

## Diversity Across the Standards

**Standard:** *Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.*

### Infusing Diversity into Practice

Over time, the ideas of diverse service-learning and diversity in service-learning have meant different things to different people, and the prominence of diversity as a key element of service-learning has evolved. Building from a document written by service-learning pioneer Nadinne Cruz, this teacher tool helps educators think critically about the role of diversity in all aspects of a service-learning project.



Intergenerational service-learning projects encourage participants to understand and value diverse perspectives and to overcome stereotypes.

*CNCS photo by Lester Austin / Universal Image*

Cruz's "Diversity Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning: An Invitation to Reflection and Discussion," suggests that diversity is both a standard in and of itself, and also a core component of all other aspects of the service-learning experience. In her words, "The service-learning call to act for the common good is problematic in a pluralistic society, where differences result in multiple and contested interpretations, some of which dominate [while] others are silent and marginalized."

#### Diversity

Commit the necessary resources to encourage the diverse voices of participants who might hold different interpretations of the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice and the assumptions that underlie them.

Aid participants' development and utilization of cultural competency skills.

#### Link to Curriculum

Accommodate diverse ways of knowing and a multitude of information sources that reflect the experiences not only of participants but also those whose views may be unfamiliar to participants.

Respect the different learning needs and strategies of participants, while bolstering their capacity to learn effectively outside their comfort zone.

Engage participants and partners in dialogue about learning objectives, how they are defined, by whom, and why.

#### Partnerships

Respect different cultural approaches that inform participants about relationships between service providers, service recipients, and community partners and how, why, and with whom those people are matched.

Honor varying organizational cultures, including those that define responsibilities more formally and explicitly according to a rational-legal model, and others organized in more fluid, informal ways.

Recognize the potential of varying interests, motivations, and abilities of partners to participate in the service-learning activity and prepares participants for potential challenges of creating a shared vision and common goals with those partners.

#### Meaningful Service

Recognize that some people may not view themselves primarily in terms of need.

Respect that the concept of need may be contested by those who view themselves as bearing the legacies of racism, sexism, colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, or other forms of subjugation or oppression.

#### Youth Voice

Recognize social and cultural differences in attitudes toward youth – and youth of different genders, ages, etc. – and how those attitudes may shape participants' desire and ability to express their voice.

Engage youth participants, adults, and partners to discuss and reflect upon their own roles and the roles of others in leading, directing, or otherwise shaping the service-learning experience through formal and informal ways.

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**Reflection**

Encourage a variety of ways to reflect, including nondirective discussion, storytelling, and varieties of artistic expression, in addition to analytic modes regarded as legitimate in the academy.

Provide meaningful experiences that motivate and stimulate reflection about preconceived notions of difference, equity, race, culture, age, and gender by participants, adults, and community partners.

**Progress Monitoring**

Appreciate the possibility that participants may be unequally satisfied by the service and learning outcomes accomplished during a project.

Respect different ways by which quality, progress, goals, evidence, outcomes, and evaluation are defined, measured, and expressed.

Recognize that people may hold different views about the value of project outcomes as well as the time and resources needed to accomplish them, based on unique community, cultural, and family experiences.

**Duration and Intensity**

Allocate sufficient preparation time for people to notice, reflect on, and discuss differences in defining, interpreting, and expressing concepts of service, responsibility, community need, action, and common good.

Provide sufficient time and structure for participants to experience together a process of struggling across differences in coming to consensus or principled disagreement in defining what is to be accomplished and what is to be learned.

*Adapted with permission from "Diversity Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning" by Nadinne Cruz, Stanford University, Haas Center for Public Service, 1996.*

**project ideas****Diversity Issues Across the Curriculum****English/Language Arts**

Create skits addressing bias issues to perform at community events.

Create an anthology of stories that represent the diversity of backgrounds in your class.

**Social Studies**

Help develop a civil rights curriculum based on the lives of seminal leaders.

Read chapters of Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*, and develop service-learning projects based on the lesser-known aspects of history.

**Science**

Raise funds for research institutions studying genetic diseases.

Study science's contributions to ending bias and share with your community.

**Math**

Conduct statistical analyses by gender of elective classes students take at your school. Present your results visually in a variety of ways.

Explore the math involved in making a building accessible to people with disabilities.

**Health and Physical Education**

Study the causes of health disparities in your community and address them through social action, education, health promotion, or other strategies.

Study the history of discrimination in specific sports and provide display for community centers.

*The project examples have been adapted, with permission, from "DIVERSITY: Culminating Project Tools for Students," a publication of Service Learning Northwest, Educational Service District 112, 2500 NE 65th Ave., Vancouver, WA 98661.*

Visit [www.nylc.org/diversity](http://www.nylc.org/diversity) to learn more about diversity in service-learning.



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