

# GETTING STARTED IN SERVICE-LEARNING

Integrating the Process into K-12 Teaching



National Youth Leadership Council



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National Youth Leadership Council  
463 Maria Avenue N., Suite 108  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)



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Many of the links in this book are in NYLC's Service-Learning Resource Center. To access these resources, please become a member at [nylc.org](http://nylc.org).

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Youth Leadership Council would like to thank the teachers, students, and service-learning practitioners who generously gave of their expertise and time in creating the original *Getting Started in Service-Learning* and in preparing this updated and expanded edition.

Maddy Wegner, Amy Meuers, Julie Rogers Bascom, and Pam Siebert led the revision of this edition of the book, whose original thoughts track back to the professional development work of James and Pamela Toole in the 1990s. Former NYLC Director of Research, Susan Root, brought the backwards planning approach to the process. Experienced teachers Anna Edlund of Bluff Creek Elementary in Minnesota and Beth Nickle of Study High School in Missouri provided valuable insights on how those new to service-learning can use this powerful instructional strategy in their classrooms and communities.

We'd also like to thank [Allstate Foundation](#), whose generous support made the revision of this publication possible.

# FOREWORD

With this revision of *Getting Started in Service-Learning*, NYLC brings “backwards planning” — as well as its 40-year history — to the service-learning process. This four-stage process reflects the critical role of educators in framing the experience and rooting it in student outcomes. It also highlights leadership roles for young people as they become civic actors in their communities.

NYLC Research Director Dr. Susan Root identified the potential of bringing this inquiry-driven process to the service-learning cycle with her book *Service-Learning by Design*, (NYLC, 2017).

In it, she helps educators:

1. Identify desired results;
2. Develop assessments (both formative and summative) to measure student progress and achievement of desired results; and,
3. Design learning experiences that support the attainment of learning goals.

This introduction to service-learning describes the power in this approach, when service-learning drives academic, civic, and social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. It is a teaching method meant to support youth action on the most pressing needs – across issues such as racism, equity in education, environmental justice, health and wellbeing, or climate change. It is also a pedagogy that can incorporate culturally responsive and anti-racist teaching strategies as it is rooted in the students’ passions and their community’s needs. And it is a pedagogy that can begin in small ways, by linking one or more academic outcomes to an experience of direct or indirect service.

Thank you for joining this effort to Serve. Learn. Change the world.®



## CHAPTER 1

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# WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

### IN THIS CHAPTER...

- Education in Action
- A Teaching and Learning Strategy
- Student Outcomes



# SERVICE-LEARNING: EDUCATION IN ACTION

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So what *is* service-learning? Among other things, it is an exciting practice for learners of all ages that is all about doing. It is not characterized by a project or specific academic discipline. Instead, it is learning brought alive through the process of inquiry. When students participate in service-learning, they move beyond the classroom into the community and use their knowledge and skills to benefit others. Simply put, they serve and they learn — and, in so doing, they become leaders.

The hyphen in service-learning is important; it represents the balance between service activities and learning goals. Service-learning falls under the broader category of experiential learning. In [experiential education](#), students learn by actively engaging in experiences that have benefits and consequences. By reflecting on those experiences, students apply academic content and develop new skills, attitudes, and ways of thinking. Service-learning is a type of experiential education.

In times that require flexible pedagogies, it can be done both in person or online, integrating anti-racist and culturally responsive teachings, and addressing issues such as structural racism, health, and education inequities.

Whether raising awareness about youth mental health services, tackling policies, or planting a school garden, students can respond to the “[fierce urgency of now](#)” — as Dr. Martin Luther King said.

## TEACHER TIP

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**Service-learning** is an approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.

Simply described,

Planting flowers at a local park is **service**.

Studying erosion is **learning**.

Researching native grasses and working with master gardeners to control erosion at a local park is **service-learning**.

Every service-learning project takes students out of passive roles and into active ones.

This book describes the basics of service-learning by outlining how to implement service-learning successfully in the classroom so that educators can take the first steps into this rewarding way of teaching and learning.







# A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

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Teachers who use this experiential method foster their students' involvement in the direction and ownership of their learning. Young people and adults become partners in this process, working together toward a common goal.

Service-learning often combines several curriculum standards, involves multiple steps, and includes outside partners in learning.

For example, when a middle school or high school teacher takes a service-learning approach, instead of

*staying in the science classroom and directing students to use a microscope to examine water samples provided by the teacher*

the class

*identifies local water sources, gathers samples, analyzes them in the school chemistry lab, documents the results, and presents scientific findings to the local pollution control agency for suggested action.*

Or in an elementary school, instead of

*second-graders reading a social studies lesson in their textbook and doing an unrelated art project*

the class

*learns social studies, language arts, and art concepts by creating books about their family traditions. They then read the books to kindergarten students. At the end of the school year, students donate their books to the second-grade library.*



Every successful service-learning experience follows a series of steps — but the strategy also is adaptable, allowing for student service to vary in many ways:

- **Size:** Experiences can be small, involving just one class or several groups of students in a class, or large, involving the entire student body.
- **Length:** Experiences can span a series of lessons or last an entire academic quarter — or more. They usually are not one-time events, however.
- **Age:** Experiences can involve students at any age.
- **Curricular Goals:** Any academic subject and curricular goal can be addressed through a service-learning approach. The method is also ideal for differentiating instruction based on learning interests and abilities.
- **21st Century, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and Leadership Goals:** All of these “softer” skill areas are applied in service-learning, as the actions require students not only to collaborate, but also to think critically to achieve goals.
- **Community Needs:** Students can define their “community” as narrowly or broadly as they choose. They may want to consider their classroom or school as their community, or define community more broadly to include a neighborhood, city, or region. Local service can have national or global links.
- **Participants:** Every service-learning experience involves young people and adults working together as partners. Outside groups and individuals are essential to the process.

Service-learning is distinguished from volunteerism in its link to learning objectives, its integration of reflection throughout the process, its ties to a curriculum, and its deliberate outcomes for young people.

As service-learning practitioner and alternative high school English teacher Beth Nickle attests: “Service-learning lets my students see their potential. It allows them to contribute to the community and apply their learning to real issues. Service-learning opens the world to my students.”

Elementary teacher Anna Edlund sees similar outcomes in working with younger students. She says that through service-learning, students answer the age-old question “What did you learn in school today?” with a new and meaningful answer: “I helped change the world.”



# FROM COMMUNITY NEED TO SERVICE-LEARNING ACTION

COMMUNITY NEED	HOW IDENTIFIED	SERVICE CONNECTED TO LEARNING GOAL	Academic Standards and SEL Skills
Local hospitals have a shortage of blood.	Story in local news.	Students help run blood drives for the Red Cross and create educational materials and presentations for peers, family, and community on the importance of blood donation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Next Generation Science Standards: Cross-Cutting Concepts: (CCC4)</b> Systems and System Models (re: blood-matching)</li> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4</b> Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.</li> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4</b> Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</li> <li>• <b>SEL Skills</b> Social awareness and responsible decision-making</li> </ul>

COMMUNITY NEED	HOW IDENTIFIED	SERVICE CONNECTED TO LEARNING GOAL	Academic Standards and SEL Skills
Bridging the age divide between older students and elementary school students.	Classroom discussion on community.	Sixth-graders collect information about younger students through interviews and create “buddy books” to foster positive relationships between the grade levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D</b> Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.</li> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.A</b> Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.</li> <li>• <b>SEL Skill</b> Social Awareness and responsible decision-making</li> </ul>

COMMUNITY NEED	HOW IDENTIFIED	SERVICE CONNECTED TO LEARNING GOAL	Academic Standards and SEL Skills
Community lacks awareness of local veterans who served in conflicts.	Local historical society presented the need and asked for assistance.	Eighth-graders visit with local members of the American Legion and gather information about serving the country in times of war. Students create documentaries about soldiers’ lives that are archived at the historical society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2</b> Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.</li> <li>• <b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6</b> Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.</li> <li>• <b>SEL Skills</b> Social awareness and responsible decision-making</li> </ul>

COMMUNITY NEED	HOW IDENTIFIED	SERVICE CONNECTED TO LEARNING GOAL	Academic Standards and SEL Skills
<p>Community is diversifying and lacks understanding of new cultural and ethnic groups.</p>	<p>News article on the increase of immigration and personal stories of conflict in the community.</p>	<p>Seventh-grade students study immigration in geography class, compare Census statistics with a survey of their community, and involve community partners in creating a showcase of ethnic and cultural groups.</p>	<p><b>C3 Framework for Social Studies: Taking Informed Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>D3.1.6-8.</b> Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.</li> <li>• <b>D4.8.6-8.</b> Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.</li> <li>• <b>SEL Skills</b> Social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.</li> </ul>

COMMUNITY NEED	HOW IDENTIFIED	SERVICE CONNECTED TO LEARNING GOAL	Academic Standards and SEL Skills
<p>Voter registration is low.</p>	<p>Statistics from the Secretary of State's office and classroom discussion.</p>	<p>After learning about voting trends and patterns in civics class, high school students design a voter registration drive. Students plan the campaign and partner with the League of Women Voters to increase awareness about upcoming elections.</p>	<p><b>C3 Framework for Social Studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>D2.Civ.2.9-12.</b> Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.</li> <li>• <b>D2.Civ.7.9-12.</b> Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.</li> <li>• <b>D4.8.9-12.</b> Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms, schools, and out-of-school civic contexts</li> </ul> <p>SEL Skills: Social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.</p>



# STUDENT OUTCOMES

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Service-learning in a high school math class will (obviously) have different outcomes than one created for first-graders studying social studies and language arts. However, the following results are typical of any service-learning endeavor:

## TEACHER TIP

When getting started in service-learning, it is important to start small. Look for needs within your school building. A small service-learning experience can demonstrate how multi-faceted service-learning can be without overwhelming participants — from teachers to students. For young children, witnessing the impact of their actions within the school community is tangible, motivating, and manageable.

## TEACHER TIP

Student outcomes may also drive administrators' and school boards' interests in service-learning, so are helpful in building broad-based support for the evidence-based teaching and learning strategy. Consider using this list to bring administrators, other teachers, and parents on board.

### 1. Increase in engagement in school and learning

Service-learning gives young people something to *do* with their learning. It helps them understand why education is relevant to their lives and the lives of others. It also connects them to their communities.

### 2. Practice of social/emotional, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills

In service-learning, students have responsibility for both identifying a community need and developing an appropriate response. This work requires them to apply social and emotional learning (SEL) skills as well as critical thinking and problem-solving strategies in new and challenging ways — attributes often labeled “21st Century Skills”.

### 3. Application of cross-cultural skills

Key to service-learning experiences are the reciprocal partnerships young people develop among themselves and with their communities. Often the strongest projects are those that involve diverse participants incorporating different perspectives while working toward a common goal.

### 4. Development of civic engagement habits

As students respond to genuine community needs, they become leaders and resources in the community. They research, interview, collaborate, and communicate their findings. Students understand that they are capable of accomplishing important tasks — both large and small — and that their actions make a difference.

### 5. Exposure to higher education and career opportunities

Service-learning prepares students for their next steps in ways that traditional classroom learning can't. It puts the reins in the students' hands, shows them the uses of their knowledge and skills, and helps them develop communication, interaction, organization, and self-motivation — all skills that are relevant to future life choices.

“Service-learning provides an intersection between the standards we are required to teach and the interests that motivate students to learn,” says teacher Anna Edlund.



# SERVICE-LEARNING EDUCATOR READINESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a teaching method, service-learning is hands-on learning. Drawing on theories of positive youth development, it requires comfort with youth leadership, the unpredictability of working outside the school walls, and different ways of assessing learning. It encourages young people to take an active interest and/or role in shaping their learning. The following self-assessment chart may also prove useful to a discussions with faculty, administrators, and school board members.

## CONSIDER WHERE YOUR COMFORT LEVEL LIES WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

	COMFORTABLE	NOT COMFORTABLE
1. Learning activities should be relevant to the “real” world.		
2. Content should be presented in ways that are interactive.		
3. Learning takes place when students have opportunities to employ critical thinking and problem-solving, to process and reconstruct their knowledge.		
4. Students should play an active role in establishing learning objectives.		
5. Students should play an active role in decision-making.		
6. Learning increases when community members are partners in the educational process.		
7. Quality educational experiences encourage students to recognize, value, and appreciate diversity.		
8. Providing service can enhance students’ personal, social, and academic development.		
9. Authentic assessment should incorporate the full range of learning styles.		
10. Learning should be fun for my students and for me.		
		<b>TOTAL</b>

## ASSESSING YOUR ANSWERS

If you’re comfortable with...

### 8-10 statements

Service-learning is a natural fit with your teaching style.

### 5-7 statements

You will likely find that service-learning occasionally challenges you to relinquish control to students.

### 0-1 statements

Wait. Service-learning is an experiential teaching and learning strategy. Before beginning this endeavor, you may want to learn more about the experiential process and its role in learning.



## CHAPTER 2

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# WHY SERVICE-LEARNING?

### IN THIS CHAPTER...

#### The Benefits of Service-Learning

- For Students
- For Teachers
- For Communities

#### K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice



# THE BENEFITS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

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The benefits of service-learning become clear when examining the connections that transpire through this type of hands-on learning.

## FOR STUDENTS:

### Academics and Real Life

When students address a community need, it transforms their learning from two to three dimensions. Math, science, history, language arts, and more come to life through projects dealing with issues such as health, intergenerational or multicultural understanding, climate change, and poverty or hunger — to name a few.

### Voice and Power

Service-learning helps students find and use their voices. Students investigate, plan, and provide service, then reflect on the outcome. Such responsibility changes their views of themselves and of the world. It shows them that every effort to help others helps them as well. The work itself raises their own estimation of their abilities.

## FOR TEACHERS:

### Academics and Real Life

Teachers often themselves struggle to answer students' perennial question: "Why do we need to know this?" Service-learning brings all participants into the applied side of education. It gives teachers and students alike renewed purpose when the audience for an action is real.

### Role and Purpose

Often teaching feels like it is done in isolation — apart from the families and communities it ultimately benefits. Service-learning contracts that distance. It illustrates teachers' vital roles in the development of an informed citizenry.

"What I learned from the experience is that it doesn't matter how small you are or how young you are; you can make a difference in whatever you do."

CHRISTIAN BREWINGTON,  
STUDENT, NEW ORLEANS, LA

"As we've grown together, we've learned each other's personalities more... We've figured out our differences and our strengths."

SAVANNA MORAN,  
STUDENT, ST. CHARLES PARISH,  
NEW ORLEANS, LA

"Service-learning goes along with social and emotional learning. Authenticity occurs when it's real world and connected to giving back to the community. Service-learning provides those opportunities for students to see the bigger context."

ELAINE FITZGERALD, PRINCIPAL,  
SATELLITE CENTER for CAREER  
AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION, LA





## FOR COMMUNITIES:

### Students' Passions and Innovations

Communities get to experience the generosity and skills of the young people who might live next door or in other neighborhoods, and who they may not know. Service-learning helps make public their skills and passions for the greater good of the community.

### Community Partners' Roles in Schools

In service-learning, a potential partner is anyone in a position to help students and teachers address a community issue. Partners might come from organizations that are already addressing the community need, such as environmental groups, police, or nonprofit organizations. They might be members of a group that needs help or a cause looking for volunteers. Or they might be parents or residents of the community willing to contribute time, materials, or expertise.

“To address some of the concerns around the impact of COVID on my Somali community, I created an informational page on Facebook called ‘MECCA’ for Minnesota East African Community Covid Awareness and collected stats from the Centers for Disease Control, Minnesota Department of Health, and independent researchers. I also found resources translated into Somali so that younger members of the community could explain to the elders why the public health practices mattered. And I worked with another participant who was supporting mothers in the community. We created a mutual aid spreadsheet that will be sent out to mosques so that those needed babysitting or grocery pick-up can connect with one another and provide support.”

**ZAHRA ALI, COLLEGE FRESHMAN,  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

“We have partners who we plan with; we have partners who might provide a service. Our biggest partners are our parents, who each provide 20 hours of service to our school yearly.”

**SHIRA WOOLF-COHEN,  
PRINCIPAL, NEW FOUNDATIONS  
CHARTER SCHOOL,  
PHILADELPHIA, PA**





# SUCCESSFUL SERVICE-LEARNING

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The outcomes for students involved with service-learning are many, yet the benefits are not automatic. How educators develop and implement service-learning practice is critical to attaining these outcomes. To help maximize outcomes, seasoned service-learning practitioners and researchers have developed standards for high-quality service-learning that provide an evidence base for the practice.

*The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice* were published by NYLC (2008) in partnership with organizations and individuals who provided research, leadership, funding, and the wisdom that comes from experience.

Incorporating these eight standards into service-learning practice helps reach the vast potential of service-learning. The standards also can serve as a tool for reflection and accountability, though they are more aspirational than essential for the educator new to service-learning.

## K-12 SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS FOR QUALITY PRACTICE

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The following standards offer guidance on implementing service-learning. While not every standard may be included in every service-learning experience, and those new to service-learning may only address one or two, it's important to understand what these standards can bring to the experience.

1. **Meaningful Service:** Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.
2. **Link to Curriculum:** Service-learning is used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals: content standards, civic engagement goals, and/or social and emotional learning (SEL) goals.



3. **Reflection:** Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
4. **Diversity:** Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity, multiple perspectives, and mutual respect among all participants.
5. **Youth Voice:** Service-learning provides young people with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.
6. **Partnership:** Service-learning partnerships are collaborative and mutually beneficial and address community needs.
7. **Progress Monitoring:** Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.
8. **Duration and Intensity:** Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

For a complete copy of the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice and their corresponding indicators, visit [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org).

### TEACHER TIP

If you have a traditional community service project in place already, your first step may be to review the *Service-Learning Standards* and modify the project to include more intentional learning. Ask yourself: How could students become more involved in planning and communication? How might math or language arts standards fit naturally into the project? In what ways could established units of study be expanded beyond the school walls?

### SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

Middle school students noticed that there wasn't a place in the community where generations could come together so they transformed an untended area on school property into a space students and community members alike would enjoy. The outdoor site was part classroom, art center, playground, and neighborhood gathering place. Students in elective classes such as horticulture, art, and construction raised money to support their plans; sowed and tended gardens; and built and decorated tables and benches, an amphitheater and performance stage, and an information kiosk. From the beginning of the service-learning experience, the community showed its support. Neighbors supplied tools, food, and time, and students welcomed them into the process. Both groups gained not only a new gathering space but also new friends and greater pride in their community.



## CHAPTER 3

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# THE SERVICE-LEARNING PROCESS

### IN THIS CHAPTER...

#### Introduction to the Service-Learning Process

- **Stage One: Identify Student Outcomes**
- **Stage Two: Determine Acceptable Evidence**
- **Stage Three: Facilitate the Student Service-Learning Experience**
- **Stage Four: Self-Assess**



# INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE-LEARNING PROCESS

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Service-learning is a process rooted in [backwards planning](#) that has distinct roles for teachers and students. As the four stages illustrate, initially educators identify student learning outcomes (Stage One) and ways of assessing those learnings (Stage Two). Teachers then become “guides on the side” supporting the youth-led service-learning experience.

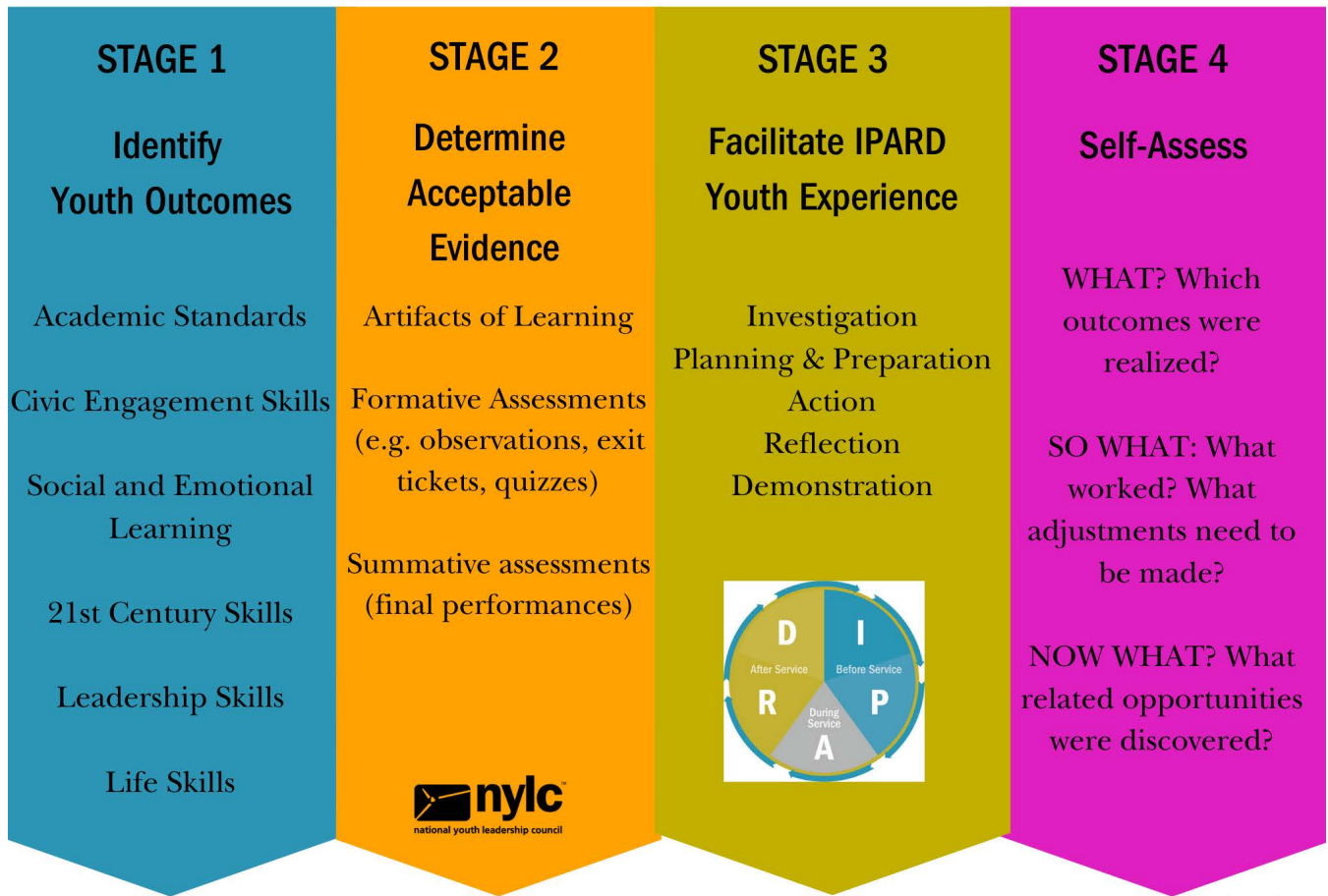
The student experience becomes central in Stage Three, also known as “IPARD” for the youth-led investigation, planning, action, reflection, and demonstration of learning. As the diagram on the following page illustrates, the experience doesn’t begin with the act of service, nor does it end with the completion of the service activity. Every part of the process is rich with learning and growth opportunities, many of them happening as young people investigate community needs, identify a doable action, plan and carry out service activities, reflect on those actions, and share their learnings with the larger community. Even when the action seems complete, the transformational power of the process continues as students, teachers, and communities grow and new needs arise.

This chapter outlines each stage of the service-learning process and follows an exemplary service-learning program based in Louisiana — Wetland Watchers — throughout the student experience. A new service-learning unit may not have all these features — remember that it’s important to start small — but the example outlines the possibilities of an effective program that has grown significantly over more than 20 years.

The Service-Learning Unit Plan map, on pages 23-25 will help you track your initial ideas.



# Stages of Service-Learning



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# FOUR STAGES OF SERVICE-LEARNING UNIT PLAN MAP

## PRE-STAGE 1: LAUNCH

**How will you get students excited about taking action?**

(You might want to consider this two-minute Kid President video on “How to Change the World”: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1rtQ7E5C4E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1rtQ7E5C4E), or this 15-min. video on Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi “Want to Make Peace? Get Angry” on how he moves from anger, to an idea, to action: [www.ted.com/talks/kailash\\_satyarthi\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_peace\\_get\\_angry?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/kailash_satyarthi_how_to_make_peace_get_angry?language=en)).

## STAGE 1: IDENTIFY YOUTH OUTCOMES

**Which of the following are pertinent to this experience?**

- Academic Content Standards
- Leadership Goals
- Civic Engagement Goals
- Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes
- Other

## STAGE 2: DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

**Assessments: Performance Tasks and Other Evidence**

- By what criteria will student progress be measured formatively?

(Think about what you are already doing. Often these approaches will fit the service-learning experience.)

- How will you assess student understanding at the end of the experience, **summatively**?

(Do you use a rubric for a performance-based assessment?)



## STAGE 3: FACILITATE IPARD YOUTH EXPERIENCE

<p><b>Investigation</b></p> <p>How will you help students INVESTIGATE the community's needs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Media</li><li>• Interview</li><li>• Survey</li><li>• Observation</li></ul> <p>What community partners can be involved?</p>	
<p><b>Preparation and Planning</b></p> <p>How will you help students PLAN AND PREPARE for their action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are trainings needed in cultural awareness?</li><li>• Have a range of diverse holidays been considered in the timeline for action?</li></ul>	
<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>How will you help students TAKE ACTION?</p> <p>What kind of action will take place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct</li><li>• Indirect</li><li>• Advocacy</li></ul> <p>How will students document their action?</p> <p>How will you help them problem-solve if things don't go the way they planned?</p>	
<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <p>How will you help them REFLECT throughout the process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before</li><li>• During</li><li>• After</li></ul>	
<p><b>Demonstration</b></p> <p>How will students DEMONSTRATE what they learned?</p> <p>Who needs to hear their message?</p>	



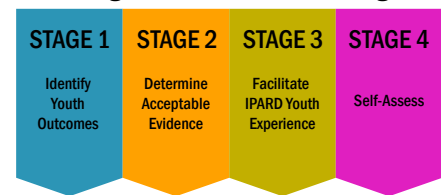


## STAGE 4: SELF-ASSESS

What worked well for you as a teacher/facilitator of the process?

What adjustments need to be made?

Other Notes:



# STAGE 1

## IDENTIFY STUDENT OUTCOMES

Because of the multidimensional aspect of the process, service-learning can meet students where they are, and challenge them to grow. But, before diving into activities it is important to have a plan to maximize the meaningfulness of both service and learning.

The first step in that process is to begin with the end in mind. This stage is also an opportunity to implement the \_\_\_\_\_ service-learning standard.

Note that addressing ANY single academic standard is a great place to start. Mostly likely, the experience will naturally include both civic and social/emotional outcomes such as increases in self awareness and social awareness, as well.

The following list includes a range of possible outcome areas.

### ACADEMIC AND CIVIC STANDARDS

Since educational standards are the building blocks of unit and lesson plans, identifying the related standards, (whether in a single subject area or across disciplines), that lend themselves to community action is a good place to start. At the beginning, identifying even a single academic, civic, or social and emotional learning (SEL) standard may suffice. Service-learning often offers opportunities for English Language Arts exposure to reading informational text and applying writing, speaking, and listening skills, for example. Science (especially STEM and STEAM approaches), languages, the arts, and even math are also subjects that come to life with service-learning applications.

While each grade-level and subject area has its own standards, the [College, Career, and Civic Life Framework \(C3\)](#) that is currently driving national K-12 social studies standards and many state-level versions, offers options. Social studies can be an easy fit for service-learning, and the C3 Framework outlines an inquiry-driven process. Like service-learning, it is designed to inspire students to take informed action.

Across four “dimensions” the C3 focuses on the acquisition and application of civic engagement skills, using questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings — all outcomes desired in service-learning as well.



## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS

Increasingly, educators are looking for ways to teach — and more importantly practice — the skills that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified as social and emotional learning (SEL): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Service-learning offers many opportunities to help these practices become habits.

Building a sense of community in the classroom is central to effective service-learning. Name games and team-builders are often a good way to kick-off classes, and discussion circles can be a good way to debrief sessions. Both allow for acquiring and practicing SEL skills and weaving in meaningful (one of the K-12 Service-Learning Standards) before, during, and after the experience. The entire service-learning process is well-suited to these approaches, and many find that sessions that begin and end with circle time allow for practicing these skills collectively while exercising youth leadership skills as well.

Identifying skill growth opportunities early on will lead to formative ways to assess them throughout the process.

## LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Leadership development is one of the strengths of this process — and is often an outcome. Service-learning gives students of all ages, passions, and academic abilities a chance to shine.

Whether inspiring a shy student to take greater initiative, or helping a more outspoken student learn the skills of supporting other students' leadership growth, both opportunities emerge in service-learning.

### TEACHER TIP

If you are starting a service-learning experience with a service project in mind, consider applying the backwards planning method. Take time to identify where the student's experiences will align with academic standards or other outcomes for students. Have students start with an investigation of the issue that the action will address.

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

A catch-all of skills that are considered readily transferable to higher education and career settings, these skills are also a natural fit with the service-learning process and echo skills that are also considered SEL and leadership skills. Across three domains — learning and innovation, digital literacy, and career and life — service-learning offers opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving, media literacy, and social and cross-cultural interaction.



### TEACHER TIP

**Step 1:** Consider the relevant standards the student experience (IPARD) could address.

**Step 2:** Identify the action words included in each standard.

**Step 3:** Turn action words into learning goals. For example:

- Students will be able
  - to **create solutions** through effective collaboration.
- Students will work
  - in small groups with a common goal while **developing their personal communication and active listening skills**.
- Students will **identify**
  - **their own emotions** and **analyze the impact** of this on their behaviors and relationships.

**Step 4:** Connect learning goals to unit topic or “Big Idea”. In kindergarten the link could be a connection to counting, or in an Earth Science class learning goals might connect to the Big Idea that scientists use repeatable observations and testable ideas to understand and explain the planet.

## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION: WETLAND WATCHERS

### STAGE ONE: IDENTIFY YOUTH OUTCOMES

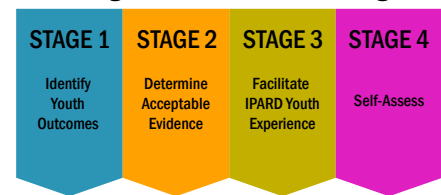
To step into Wetland Watchers Park on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain just outside New Orleans is to step into a natural world wholly changed by hurricanes, then reclaimed by the students of Harry Hurst Middle School – not once, but several times over.

Now 23 years into its existence, Wetland Watchers has exploded in scope and scale. As science teacher and Project Coordinator Barry Guillot says, “I was never planning for a park that involved 20 schools. My plan was to get kids out of school and into the environment.”

As with most teachers, he lived in a world of standards and benchmarks. In recounting his first exposure to service-learning, he attributes that experience to a longtime partner from the University of New Orleans. When Guillot helped her set up learning stations in the area, he says, “I’d look and blink and think, ‘That’s a standard; that’s another standard.’”

Some of the initial life science standards Guillot identified include: “Describe changes that can occur in various ecosystems and relate the changes to the ability of an organism to survive;” “Explain how environmental factors impact survival of a population;” and “Distinguish the essential roles played by biotic and abiotic components in various ecosystems.”





## STAGE 2

# DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

In the second stage of the service-learning process: Determining Acceptable Evidence, teachers answer the question, “How will I know my students have met their learning goals?”

This is also a great place to ensure the service-learning standard of is part of the process. Progress Monitoring means assessing students’ prior knowledge, skills, and beliefs to ensure that they grow from the service-learning experience. This baseline assessment not only reveals students’ basic understandings of content but also their knowledge of the community. Once students have completed their service-learning experience, looking back on their initial thoughts can provide powerful reflection opportunities.

Consider using the following sources of evidence to track students’ progress toward meeting their learning goals:

- **Concept Maps:** The creation of concept maps helps students see relationships between issues and sub-issues. These maps provide opportunities for students to identify their preconceived notions about issues before the experience begins, as well as to revisit them during a summative assessment for comparison and contrast.
- **Think-Ink-Pair-Share:** Typically, students are posed a question, asked to think individually, then share their reflections with another. Then, pairs/individuals share their outcomes with the class as a whole.
- **Journaling:** Journaling is useful in the pre-assessment stage because it can shed light into how much each student knows about a given topic before the service-learning experience begins.
- **Rubrics:** Rubrics can be used to provide information about students’ understandings of their own skills and knowledge. Results can then be used to record each student’s areas of strength and potential improvement. Students can revisit their rubrics at the end of the process to evaluate themselves.

The simple SEL pre- and post-self-assessment ([rooted in the collaborative for Academic, Social and Environmental Learning](#)) on the following page also provides an understanding of students’ baseline senses of agency. Over the course of the service-learning experience, they will likely see growth.



# PRE/POST SURVEY ON STUDENT LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

NAME OR CELL PHONE (if survey is to be anonymous): \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions, indicating whether you strongly agree or disagree with the statements by circling the number that corresponds to how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your strengths coming into and leaving this program.

**1. I know what my strengths are and can list them.** (self-awareness)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**2. I know how to calm myself down when I am upset.** (self-management)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**3. I can set goals and figure out how to reach them.** (self-management)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**4. I can stay focused even when there are distractions.** (self-management)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**5. I can learn from people with different opinions from me.** (social awareness)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**6. I know when someone needs help.** (social awareness)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**7. I can respect a peer's opinions during a disagreement.** (social awareness)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**8. I know how to share what I am feeling with others.** (relationship skills)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**9. I can think about what might happen before making a decision.** (responsible decision-making)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5

**10. I can think of different ways to solve a problem.** (responsible decision-making)

Disagree Agree  
1 2 3 4 5



## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Educators already use formative assessments to monitor and support student learning. Most approaches can either be used as they are (exit tickets, observations, checklists) or can easily be adapted, offering feedback on the level of student understanding, demonstrating the gap between what students know and what they need to know, and offering opportunities for

The following examples of formative assessments can support the service-learning process:

- **Action Plans:** In the service-learning process, goal-setting is often expressed as an action plan that students and teachers can monitor. In this step, it is important that students break down the preparatory steps into specific and manageable tasks.
- **Graphic Organizers:** Graphic organizers present information and relationships in visually-interesting ways, and illustrate the hierarchical relationships between issues and sub-issues.
- **Working Portfolios:** Working Portfolios (as opposed to final portfolios that are used to summatively evaluate students) showcase a student's growth over time. They allow students and teachers to monitor progress and may include drafts of final projects, research, interviews, etc.
- **Learning Logs:** Learning logs are similar to working portfolios in that they focus on the production of materials during the service-learning project. However, they are briefer and more informal than working portfolios and are usually summaries produced after having taken part in a learning or service experience.
- **Questioning Checklists:** Questioning can occur either informally or more formally. Both offer insight into student understanding and reasoning. Questioning helps students delve deeper into topics and explore the root causes of issues, creating opportunities for higher levels of thinking.
- **Exit Slips:** Exit slips can target the big idea of the lesson and challenge students to answer comprehension questions. Ask students to write just a sentence or two, then sort the slips into three stacks: 1. They get it; 2. They kind of get it; 3. They don't get it. Use the stacks to determine how to build the next lesson and/or how to break students into groups.



## SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

These final assessments may take the shape of a rubric or a version of a performance-based assessment, measuring growth in the original student outcomes established in Stage Two. The [New Technology Network](#) rubrics offer ways for students and teachers to assess growth mindset and other attributes that are often outcomes of service-learning experiences.

### SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION: WETLAND WATCHERS

#### STAGE TWO: DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

As the “outdoor classroom” example of middle school science teacher Guillot taking students out to the shores of Lake Pontchartrain illustrates, he and his Wetland Watchers students started with real-life chemical and biological water-testing – which offered ways to document student work through lab reports and collected data.

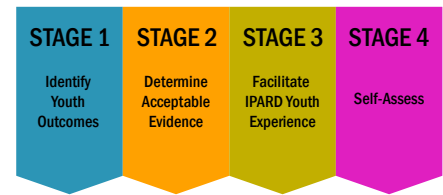
But, the area was so overlooked following the hurricanes that it had become a dumping ground for car parts and appliances. After one student had collected enough discarded steering wheels, broken windshields and tires that he could nearly build his own car, Guillot asked, “What else can we do?” The students answered, “We can plant trees!” to help counteract erosion – another documentable opportunity for formative assessments.

For Guillot, the benchmarks were becoming as apparent as the original opportunity for standards-based instruction had been. And knowing which benchmarks he could address allowed him to begin thinking about related formative and summative assessments.



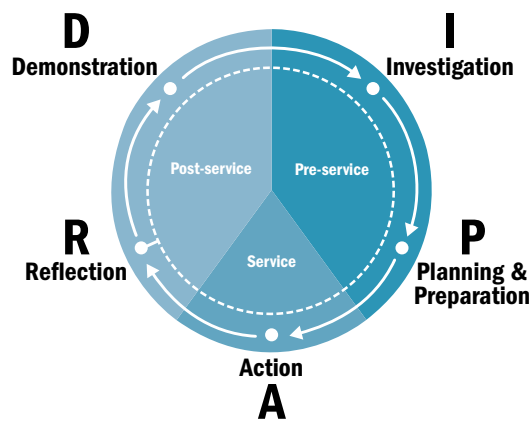


Stages of Service-Learning



# STAGE 3 FACILITATE THE STUDENT SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCE (IPARD)

At this point in the service-learning cycle, the opportunities for  and leadership become central to the experience. Once learning targets and ways of monitoring student growth are established, the educator’s role becomes one of a “guide on the side” managing and supporting student inquiry into their individual and collective interests, strengths, and passions — then supporting them as they investigate the community’s needs, through a process known as "IPARD": investigation, planning and preparing, acting, reflecting, and demonstrating learning.



## INVESTIGATION INTO SELF

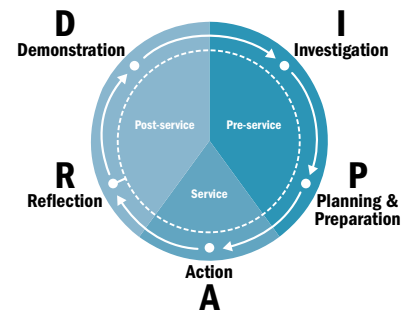
Identity is a critical first step in service-learning, understanding what students bring to the experience in terms of their backgrounds, interests, talents, and passions. This first step is a powerful form of self-reflection and can also function as a team-building exercise. Consider the "Identity Outline" on the following page as a place to start.

### TEACHER TIP

Take a look at the graphic for the IPARD process. Notice anything surprising about the shaded pie shapes? Community service would focus on just the “Action” step, but service-learning puts heavier emphasis on the other steps. That’s where outcomes for students aligned with standards, social and emotional life skills, and leadership development are realized.

## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

One fifth-grade classroom decided that they wanted to explore how to bring a solar panel to their school. Before they decided on what kind of action they would take, they inventoried students’ skills, talents, and interests. One student said he liked to read and could do more research. Another said she liked to draw. If they decided to do a flyer or pamphlet, she could illustrate it. An energetic student said he liked to run. He could deliver the pamphlets to neighbors around the school and neighborhood.



# IDENTITY OUTLINE

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** paper, colorful markers, colored sticky dots, and painting tape.

**Directions:**

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## STEP ONE: (10 mins.)

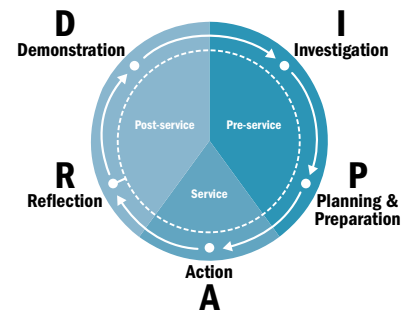
- Roll out butcher paper and cut it into human-sized strips.
- Distribute markers with the butcher paper.
- Have students partner to draw outlines of each other. (These can be self-selected partners, since some degree of comfort is needed with the partner to draw around the partner's head, hands, feet, etc.)
- Then have each person write, inside the outline, what they like to think about, read about, or research. This description goes inside the figure's head.
- At the heart level, have participants write what they are passionate about.
- Inside the hands, have them write what they like to do with their hands (Cook? Knit? Text? Play an instrument?)
- Inside the feet, have them list what they like to do that's active.

## STEP TWO: (10 mins.)

As participants are wrapping up on the inside of their figures, explain the second step. In this phase, they will identify where they get support for these passions and interests. Maybe it's a talented friend or family member, or maybe it's an organization. Push the participants to think of the organizations. These names will land outside the head, hands, heart, and feet of their figures.

## STEP THREE: (10 mins.)

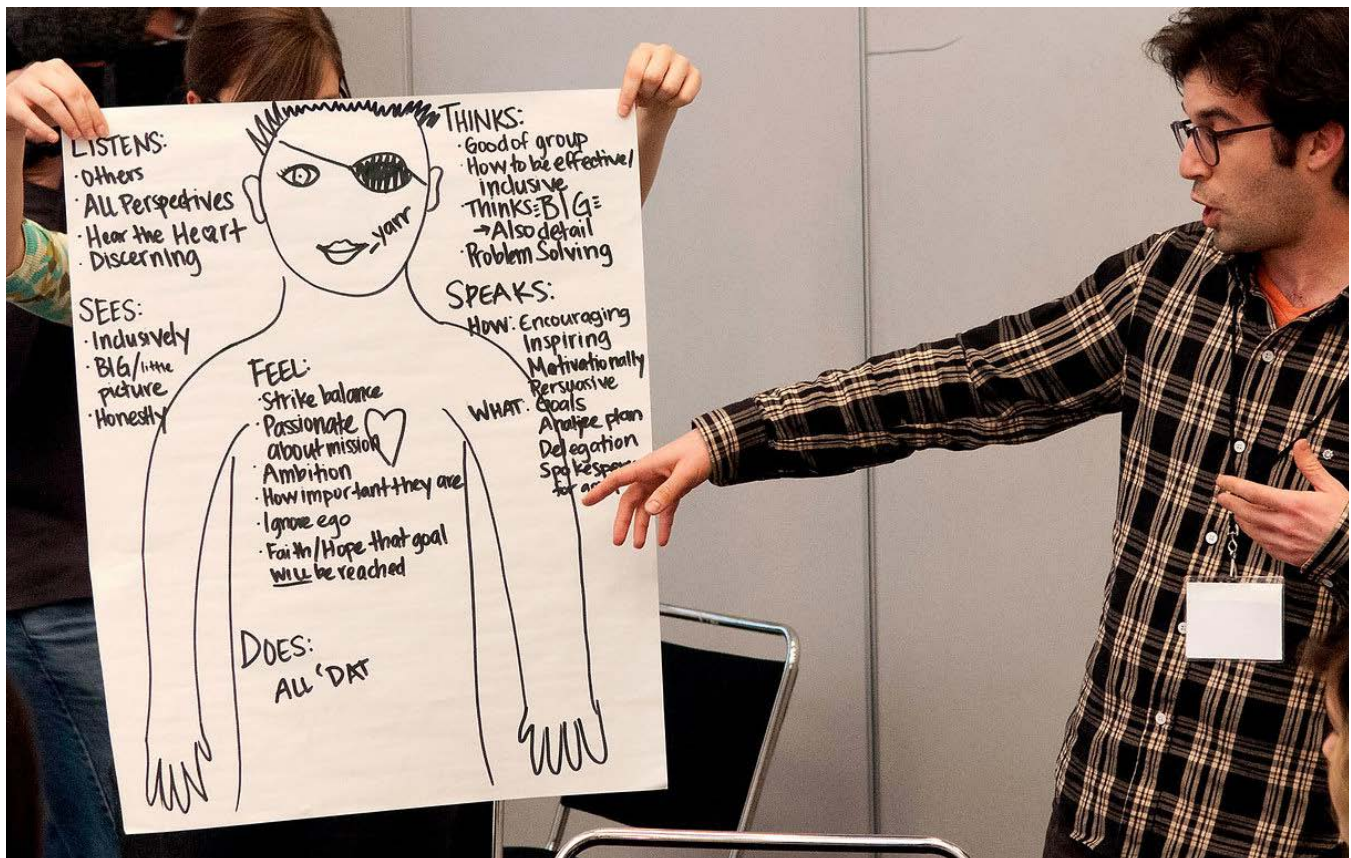
At the end, distribute multi-colored sticky dots and have participants post their figures, personalized/decorated as they like. They then do a "Gallery Walk" of the figures, adding green (for example) sticky dots to the figures that share their interests and yellow to the organizations they find that are new to them.

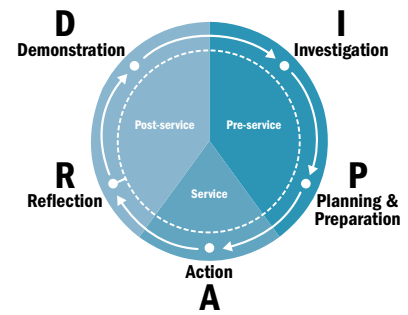


Discuss these findings as a large group, asking:

1. What's one new thing you learned about a classmate?
2. What's one new organization you saw?
3. What similarities did you notice?
4. Are there some shared passions in this group? If yes, what are they?

Leave these figures mounted on the walls of your space, if possible, as they can be helpful to future discussions.





## INVESTIGATION INTO THE COMMUNITY

From this accounting of student interests, passions, and talents, the next step involves an assessment of the community. Remember that the group may decide how narrowly or broadly to define “community.” It may be the class, school or grade level, neighborhood, city, or state. As noted earlier, the local issues unearthed may also have global implications, which can serve as a source of ideas for further service-learning action.

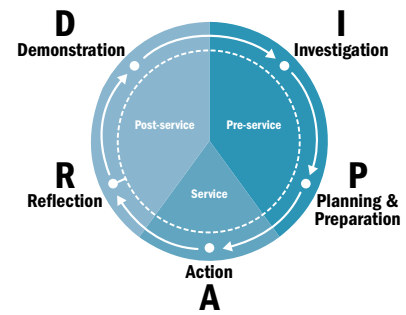
The goal is to identify a need in the community that students care about and can address. Service-learning projects can grow out of a wide range of needs, from welcoming younger students to a new school to larger issues like poverty, the environment, peace and social justice, health and safety, or violence prevention.

### SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

As part of a leadership development unit, students at a high school in Minnesota investigated the needs of their school community caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the student’s sisters was a teacher in a local elementary school. She relayed her concern that younger children didn’t have adults reading to them during distance learning. The student brought the issue back to her peers and asked them what they thought about possible solutions. After speaking with the elementary school’s media specialists, the high school students decided to record themselves reading books and share the videos with the younger students to encourage literacy development during the pandemic.

#### TEACHER TIP

At the beginning of the process, consider how to “hook” students when introducing service-learning. Many teachers kick off their unit by reading a book that examines how young people have addressed community problems — such as *Follow the Moon Home* by Philippe Cousteau and Deborah Kopkinson or *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. Another way to get students imagining possibilities is Kid President’s short video on [“How to Change the World.”](#) These resources may also prompt student reflections.



## WAYS TO IDENTIFY NEEDS

With a world full of problems that adults have not successfully solved, this may seem like a daunting step. But there are easy ways to get started.

### ADAPT AN EXISTING COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT.

One of the easiest ways to get started is to augment an existing service project by adding a learning dimension and then tying the action to the curriculum. Could a canned food drive at the holidays become a math or civics lesson? Have students ever stopped to ask WHY hunger is an issue in the community? Often this exploration into root causes will open up opportunities for reflection that can lead to deeper and more meaningful actions.

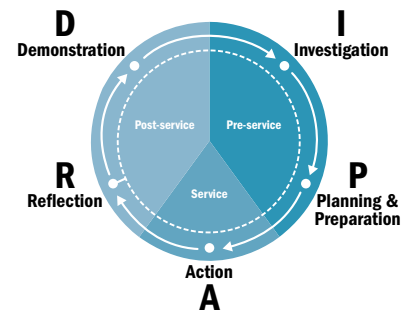
### COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

Students can find a partner or partners already working to address a need in the community and offer assistance. Existing programs may have the structure, resources, and contacts to help develop a successful form of action. Strive to include a variety of voices in these community partnerships. Partners to investigate include:

- Community education
- Park and recreation boards
- Local service organizations
- Department of Natural Resources
- Nonprofit organizations
- Local government agencies (like the mayor, police, or fire department)

#### TEACHER TIP

Relationships are key to successful service-learning. Often nonprofits are happy to speak to students about their actions to address a community need. Could students help by developing a product? Providing a service? Advocating for a cause? Investing time in developing relationships with partner organizations supports successful outcomes.



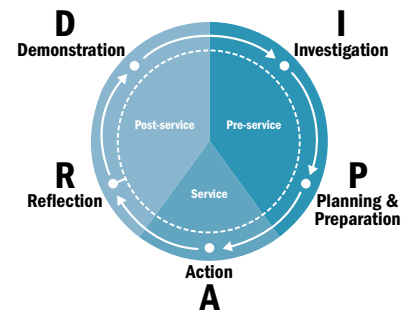
### REVIEW MEDIA.

This step may be as simple as reviewing school or community papers in print or online, monitoring evening news reports for a week, or looking at broader frameworks for what issue areas also have local connections. What are the important issues facing the school, city or state, nation, or the world? Students can list some of these issues after reviewing headlines and articles in the local paper or other media. Comparing local headlines to national and international headlines can help them find issues of local and global importance, and see connections between what’s happening in their community and what’s happening in the rest of the world.

### USE GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS.

One global approach to identifying issues is through the framework of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#), seventeen goal areas that young people and adults around the world are aiming to address by 2030 in the broad categories of ending poverty, fighting inequality, and addressing the urgency of climate change. Posing an initial question like, “Which of these are issues in our community?” may get wheels turning.





Another framework for identifying community needs is the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#). While the U.S. — with leadership from Eleanor Roosevelt — codified human rights for all in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, this treaty that is specific to children and young people under age 18 was developed in 1990. All the United Nations countries, but the U.S., have ratified it — numbering 196, total. Now several cities in the U.S. are aiming to become “Child Friendly” cities that follow the parameters of the treaty.

The CRC also provides a framework in more than 50 issue areas for examining community needs and assets specific to the lives of young people. Again, students could review the child-friendly version of the Articles, and think about the ones that are not being upheld in their community.

### TEACHER TIP

Community investigation techniques must be age-appropriate. While first-graders might want to go on a walk to assess the needs of their school neighborhood, eighth-graders might prefer administering surveys at the local mall.

## CONDUCT A COMMUNITY WALKABOUT.

A Community WalkAbout, rooted in student observations and documentation, is a great way for students to begin to document authentic needs. Armed with clipboards and cameras, this activity calls for students to engage their senses of observation as they evaluate their real-world community, identifying assets (resources and strengths) and needs and challenges in a predetermined area — like the playground, a local park, or a specific neighborhood.

While these actions will likely produce many ideas for needs to address, one idea is all that is needed for the first project — but hang onto the WalkAbout research, as it can be used to inform later projects.

### TEACHER TIP

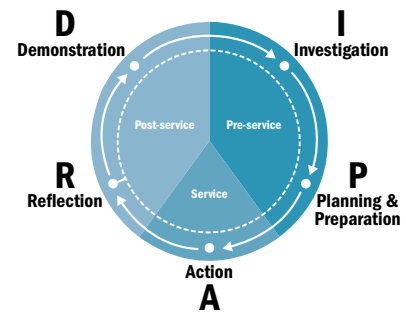
One of the most valuable skills students can acquire and practice during this process is learning how to conduct an interview. A Minnesota fourth-grade teacher knew one of her students’ parents worked in market research and invited him to come talk with the students. The guest speaker described how to ask questions (open, not closed), how to maintain eye contact with the interview subject, and shared other tips for information-gathering.

## SURVEY THE COMMUNITY.

Similar to a WalkAbout, students can also develop a written or online survey for a variety of groups to gather information on what people see as important issues in their communities. Creating survey questions, deciding how to administer the survey, collating the resulting information, analyzing the data, and deciding how to act on that data can provide important real-world experiences for students.

Audiences they might consider surveying include:

- Other students in the school
- Teachers and other school staff
- Community members or community organizations



## INTERVIEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

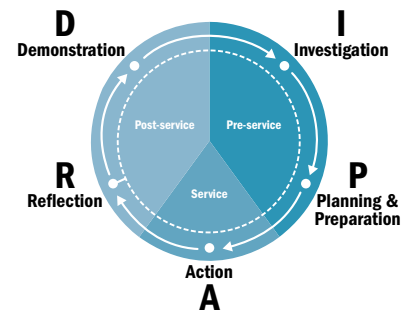
Whether interviewing individually or as a group, it is important to role-play beforehand. One of the key skills of interviewing is striking the right balance between being prepared, and listening hard to the information shared so that interviews can go in new and interesting directions.

In terms of directions for students, providing an overview of the following information will take the mystery out of the process and allow for some English Language Arts standards to be met as well.

1. **Research:** Know enough about the issue to make good use of the community expert's time.
2. **Schedule the interview time,** being mindful of whether it is best to have the expert online in a Zoom or Skype call, visit the classroom, or have students travel to their location. Asking for an hour of the expert's time should allow for a meaningful exchange. It is wise to ask if the expert is comfortable with having the conversation recorded. (Be sure to remind students to thank them profusely for their contributions!)
3. **Brainstorm questions,** keeping in mind the journalistic basics of who, what, where, when, why, and how. Suggest that the students have five to eight good questions, and listen hard to the answers so that spontaneous questions emerge based on the information gathered.
4. **Be prepared,** on time, and polite. All of these behaviors foster further connections, which can help the project overall. Ensure that students are both recording and taking notes during the interview. Students don't have to capture every word, but their notes will enable them to use the recording more efficiently. Notes also offer a back-up plan if technical difficulties with the recording arise. Have a plan for who asks which questions, and allow time for follow-up questions. Be sure not to repeat a question already addressed in another answer.
5. **Notice surroundings:** If the interview is happening outside school, have several students identified whose job it is to notice family photos, awards, etc., and develop questions about the items displayed. Often these lead to unexpected discoveries.
6. **Closing:** In addition to thanking the interview subject, ask if a follow-up call is o.k. The expert has the right to review any direct quotations that become a part of any public record. It may also be appropriate to ask if the expert could make referrals to other community experts.

The entire investigation process is an exercise in analysis and reflection. This deep dive into the community, and the students' emerging understandings of it, will likely become evident in their conversations and exit tickets.





## TURNING RESEARCH INTO ACTION

After students have identified genuine needs in their community, the next step is to consider how they can address those needs through *service-learning* and how the service connects to the overall learning goals.

### TYPES OF SERVICE

All service does not look the same. Service can be either direct, indirect, or may be a form of indirect service: advocacy.

- **DIRECT SERVICE**

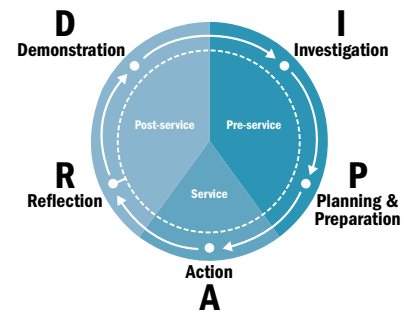
In service-learning, some of the efforts qualify as *direct* service, bringing students face-to-face with those they are serving. For example, drawing on language arts, social studies, and visual arts, young people may teach residents of nursing homes computer skills. Or, using lessons in mathematics, nutrition, and art, they may talk with the school nurse about nutritious foods, then hold a food drive for the neighboring shelter, and help to prepare and serve a meal.

### SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

For people who suffer from memory loss or dementia, music is often one of the remaining memory triggers for them. Knowing this, a Director of Activities of a senior care center approached a Family and Consumer Science class with a need to help elders tap into their music memories. The students interviewed the seniors (direct service) to find out their favorite songs and types of music and created a personalized playlist. They then downloaded and uploaded the chosen songs to an iPod that the staff could use to engage the residents (indirect service).

- **INDIRECT SERVICE**

Other actions offer *indirect service* to a cause or group but do not necessarily put students into contact with beneficiaries. For example, after young people studied the roots of mathematics from Egypt to Greece, they hosted a multicultural math fair for the school to demonstrate the everyday uses of mathematics and to celebrate it as a “universal language” across all cultures.



## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

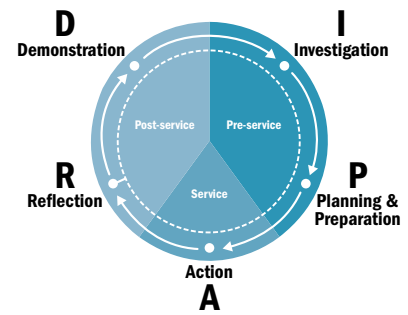
A fifth-grade team had a long-standing craft bazaar as part of their unit on community, charities, and business. Students would make simple crafts and sell them at an all-day community event then donate the money to a local charity. To turn this community service project into a service-learning experience, teachers wove in steps to deepen the learning for students. Instead of starting with a specific charity, students first identified an issue that resonated with them. Then they looked for local nonprofits that addressed that issue. Students then voted for what agency they wanted the funds to benefit, reflecting throughout the experience.

### • ADVOCACY

A type of indirect service is *advocacy*, which might also be thought of as a kind of activism on behalf of a specific cause or social issue, such as rates of obesity. In one Oklahoma fourth-grade class, students began their science and health study by assessing their own body mass indexes. When they realized that, as a class, theirs were high, they initiated school exercise plans. As word spread, other schools wanted to get involved, so the students developed a website to help others anonymously record their BMIs to assess school-level health. Ultimately, the students proposed legislation — a “Walk Across Oklahoma” in which students kept weekly totals of their steps — to help address fitness levels across the state.

## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

Classes studying child rights dug into why the U.S. is the only United Nations country not to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Because their city was aspiring to become a “Child Friendly City” (a U.N. designation), students created a presentation on the Rights of the Child for other students. They also created children’s books on child rights and translated them into multiple languages, then shared them with school libraries and pediatrician health clinics.



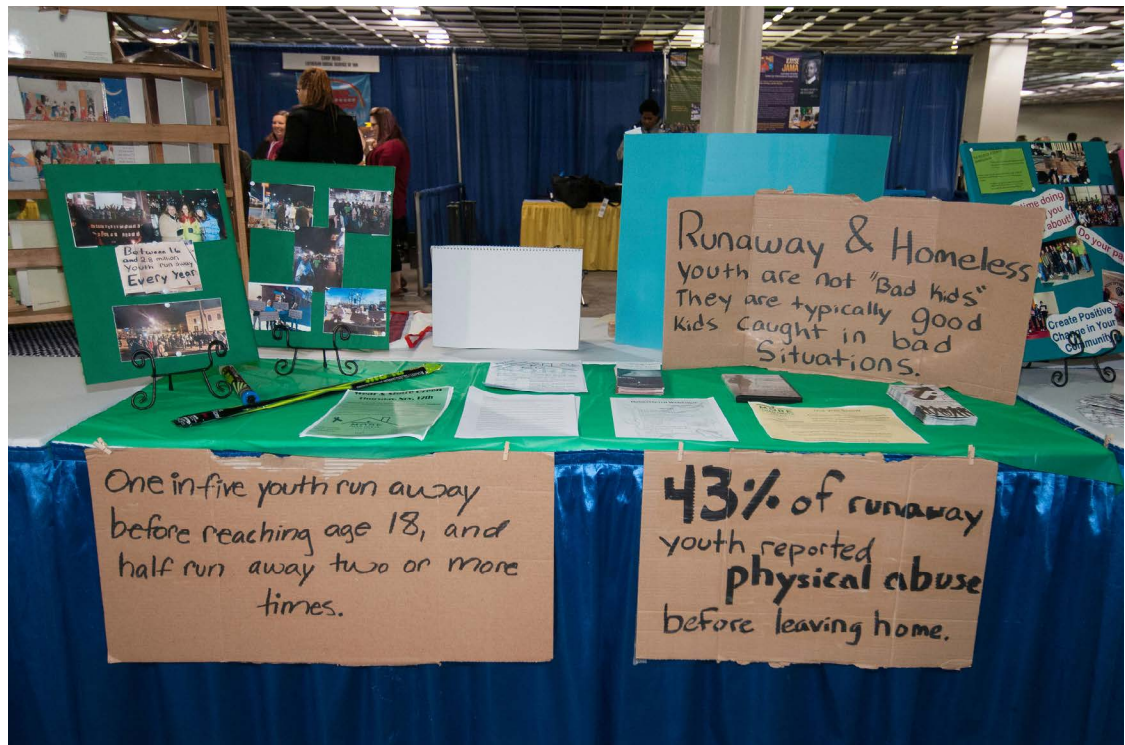
## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

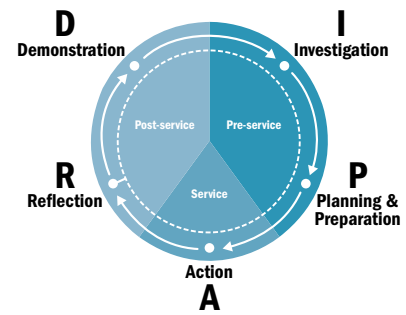
After learning in their science class about the reasons for the declining bee population, a group of girls interviewed local experts on possible solutions. The “Bee Girls” proposed remedy was to increase the number of bee hives in their city — but that was against city code. So they conducted more research, talked to community members, formed a youth action committee, and presented to the city council. They become advocates. Impressed with what the young people suggested, the code was changed and now homes and businesses in this community can have bee hives on their property.

When deciding what kind of action to take, ask “How can we address this need by bringing awareness, being of service or being an advocate?” Some actions can be a combination of all types of action. Sometimes, one type of action leads to another in the next service-learning cycle.

### TEACHER TIP

Narrowing down the issue can be a challenge when students have different ideas of how to get started. Consider narrowing the focus to an issue area that provides an obvious link to the curriculum. If addressing the impact of human behavior on the environment, the issue area could be environmental issues around the school. If addressing literacy standards in elementary school, students might want to start by assessing the school’s library books for diverse representation of languages and protagonists.





## FROM NEEDS TO ACTIONS

The process of moving from identified needs to possible actions can be as simple as a classroom brainstorm, discussion, and vote. Another systematic and democratic approach to arriving at a single workable idea for the whole class is to have students consider the ways that the service should be assessed — aiming for three criteria. This can be done with elementary through high school-age students, and is a practice developed by the nonprofit [Earth Force](#).

Have the students come up with two criteria. The teacher develops one, as well. Often such practicalities as the following list are the criteria:

- Can the service be done in the time available? (In a first time through the service-learning experience, thinking small can build early success.)
- Does the service require outside funding?
- Does the service help meet an academic standard?

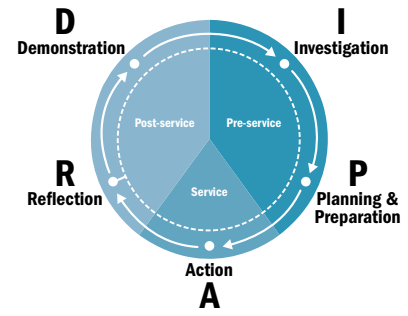
Students then

1. Brainstorm three (or so) ideas based on the community need identified.
2. Divide themselves into groups according to their interests in the service ideas.
3. Research further to refine their chosen ideas for three-minute presentations to the class.

### FIST-TO-FIVE VOTING

Once the students are ready, have each group present their ideas in three minutes or less, then take questions. After the presentations, the class votes, raising their hands to register the level of viability of the idea based on what they have heard their fellow students present.

The process helps build consensus, since literally every vote counts, and the count is visible. Teachers typically lead this effort, with the support of two students — one who makes a visual assessment of the average score in the show of hands. The other records and ultimately averages the scores by adding and dividing the scores by three (for each of the three criteria) for each project in the far right-hand column. The “winning” project is then apparent. (See the following page for more details.)



### FIST-TO-FIVE VOTING (CONT.)

**Step 1:** List the action ideas down the left column of a chart divided into 5 columns. (This can be done on a large piece of paper or whiteboard.)

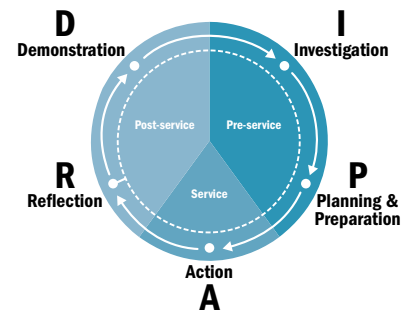
**Step 2:** List the criteria in the three columns to the right of the list of service ideas, leaving the far right column empty. These three criteria will be used to rate the viability or feasibility of each idea. The criteria selected should be conditions that are necessary to carry out a successful service-learning experience.

**Step 3:** Rate the ideas, according to the criteria. Everyone (including the facilitator) votes with a 0-5 (fist to five) hand score, raising hands for a quick visual estimate: 5 fingers = the strongest positive vote and closed fist = 0. Rate each idea according to each of the three criteria.

**Step 4:** Average the score of the group’s responses for each criterion, adding the numbers and dividing by three (for the three criteria). List the average scores in the last column on the right. The highest average indicates the action that is most viable or realistic.

For example, if the topic is encouraging safer driving habits, and the following ideas were developed, the public service announcement idea would prove the most viable option.

ACTION IDEA	CRITERIA #1: TIMEFRAME	CRITERIA #2: FUNDING (additional \$\$ required)	CRITERIA #3: STANDARDS (helps meet academic standard)	AVERAGE SCORES
social media campaign	4	0	3	2.3
public service announcement	5	3	3	3.66
hosting a school-wide event on safe driving	3	0	2	1.66



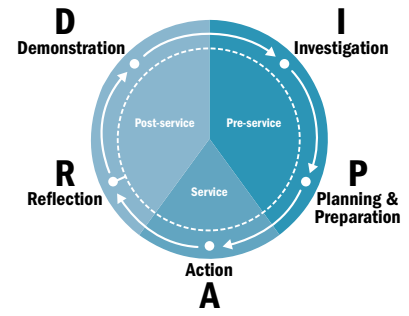
## PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR ACTION

Once students have deliberated about and chosen the action for their meaningful service, they are ready to plan the specifics of who, when, how, and where they will implement their action. This phase is the “backwards planning” aspect of the work for the students. Looking at what they want to achieve by when, deconstructing the goal into smaller steps, and remembering what students identified as their strengths and interests will help this process along. (Note that in more advanced-level practice the standard also can be considered at this step. But for beginners, starting small to build likely success is the greater goal.)

### TEACHER TIP

Like many adults, students often get an idea of what they want to do and they skip this very important stage. Instead of “Ready, set, go!” it’s “Ready, go!” This stage in the IPARD process aligns with many of the desired outcomes that service-learning can address: life skills like creating a timeline and budget, practice in collaboration through developing reciprocal partnerships with community resources, and strengthening critical thinking skills in the analysis of actions to take.

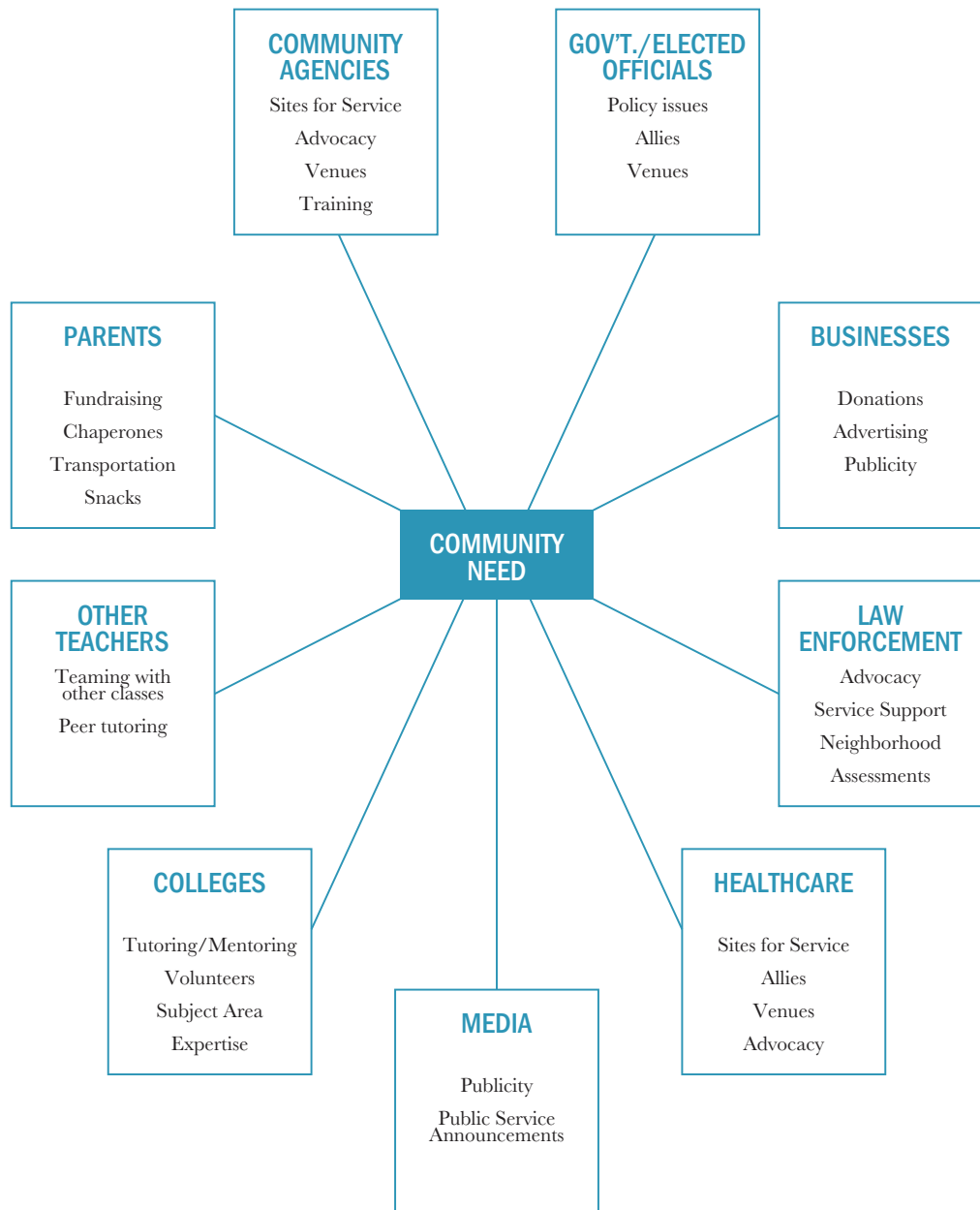




## MAPPING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

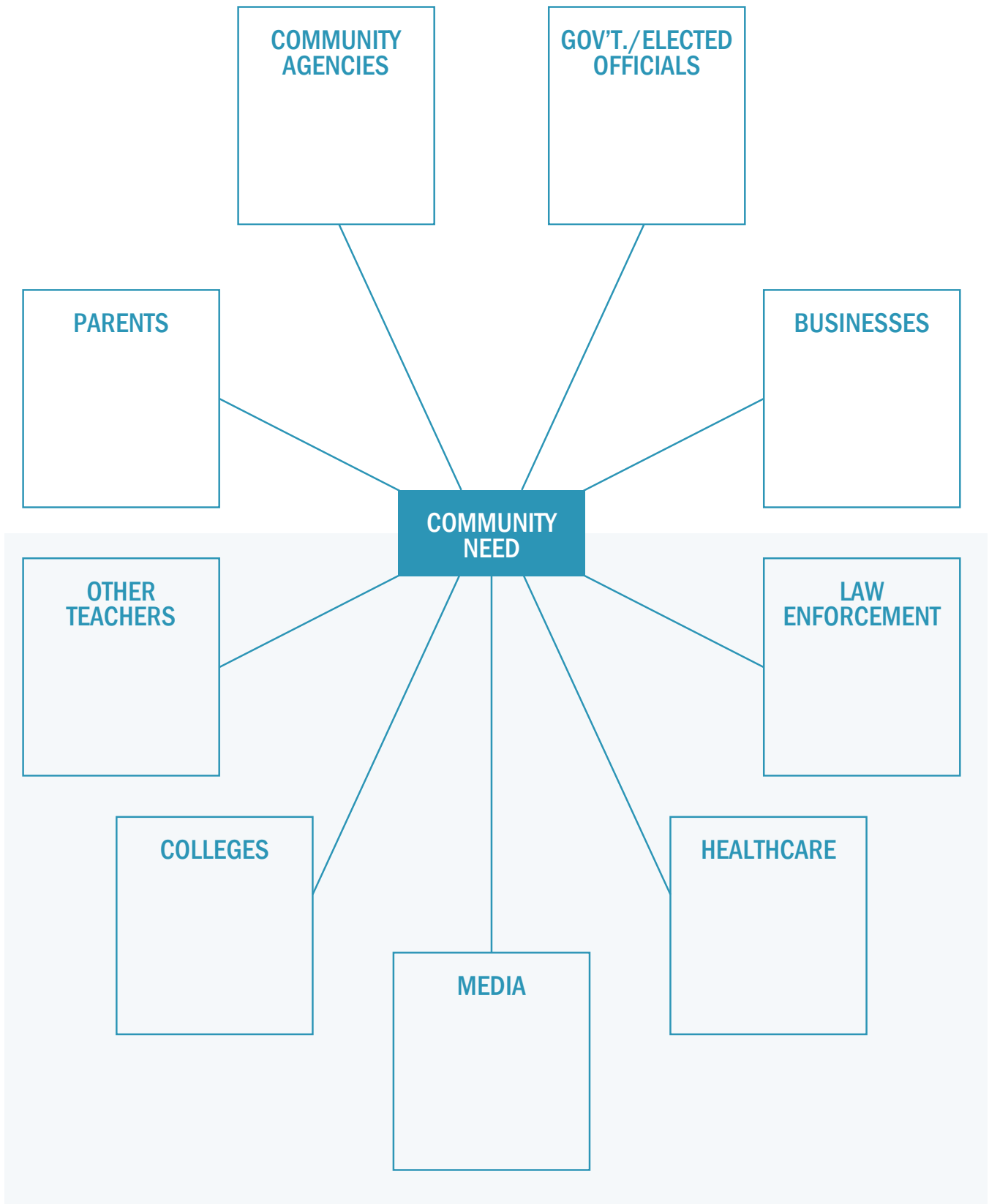
Every community has potential resources. Businesses, schools, religious institutions, organizations, and governmental bodies might be able to provide resources to help address the chosen issue.

Start by creating a resource map and brainstorming with students potential sources of assistance.

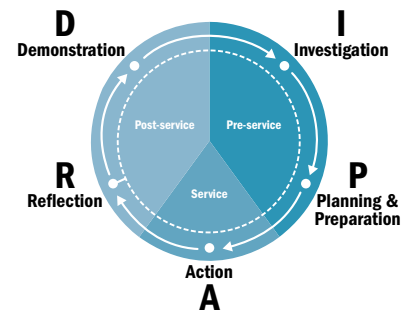


### TEACHER TIP

Begin by looking close to home. Are there other teachers or staff members who can assist with the planning, execution, or evaluation of the service-learning experience? Can students partner with other student organizations? Could parents of current or former students share expertise? Are there transportation resources for field trips? (These funds can also be tapped for service-learning site visits.)







## DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR ACTION

Once students have brainstormed potential partners and identified possible funding sources (if necessary), use the Plan for Action template (on page 52) to have students develop a plan outlining their activities and schedule. Note that this is the opportunity for “closed” (not open) questions with specific and measurable answers. Guide them through this process by posing questions such as:

### Timeline:

- When will students complete the action?
- What deadlines can students set for specific parts of the action?

### Budget:

- Are additional funds required? If yes, how much?
- If yes, who will ask whom, by when?

### Partners:

- Which family members, nonprofit organizations, or community members might be helpful partners?
- How will students ask them to participate?
- What is the frequency of communication needed with each partner?

### Space:

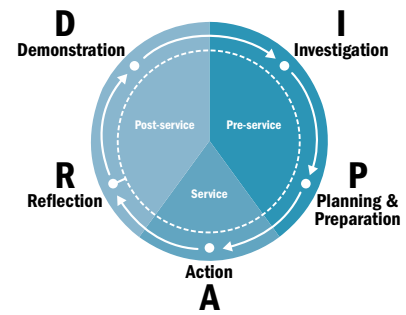
- Is a special space needed?

### Training:

- What skills do students need to acquire?
- Are etiquette and cultural orientation needed?
- If yes, who will lead these trainings?

### Materials:

- What materials are needed?
- Can students get any of the items donated?
- Are any recyclable materials available?



Once the first service-learning action has been completed, consider adding a publicity plan to the next service-learning experience, addressing questions such as:

**Media:**

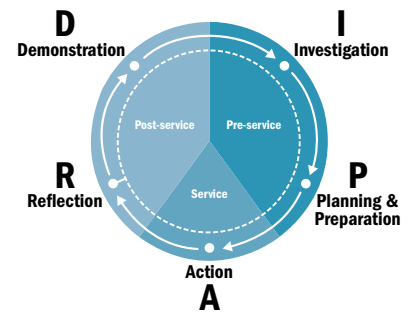
- What is the message we want to send?
- What media venues are possible?
- How might social media be involved?
- Who has connections to media outlets such as radio, television, newspapers or other local publications?

## TAKING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Planning also includes safety considerations. Any educational program, particularly those involving young people, contains an element of risk. Service-learning challenges are no different from those of athletic teams, work experience programs, or field trips that take students out into the community. These programs must be designed and implemented to ensure the safety of both those serving and those being served.

### PRACTICE SAFETY

- Assign tasks that are age-appropriate and within the young person's capability or experience.
- Develop master schedules showing where students are when they are off-site.
- Use parent permission and release forms.
- Provide clear and adequate supervision and training. For example, if students are volunteering at a nursing home, they need to know what they should do if someone suddenly gets sick, slips, or falls. At a daycare center, they need to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate play.
- Clarify rules for safety with students, for example, walking on the sidewalk and/or knowing if there are medical needs among the service recipients.



## CONSIDER LIABILITY

Identify or develop procedures and policies that minimize risk and danger.

- Understand state laws and district policies on whether students and school staff can drive themselves or others. Be sure all drivers are covered by the insurance required.
- Follow the school district's confidentiality guidelines at all times, and make sure that college students, Senior Corps, or other volunteers are aware of the requirements.
- Check the school's insurance coverage parameters.
- If necessary, check with the state volunteer office regarding liability issues.





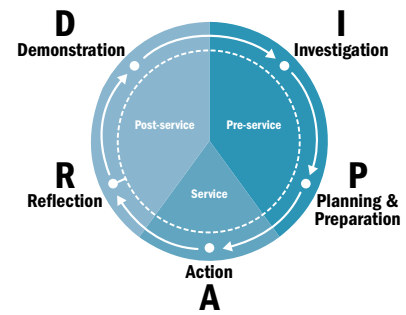
# PLAN FOR ACTION

YOUTH NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TEAM MEMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

ACTION STEP	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	SUPPLIES NEEDED	DEADLINE	STATUS



## TAKING ACTION

### CONDUCT MEANINGFUL SERVICE

Action is at the heart of the service-learning experience.

Students now engage in service to the community, whether direct or indirect, whether working with younger students or elders, collecting wetland specimens, building birdhouses, or advocating for equity in an inequitable system. The types of action in the service phase are varied, but all service is meaningful when linked to learning. The planning and preparation done earlier in large part determines the success of the service activity. Of course, unexpected obstacles and problems do occur, but these too can be learning experiences and opportunities to practice problem-solving skills and build social and emotional skills.

During the action, students may take note of the effects of their action on different participants, exchange ideas with peers and community partners, look at the implications of cultural and diversity issues, and view the service in civic or political terms — all good reflection prompts and material for qualitative analysis.

Another effective way to build reflection into the action itself is to ensure that some students are in the roles of documentarians, videographers, or photographers. Their raw data provide artifacts of the experience which can become material for the demonstration of learning later in the process.

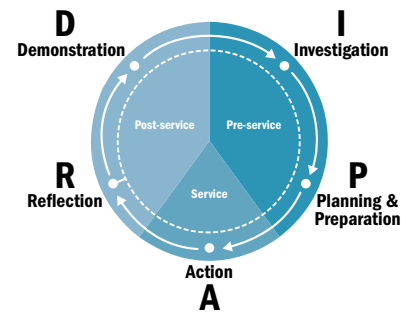
As the service takes place, it's also important to gather relevant quantitative data that will later help participants assess or observe the impact of the action on the community. For example, how many emergency kits were created? How many flyers were distributed? How many meals were prepared? How much money was spent or saved?

If appropriate, ask service recipients and community partners to fill out an evaluation form and ask students to compile the results. This step:

- Allows students to see how their perceptions fit with those of the other people involved.
- Helps educators and students evaluate how they met academic objectives and service goals.
- Helps students compare their prior knowledge with new understandings of academic content.
- Provides ways to improve future actions.

#### TEACHER TIP

One student in an engineering class in a career and technical education program identified that some students have sensory stimulation concerns. So he created a design for a helmet that shielded the wearer from peripheral vision, based on his own disability. Taking action on something personal can have a huge impact on a young person's sense of mastery.



## REFLECTION

It is no accident that reflection is both a standard of high quality service-learning and is also a vital part of the service-learning process. Reflection happens daily in most teaching, as educators query whether a student understands a concept. In service-learning, it prompts the critical thinking skills all disciplines require.

In short, reflection is the processing of the service experience that is done before (pre-reflection), during, and after (post-reflection) service, using multiple methods to encourage critical and creative thinking. It is through reflection that the service activities and the learning objectives, plus prior learnings, connect. Reflection is the demonstration of the hypothesis in service-learning.

### TEACHER TIP

One technique to help develop an atmosphere of safe communication is to hold a classroom "circle." Begin by gathering everyone into a circle and then invite sharing on a particular topic, and have students speak one at a time. Typically, a stone or stick is passed to the person whose turn it is, and no one else may talk until the stone or stick is passed again. With good monitoring and instruction, students learn the elements of safe and open communication. They begin to speak without judgment, without rehearsing, without over-thinking. The point is for all in the circle to speak from the heart, to say what is important and true for them, while the others listen in the same spirit, not jumping in with their own reactions. Gradually, this fosters trust and respect.

### PRE-SERVICE REFLECTION

#### ASK: WHAT?

At the start of the experience, encourage students to examine their prior knowledge of and opinions about issues raised by the experience. Take this opportunity for pre-service reflection for a final check-in before beginning service.

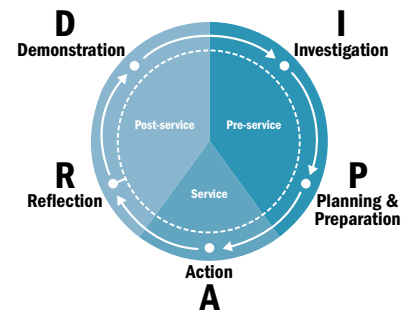
Ask:

- Who will be involved? What are their roles?
- Why is this issue critical to the community?
- Do you think our action will address a root cause underlying the issue? How?

Students can also write or draw in journals, on an exit ticket, or talk about their feelings and expectations.

### SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

A partnership between elementary and high school students with special needs formed to address the genuine needs of both. The "Reading Buddies" mentorship program helped K-2 students improve their reading skills. Twice a week, for nearly an hour, high school students visited a nearby elementary school and took part in leisure reading and literacy games. The younger readers began to see reading as exciting and the older readers began to see themselves as contributors. "For some it was a surprising realization that they had something valuable to offer," said the service-learning facilitator.



## SERVICE REFLECTION

### ASK: SO WHAT?

As students get involved in their acts of service, ask: What's the importance of all this? Discuss what participants are thinking and feeling about the experience. Ask them what they've learned and how things have changed.

Reflection opportunities in this phase offer students a chance to discover where they are in the learning process, and give them a chance to voice concerns and share feelings.

Asking open-ended questions is one way to help young people process their service-learning experiences and move beyond the "feel good" results of the experience to cognitive gains.

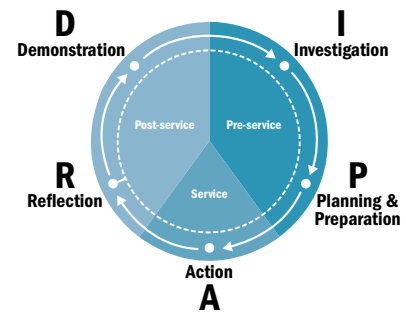
#### TEACHER TIP

Consider using formative assessments as reflection. Try some strategies like a whip around or another engagement strategy. A reflection activity doesn't need to take a substantial amount of time.

#### TEACHER TIP

Digital tools open up creative options for reflection. One elementary teacher created a padlet (padlet.com) entitled "Things I would like to see changed in my school." Young people generated and posted concerns, which led to sorting the issues into categories. Students then broke into groups with the task of analyzing the data — further reflecting in a digital mode.

- What did you see, hear, read, or notice on-site?
- What surprised you?
- How were your observations similar or different from your pre-service assumptions?
- What object could be a symbol of your service-learning experience?
- What do you think about the people or things involved?
- What would you do differently if you could?
- Are your thoughts about the issue facts or opinions?
- What other facts and opinions might be important to consider?
- How else can you view the issue?



## POST-SERVICE REFLECTION

### ASK: NOW WHAT?

What should the class do next? It's time to decide how best to channel these new understandings into continued action and transformation. At this phase especially, be sure to give students time to assess the meaning of the service experience; integrate their new understanding; and propose further action or enhancements for the future.

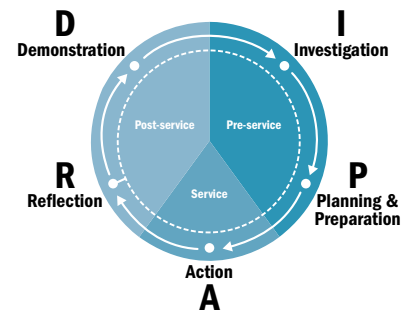
Consider asking some of the following:

- What do you now understand about the issue you tackled? What questions do you still have?
- What follow-up work is needed?
- In what ways can you tell what you've learned because of this experience?
- How has what you learned changed your thinking?
- What new understandings do you have about the root causes behind the issue you tackled?
- What was the most effective part of the action?
- What was least effective?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What are you most proud of?
- What are you most disappointed in?
- What grade do you deserve? Why?
- Think about the people you encountered during your service. What actions or words from them are the most memorable to you?
- What did you learn from the people you worked with? What do you think they learned from you?
- What do you think this service-learning experience means to other people your age?
- Why should people your age be concerned with the issues your action addressed?

### TEACHER TIP

One fourth-grade teacher used exit tickets to reflect on ideas for how their school could be more welcoming. She also had students record short videos to keep partners informed and engaged. Then, during the action phase, several young people videotaped and took notes about the events. These recordings were also valuable when demonstrating their learnings to the community.





- What does this service-learning action mean to your community?
- How do the ideas that arise from this service-learning action affect your community? Other communities?
- How does what you learned through this experience connect to other learning?
- What global connections can you make to this issue?

As one student said: "I was very selfish when I found out I had to do service. I thought 'I don't have time for this. I dance and I've got schoolwork.' When I first did it, on my way home I was like, 'Okay it wasn't what I really thought. It actually changed me ... It's not about me; it's about other people.'"

Another admitted: "Initially I just went in for the credit; that is what pulled me into the program. But then when we started working with the kids, it's the feeling you get helping somebody."

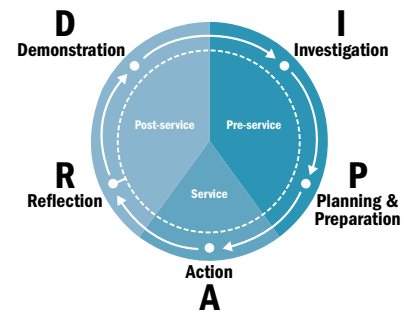
As these remarks illustrate, once students begin participating in service-learning and feel the impact of solving community problems, their attitudes often change. Many describe the feeling as "addictive" and stress that they became "passionate" about the issues they were addressing.

## INCLUDING PARTNERS IN REFLECTION

As with many other aspects of service-learning, this step is most effective when it's collaborative and inclusive. Service partners and/or recipients may also fill out evaluation or assessment questionnaires or be interviewed. The more information gathered, the greater the growth potential. The possibilities for future service-learning opportunities expand through the successful execution of this phase of the process by increasing the engagement of partners.

### TEACHER TIP

Stories about students' service-learning experiences can be shared on the school website, with local media, community partners, or at parent events. The more the word gets around, and the faster interest in service-learning grows, the faster youth innovation fuels solutions to societal issues.

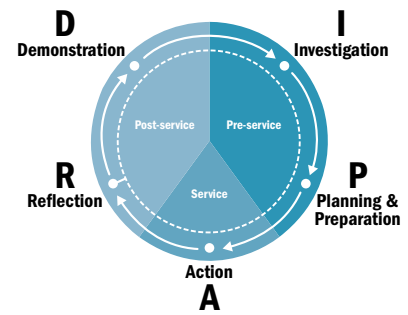


## DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

Demonstrating the culmination of the work is an important component of service-learning, and one which helps students solidify their learning, understand the importance of their contribution, and become further engaged in their communities. It also allows students and community partners to celebrate their joint work and may bring interest to support further action.

The possibilities for demonstrating work are virtually endless and, here again, students should have a central role in developing this plan. Below are some ideas for ways students can demonstrate their newfound knowledge and accomplishments.

- Public Service Announcements
- Skits
- Videos
- Multimedia presentations of data and images collected
- Poster board displays showing the evolution of the project
- Posters or ads designed to raise awareness
- Murals
- Articles, or personal essays
- Spoken word performances
- Songs, raps, or other musical interpretations
- Persuasive speaking
- Educational materials
- Fact sheets on the issues
- Websites or social media campaigns on the issue
- Guest appearances on local media
- Poetry
- Creating logos or other images to display on T-shirts, water bottles, hats
- Organizing a petition
- Creating a proclamation or declaration
- Holding an informational fair
- Inviting students and community experts to a conference
- Podcasts



## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION: WETLAND WATCHERS

### STAGE THREE: FACILITATE IPARD YOUTH EXPERIENCE

In the early days of the Wetland Watchers, the middle school students’ investigation of the area had produced the goal of reclaiming a football-size piece of property. While that action itself was an achievement, following the repeated damage from hurricanes, this original vision has grown into a 28-acre park, replete with a boardwalk into the wetlands which provides the area’s only nature trail, picnic pavilions, a marsh overlook, and two outdoor classrooms.

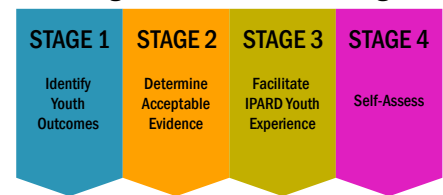
Now, Guillot’s students’ annual actions, built off the expectations of siblings that preceded them, are to foster new generations of wetland stewards by planning and delivering a series of science nights and field experiences, in addition to an annual regional “Swamp School” — opportunities to demonstrate their learnings with the vast array of 35 community partners who are now also Wetland Watchers.

While the ability to deliver on those goals differs year-to-year in the face of still more hurricanes and a pandemic, the students have managed to offer some of their animal lessons via Skype. As one student reflected, “I’ve presented the alligator to over 50,000 people last year, but showing them to the third-graders on the webcam, Skyping, was a much different experience! It was so cool to see their excitement and hear their excitement through the computer.”

#### TEACHER TIP

Celebrate! Mark the completion of the service-learning cycle by having some fun. All involved should enjoy the fruits of their labor and respect the accomplishments of other participants. This reinforces the positive achievements, sense of accomplishment, and personal growth attained. Students may choose to celebrate by gathering with the other service-learning participants, presenting awards to participants, or posting to social media.





# STAGE 4

## SELF-ASSESS

In service-learning, an educator's self-assessment is a critical part of the experience, considering whether learning objectives were met and whether the experience also met community goals.

In taking a step back from the experience, consider the efficacy of the range of experiences:

- Which learning outcomes identified for student growth in Stage One were achieved?
- What worked well?
- What might be done differently next time?
- Were there any unintended outcomes?
- What were student responses to the experience?
- What were the impacts on the school/community?
- In direct service, were recipient benefits realized?
- What were the community impacts?

Then, consider outreach.

- Have learnings been shared with colleagues?
- Have other teachers become interested in service-learning?
- What is the administration's response?
- Has news of the experience been shared with the school board?
- Have new partners been identified in the community?
- Might the media be interested in interviewing the students?

Out of this self-assessment, new ideas may arise for taking students' service-learning experiences to deeper levels, addressing the root causes of issues identified, and identifying new academic standards, social and emotional skills, or leadership goals.



## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION: WETLAND WATCHERS

### STAGE FOUR: SELF-ASSESS

The experiences of the Wetland Watchers over more than two decades of work have offered many opportunities for Guillot to reflect.

One of his earliest discoveries was how much the community wanted involvement. Though he was discouraged by the price of trees when the students originally wanted to plant them to prevent erosion, when he reached out to the National Resource Conservation Service, they said they could provide 150 trees at no cost. As Guillot reported to his students the following day, “I’ve just realized that there are a lot of people who can help us, but they don’t know they can help us – yet!”

His original goal to have the standards come alive for the students has more than been realized. Seventh-grader Wil Gilmore says: “Because of my involvement with the Wetland Watchers project, I now understand that the wetlands directly affect our everyday lives. They protect us from storms, provide needed resources, and they let us experience their natural beauty.”

For others, the realizations are in the social and emotional realm. “I feel like we are a closer community when everyone is working together to clean our wetlands!” says seventh-grader Gina Ngyuen.

Community partners are critical partners in the self-assessment stage for Guillot. As a curriculum coordinator noted: “As we unloaded our vehicles, kids were scattered about the area completely immersed with the environment in one way or another. Then, as our tour started, we were introduced to our student tour guides — a brilliant...leadership opportunity for these kids.”

Another Louisiana educator also sees beyond the students’ subject area learnings: “It is absolutely heartwarming to see teachers who go beyond their classroom responsibilities to teach youth not only about science but also basic life skills, career opportunities, love for learning, citizenship, and leadership.”



## GOING DEEPER

Going deeper in service-learning may mean moving from one type of service to another, such as from direct service to advocacy. After a first exposure, students begin to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues, one of the standard indicators. This may mean moving from a one-time action, to a more sustained effort. It may mean going from a student-led audit of library materials, for example, to addressing more systemic issues, like how to broaden representation in library books by involving more racially diverse students on the book selection committee.

When the action goes well, and when everyone feels excited by it, word also gets around; other students, teachers, parents, and schools become interested. This kind of experience takes deep root in the students. It changes their views of themselves and their worlds. Most of all, it shows them that every effort to help others helps them as well, inspiring them to take on the next project, and the next.

An initial experience often demonstrates that the service-learning process is more than a cycle; it's a spiral that winds higher and wider with every new experience, drawing in more people, creating new relationships, teaching new lessons.

"In this time of scarce resources, coupled with multiple languages and cultures in our classrooms, educational leaders cannot afford to ignore the benefits of service-learning for themselves and for their students. As educators, why would we not more fully and enthusiastically embrace service-learning? It does make a difference. It's clearly a movement whose time is now."

**DON HELMSTETTER,**  
FORMER SUPERINTENDENT,  
SPRING LAKE HIGH SCHOOL, MN

## NYLC SUPPORT

NYLC has a nearly 40-year history with this teaching and learning method, having pioneered the practice in K-12 settings and led the research initiatives that have provided an evidence base for the field. Its staff and Youth Advisory Council offer a range of services, from annual gatherings like the National Service-Learning Conference and Youth Summit to customized trainings and keynote addresses, to resource materials and online support.

To explore these possibilities, visit [nylc.org](http://nylc.org).

Thank you for your interest in this powerful pedagogy.



# APPENDIX

## K-6 SERVICE-LEARNING EXAMPLES

The following ideas come from service-learning/elementary teacher Anna Edlund of Bluff Creek Elementary, in Chanhassen, Minnesota and project partners Heather Tran and Lena Otolski of *A Better Society*.

COMMUNITY PARTNER	NEEDS/ACTIONS	ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS
NICU Nurse	Tiny Hats for Tiny Babies	<p>All of these projects follow the same process and incorporate 21st Century Skills, SEL, and academic standards.</p> <p>After the elementary students meet and interview the community partner to identify their needs, they learn project management skills by developing an action plan, timeline, materials list, etc. Each project involves creating an advocacy campaign, product, or collection. The students write public service announcements, elevator pitches, and school newspaper articles. At the close of the cycle, they host a “Celebration Fair” for families and community partners, demonstrating the objectives of their projects.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6:</b> Use technology, including the Internet to produce and publish writing and interact and collaborate with others.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3:</b> Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques.</p> <p><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4:</b> Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p><b>21st Century and SEL Skills:</b> communicating effectively; developing positive relationships; demonstrating cultural competency; practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving; resolving conflicts constructively, showing leadership in groups; standing up for the rights of others.</p>
Humane Society	Reaching Out to Animals	
Food Pantry	Zero Hunger	
Community Education	Little Free Library	
School Social Worker	School Ambassadors	
Environmental Center	Youth Photography Exhibit	
Master Gardeners	Planting Pollinators	
Lions International	Eyesight for Everyone	
School Social Worker	Elementary School Ambassador Bags	
Community Nonprofit	Intergenerational Art on Autism	
Food Pantry	Empty Bowls	
Parent Medical Worker	Clothing Collection for Rehab Unit	



## SERVICE-LEARNING IN ACTION

### EXPANDED EXAMPLE: RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS CARDS

Making cards is a common community service project. But this action also can incorporate service-learning standards.

An elementary class read *I am a Bucket Filler* by Carol McCleod. Reflecting on the story, the children decided to “fill people’s buckets” by creating baskets of kindness cards to place around the community. Community members were invited to take a free card and “fill someone’s bucket” by writing a kind note.

Guided by the teacher, the children developed an action plan and designed three simple cards. The class organized a card assembly line, including measuring and cutting, adding decorative components, and checking for quality control. As the children worked, they were encouraged to use math talk, including vocabulary such as centimeters, half, quarter, congruent, and skip-counting.

Next, the children wrote a description explaining their project and included it with each card. Finally, the students brainstormed locations for their baskets of kindness cards and created a short speech they could all use to communicate the intent of their project. The children and their families delivered the baskets of cards around the community, including places such as the dental and doctors’ offices, the adjacent recreation center, nursing home, and school office. The children have received letters in the school mail praising them for taking action to encourage kindness in the community.







## THE K-12 SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS FOR QUALITY PRACTICE

In 2008, NYLC released evidence-based standards and accompanying indicators that K-12 practitioners use to ensure high-quality service-learning practice.

For decades, service-learning practitioners have known that quality matters for service-learning to live up to its promises of academic achievement, civic engagement, social and emotional learning (SEL), and leadership development.

The K-12 Service-Learning Standards come to life at [nylc.org](http://nylc.org): “Lift: Raising the Bar for Service-Learning Practice.” The website includes extensive videos and downloadable resources that follow three schools through their service-learning projects, illustrating how the Standards are important to their success. “Lift” features stories and interviews on location with school administrators, teachers, and students talking about the challenges and rewards of their projects, and serves as a helpful base for professional development events.

**1. Meaningful Service:** Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

**2. Link to Curriculum:** Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. Service-learning is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curriculum.



3. Service-learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
  4. Service-learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.
- 3. Reflection:** Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
- Indicators:
    1. Service-learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
    2. Service-learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
    3. Service-learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
    4. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
    5. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their service-learning experience so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.
- 4. Diversity:** Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.
- Indicators:
    1. Service-learning helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
    2. Service-learning helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
    3. Service-learning helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
    4. Service-learning encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.



**5. Youth Voice:** Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
2. Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experiences.
3. Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. Service-learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
5. Service-learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

**6. Partnerships:** Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service-learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.



**7. Progress Monitoring:** Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
2. Service-learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service-learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
3. Service-learning participants use evidence to improve service-learning experiences.
4. Service-learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service-learning understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

**8. Duration and Intensity:** Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

- Indicators:

1. Service-learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. Service-learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. Service-learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.

NYLC's mission is to create a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world with young people, their schools, and communities through service-learning.

Visit [nylc.org](http://nylc.org) to learn more about customized trainings and become a member to access a full range of resources.



*“I think students see hope when they’re engaged in service-learning.”*

~ Elaine Fitzgerald, Principal, Satellite Center, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana

*“In service-learning we’re design-thinking and problem-solving all the way.”*

~ Brian Gough, Digital Media instructor, Satellite Center, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana

*“It doesn’t feel like school. It feels like you’re making a difference in the world.”*

~ Logan Sampey, student, Satellite Center, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana



National Youth Leadership Council  
463 Maria Avenue N., Suite 108  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)

