning goals for service-learning.
2. Intentionally align service-learning with state or district standards.
3. Intentionally align service-learning with civic, social, life, or career-related goals.
4. Ensure that knowledge and skills students learn in and from the community are acknowledged in the classroom.
5. Assess student learning based on curricular and other goals.
6. Formally recognize service-learning in school records.
7. Demonstrate best service-learning practices in curriculum integration by including student voice, reflection, and community involvement. ■

FOR REFERENCES, SEE PAGE 3.

Wisconsin Students Become Global Citizens through PlayPumps Project

What do middle school students in Madison, Wisc., have in common with teens in Sub-Saharan Africa? Not enough, or so thinks 12-year-old Wingra Middle School student Jele Magdalena, who returned from a family trip appalled at the differences between his chores and those expected of his peers in Africa.

“Girls can’t even go to school because they’re hauling water for their families,” says Magdalena. Despite these efforts, every 15 seconds a child dies from contaminated water in Sub-Saharan Africa, and families use the equivalent of one toilet bowl flush of water each day.

Magdalena can rattle off these sorts of statistics now, having turned his concerns into action. When he got home, Magdalena encouraged his fellow middle school students and social studies teachers Jamie Domini and Josh Rankin to explore PlayPumps International,

“Girls can’t even go to school because they’re hauling water for their families.”

related service-learning opportunities. Once Magdalena presented his idea to the class, and had his classmates watch a “Frontline” program on the technology, “the whole class was unified on the decision to [fundraise for PlayPumps]; they really owned the process,” says Domini.

Despite a certain “messiness” in letting students take the lead on a project, “it makes for a much more powerful experience. You have to set the parameters, but then you need to let the kids make mistakes,” she says.



Sixth-grade student Jele Magdalena tells the story of Wingra Middle School’s involvement in PlayPumps International to a local reporter.

The parameters for the class project included the fundraising goal—\$14,000 to erect a PlayPump merry-go-round in Sub-Saharan Africa—and the need to address learning benchmarks in geography, language arts, and environmental science. Despite the pricetag, Domini encouraged her students, saying, “If you aren’t audacious and don’t dream big, big things won’t come to you.”

Their fundraising strategy featured efforts to build community-awareness. Students planned a “green” rummage sale to benefit PlayPumps International, placed donation boxes in local bakeries and coffeeshops, got themselves onto the evening news, and managed to raise more than \$5,000.

Along the way, each student learned not only how to break a project down into manageable steps and how to handle the media, but also “how to be a good citizen in a global setting,” says Domini. “This is what school is for. Service-learning is powerful, amazing, awesome learning that they’ll remember the rest of their lives. It’s good for the school and the community; the goodwill it produces is unquantifiable.” ■

For free global water issues lesson plans featuring PlayPumps International, visit www.knowh2o.org.

For more curricular resources, visit www.nylc.org/resource_center.cfm



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Communications Director

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

service-learning project... and evaluate the project’s effectiveness and civic contribution.”

Social studies teachers across the state are currently gearing up to put the new standards into practice. Recently, Nerbak offered a “Leave No Citizen Behind” training on the new standards which attracted 300 social studies teachers.

He is perhaps most excited about getting middle school students involved with service-learning. “They’re still very idealistic,” he says. “If you can tap into that, wonderful things result.” ■

— NATE SCHULTZ and MADDY WEGNER

To view *Maine Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction* visit www.maine.gov/education/lres/pei/ss102207.pdf.



Children enjoy playing on the PlayPump® water system donated to the community of Volinquondo, South Africa.

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Curriculum Integration 1

The following example is derived from curricula developed by NYLC for PlayPumps International. For free global water issues lesson plans, visit www.knowh2o.org.

Start with the Service Project ▶ **Connect Service to the Educational Standard**

How to Integrate Service-Learning into the Curriculum

Service-learning can be integrated with curriculum standards to achieve powerful results. Teachers can approach this in two ways:

1. **Start with the service project in mind and connect the project to educational standards or learning objectives.**
2. **Start with selected educational standards or learning objectives and design a service experience that meets them.**

The second approach can be used effectively to involve students in designing the curriculum. (See Curriculum Integration 2.)



CARYN PERNU
Managing Editor

The Teacher Tools can help guide you as you integrate service and learning in your curriculum. These pages offer reproducible forms you can use as you and your students plan service-learning projects.

Additional resources and tools are available in NYLC's Online Resource Center at www.nylc.org/curriculumintegration.

Service Project

Description: Fifth-grade students write a class book to help second-grade students and the larger school community understand the drinking water crisis in Africa.

Main goal (or essential question): Students create a teaching tool that can be used in other classrooms to raise awareness of the drinking water crisis in Africa.

Language Arts Standards

- Engage in a writing process.
- Apply standard English conventions when writing.
- Locate and use information in reference materials.

Geography Standards

- Understand the physical and human characteristics of places.
- Understand how to use maps and other tools.
- Understand how physical systems affect human systems.

Fine Arts Standards

- Use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.
- Explore and understand prospective content for works of art.
- Select subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

Activities

1. Connect with students' prior knowledge about drinking water, its sources, and drinking water access at home and around the world.
2. Students research picture books and analyze how they are put together.
3. The class works as a team to brainstorm the framework for the story and pictures for a class book.
4. Students work on writing or illustration teams to create a class book.
5. Students share their book and their knowledge about the drinking water crisis in Africa with other classrooms.

Start with the Service Project ▶ Connect Service to the Standard

Service Project

Description:

Main goal (or essential question):

Educational Standards

Educational Standards

Educational Standards

Activities

Curriculum Integration 2

The following example is derived from curricula developed by NYLC for PlayPumps International. For free global water issues lesson plans, visit www.knowh2o.org.

How to Integrate Service-Learning into the Curriculum

If you have identified educational standards that you need to address, use the following approach to design a service-learning project that meets them:

1. **List the standards or objectives you wish to achieve.**
2. **Connect these to genuine community needs. Students can research needs in their community associated with these standards:**
 - Scan local media sources for information on needs in their community.
 - Walk through the local area to document assets and needs.
3. **Teacher and students generate criteria for selecting a need to address. For example:**
 - Meets the required content standards.
 - Can be done in the allotted timeframe.
 - Addresses the root causes of a community problem.
 - Fits with student interests.
4. **Students develop their service-learning project:**
 - Suggest projects that fit the criteria.
 - Evaluate possible projects based on the criteria.
 - Select a project and then further develop it by locating partners, developing schedules and action plans, and alerting the media when appropriate.

Start with Educational Standards ▶ **Connect to Genuine Community Needs**
▶ **Design a Service-Learning Project**

Educational Standards

Civics Standards: The Role of the Citizen

- What are the roles of the citizen in a democracy?
- What is citizenship?
- What are the responsibilities of citizens?
- How can citizens take part in civic life?

English Language Arts Standards

- Conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems.
- Gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate discoveries in ways that suit the purpose and audience.

Connect to Genuine Community Needs

Research Community Needs Associated with Standards:

Students will explore water use in their own community through a variety of methods:

- Surveying their families and community members on personal daily water use.
- Conducting online and library research to explore community and worldwide trends in water availability and use.

Criteria for Selecting a Community Need:

- Includes study on the content standards listed above.
- Connects to working with a town in Africa.
- Involves sharing what the class learns with a wider audience.
- Addresses some of the root causes and problems of the lack of access to water.
- Requires student leadership role in solving significant community problems.

Design a Service-Learning Project

Service-Learning Project:

Raise public awareness about the problems a lack of drinking water has in Africa and raise funds toward building a PlayPump water system in a town.

Activities:

- Create PSAs and poster campaign to share what students learn about the drinking water crisis and PlayPumps playground equipment as a potential solution.
- Distribute materials and play announcements within the school and community.
- Raise funds to build a PlayPump water system in a selected city in Africa.

Start with Educational Standards ▶ Connect to Genuine Community Needs ▶ Design a Service-Learning Project

Educational Standards

Standards

Standards

Connect to Genuine Community Needs

Research Community Needs Associated with Objectives:

Criteria for Selecting a Community Need:

Design a Service-Learning Project

Service-Learning Project:

Activities: