



The GSN Self-Assessment Guide for Service-Learning Projects

**The National Youth Leadership Council
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

Guide and Self-Assessment Rubrics Developed in Partnership with:

The Center for Urban Initiatives & Research
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

September 2009

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This guide was adapted in part from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's *Wisconsin Continuous Improvement Process for After School Programs Self-Assessment Guide* (2007). With permission of Wisconsin DPI, it has been modified for use by NYLC.

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Background on the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

In April 2008, concurrent with the release of the *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice*, the National Youth Leadership Council launched a new Generator Schools Network to support schools that are passionate about service-learning and committed to schoolwide, high-quality practice. As part of this effort, NYLC created a self-assessment process for schools interested in understanding the components of high-performing service-learning and dedicated to improving how they use service-learning in the classroom.

NYLC has been at the center of service-learning standards development for more than twenty years — based on a belief that informed practice is essential to solid learning results for students. Working with other leaders in the movement to gather the most recent educational research and best profession wisdom, NYLC led the process to create the current service-learning standards. Over the first two years of their use, they have been widely adopted as policy by Learn and Serve America, the Peace Corps, and others. These eight standards are the basis for this self-assessment process. NYLC developed a rubric to accompany each standard so that you can rate your level of implementation and better see where you would like to improve.

If you'd like to learn more about the standards-setting process or the research that backs up each of the standards, visit www.nylc.org/standards.

The purpose of this guide is to explain the full process in detail and guide you through your own self-assessment.

Congratulations on your decision to engage in the self-assessment process!

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Why Should Schools Assess Their Service-Learning Practice?

The GSN Self-Assessment Process for Service-Learning Projects incorporates the latest research and knowledge in effective practice for service-learning, as well as methodologies from experts in the fields of self-assessment and mentoring for change. The ultimate goal of this process is helping teachers improve the quality of their service-learning practice for the benefit of young learners and the communities in which they live.

By engaging in this self-assessment, you and your colleagues have a unique opportunity to reflect and problem-solve in order to improve your services to youth. During this process you and the other members of your self-assessment team will ...

- rate the quality of your service-learning practice
- identify areas for improvement
- decide and act on action steps for improvement

How does self-assessment differ from external assessment?

The process of participating in a self-assessment is well suited to improving program quality and generating substantive positive changes. There are three reasons for this¹:

1. Staff and stakeholders are the best judges of the quality of their program.
2. Staff and stakeholders know the culture and goals of their programs best and, therefore, are in the best position to identify areas of improvement.
3. Action steps intended to improve the program are much more likely to be implemented if they have been created by those who run the program and those who are most affected by program changes. The value of buy-in for change cannot be overstated.

While external assessments or evaluations are valuable, and at times absolutely necessary, external assessors can never completely gain the level of knowledge about a program held by staff and stakeholders. External assessors also do not know the challenges and barriers of changing a program, nor do they have to implement changes.

Incorporating self-assessment into a service-learning program offers students, teachers, and community stakeholders a unique opportunity to examine how they operate and what impact a project has in a nonthreatening, intimate environment. Participants in the self-assessment have no reason to minimize the challenges, yet every reason to examine their program in an open and honest way in the interest of positive change.

What exactly is self-assessment?

When thinking about what a self-assessment process means, it is useful to consider some underlying assumptions:

- **Self-assessment is integral to learning and improving.** Taking time to examine and reflect critically on your program is essential to discovering action steps to enhance the quality of your services.

¹ *Self-Assessment at Alverno College* (2000) by the Alverno College Faculty; Georgine Loacker, editor, Milwaukee

- **The ability to self-assess develops over time.** Self-assessment is a skill that must be developed and expanded over time. This self-assessment is meant to be a continuous process. Your skill in assessing your own program will grow each time you engage.
- **Self-assessment is based on public criteria that is understood and accepted by everyone involved.** The accompanying rubrics are grounded in years of work done by experts in the field of service-learning. They provide a set of standards that will guide your program in implementing substantive positive change.
- **Self-assessment is enhanced by feedback based on the accepted criteria.** Your GSN Advisor will work closely with your site to help you view your program through a different lens. He or she will offer insights into your program, based on the rubric elements, to enhance your own understanding of how to achieve the highest-quality programming for the youth and communities you serve.

In the context of this process, *self-assessment* is defined as:

The ability of a program's staff and stakeholders to observe and analyze program components, judge the program's effectiveness based on rubric criteria, and make concrete plans to improve the program's performance.²

What are the stages of self-assessment?

The self-assessment process develops in four stages that build upon each other³:

- 1) **Observation:** During the observation stage, self-assessment team members gather evidence to help them explore different aspects of their program based on criteria documented in the rubrics. The team begins to think about the significance of the criteria in relation to its program.
- 2) **Interpreting and Analyzing:** During the interpreting and analyzing stage, the team looks for patterns and distinctive elements in the evidence.
- 3) **Judgment:** During the judgment stage, the team looks at the evidence as a whole and considers where modifications would help to improve the program.
- 4) **Planning:** During the planning stage, the team formulates specific action steps to improve the program. The steps are consistent with targeted goals for improvements that will move the program to the next higher level of quality identified in the rubrics.

² Adapted from *Self-Assessment at Alverno College* (2000) by the Alverno College Faculty; Georgine Loacker, editor, Milwaukee

³ Ibid

The Elements of the GSN Self-Assessment Process for Service-Learning

The GSN self-assessment process builds off the four stages outlined above and includes six critical elements, each interconnected and equally vital to the success of the process.

Element 1: Self-Assessment Team

The self-assessment team is at the heart of the process. These people are responsible for reviewing the program or project, reaching consensus on quality ratings, deciding important areas on which to focus for improvement, and formulating specific action steps for improving the service-learning program.

Team members take responsibility for ...

- conducting the self-assessment
- developing action steps
- implementing the action plan

The self-assessment team should consist of a Lead Site Coordinator (often, but not always, the service-learning program coordinator) and three to eight other individuals with thorough knowledge of the program. The team includes the school principal, teachers, other staff, students, parents, and other community stakeholders

It is essential that students be involved in the process. Although they may not be charged with gathering evidence, students should attend team meetings and actively provide input and make decisions. It is also crucial to involve the school's principal in the process, as her or his support is essential to enacting program improvements. Your team should also include the program's coordinator and at least one other staff person. In addition to these participants, you may want to include community stakeholders and parents. Team members should have extensive knowledge of both the program and the community or school in which the program operates.

Since this is a working team, involve no more than eight members in order to maximize productivity and ensure a relaxed collaborative environment. The Lead Site Coordinator should take the lead in this process by being responsible for scheduling meetings, assigning tasks, and compiling the Self-Assessment Report.

Element 2: GSN Self-Assessment Process for Service-Learning Rubrics

The self-assessment rubrics provided in this guide help your team to determine the quality of your program and identify areas for improvement. If your service-learning program involves more than one project, you may evaluate up to three projects individually, using the rubrics for each project. The three-project limit is intended to keep the assessment process manageable.

There are 11 evidence-based rubrics (Appendix A), each focused on a different component of a successful service-learning program. The first eight focus on the K-12 service-learning standards, and the last three look at elements of a successful program. Your team will assess all of these areas for each project you evaluate. The rubrics allow you to rate your project on a scale of 1 to 4 for each component — with Level 1 being basic and Level 4 being exemplary.

For each rubric, your project is rated at the highest level for which it meets *all* of the elements.

Element 3: GSN Advisor

You will be assigned a GSN Advisor to guide and assist your team through the entire process. The GSN Advisor offers an outside eye and additional perspective as the team self-assesses the program and develops an Action Plan. Advisors engage their teams in reflective dialogue, giving feedback and asking questions to help you look more deeply at your service-learning program. Your Advisor may also challenge the way you view your service-learning program, helping you to see it in a new light. All this is done in a nonthreatening and nonconfrontational way.

The Advisor plays the role of a “critical friend.” According to noted educators Costa and Kallick:

[A critical friend] is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is the advocate for the success of that work.⁴

Your Advisor will be available to answer questions through the entire process, by telephone or email. Once you complete a Self-Assessment Report, you will send it to your Advisor, who will then review it in order to better understand your program in the context of the rubrics, and will generate questions and discussion topics for your Action Plan Meeting.

Element 4: Self-Assessment Report

One of the team’s main responsibilities is compiling the findings of the program review in a Self-Assessment Report. (Remember, the review may include evaluations of from one to three projects.) This report should be a sincere, straightforward assessment of the quality of your program’s different components as outlined in the rubrics.

The Self-Assessment Report describes both strengths and weaknesses, but its main purpose is *identifying areas for improvement*. Upon completion, you will send a copy of the report to your GSN Advisor for review. It will be used during the Action Plan Meeting to develop strategies for improvement.

Your team should include documentation to support its judgment on the ratings. (See Appendix B for examples.) Documents should clearly illustrate how your program meets the elements on the rubrics. Remember, the items in Appendix B are only examples. Your team may have ideas for documentation that better illustrates your program and backs up the ratings you gave it on the rubrics.

Some of the rubric elements may not be supported by physical documents. In these cases, you should include a narrative explaining why you believe your program or project should be rated at the level you have identified. Clearly connect your explanation, or any other document evidence, to the elements in the specific rubric level on which you have rated a project.

In summary, your Self-Assessment Report will include two types of evidence:

1. **Documentation:** Physical evidence that illustrates how a project meets elements in a rubric level. For example, you may include agendas of project planning meetings listing youth participants

⁴ Costa, A.L. & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership*, 1(2), 50.

(Youth Voice Rubric), schedule of the project activities (Duration and Intensity Rubric), data collection instruments (Progress Monitoring Rubric), and reflection worksheets (Reflection Rubric).

2. **Narrative:** Written descriptions that explain how a project meets elements in a rubric levels. For instance, you may provide a narrative explaining your process for conducting a needs assessment (Meaningful Service Rubric) or opportunities youth have for collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds (Diversity Rubric).

You will provide evidence, either documentation or narrative, for each element at the rubric level on which you have rated your project. Please do not skip any of these elements in your Self-Assessment Report. For each piece of evidence, you will explain to your Advisor how your evidence relates to the element of the rubric. The Rubric Cover Page (Appendix D), provides you a form for explaining the connections.

There is no set number of supporting documents to include in your report, but it's important to keep your report manageable. Please limit your documentation to that which best supports your team's judgments on the ratings.

Element 5: Action Plan Meeting

The Action Plan Meeting takes about two or three hours and is attended by all members of the Self-Assessment Team. If there are other stakeholders you believe can help in this process or in implementing the Action Plan, you may choose to invite them as well.

Your GSN Advisor will join your group, probably by phone. During this meeting, you and your Advisor will discuss the evidence used for supporting each rubric level and reach a consensus on the rating for each rubric. Your Advisor, acting as a guide, will then help your team decide on areas for improvement and strategize about specific action steps you will take to increase the quality of the program over the next year. You'll target only select rubric areas for improvement, not all of them. As the goal is to create an achievable plan, your team, with the help of your Advisor, will decide on a set of areas that are the most important to address at the time. Together, you'll design action steps to help your program move to the next level of the rubrics targeted for improvement.

Team members should go into the Action Plan Meeting respecting each other's differences, but with the goal of reaching consensus on priority areas and action steps. Reaching this consensus will not necessarily be easy. Though team members share the goal of improving service-learning practice, each member brings his or her own priorities and opinions to the process. Challenging though it may be, reaching consensus on how to proceed is a crucial. It is unlikely that positive changes will occur unless all the team members agree and focus on the same priorities.

Remember, it is not the Advisor's job to make decisions on your priorities or action steps. Your Advisor will assist you by asking questions and providing new insights and take detailed notes during this meeting to record the decisions made. After the meeting, your Advisor will use the notes as a guide to prepare your program-specific Action Plan.

Your Advisor has made a pledge of confidentiality concerning your program's self-assessment and subsequent discussions. Your advisor will not share your Self-Assessment Report, Action Plan, or the

content of any confidential discussions with anyone outside of your program without your express permission.

Element 6: Action Plan

The Action Plan is a roadmap for your team to follow. It contains a set of targeted action steps that all team members have agreed to support and implement. It is the result of all the hard work your team and Advisor have done. The Action Plan is systematic process that helps you move your program up to the next level in agreed upon areas of the rubrics and keep your program on its path of improvement.

Conducting a Self-Assessment

Plan for two or three months to complete the GSN Self Assessment Process for Service-Learning.

The following table offers a summary of the steps in the self-assessment, along with an estimated timeline for completing each step.

GSN Self-Assessment Process for Service-Learning		
Task	Amount of time to complete	Timeframe for Completion
Select Service-Learning Assessment Team.	1 week	Beginning of process
Lead Site Coordinator and two other members of the team receive training on the process.	1 hour	Within a week of selecting team
Request a GSN Advisor be assigned to your school	1 week	1 week after training
Gather information and prepare Self-Assessment Report.	3-4 weeks	4 weeks after training
Advisor reviews Self-Assessment Report and prepares for the Action Plan Meeting.	2 weeks	6 weeks after training
Action Plan Meeting	The meeting lasts 2 to 3 hours. It's held approximately 2 weeks after the Self-Assessment Report is submitted.	
Advisor submits a draft Action Plan to the team.	Approximately 2 weeks after Action Plan Meeting.	8 weeks after training
Team contacts Advisor with any changes to the Action Plan.	Within 1 week of receiving the draft Action Plan.	9 weeks after training
Advisor submits final Action Plan.	Within 1 week of receiving program's request for revisions.	10 weeks after training

Your Action Plan will be used as a guide during the months following your self-assessment as you and team implement the changes you have identified to increasing the quality of your program.

Tips for the Self-Assessment Process

1. If your program has multiple projects, you should assess no more than three projects in the first year. If you are assessing multiple projects, you should prepare a Self-Assessment Report for each one, as they are likely to differ in the rubric ratings. Eventually, you should assess all projects at your site. To keep the improvement process manageable, though, this should be done systematically and over a period of time. We suggest you start with your weaker projects.
2. Your team should meet as soon as possible in order to familiarize themselves with the rubrics and process. Distribute copies of the rubrics to all members. Decide on a process for gathering evidence to include in your Self-Assessment Report. We suggest dividing up responsibility for the gathering of evidence and completion of rubrics ratings.

During the time you are preparing your self-assessment, your Advisor is available for questions. Please call or email your Advisor if you need clarification or guidance.

Remember, it is an exceedingly rare program or project that will rate a Level 4 on all rubric categories. In fact, the elements in Levels 1 and 2 are more typical. The purpose of this process is to engage in continuous improvement and have a systematic method for incorporating the K-12 Service-Learning

Standards for Quality Practice into your program. Reaching the higher levels of each rubric will take time, ongoing reflection, and effective action steps.

Compiling Your Self-Assessment Report

A three-ring binder can be a useful tool for compiling your Self-Assessment Report. The following sections should be included. If you use a binder, you can separate each section with a tab. Remember, if you are assessing more than one project, each one requires its own Self-Assessment Report.

- Complete the main cover sheet (Appendix C) as the first page of your report. The cover sheet includes:
 - A brief description of your project. This information helps your Advisor understand the context in which you work with youth. *maximum length: one-half page.*
 - A brief description of the community your project engages. This should include demographic data, geographic information, school district, etc. This should give your Advisor will a good idea of the characteristics of your community. *maximum length: one-half page.*
 - A short history of your project: You should include the year your project was established, any important changes that have occurred over the years, and any other information that will help your Advisor understand how the project has evolved. *maximum length: one-half page.*
 - A brief summary of your ratings on the rubrics. Highlight the strengths and weakness — areas you want to sustain and improve. Include any initial thoughts about rubric areas that you *may* want to include in your Action Plan for improvement. If you are assessing multiple projects, please include a summary for each, along with the rubric ratings. Clearly identify the project. *maximum length: one page.*
 - A short narrative on challenges to improvement in the areas you have identified. Connect these challenges specifically to the rubrics elements where you believe improvements are necessary. The purpose of this section is to help your Advisor understand the program-specific challenges to producing change. *maximum length: one-half page.*
- Each rubric category should have a separate section in the Self-Assessment Report binder. In each of these sections, please include the following:
 - Complete a cover sheet for each rubric section (Appendix D). You should prepare an individual cover sheet for each rubric section.
 - Next, include the evidence you used to determine your program or project's level on the rubrics. This includes both documentation narrative evidence as described in Element 3 above. You need only provide evidence for the rubric level at which you rated your project. (It is not necessary to include evidence for lower levels.) The evidence should be placed after the cover sheet in each corresponding rubric category. If one piece of evidence applies to more than one rubric, include it only in the first applicable section and reference it as needed in future sections.
- When you have completed your Self-Assessment Report, you should send it on to your Advisor for review.

The Action Plan Meeting

- Once you have sent your Self-Assessment Report to your Advisor, he or she will contact you to schedule your Action Plan Meeting. This meeting will take place approximately two weeks after you have submitted the report.

- Your Advisor will read your report and generate a list of questions to ask during your meeting. The purpose of these questions will be to clarify information in your Self-Assessment Report and generate discussions around what areas require improvement and what action steps should be considered.
- Your Action Plan Meeting will be held after your Advisor has reviewed your report. Here is what to expect from your Action Plan Meeting:
 - Facilitate a discussion about your Self-Assessment Report. This will help your Advisor more fully understand your program and the rationale for your rubric ratings. Your Advisor will express any concerns or confusion he or she may have about your ratings. This exchange of ideas should help bring your team and Advisor into consensus regarding all rubric ratings.
 - The next step is identifying the rubric areas that have the most urgent need for improvement. Your Advisor will again ask questions to help your team think about how each rubric area impacts the overall quality of the project and your program's goals. As a feasible, effective Action Plan can only address a limited number of goals, the team will decide on which rubrics areas the plan should focus on. You should select only areas that require the most improvement, but be sure to include at least one of the management rubrics in addition to the standards rubric.
 - The final stage of your meeting involves creating specific action steps for improving your project. Your Advisor will help your team brainstorm ideas on methods to increase quality under the rubric areas you have identified as most important. Your Advisor will help you stay focused on action steps that will directly affect your project's ability to advance to the next level on the targeted rubrics.
- Achieving consensus during the Action Plan Meeting will involve all Assessment Team Members reaching agreement on where to focus and how to proceed, which can be challenging. Therefore, it is very important for members to approach this meeting with a spirit of cooperativeness. While everyone will be expected to put forth their best ideas, insights, and recommendations on priority areas and action steps, compromises will most certainly have to be made in order to create a plan that is acceptable to all.
- Your Advisor will take the decisions made by your team and compile them for you in your formal plan. You will receive a draft of the plan within two weeks of your Action Plan Meeting. After reviewing the draft, you will submit changes to your Advisor, if needed. Your Advisor will make the changes within a week of receiving your feedback and send the final copy to your site for implementation.

You should now be ready to begin your self-assessment. The following pages include several documents that will be required during the process.

Appendix A: Rubrics for the GSN Self-Assessment Process for Service-Learning

Developed in Partnership with the Center for Urban Initiatives & Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Note on terminology used in these rubrics: The term “activity,” for the purpose of these rubrics, refers specifically to a hands-on service activity that engages the community being served. The term “project” refers to a specific service-learning project — a service activity accompanied by all the other aspects of the service-learning process (e.g., project selection, design, planning, preparation, and evaluation). The term “program” refers more broadly to systemic inclusion of service-learning within a school or other organization (e.g., a school may have service-learning integrated into its schoolwide curriculum, a service-learning coordinator, and a dedicated budget to support service-learning).

Simply put, a program may have multiple projects, and projects will have multiple activities.

1. Meaningful Service:

Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

<p>Level 1 <i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning programs.</i></p>	<p>Level 2 <i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p>Level 3 <i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p>Level 4 <i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of the service project is mainly based on the interests of one or a few stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project involves youth with a range of ages and differing developmental levels. They are matched to activities and roles in a developmentally and age-appropriate manner. • The project is selected by the program staff and with minimal involvement from youth. Consideration may, however, be given to projects in which youth have expressed interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is age-appropriate for the majority of youth. • The majority of youth are involved in project selection. • Youth are introduced to the underlying causes of the problems addressed by the project. • Activities are included to help youth understand the impact of the project on those it serves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is carefully chosen <i>and</i> planned to be appropriate for all the ages and developmental levels of the youth involved. As a result, the project engages all youth in appropriate roles. • All youth participants work in partnership to complete a needs assessment. Using available data, they identify the community-needs to be addressed. • All youth participants are actively involved in choosing the project. • Youth are engaged in multiple structured activities throughout the project, helping them understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the potential impact of the project. ○ the social issues underlying the community-needs addressed by the service activities. • Outcomes have been established for those receiving the project service and activities occur with the youth to monitor the achievement of those outcomes.

2. Link to Curriculum:

Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has been developed independently from other formal learning experiences in which youth are engaged (e.g., academic or civic classroom curriculum). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has established learning goals for youth that are specific to the service-learning program rather than tied to the classroom curriculum. • The school is generally supportive of the program, but does not intentionally coordinate curriculum and academic learning goals with the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project’s learning goals are somewhat consistent with other academic content and program curriculum used in the school. • Youth are aware of learning goals and how they will be achieved. • Reflection activities help youth understand the relationship between their service activities and achievement of learning goals. • Specific skills have been identified as beneficial to achieving learning goals. The project is carefully planned so that youth have hands-on experiences developing and using these skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project goals are intricately connected to broader school goals — supporting academic and program curriculum. • Learning goals are clearly articulated to youth and reinforced throughout the project through multiple activities (e.g., visual media, reflection exercises, instructions). • The project takes full advantage of reflection activities, adult feedback, and hands-on experiences to help youth transfer knowledge and skills between the project and the classroom. • Service-learning is formally recognized in school board policies. • Students participation in service-learning is recognized in 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.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning programs.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection is not a primary part of the project. • If incorporated, reflection functions mainly as a feedback function between youth and adults as a means to process experiences of youth during the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection activities are concentrated at the end of the project, primarily to evaluate quality and impact. • One or two methods are used to facilitate the reflection experience, such as group discussion or written journals. • Youth reflection goes beyond “what happened” as they more closely examine their personal experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection activities occur before, during, and after the project. • Reflection is used both as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a method for youth self-examination, helping them understand how the project has led to personal growth and civic engagement. ○ a means for adults to gauge youth progress throughout the project. • Youth are intentionally challenged to re-examine their assumptions, values, and beliefs in the context of the service activity. • Different types of reflection activities — e.g., visual, verbal, written — are used to help youth fully engage in the reflection process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection activities are incorporated throughout the planning, preparation, design, implementation, and evaluation phases of the project. • Multiple reflection methods are used — e.g., verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities — to address all learning styles. • Youth use critical-thinking skills to question their personal belief systems and assumptions about the service experience, as well as those of others involved in the project. • Youth are engaged in active reflection that helps them understand the community needs targeted by the project within a broader social context. This allows them to address the broader social issues that underlie the specific community needs addressed by the project.

4. Diversity:

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

<p>Level 1 <i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning programs.</i></p>	<p>Level 2 <i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p>Level 3 <i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p>Level 4 <i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although youth may have opportunities to reflect on differing opinions within their group (i.e., staff and youth in the project), there is little opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff values diversity. Youth have some opportunities to work with people who come from different backgrounds and have different points of view. • The program incorporates some classroom skill-building activities that help youth appreciate diverse perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open environment that welcomes diversity is intentionally incorporated into the project. It is supported through curricular and reflection activities. • Youth experience people from diverse backgrounds with differing opinions. • During activities, adults provide youth with feedback and guidance to enhance their tolerance and respect for differing points of view. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting understanding of diverse backgrounds and perspectives is a stated goal of the project. • Activities are intentionally planned so that youth will experience diverse people and perspectives. • Youth are exposed to diverse service providers and beneficiaries. • Reflection activities and curriculum elicit diverse perspectives about the project from youth and stakeholders. They also put these perspectives in a broader context by addressing related social issues. • Reflection activities are carefully guided to help youth appreciate the value of differing points of view and the importance of overcoming stereotypes.

5. Youth Voice:

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

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although youth are active in service-learning activities, they are not typically charged with making <i>decisions</i> about the project. • If youth-input does occur, it usually does so through opinion-gathering vehicles, such as group feedback sessions or surveying. • Youth are not key decision makers and do not lead the planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limited opportunities for youth to make decisions. They are involved in decision-making for at least one phase of the project — e.g., project selection, design, planning, or evaluation — but not the majority of those areas. • The program has <i>informal</i> mechanisms that provide youth with limited decision-making roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an age-appropriate manner, youth are highly involved in most — but not all — decision-making processes. • The program has adopted a formal system or practice to involve youth in decision-making during most phases of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth are <i>responsible</i> for leading <i>all</i> phases of the project — including project selection, planning, design, lessons, goal-setting, assigning roles and responsibilities, and evaluation. • Youth are matched to decision-making tasks in an age-appropriate manner. • Youth and adults work in partnership <i>through a formal system</i>, ensuring youth decision-making with supportive adult input.

6. Partnerships:

Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning programs.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project largely functions independently from the community being served. • The program may occasionally connect with community agencies or groups, but does so only to access resources for the project. • Community agencies and groups are not involved in the planning or implementation of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service-learning program has <i>functional</i> community partnerships. Though community stakeholders are not involved in the planning of the project, there is cooperation and a sharing of resources to achieve a mutually beneficial goal. These partnerships provide a richer experience for youth. • These partnerships typically end at the conclusion of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project partners with community stakeholders to achieve service and learning goals. • The partners are involved in setting goals for the project and coordinating service activities. • The partnership is ongoing, continuing after the project is completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse, collaborative community partnerships — involving such partners as youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and businesses — are central to the project. • Partners have adopted formal policies and practices guiding their collaboration, as well as a shared vision and set of common goals. • The partners engage in joint decision-making for community programs and shares resources for activities. • There is a formal advisory group of partners that oversees the roles and responsibilities and plans for future collaborations and projects. • The partners have developed and implemented an action plan to meet agreed upon goals.

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.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project may have goals and intended youth outcomes, but there is no process in place for measuring achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has specific goals and intended youth outcomes, and there are some processes in place to monitor how successfully they are achieved. • Some data is collected — e.g., performance assessments, portfolios of youth work, project activity logs — to support monitoring, but there is no evaluation system in place for routine measurement and assessment of results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth and adults develop a formal evaluation plan during the planning phase of the project. • The evaluation plan monitors both the project’s process and outcomes. This monitoring is used to evaluate the project’s quality in terms of implementation and achievement of learning outcomes for youth. • Youth are involved in data collection. • Results are occasionally reviewed to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the quality of the project. (Is it being implemented effectively?) ○ the impact of the project’s activities on youth learning, including skill building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal evaluation plan — that monitors process measures and youth learning outcomes — is fully implemented throughout the course of the project and following its completion. • The evaluation plan also measures community outcomes — i.e., impact on beneficiaries of the project — throughout the process and assesses them at the project’s completion. • A process is in place to use these results to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ monitor the quality of project implementation ○ assess the project’s impact on youth learning ○ improve the program This is done on an ongoing basis. • Youth and adults are both involved in implementing the evaluation, measuring achievement of outcomes, and processing information.

8. Duration and Intensity:

Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>The project exhibits practices and characteristics commonly found in service-learning.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>The project has taken some steps beyond the basics, integrating elements that achieve a higher degree of effectiveness.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>The project has begun to formalize its practices and processes to maximize the service-learning experience.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The project intentionally incorporates practices and processes that result in youth-centered service-learning programming.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ at least one-month long with youth engaged three or four times during that month <i>or</i> ○ longer than one month with youth are engaged inconsistently or less than once a week. • The length of the project is sufficient for youth to be actively involved in the implementation of the activity and engage in limited reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is longer than one month but less than one semester. • Youth are engaged at least once a week. • Youth have time to prepare for the activity and it's implementation. • Throughout the project, youth have time to reflect on the process and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is at least one semester long. • Youth are engaged consistently and on a weekly basis. • The project is carefully constructed to offer youth a balance of activities, including planning, preparation, implementation, reflection, and learning-outcome assessment. • Though time is allowed for youth to engage in many areas of the service-learning process, the majority of their time is dedicated to the implementation of service activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is longer than one semester. • Youth are engaged multiple times each week. • The duration is sufficient to address the identified community needs in a meaningful way. • The duration is sufficient to achieve youth learning outcomes. • Youth have sufficient time and structured opportunity to fully experience each phase of the service-learning process, including planning, preparation, implementation, ongoing reflection, learning outcome assessment, and project evaluation.

9. Mission, Beliefs, and Goals:

Service-learning is promoted and systematically practiced in a manner that is central to the school’s mission, beliefs, and goals.

<p>Level 1</p> <p><i>Service-learning generally functions within the larger school structure as a distinct and separate program, but is not an integral part of the wider system.</i></p>	<p>Level 2</p> <p><i>Service-learning is clearly a valued component of the larger school system, and programs are somewhat supported through system resources.</i></p>	<p>Level 3</p> <p><i>Service-learning has been integrated into the larger school system. Formal policies and practices have been created to ensure that service-learning is instituted for effective instruction.</i></p>	<p>Level 4</p> <p><i>The school system has adopted service-learning as a central part of its instructional strategy. It has implemented practices and policies that ensure service-learning is fully supported across a wide range of instructional programs.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-learning occurs as a single program or special activity but is generally not part of a broader system-wide strategy for instruction. • The school has no special policies that focus on service-learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-learning is publicly supported by some administrators as an important part of students’ learning. • Service-learning occurs in more than one instructional program. • Goals and policies mention service-learning, but it is not specifically part of a system-wide strategy for instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-learning is intentionally incorporated in a number of instructional programs. • The school’s mission statement or goals refer broadly to service-learning as a strategy for effective instruction. • The school’s policies support service-learning as a method of instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school’s mission statement specifically includes service-learning as a method of providing community service and enriching the learning experiences. • The school has created a specific set of goals related to service-learning. • The school has institutionalized service-learning in its policies and practices. These specifically include service-learning as a method of instruction across a wide range of instructional programs. • Policies and practices are continuously reviewed and altered as needed to accommodate growth in service-learning across instructional programs.

10. Organizational Support and Resources:

The school administration dedicates sufficient resources to the program to ensure youth have service-learning opportunities.

<p>Level 1</p> <p><i>Service-learning generally functions within the larger school structure as a distinct and separate program, but is not an integral part of the wider system.</i></p>	<p>Level 2</p> <p><i>Service-learning is clearly a valued component of the larger school system, and programs are somewhat supported through system resources.</i></p>	<p>Level 3</p> <p><i>Service-learning has been integrated into the larger school system. Formal policies and practices have been created to ensure that service-learning is instituted for effective instruction.</i></p>	<p>Level 4</p> <p><i>The school system has adopted service-learning as a central part of its instructional strategy. It has implemented practices and policies that ensure service-learning is fully supported across a wide range of instructional programs.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for service-learning is irregular, but the program manages to implement activities by juggling resources. • At times, important activities must be eliminated or reduced due to lack of funds or resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program is partially funded by the school or district, but also relies on some external funding sources, such as grants and community donations. • The school or district provides some additional resources — such as transportation and supplies — but resources are generally scarce. (e.g., Teachers sometimes transport students due to lack of buses; teachers frequently provide materials for the projects.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school or district funds the program as part of its general budget. • There is adequate funding for the core program, but “extra” activities, such as field trips, must be funded through external sources. • The school or district provides most of the resources needed by the program, such as transportation and supplies. Teachers may, but rarely need to, supplement resources themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service-learning program receives ample resources to operate at a high-quality level. • The school or district fully and adequately funds and provides all resources for all service-learning projects and activities. • The school or district fully funds occasional activities that are not part of the base budget. • Transportation is provided by the school or district consistently and reliably.

11. Professional Development:

Educators involved in implementing service-learning projects are provided with strong training in the philosophy and pedagogy of service-learning. They are also offered ongoing opportunities to network, observe, and problem solve with others in the service-learning community.

<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1</p> <p><i>Service-learning generally functions within the larger school structure as a distinct and separate program, but is not an integral part of the wider system.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2</p> <p><i>Service-learning is clearly a valued component of the larger school system, and programs are somewhat supported through system resources.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3</p> <p><i>Service-learning has been integrated into the larger school system. Formal policies and practices have been created to ensure that service-learning is instituted for effective instruction.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4</p> <p><i>The school system has adopted service-learning as a central part of its instructional strategy. It has implemented practices and policies that ensure service-learning is fully supported across a wide range of instructional programs.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and other staff generally provide their own service-learning training. The school or district does not pay for training. • Teachers and staff seek out their own networking opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school or district requires and funds some service-learning-specific training. It is typically offered once or twice a year. • Teachers and staff are responsible for researching their own training opportunities and gaining approval from the school for funds. • Networking is informal and opportunities are generated by teachers and staff, instead of being sponsored by the school or district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school or district has a fully funded service-learning training program for teachers and staff. There are multiple training opportunities each year. • Teachers and staff research training opportunities, and the administration also seeks out opportunities and presents them to staff for participation. • Networking occurs both informally and formally through school- or district-sponsored events. There are also opportunities for staff to travel to other service-learning programs, conferences, and workshops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-learning training is a fully funded, integrated feature of professional development. It is available to staff at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. • Training concentrates on staff directly involved with service-learning projects, but is offered to all teachers as a way to promote service-learning integration. • Administrators, teachers, and staff work together to create a professional development plan that enhances skills and strengthens the service-learning program. • The administration values networking as an essential part of program development. The administration proactively creates opportunities for teachers and staff to work with other service-learning professionals.

Appendix B: Physical Evidence Examples

This list is only intended to provide examples, and is by no means comprehensive. In addition to physical evidence, such as the examples below, narrative evidence can also be included when physical evidence is not available or adequate.

Rubric Area	Physical Evidence Example
1) Youth Voice	Youth surveys, project planning meeting agendas and minutes, attendance sheets.
2) Duration and Intensity	Project timeline, schedule of activities, participation requirements.
3) Progress Monitoring	Survey instruments, evaluation plans, goals statement, youth-assessment forms, evaluation results.
4) Link to Curriculum	Project brochure showing youth learning goals, program curriculum.
5) Partnerships	Partnership agreements, list of Advisory Group members, collaboration-group meeting minutes.
6) Reflection	Reflection worksheets, schedule showing reflection activities, list of visual aids used in reflection activities.
7) Meaningful Service	Results of community-needs assessment, examples of media used to show youth the potential impact, a schedule of activities to help youth process service-learning experiences.
8) Diversity	Written program rules on respect and tolerance of differing viewpoints, a list of community stakeholders that demonstrates diversity.
9) Mission, Beliefs, and Goals	A school mission statement that includes service-learning, school policies and goal statements on service-learning.
10) Organizational Support and Resources	Statement of school funding, school bus schedule.
11) Professional Development	Staff training schedules, professional development template and example, brochures from workshops and conferences attended by staff.

Appendix C: Self-Assessment Main Cover Page

Please complete this form and include it as the first page of your Self-Assessment Report.

Project Name:

Location:

Self-Assessment Team Leader:

Telephone Number:

Email:

1) Briefly describe your program — include partners, how long your program has been operating, enrollment, youth demographics, and other pertinent information that will help your Advisor understand your project. *Please limit to one-half page.*

2) Briefly describe your community — include school district, if applicable; demographic data on the general population; geographic information; and any other information that will help your Advisor understand your community. *Please limit to one-half page.*

3) Briefly describe your ratings for the rubric categories. This is a summary of your report for your Advisor to use as a reference. Please talk about which rubrics you think are the most important to address at this time. Feel free to provide additional information about your program in areas you believe would help your Advisor better understand your program. *Please limit to one page.*

4) Provide information on challenges and barriers that may hinder you from implementing changes to improve your program. *Please limit to one-half page.*

Appendix D: Rubric Cover Page

Please duplicate this form and complete it for each of the 11 rubrics. Include the completed form as a cover page for each rubric area in your self-assessment report. If you are assessing more than one project, please use a separate set of these pages for each one.

Project Title:

Rubric:

Project's Estimated Rating Level:

Do you believe this rubric area is a priority to improve at this time? If yes, why?

1) Documentation included as evidence:

a. Please explain which rubric-level elements this evidence supports and why. *Please limit to one paragraph.*

2) Documentation included as evidence:

a. Please explain which rubric-level elements this evidence supports and why. *Please limit to one paragraph.*

3) Documentation included as evidence:

a. Please explain which rubric-level elements this evidence supports and why. *Please limit to one paragraph.*

4) Documentation included as evidence:

a. Please explain which rubric-level elements this evidence supports and why. *Please limit to one paragraph.*

Use this area for narrative evidence. Please be sure to refer to the specific rubric-level elements being addressed and provide a rationale for how this evidence supports existence of those elements.

List any additional documentation that is not being submitted with the self-assessment report. *Please bring these documents to your Action Plan Meeting.*