Equity in Service-Learning:

Self-Assessment Tools for Community Engagement

nylc™

national youth leadership council

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Table of Contents

"We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
And the norms and notions of what 'just is'
Isn't always justice."

~ *Amanda Gorman,*
The Hill We Climb
(Inaugural poem, Jan. 21, 2021)

Foreword

For nearly 40 years, the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) has advocated for youth voice and leadership from our home state of Minnesota. We support young people to lead change where they see injustice, often by working in tandem with educators and youth workers.

In a year like no other, 2021 inspired us to strengthen our own resolve to support those who value and recognize that our differences make us stronger, who respect and appreciate that there are tensions among interests, and who understand that from those tensions we gain stronger perspectives on issues and can approach them with humility. This commitment also led us to re-examine our educator materials such as this personal and programmatic self-assessment.

Too often, service and service-learning experiences put a band-aid on a problem (e.g. making blankets for people experiencing homelessness) instead of looking at the root causes of becoming unhoused. This tool asks educators to consider how social justice can and should be part of the service-learning process, with an emphasis on reciprocal partnerships, diversity, reflection, and youth voice as students examine the institutions, systems, and barriers that are at the roots of the issues they are addressing.

We hope that these self-assessments serve as an initial step in supporting educators as they develop equitable service-learning experiences for young people, their schools, and communities.

~ Amy Meuers
CEO
NYLC

Acknowledgments

The partners in this project would like to acknowledge the sacred lands where we work, live, teach, learn, and build community. While our work is happening across two countries -- the U.S. and South Africa -- NYLC's area of central Minnesota is home to thousands of Indigenous people, including the Wahpekute, Mdewakantan, Ojibwe, and Dakota peoples -- from time immemorial. We recognize the repeated violations of sovereignty, territory, and water that have impacted the original inhabitants of this land and celebrate the citizens of these Nations who live here today, and their ancestors who have lived here for hundreds of generations.

In South Africa, home to one of the contributors to this tool, it is widely recognized that the first people were made up of many tribal groups living across multiple societies and communities. Although there is ongoing dialogue over the names and ancestry of these groups, we pay our respects to all the ancestors and survivors of those communities and the people that live on through their stories, traditions, and blood. In this small way we honor the currently occupied spaces and people (past, present and future) of the many nations found across our landscape.

As the writers of this content, we represent a range of positions, experiences, and backgrounds. The intersectionality of our diverse identities supported the revision of this content; however, we must also acknowledge that not all voices of those often marginalized are represented here. We are a small portion of those voices and we recognize that there is much work to be done in undoing the harm inflicted upon these original communities, individuals, and lands.

We also affirm the importance of integrating indigenous worldviews into our practices. From the founding of NYLC in 1983, our work has been informed by Native perspectives -- originally through a youth camp with the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, then in shared work with the National Indian Youth Leadership Project out of Gallup, New Mexico, and through a network of pueblo-based schools, as well as in work with Ogallala Lakota brothers from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and later with an annual Gathering of Elders, co-led by a member of the Cherokee Nation. We will continue to integrate indigenous voices and perspectives, and ask that others who engage in service-learning research the Native histories of their areas and commit to related actions.

Preface

These self-assessment tools are designed for those interested in taking informed action in their communities, particularly for the adults who often lead these experiences. The tools and next steps highlight the service-learning process, but are not exclusive to service-learning. They are meant to help leaders reflect on their own motivations and possible assumptions about the communities in which they work and serve. As NYLC's Director of Learning and Leadership, Julie Rogers Bascom, often says, these tools are about "readiness" to lead others in the service-learning process.

We hope that those who take these self-assessments see them both as opportunities for growth and for accountability.

The revisions grow out of a series of meetings, reflections, and drafts among a team of practitioners representing K-12 and higher education. Our contributions are based on our groundings in education and personal commitments to creating equitable service experiences.

> "Building community is to the collective as spiritual practice is to the individual."
> ~ adrienne marie brown
> *Emergent Thinking*

Background

The original research behind this document was conducted by NYLC as part of the Learning in Deed initiative in 2006, with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Pamela Toole, Ph.D., Verna Cornelia Price, Ph.D., and Wokie Weah, M.S. -- experienced educators and service-learning practitioners -- based their research on previous studies by principal investigator Melinda Fine, Ph.D., "Thoughts on Field-Building: A Synthesis of Observations" and "Creating Inclusive Communities: An Inquiry into Strategies for Pursuing Diversity in the K-12 Service-Learning Field"(2000). These initial researchers used a qualitative research design which included 38 two-hour interviews of service-learning practitioners, in addition to convening three focus groups to develop the original self-assessment tools and professional development strategies. The self-assessment tools they developed remain largely unchanged.

However, it is noteworthy that the earlier iteration of this document was named: "Beyond the Missionary Ideology" -- a title that required some explanation. In that initial research, missionary ideology was defined as "One group trying to impose their ideas on another group, with little or no consideration of that group's traditions, beliefs, and needs ... typically working cross-culturally — involving groups of different ethnic, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic backgrounds." While we are not continuing to use this label, we respect the early efforts to tackle terminology and related community practice issues.

In higher education circles, similar concerns gave rise to the term "critical service-learning", emphasizing the need to examine flaws in systems that often underlie community needs. In short, the topic of how schools can best work in tandem with communities has consistently been a concern of service-learning practitioners, and is the impetus behind the revision of this document.

For this revision, practitioners gathered virtually, each offering a particular strength. Included in the group are both K-12 and global teachers, a college student, a curriculum developer, and several teacher trainers with expertise in culturally responsive pedagogy and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their personal statements are included at the end of this document.

Introduction

In response to the reckonings of the past two years, interest in strategies for working in communities -- both within and outside schools -- has increased. But educators remain concerned about how and where to begin service-learning experiences -- as well as how to work across cultures, towns, or countries.

Questions such as the following may deter initial community outreach:
- What if the community needs the students identify are realities for some of their families?
- How can we move beyond the experience of service making some students realize only "how lucky" they are?
- How can we help students understand that service-learning is more than a resume-builder?
- How can we ensure that students realize that in providing a service, they also will grow?
- How can we support students in understanding that there is no "less than" in the relationship between service provider and recipient -- that "Your down isn't my up!" as Equity and Outreach Specialist for the Jordan Public Schools, Malik Peer, says.
- How can we uncover possibilities for social change -- even if motivated by charity?

To be effective facilitators, educators must not only be informed about community assets and needs but also be aware of their own motivations and assumptions. These two self-assessment tools -- one personal, the other programmatic -- provide opportunities for this kind of reflection ahead of the experience.

Equity in Service-Learning Example

Middle school students whose school was moving to a new site in Minneapolis were interested in the history of the 1890s building. So they interviewed elders in the surrounding community and learned that the buildings had been used as an orphanage, among other things. The conversations made them interested in creating more opportunities for local residents to share the space, so the students made the case to the school board that funding be set aside for a walking path that would connect the public sidewalk and school grounds. They also researched the most predominant languages in the city and decided to create signage in multiple languages – including Braille – and ensure that any new playground equipment was universally designed so that people of all ages and abilities could enjoy the location.

Purpose of Self-Assessments

In general, these tools aim to:

1. Provide a "pre-reflection" to the service-learning process.
2. Inspire commitment to high quality practice that includes an emphasis on reciprocal partnerships with community agencies; reflective practices; and ongoing professional development.
3. Recognize the multicultural roots of service.

Without this sort of "pre-reflection" or an awareness of culturally responsive approaches, communities can be harmed. And assumptions about who needs help, in what parts of town or the world, can lead educators and students to miss critical local needs.

In the "Curricular Frameworks" section (beginning on page 21), we offer a variety of points of entry for service-learning experiences, whether exploring social justice concepts, indigenous practices in youth development; human and child rights, or integrating informed community action into a civics class.

The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice -- service-learning best practices that were developed and published in 2008 (after the first edition of these tools) -- also offer reminders for effective first steps to building reciprocal partnerships (included on page 10).

This document is not a curriculum, but is a starting point for reflective practice.

Indigenous Roots of Service

Often, western education has viewed the child as an empty vessel needing to be filled. This perspective supports the idea that teachers are serving families and children, and furthers the notions of giver and receiver, fortunate and less fortunate, have and have nots, "at risk" and "not at risk".

To change the narrative, ancient worldviews across many cultures and religions offer alternatives. In the book, Reclaiming Youth At Risk: Futures of Promise (2019, Solution Tree Press), authors Martin Brokenleg, Larry Brendtro and Steve Van Bockern explain that Indigenous societies around the world have acknowledged the child as a spirit entering the physical world with all the wisdom to contribute to the community. The child has four growth needs that community caregivers are responsible for nurturing: belonging, generosity, mastery, independence.

Service-learning offers a foundation for educators to model and nurture the four growth needs, particularly the need for generosity. Indigenous people's understanding of the need for generosity is explained by Brendtro et. al. as permeating all aspects of life. From the beginning of a child's life, giving is a central theme. Young children are encouraged to give generously, without holding back. Gift-giving is included in all ceremonies: children bring food to their elders, women make useful items for widows and orphans, and community members of status are considered those who have the most to give.

This way of life contradicts much of American life, in which status is afforded those who accumulate wealth for themselves. In traditional indigenous views, the accumulation of wealth for the owner's sake is considered disrespectful (Brendtro et. al.).

With the involvement of skilled facilitators and role-models, service-learning has the potential to embrace this embodiment of generosity if practitioners share a similar spirit. Alternatively, if practitioners embark on service to elevate their own self esteem by "helping others" less fortunate, they miss the essence of service.

Service completed as an extension of self because generosity is a way of life tracks back to the original heartbeat of the National Youth Leadership Council, from its first camp held on the lands of the Cherokee Nation to 10 years convening the Indigenous Service Forum. It is our hope to continue to grow from many cultures' traditions of service and incorporate these learnings in our practice.

Charity and Social Justice

It is also important to acknowledge that service can cause harm. For many, service to others is viewed as inherently good and represents values of kindness, compassion, and responsible citizenship. However, when implemented without critical reflection and preparation, service can disrespect the intended beneficiaries of service actions and reinforce inequitable systems and stereotypes. There are countless examples of service actions that are disconnected from real community needs and without meaningful participation of those who may be impacted. Meanwhile, participating students may be integrating messages that they are "saviors" of the communities they are serving or "lucky" for what they have in relation to others, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities.

At the time of the original development of this tool, a survey was undertaken regarding the intent of service-learning as a vehicle for social change and social justice, or as a tool for both charity and social justice. Most respondents viewed service-learning as a tool for social change, but noted that in practice, it was more often implemented with a charity-focused lens.

Twenty years later, this continues to be a tension in the field. Some educators embrace a charity-focused model because it is perceived to be safer and less risky, while others concerned with the association of service and charity have turned away from the term "service-learning," opting instead to use alternative language such as civic engagement or informed action. This document uses the term "service-learning" because it reflects the evidence base codified in 2008 in the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice and because it is the focus of the National Youth Leadership Council's ongoing work.

In a world with many systems that take power away from individuals and communities, the team revising this tool firmly believes that service-learning should be empowering and play a role in disrupting negative societal patterns and systems.

"Nothing happens in isolation. There is always a squad of collaborators, a body that supports change occurring."
~ artist Sage Crump

What is Service-Learning?

Many readers of this document will have their own understanding of this practice. To ensure that everyone has a shared understanding, NYLC defines service-learning as "an approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs."

Service-learning fits into the broader category of experiential learning, and is a type of project-based learning with strong outcomes in civic engagement, social and emotional learning, and the 21st century skills of critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication.

The Process
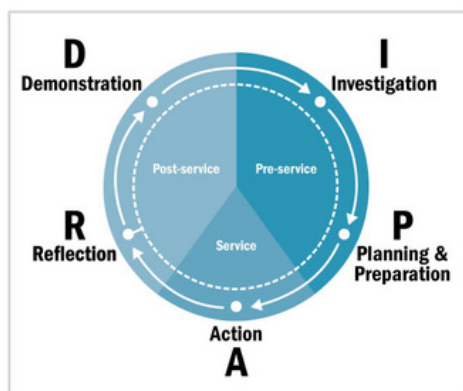
The student process involves five steps and is driven by student inquiry. It begins with an investigation into community needs via community experts, moves to the consideration of a project that will effectively address those needs, requires careful planning and preparation with time for reflection of both the process and the problem, and ends with a demonstration of learning -- whether a presentation, editorial, skit, podcast, or other form of public expression.

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
Identify Youth Outcomes	Determine Acceptable Evidence	Facilitate IPARD Youth Experience	Self-Assess

For the educator leading the backwards-planning process, two stages of preparation precede the student-led service-learning experience: establishing youth outcomes and identifying assessment strategies -- both of which can be the strategies already in use. And, for the educator, as for the student, the process requires personal reflection throughout the process to ensure that assumptions are in check and that root causes of issues are being identified and addressed -- to the extent possible.

The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

Supporting these practices is an evidence base, codified in 2008: The K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice. These eight standards and their indicators -- while often more aspirational than essential -- help practitioners avoid assumptions about young people, about communities, and about how to address needs. They emerged after the first iteration of this document, but reflect the spirit of much of that original research.

Meaningful Service	Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.
Link to Curriculum	Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

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

Youth Voice	Service-learning provides young people with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.
Partnerships	Service-learning partnerships are collaborative and mutually beneficial and address community needs.

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

Both the "diversity" and "partnerships" standards are particularly pertinent to this work. The diversity standard carries the following indicators, emphasizing both diversity of perspectives and backgrounds.

Service-learning:
- Helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
- Helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
- Helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
- Encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.

The diversity standard also has implications for youth voice, explicated in the following list, which also ensures a range of perspectives.

Service-learning:
- Engages young people in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- Involves young people in the decision-making process throughout the experience.
- Involves young people and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
- Promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
- Involves young people in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the experience.

The partnerships standard emphasizes the importance of reciprocity in this community work, as illustrated in the following indicators.

- Partnerships involve a variety of partners, including young people, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
- Partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
- Partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
- Partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
- Partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

Finally, because these are self-assessment tools, they are key to participant reflection, another one of the eight standards.

Reflection:
- Includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
- Occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
- Prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
- Encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
- 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.

While every service-learning experience may not live up to these standards initially, these best practices offer guideposts -- especially in work that strives to nurture upstanders on issues of equity and justice.

Equity in Service-Learning Example

High school students who were part of a theater class on ensemble acting and play development chose to create a fast-breaking series of skits on several of the United National Sustainable Development Goals to spawn conversations on critical issues in their community. Uppermost in their concerns were climate change (SDG #13, Climate Action), gender equity (SDG #5, Gender Equality), and state-mandated testing practices (SDG #4: Quality Education). They began by investigating the issues, reaching out to local climate change experts, nonprofits focused on gender equity, and Department of Education administrators about the rationale behind state-level education testing. Over the course of a quarter they not only learned the skills of improvisation and script-writing, but also the need for the multiple perspectives of community experts on their chosen topics to provide the details that brought their scripts to life. Ultimately, the students performed for communities across the state, fostered dialogue with their audiences, and seeded ongoing relationships with organizations from the public and private sectors who continue to support their work.

Self-Assessment Tools

These tools are designed to equip individuals and organizations with a practical and reflective entry point for assessing the motives behind their community work. They are not meant to be standardized tests with ratings that can be compared.

The first section is a personal assessment designed to help adults think critically about their attitudes, assumptions, and biases. The second section applies to service-learning practice within a school or organization, and is designed for those who have experienced service-learning at least once.

Personal Awareness Self-Assessment

Please rate yourself and/or your program using the following scale:
5 – Very Like Me; 4 – Like Me; 3 – Somewhat Like Me; 2 – Unlike Me;
1 – Very Unlike Me

_____ 1. I have spent time examining my own cultural identity, biases, and prejudices so that I do not let them influence my service work

_____ 2. Most of the service that I have done on my own would be considered charitable giving.

_____ 3. I live in a community where most of the people are ethnically similar to me.

_____ 4. I live in a community where most of the people are economically similar to me.

_____ 5. I live in the same community as my place of work.

_____ 6. I have read articles and/or books, watched videos, and/or participated in workshops that have helped me understand issues of power, race, and privilege.

_____ 7. I have read articles and/or books, watched videos, and/or participated in workshops that have helped me to understand community organizing.

_____ 8. I have participated in several service-learning workshops and/or courses that have helped me understand best practices in service-learning.

Personal Awareness Self-Assessment (con't.)

_____ 9. I value the culturally different ways that other people serve.

_____ 10. I welcome feedback on my behavior.

_____ 11. Most of the service that I have been involved with has been on issues of injustice.

_____ 12. I regularly engage in conversations with work colleagues about service-learning practice.

_____ 13. Self-reflection is very important to me in my everyday life.

_____ 14. Whenever I visit or move to a new community, I spend time gaining knowledge about the customs, history, and/or traditions of the local people.

_____ 15. I believe that lower socioeconomic communities have the greatest needs for service.

_____ 16. I have spent time in multiracial and multiethnic settings and engaged in conversations about issues of service, community, power, race, and privilege.

_____ 17. I am familiar with many of the community-based organizations in the area where I work.

_____ 18. I do not feel that service-learning benefits students who are doing poorly in school.

_____ 19. I find it easy to respect the beliefs of others even though I may not share the same ideas or belief systems.

_____ 20. I regularly interact with people from the local community.

_____ 21. I have frequently felt grateful to be me, and not the people whom I serve.

_____ 22. I typically ask questions to increase my understanding of another person's experience and point of view.

_____ 23. I spend time reading and learning about other cultures and their traditions.

Personal Awareness Ratings Analysis

Under each column, fill in the score you gave yourself from the related question number on the survey. For example, if you answered question number 1 as "Very unlike me," and gave it a score of "1" you would write "1" under Column 2, question 1.

Column 1

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
15. _____
18. _____
21. _____

Column 2

1. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
16. _____
17. _____
19. _____
20. _____
22. _____
23. _____

Count the number of "1"s and "2"s for each column:

Count the number of "3"s, "4"s, and "5"s for each column:

Scoring Key

Ratings of 1-2 in Column 1 and 3-5 in Column 2 indicate a greater potential for AVOIDING action that is based on assumptions.

Add dark grey boxes for total score.

Ratings of 3-5 in Column 1 and 1-2 in Column 2 indicate a greater potential for TAKING action that is based on assumptions.

Add light grey boxes for total score.

Personal Awareness Reflection

**After taking this self-assessment it is
typical to feel some discomfort -- and is often a sign of growth!**

The following questions may help process the information:

What stories come to mind – from your service-learning experiences – in taking these self-assessments?

_____

_____

Thinking back on those stories, how might you now act differently in developing those experiences with young people?

_____

Which questions were hardest to answer? Why?

_____

_____

Which questions prompted more questions?

_____

_____

How do you think you'll use this information?

_____

_____

Where would you like to grow?

_____

_____

What do you need as service-learning resources at this point?

_____

_____

See nylc.org for further resources.

Self Assessment Tools

Programs and Practices

Please rate yourself and/or your program using the following scale. Note that this self-assessment is designed for those who have participated in service-learning at least once.

Circle the number that corresponds with your response:

5 – Strongly Agree; 4 – Agree; 3 – Somewhat Agree; 2 – Disagree;

1 – Strongly Disagree

_____ 1.Our service-learning projects occur outside of our immediate community.

_____ 2.Our service-learning projects are one-time events.

_____ 3. The community we serve does not have the resources necessary to help address their needs.

_____ 4. Our projects include dialogue with and research about the community.

_____ 5. Our service-learning curriculum includes conducting a community assessment/survey before we identify a community need.

_____ 6. When developing service-learning projects, we have focused on what we could do to help others.

_____ 7. Our service-learning projects represent an emphasis on doing the service with the local community versus doing the service to or for the local community.

_____ 8. When it is relevant to the service, our planning and preparation involves all program participants in critical dialogue on issues of power, race and/or privilege.

_____ 9. We discuss prior knowledge or experience related to the identified community need before beginning our service work.

_____ 10. Our organization/school is located in a middle-class community and we have few needs for service.

_____ 11. Typically our service experiences integrate reflection for the program participants before, during, and after service.

_____ 12. Our staff has a clear understanding of the difference between service-learning and community service.

_____ 13. We set priorities and plan our service projects in partnership with the local community.

_____ 14. New employees are required or strongly urged to attend a service-learning in-service/workshop.

_____ 15. Our organization has a strong representation of employees who live in the local community.

_____ 16. Our service-learning projects recognize and utilize the assets of the community, and do not only focus on the community's needs.

_____ 17. Most of the responsibility for the community partnerships rests on our program/school.

_____ 18. Our program strives to have all partners involved share a common vision and clear goals.

_____ 19. Our program views service-learning as a tool for social change and social justice.

_____ 20. Our projects reflect knowledge and understanding of cultural context, norms and/or traditions in our community.

_____ 21. A priority of most of our service-learning projects is to study the greater context behind each identified community need. For example, if we volunteer at a nursing home, we examine issues around aging in America.

_____ 22. The planning and preparation for our projects are based on the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice (2008) -- or another set of "best practices."

_____ 23. Our service projects focus on charity versus social change.

_____ 24. Our programs frame service-learning as "server" and "served."

_____ 25. Reflection has been one of the weakest aspects of our program.

_____ 26. Service-learning experiences are designed so that both those providing service and those who are the beneficiaries of service are perceived as having gifts to offer.

Programs and Practices
Rating Analysis

Under each column, fill in the score from the related question number on the survey. For example, if you rated question number 1 as "strongly disagree," and gave it a score of 1, then you would place a 1 under Column 1, number 1.

Column 1
1. ———
2. ———
3. ———
6. ———
11. ———
18. ———
24. ———
25. ———
26. ———

Column 2
4. ———
5. ———
7. ———
8. ———
9. ———
10. ———
12. ———
13. ———
14. ———
15. ———
16. ———
17. ———
19. ———
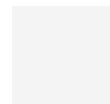20. ———
21. ———
22. ———
23. ———

Scoring Key

Ratings of 1-2 in Column 1 and 3-5 in Column 2 indicate a greater potential for AVOIDING action that is based on assumptions.

Add dark grey boxes for total score.

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Add light grey boxes for total score.

Count the number of "1"s and "2"s for each column:

Count the number of "3"s, "4"s, and "5"s for each column:

Programs and Practices Reflection

**After taking this self-assessment it is
typical to feel some discomfort -- and is often a sign of growth!**

The following questions may help process the information:

What service-learning stories come to mind – from your experiences – in taking these self-assessments?

_____

_____

Thinking back on those stories, would you now act differently in developing those experiences for young people? If yes, how?

_____

_____

_____

Which questions were hardest to answer? Why?

_____

_____

Which questions prompted more questions?

_____

_____

How do you think you'll use this information?

_____

_____

Where would you like to grow?

_____

_____

What do you need as service-learning resources at this point?

_____

_____

See nylc.org for further resources.

Service-Learning and Curricular Frameworks: Civic Action

After taking these self-assessments, educators face the next question: when and how to integrate service-learning experiences into a curriculum. The following frameworks offer perspectives on identifying community needs, and ways for young people and their adult partners to make connections to larger societal or global concerns. These considerations are part of an educator's back-planning for a unit of study, establishing where the service-learning process fits in the overall curriculum. Several national and international frameworks highlight the academic and civic outcomes possible -- supporting the idea that service-learning should be integral to a course of study that delivers first-hand experiences with both American and global ideals such as human rights, justice, and equity.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)

This framework drives the development of social studies standards across the country at the state level. At all grade levels, four "dimensions" (listed below) lead to students taking informed action -- an outcome of the service-learning process.

In the C3 framework, students:

1. Develop questions and plan inquiries (as in the "investigation" phase of service-learning).
2. Apply disciplinary tools and concepts (as in the "plan and prepare" phase of service-learning, when students apply their research and communication skills to learning about a topic).
3. Evaluate sources using evidence (as in the "reflection" and "planning and preparation" phase of the service-learning cycle, when students interview primary sources and conduct secondary research to refine their ideas).
4. Communicate conclusions and take informed action (as in the action and demonstration phases of the service-learning process, when students publicly share their findings.)

Service-learning experiences require adults and students to tackle communities' most urgent and challenging issues while exercising their democratic rights and responsibilities, applying C3 principles to community needs.

Educating for American Democracy

This national framework to animate civic education also shares the service-learning goal of inspiring the next generation of civic actors. Across seven themes, students consider how history informs civic action today, leading to the central question of: "How can I participate?"

The thematic areas of the EAD framework include:
1. Civic Participation -- which focuses on the overarching goal of engaging young people as civic participants and preparing them to assume that role successfully.
2. Our Changing Landscapes -- which includes collective responsibility for the natural world.
3. We the People -- which explores how America has developed as a political body and how political institutions and shared ideals can connect a diverse population to shared processes of societal decision-making.
4. A New Government and Constitution -- which explores the institutional history of the United States as well as the underpinnings of the constitution.
5. Institutional and Social Transformation -- which builds understanding of how American political institutions and society change.
6. A People in the World -- which explores the place of the U.S. and the American people in a global context.
7. Contemporary Debates and Possibilities -- which explores contemporary civic participation and civic agency.

Similarly, service-learning offers limitless ways to experience civic life, as students "explore the principles, values, habits, and skills that support productive engagement in a healthy, resilient, constitutional democracy."

Equity in Service-Learning Example

Elementary school students in Oklahoma who were studying Body Mass Index were growing aware that it was a local issue. So they decided to build out a simple website where students could upload their BMIs anonymously, and promote the idea that the whole school participate. These actions led to suggestions from physical education teachers that they promote biking and walking to school, then re-assess at the end of the school year. When those results were favorable, they grew their effort statewide, and ultimately persuaded politicians to sanction a "Walk Across Oklahoma" day with the goal of improving health statewide.

Service-Learning and International Frameworks

Similarly, for those teaching world history, geography, and/or economics, international frameworks also offer opportunities for integration of service-learning experiences.

Universal Human Rights

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Universal human rights are the rights we all share as people. The foundational document of international human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), upholds values of equality, non-discrimination, and the dignity and worth of each person in the world. Human rights education involves teaching and learning about human rights norms and values, but also education through human rights, creating a space for learning that values the dignity of educators and students. Human rights education is also intended to be for human rights, equipping students to exercise their own rights and to protect and advocate for the rights of others.

A human rights framework for service-learning sets up an experience grounded in equity and justice that can incorporate education about, through, and for human rights. This framework also spans a wide range of issues from criminal justice or voting rights to the rights to food or housing, allowing for service-learning experiences based on student interest. Human rights education can be adapted to suit the context of the communities involved.

Classroom exploration of the UDHR or other human rights documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), can be a valuable starting point for investigating human rights challenges in a service-learning experience. In the investigation phase, students identify an issue that motivates them to take action. During this stage they gather information through credible sources (articles, multimedia, issue experts, community members, etc.) to understand a human rights problem and its complexity, as well as the approaches currently being used to address it. After delving deeper into understanding the issue, students can generate ideas for actions they can take in their school, local, national or global communities.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations has developed 17 goals as an urgent call to action for all countries to work in partnership towards peace and prosperity by 2030. These goals were born out of a participatory process to identify concrete goals related to the world's most significant challenges.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a blueprint for strategies to end systemic and global issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. The SDGs also provide a platform for young people to see what others are doing in their communities and schools, and place their own actions in the context of a larger global effort. Engaging students in this work allows them to understand the critical role they play in addressing and achieving these goals.

These goals can serve as an anchor for many curriculum objectives and service-learning initiatives across content areas. Many of the SDGs relate directly to students' lives, creating opportunities for students to bring their voices and lived experiences to the conversation and ideas for action. Similar to the universal human rights framework, there are multiple ways of linking the SDGs to service-learning experiences.

By using this framework (alone, or in combination with another) students, educators, and organizations can participate as partners in advancing the shared mission to end the world's most significant social and environmental issues.

THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

Given what you've learned about your motivations and possible assumptions in community-based work, what next steps would you like to take?

Next Steps Plan	I will do.	I might do.	I'm good on this.	Not sure.
Learn more and/or read about service-learning: the strategy and its relationship to social justice.				
Have conversations with colleagues about the difference between service, service-learning, and charity.				
Examine my knowledge of cultural identity, potential biases and prejudices, and how they intersect with my work.				
Examine my understanding of areas of need in my community.				
Learn more and/or read about other cultures and their traditions.				
Learn more and/or read about issues of power, privilege, and race.				
Learn more and/or read about community planning and development.				
Learn more and/or read about culturally responsive teaching practice.				
Explore ways to get involved in neighborhoods that are different from my home community.				
Reflect on how I respond to feedback on my behavior.				
Ask questions of others to more fully understand different points of view.				
Participate in more racially and ethnically diverse events.				
Participate in more community meetings and listening sessions.				
Get involved in community-based organizations near school/work.				
Research indigenous history of community with students.				
Incorporate indigenous land acknowledgments and follow-up actions in my classes and events.				

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From the Contributors

Julie Rogers Bascom, Director of Learning and Leadership, NYLC

My roots of service align with the sense of community I experienced growing up on a farm: we all did better when we all did better. (Thank you, Sen Paul Wellstone.) If there was a need, someone would offer to meet that because we each knew there would be a time when we would have a need. I later found myself in Oakland, California, where economic diversity was easy to observe and my kids went to a school where every student, every year, experienced service-learning. The third-graders did a bird census and reported to the Department of Natural Resources; the first-graders made sandwiches for the homeless shelter, and the middle grades focused on addressing water quality issues around the lake and creek alongside their school. Fast forward to moving back to Minnesota, where I found myself leading a service-learning program in an affluent school district that often mistook charity for service-learning. It did reinforce stereotypes and fueled the "it's good for kids to see how good they have it" attitude. Those weren't the outcomes I had hoped to see. I'm eager to learn, share and develop tools that can be used to help teachers and young people focus on asset-based action around community issues. Having language, evidence and tools will help solidify this as a culturally responsive effort for the field of service-learning.

Tiwana Merritt, Teaching and Learning Coach and Service-Learning Coordinator, American International School of Johannesburg, South Africa

I have spent much of my teaching career specializing in outdoor and experiential education, spending many years teaching in Australia and most recently in southern China. I strive to challenge students in developing their understanding of the world through service to and with others, the environment, and learning how to live for a more sustainable future. I believe that international curriculum and experiential education provides challenge, holistic thinking and learning, inquiry-learning and a greater sense of the world in ways that extend far beyond traditional models of education. While academic achievement is very important, high value and importance on shaping the whole learner should also be equally as important. I am finding that my passion in connecting diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work to community engagement is a foundational step in community engagement. Living in South Africa for the past few years has really heightened my awareness that we don't live in a fair or equitable world. It is our individual and collective responsibility to support movement towards a more just world. Critical community engagement is a pathway that is accessible for all, no matter who you are, your economic status, background, or community. This document will be a tool that supports educators in jump-starting service initiatives. This resource "can't be an opt-in tool!" "We need to commit to valuing the importance of 'unlearning' much of our previous understanding of service learning and community engagement. Then set about moving from understanding, to reflection and action."

Sarah Miller, Jordan, Minnesota Public Schools Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist

I grew up in Aurora, Minnesota, a small Iron Range town. After graduating from high school I continued my education at Bemidji State, where I earned a B.S. degree in elementary education. Upon graduation I was hired in Jordan, Minnesota. I have been teaching for the Jordan School District for 29 years, first through eighth grade. Currently, I am working as the district's Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Specialist, Instructional Coach, and Behavior Specialist, and American Indian Parent Advisory Coordinator. After raising my son, I continued my education and earned a master's degree in educational leadership and certifications in administration, Restorative Practices, and Culturally Responsive Teaching. Today I am working towards earning my Ed.D. in Equity and Inclusion Administrative Leadership. My passion involves creating and honoring systems, processes, procedures, policies, programs, and training that are inclusive and equitable. I find joy in my profession by facilitating a collaborative process that creates culturally responsive, equitable, and an inclusive organizational culture. Developing tools like this will hopefully assist in creating an organizational culture that honors differences, values diversity, and celebrates commonalities. Together, as a community, we can create positive social change through integrating a service-learning approach in education.

Nicole Palasz, Program Coordinator, Institute of World Affairs, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

I work with the Institute of World Affairs, a community outreach office in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Center for International Education. My primary role is to support K-12 teachers in incorporating global perspectives in their classrooms. For the past several years, I've been involved in an initiative we call the Global-to-Local Service-Learning initiative, an effort to support classrooms in exploring how local challenges in Milwaukee connect to larger global issues. We also encourage teachers and students to investigate how people are trying to create change around the world to inspire new ideas for action locally and foster a greater sense of shared humanity and connectedness. Prior to my current role, I worked with the New Tactics in Human Rights project at the Center for Victims of Torture, where I had the opportunity to meet dedicated and inspiring human rights defenders from around the world. That experience profoundly shaped my world view and approach to service-learning and civic engagement in my local context. In programs with teachers from across Wisconsin and other parts of the country, I've heard examples of globally and locally-focused service-learning experiences that are misguided and potentially harmful. Many reinforce long-standing stereotypes and hierarchies. Without critical self-reflection, I believe service can provide a simplistic and comfortable response to hard, complex, and systemic issues. I hope this tool will provide educators with the motivation and encouragement to take the time for reflection before leading service-learning experiences and seek out additional opportunities for learning and growth to create meaningful student experiences grounded in equity and justice.

Malik Peer, Jordan, Minnesota Public Schools, Equity and Outreach Specialist

I grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas. To escape the desolation of poverty, at the age of thirteen I left home with my brother to pursue a music career in Minnesota. After an adventurous music career, I found my way back to public education. At the age of thirty-seven, I earned my GED. Upon graduation, I earned my B.S. degree in Equity and Inclusion. Currently, I'm completing my master's degree in Equity and Inclusion emphasizing social education. I am also a licensed mediator, Restorative Practices Trainer, and an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) administrator. And I'm a co-founder of The B4ME Youth Studies summer program based out of Little Rock. I have a deep passion for assisting and supporting the momentum of all people in developing their relationship with self, others, and knowledge. I'm very intentional about bringing my passion to my profession by creating engaging and life-changing coaching opportunities.

Bella Sullivan, Colby College (Maine) student and NYLC Youth Advisory Council Mentor

Growing up, my parents always made sure that I understood that all of life is rooted in service and education. There will always be more to learn and people to help. My mother is a teacher and the sponsor of many service clubs, so I've been doing service since I could walk. During my Junior year of high school, she urged me to apply for the National Youth Leadership Council's Youth Advisory Council. Almost four years later, I am still working with NYLC, mainly focusing on the worlds of service-learning and education equity. I am also a Sophomore at Colby College, studying English, Philosophy, and Italian. My first year at Colby, a wealthy, predominantly white institution, taught me a ton about education equity, especially in the world of higher education. On campus, I am a low-income student who did not attend private school before Colby, so I am a bit of an outlier. It's been very interesting to see how someone's upbringing and educational past can so greatly affect how they interact with others and how they view the concept of higher education. With these privileged, wealthier students, it's not uncommon to see a "missionary ideology" emerge when they repost Black Lives Matter infographics or donate to Mutual Aid Funds. With the creation of these tools, I am hopeful that we will help others recognize their privileges and how they can use them in a way that does not make them feel like a "savior." Finding your true motivations behind service and activism is the most important step in becoming an advocate and activist. As both a "servant" and "servee," it's easy to tell who truly puts their heart into service. I am optimistic that this toolkit will help people get to a point where they can perform genuine service that will change lives.

Maddy Wegner, NYLC Director of Content Development

I am a former high school English/Language Arts teacher and journalist. Having taught in public, private, and charter school settings, I was most inspired by a recent experience co-teaching Somali Studies (an ethnic studies option) in a Minneapolis Public School. There, I witnessed the power of students learning about their own heritage in the context of service-learning projects: Middle school students created bilingual story books for elementary students and high school students interviewed community elders to learn how to write profiles. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of the experience was a unit on identity — during George Floyd's murder in a neighborhood near the school. The timing of that unit made me realize how we never leave our identities behind when we embark on service-learning experiences. While the beauty of service-learning is that it can address Martin Luther King's "fierce urgency of now", this urgency also means that educators need to have explored their motivations for community-based work ahead of time because their passions — like the students' — may suddenly prove relevant to a community need. I hope that this tool can do that: help educators consider their motivations for working in communities and see new benefits to learning alongside their students in service-learning experiences — investigating their motivations for engaging in community work and letting go of possible assumptions before doing so.
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