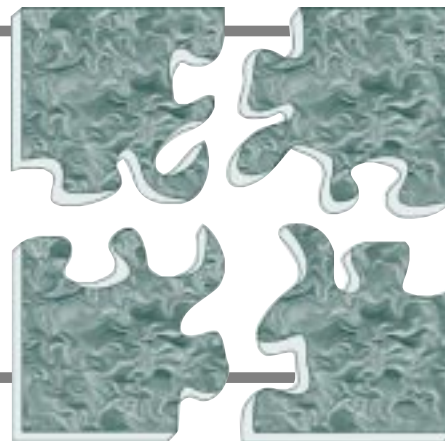


# BEST PRACTICE BRIEFS



## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

### SERVICE-LEARNING requires

- a community partnership
- an active instructor
- means for reflection

### INVOLVE STUDENTS in

- planning
- ongoing process assessment
- evaluation of outcomes

### DON'T underestimate

- time required for planning and oversight
- value of institutional support
- need for orientation
- benefits to students



OUTREACH  
PARTNERSHIPS

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## SERVICE-LEARNING: A WAY TO BUILD ASSETS-2

*Service-Learning provides a unique opportunity to build assets in youth through community-school/university partnerships. However, designing and implementing a course that incorporates learning through such experiences as improving a river, writing reports for community agencies, or working with young children is not a simple process.*

Service-Learning differs from other forms of experiential learning in its close connection to current academic work. To meet the criteria for Service-Learning, the service experience must:

- be planfully utilized to enhance academic learning.
- involve students in meeting actual community needs—contributing to the well-being of an individual and/or the resolution of a community issue.
- provide opportunities for structured and disciplined reflection on the linkages between the experience and the academic content.

Developing and implementing a course that incorporates Service-Learning requires thoughtful effort by the instructor and involvement of the community agency. A successful Service-Learning program also requires the support of the school/university through its policies and resources. This **BRIEF** explores the process and considerations in designing and implementing a good Service-Learning experience, the institutional support that can promote the use of Service-Learning, and possible funding sources for curriculum development and training.

## DEVELOPING SERVICE-LEARNING<sup>1</sup>

Developing a Service-Learning program involves time and energy to plan the curriculum and develop a partnership between the instructor and the community agency. These processes are outlined below, although not necessarily in the order in which they will occur.

<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted in part from National Service-Learning Cooperative, (April 1998), *Essential Elements of Service-Learning*. Roseville, MN: National Youth Leadership Council.



## THE INSTRUCTOR

Because Service-Learning is a teaching model, the instructor is key in modifying the curriculum, developing the relationship with the community agency, and facilitating the experience.

### The instructor re-orientes an existing course by

- **establishing learning outcomes** for the Service-Learning experience that are linked to the objectives of the course. For example, the student will, through an experience in a community setting,
  - have a deeper understanding of the concepts and content of the course.
  - improve relevant skills.
  - have an opportunity to use more complex information, inductive thinking, synthesis of theory and practice, and new information to produce new meaning, understanding, and solutions.
- **identifying service possibilities** in the community that
  - can accomplish the academic goals.
  - are of sufficient duration to stimulate learning.
  - are needed by the community.
- **incorporating activities** that give each student an opportunity for **reflection** on the experience. These may include
  - individual assignments and learning formats, such as journals, daily logs, papers, and time for focused conversations that provoke analysis of the service experience.
  - group assignments and learning formats such as co-authored products, small group discussions, class and community presentations, and simulations that encourage communal rather than individual learning, in order to promote the students' sense of community and social responsibility.
- **allowing sufficient time** for
  - planning with students with respect to their role, preparation, and reflection.
  - providing oversight.

### The instructor takes an active role in establishing a community partnership by

- **negotiating with the community agency**<sup>2</sup> to establish an ongoing partnership that will benefit the community agency.
- **working out the details** of the partnership with respect to
  - roles and responsibilities for the students, community agency staff, and instructor
  - the scope of the work
  - the expected outcomes and how they will be measured
  - schedule of hours the students will spend on site
  - arrangements for the instructor to be present on site at regular intervals
  - legal issues and insurance coverage.
- **documenting** the agreed-upon arrangements in a **written memorandum**.
- **providing necessary support to students**, including
  - **teaching** the **background, conceptual information, and basic skills needed**, so that the students will be prepared academically to carry out the assignment.
  - **orienting** the students to the agency, its practices, and the assigned task, expectations, and responsibilities; ideally undertaken jointly with a community agency staff member.
  - if appropriate, providing instruction about **safety** issues.
  - providing **supervision** and learning direction to students.
- **mediating** with agency staff any difficulties or **problems** that develop.

<sup>2</sup> In some schools/universities this initial negotiation may be undertaken by a Service-Learning coordinator.

**RECOGNIZE THAT** students vary in their level of maturity, experience at a work site, and ability to relate effectively to others. Coaching on appropriate behavior in the community and on the job site and providing information about the particular culture of the community, agency, and world outside the school building will help to avoid problems.

**The instructor, together with the community agency, assists the students to reflect upon and learn from the experience, by**

- **undertaking** an ongoing **assessment** of the Service-Learning experience to identify what is succeeding and what needs to be changed.
- **evaluating** the **outcomes** in terms of the objectives of the community agency and the learning goals for the students.
- **acknowledging** the work of the students directly and through sharing the experience with others; e.g.,
  - a presentation to those members of the class who did not participate in the Service-Learning experience
  - a celebration inviting community representatives and parents
  - communication to the broader community through media coverage or community events.

**RECOGNIZE THAT** Service-Learning works best when

- students are given **maximum responsibility** in planning as well as in service.
- a **sustainable** long-term, reciprocal, **trusting relationship** exists or is developed between the community agency and the educational institution.
- there is a **clear understanding** of the organizational structure, authority, and roles and responsibilities of the respective partners, and limits, operating rules, and management procedures.

## THE COMMUNITY AGENCY

The community agency's involvement may be limited to identifying the need for a product and establishing specifications. However, the community agency must be an active participant when the agency serves as the site for the Service-Learning experience and students are engaged with staff or service recipients. Service-Learning ideally is a shared teaching experience between the school/university and the community agency.

**Community agency staff should**

- understand and promote the academic learning objectives
- be clear about the service products that students will deliver
- work with the instructor to develop a productive experience
- allow time for orientation, training, supervision, and logistical support
- recognize that a collaborative partnership requires an investment of time in planning and problem solving.

## SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

While instructors can—and often do—independently adopt a Service-Learning approach, an educational institution can promote widespread use by attention to policies, training opportunities, and incentives. The extent and formality of such supports will obviously differ between universities and secondary schools.

Instructors will be more likely to develop Service-Learning opportunities when the school/university

- **adopts policies** designed to support quality Service-Learning practice, e.g.,
  - Service-Learning is identified as **relevant to the educational mission** and relationship to the community.
  - Use of Service-Learning is part of the **criteria for evaluating** instructors for retention, promotion, and tenure.
  - Staff members of community agencies involved with Service-Learning are recognized as **adjunct faculty** with a significant role in promoting the academic learning of students.
- **provides a structure** such as an identified unit and/or a Service-Learning coordinator position that
  - provides instructors with **training** in the philosophy and pedagogy of Service-Learning.
  - offers instructors ongoing **opportunities** to refine their Service-Learning practice through networking, observation, problem solving, and mentoring with other staff within and outside their schools.
  - **facilitates connections** with community agencies.
- **provides resources** for benefits and incentives, e.g., stipends for course development, release time, teaching assistants, conference attendance.

## FUNDING FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

The federal government's CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE (CNS) provides funds (more than \$63 million in 1999) to

- most **state departments of education** for grants to public schools
  - **The Michigan Department of Education** annually distributes federal funds (\$650,000 in 1998-99) to school districts that have at least one community partner, for technical assistance and Learn and Serve grants involving planning, implementation, or district-wide expansion of Service-Learning programs.
- **community service commissions** for grants to community agencies and schools
  - **The Michigan Community Service Commission** uses federal funds for similar Learn and Serve grants to community-based organizations and schools. Programs must address local needs in the priority areas of education, public safety, human services, and the environment. The Commission funded ten "Learn and Serve" programs in 1998-99 for a total of \$135,527.
- **national, state, and regional Campus Compacts** for grants to institutions of higher education.

GENERAL ELECTRIC FUND has given Campus Compact \$600,000 for Campus/Corporate/Community projects to provide at-risk youth with opportunities for academic enrichment based on the Asset-Based Community Development model. Fourteen campuses have received grants.

OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING have included the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Center; the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Community/University Partnership Program; and the Council for Independent Colleges.

## CAMPUS COMPACT

A national consortium of 590 colleges and universities, Campus Compact supports affiliates through 22 state offices plus the National Center for Community Colleges. Services from the national and state offices include Service-Learning courses, symposia, presentations, newsletters, annual Service-Learning updates, demonstration projects, discussion forums, and publications. Since its inception, Campus Compact with CNS funding has awarded grants to 283 colleges and provided training to 1,100 faculty. National and state Campus Compacts are currently working on theme-based institutes on such topics as Service-Learning and the arts, Service-Learning and K-12 partnerships, and Service-Learning and multiculturalism. (1997-98 data)

In an effort to promote Service-Learning, the W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION has undertaken “Learning in Deed: Making a Difference Through Service-Learning.” This four-year, \$13 million national initiative started in June 1999 to

- provide grants to five states—California, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, and South Carolina—to identify effective practices and policies.
- form a national blue-ribbon commission to promote standards of quality and encourage investment in Service-Learning opportunities.
- establish a national network of youth service and education organizations, and a research network to identify and communicate best practices.

**IN SUMMARY,** Service-Learning requires creativity and work on the part of instructors and receptivity and support from the community agency. For the school/university, Service-Learning offers unique opportunities

- to make the educational experience more effective
- to broaden horizons for youth
- to build assets in youth, including the development of social competencies and self-esteem.

For the community agency, Service-Learning brings the benefits of additional resources to accomplish needed tasks, the opportunity to extend awareness of its mission, strengths, and issues, and the satisfaction of contributing to the development of assets in youth. (See **BEST PRACTICE BRIEFS** No. 2 and No. 11 for information on assets).

## TUTORING TO LEARN ABOUT DIVERSITY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

To learn first-hand about diversity and multiculturalism, Michigan State University students volunteer to provide tutoring in science and math to students at Allen Street School, an elementary school located in a high poverty neighborhood in Lansing. Fifty percent of these children are from minority groups; 90 percent qualify for free school lunch; and half move during the academic year.

*“The Allen Street children are different in economic status and family experience from the majority of our students. This adds a unique dimension to our university course work,”* says Esther Onaga, from the Department of Family and Child Ecology, co-teacher of the course in National Diversity and Change: United States.

When Onaga first approached the Allen Street school administration six years ago about developing a relationship with the school, the principal was open to the idea, but the teachers were unreceptive, partly because of poor previous relationships with university researchers who used the school as a “laboratory” for short-term projects. However, Onaga made it clear that she was interested in making a long-term commitment to the school. During the school year, she visits the school two to three times each week to monitor the MSU students and to meet with teachers so that all involved have a clear understanding of their respective roles.

As part of the reciprocal relationship, 70 to 80 fourth and fifth graders from Allen Street School come to the campus toward the end of each semester, visiting the dormitories and eating at the dining hall.



The Allen Street students visit the Diversity course to talk to the full class about their experiences.

Six years ago the initiative began with thirty college students. Two years ago arrangements were made to tutor students with special needs enrolled in the middle and high schools in Okemos, a suburban community near Lansing. By spring semester 1999, involvement in this Service-Learning aspect of the Diversity course had grown to include 130 MSU students. Each student in Onaga’s class spends 2 to 2 1/2 hours each week working with one student in the classroom. For their work, the MSU students receive a letter for their portfolio and the option to drop two of their lowest quiz scores.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND TOURISM**

### **BRETHREN HIGH SCHOOL, KALEVA, MICHIGAN**

The landscape has changed in Kaleva, a small community near Manistee in northern Michigan, as a result of a Learn and Serve grant to Brethren High School. Kaleva was settled in the 1880s, thriving as a result of the lumber industry and important enough for two railroads to compete in a race to lay tracks to the community. Finnish settlers began arriving in the early 1900s, becoming farmers. However, by the late 1960s, the community had declined.

In spring semester 1996, Cindy Asiala and Deborah Crandell, teachers at Brethren High School, organized a Service-Learning class as a social science and art elective for junior and senior high school students with emphasis on writing, mathematics, and art skills. The first group of 20 students interviewed 16 elderly people who knew what Kaleva used to be like. The students found that the residents of Kaleva treasured their Finnish background and wanted the historic buildings—such as the Kaleva Train Depot—preserved. Subsequent classes of students (more than 125 students have worked on these projects over the past four years) developed community service activities geared towards economic development and increased tourism. The first group of students renovated Asiala Park with the help of local landscapers, putting in benches and flowers. “*Local residents could see the students out working to improve the park and helping the area,*” said Ms. Asiala.

Other classes renovated the Train Depot, developed a Welcome Center and an artist’s cooperative gallery, and renovated an historic 100-year-old log cabin into a Summer Theatre that opened summer 1999. The students have painted a mural on the wall of the local firehouse, repainted the signs at the north and west entrances to the town, welded an eagle sculpture, painted a Midnight Sun fence by the Kaleva Art Gallery Cooperative, and created a Rail Sculpture next to the Depot Railroad Museum. The Kaleva Depot Railroad Museum was refitted with railroad memorabilia and a model train and currently is open Saturday afternoons in summer from noon to 4 p.m., with local train collectors staffing the museum.

Each project involved strong advance planning as well as reflection afterward, often expressed in a class newsletter that describes the experience. Students have also written three books as a result of the class. Community members have become involved, often providing expertise and mentoring the students. Pleased with the outcome of Service-Learning, interested community members formed a committee a year and a half ago to raise funds to support the school's Service-Learning activities.

*"Students are the community's greatest resource,"* says Deborah Crandell. *"With the community's support Service-Learning will allow the growth to continue in future generations."*

## SERVICE-LEARNING WRITING PROJECT

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

More than 300 first-year students annually improve their writing and expand their understanding of democratic processes by producing materials needed by community agencies. David Cooper, Department of American Thought and Language/American Studies, has combined composition instruction with student volunteerism and a focus on responsible public discourse in a democracy. Over the past six years, Cooper and MSU's Service Learning Center have developed a network of 70 non-profit agencies in which students can be placed.

To prepare for the assignments, Cooper has students reflect critically on America's civic traditions. The students review primary historical source documents and literary expressions that constitute the historical conversation on some aspect of public culture in America. Once the students have entered these cultural conversations about civic duty, pluralism, and the moral claims of democratic citizenship, they are ready to pursue a major writing project.

Students have produced brochures, newsletters, grant proposals, fundraising and recruitment materials, communications to legislators, and organization histories. Students receive assistance from consultants at the MSU Writing Center and circulate drafts of their written materials in class for critique by other students and the professor.

Cooper says that Service-Learning is a way to energize the learning process in his classes while giving students the opportunity to participate in constructive conversations, actively learn about

democratic values, and understand their civic responsibilities.

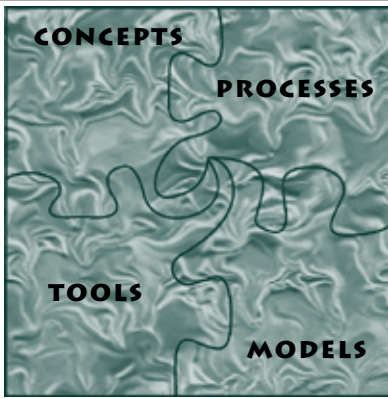
## SERVICE-LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IN SPANISH

WAVERLY HIGH SCHOOL,  
WAVERLY, MICHIGAN

Students learning Spanish at Waverly High School, west of Lansing, work with community agencies that serve Spanish-speaking migrant workers and refugees.

- Second-year students have created bi-lingual picture books for the Migrant Head Start Program. Students make books to order, talking to the preschool teachers to learn the needs of the children. Household words are selected that the high school students want to learn but are not in their academic course books.
- Third-year Spanish students write and design bi-lingual storybooks for the older Head Start participants. They may work from a traditional Spanish story or develop their own stories, starting with Spanish and translating back into English. Here, the objective for the students is to learn the Spanish past tense.
- Students developed bi-lingual coloring books, celebrating the contributions of famous Hispanics to American culture. The books were distributed during Spanish Heritage Month by the Michigan Commission on Spanish Speaking Affairs.
- Students developed simple books for the Dominican Republic to replace materials lost in Hurricane Mitch.
- Students have created vocabulary flash cards to assist persons preparing to take the U.S. citizenship test.
- Advanced Placement Spanish students worked one year with retired citizens at Cristo Rey Community Center to develop oral history videotapes of their life experiences.

*"The students feel that they are not just working for a grade; they are doing something meaningful and contributing to society,"* says Linda Roberts, Spanish instructor. *"Service-Learning is a way of celebrating the contributions of all the students in a class, not just the outstanding ones."*



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## WEB SITES

*American Association of Higher Education.* **Web Site:** [www.aahe.org](http://www.aahe.org)  
One Dupont Circle, Suite 360, Washington, DC 20036-1110.  
Tel: (202) 293-6440. (Publishes a series identifying Service-Learning opportunities in various academic areas.)

*Corporation for National Service.* **Web Site:** [www.cns.gov/learn/index.html](http://www.cns.gov/learn/index.html)  
1201 New York Avenue, NW, 8th floor, Washington, DC 20525.

*National Campus Compact.* **Web Site:** [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)  
Box 1975, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.  
Tel: (401) 863-1158. E-mail: [campus@compact.org](mailto:campus@compact.org)

*National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.* **Web Site:** [www.nicls.coled.umn.edu](http://www.nicls.coled.umn.edu)  
1954 Buford Avenue, Room R-460, St. Paul, MN 55108.  
Tel: (800) 808-7378. E-mail: [serve@maroon.tc.umn.edu](mailto:serve@maroon.tc.umn.edu)

*National Society for Experiential Education.* **Web Site:** [www.nsee.org](http://www.nsee.org)  
1703 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311-1714.  
Tel: (703) 575-5475. E-mail: [info@nsee.org](mailto:info@nsee.org)

*National Youth Leadership Council and National Technical Assistance Center.*  
**Web Site:** [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)  
1910 West County Road B, Roseville, MN 55113.  
Tel: (612) 631-3672. E-mail: [nylinfo@nylc.org](mailto:nylinfo@nylc.org)

## MICHIGAN RESOURCES

*Michigan Campus Compact.* Room 29, Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Tel: (517) 353-9393.  
E-mail: [MCC1989@msu.edu](mailto:MCC1989@msu.edu)

*Michigan Community Service Commission.* George W. Romney Building, 4th floor, 111 S. Capitol Avenue, Lansing, MI 48913. Tel: (517) 335-4295.  
E-mail: [salasa@state.mi.us](mailto:salasa@state.mi.us)

*Michigan Department of Education.* Curriculum Development Program, Learn and Serve Michigan, Hannah Building, P.O. Box 3008, Lansing, MI 48909. Tel: (517) 373-7248. E-mail: [knutsonb@state.mi.us](mailto:knutsonb@state.mi.us) **Web site:** [cdp.mde.state.mi.us/lc](http://cdp.mde.state.mi.us/lc) (curriculum development for school and community programs).

*Michigan K-12 Service-Learning Center.* University of Michigan School of Education, 610 E. University, Room 1360F, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.  
Tel: (734) 647-2135. E-mail: [stellarl@umich.edu](mailto:stellarl@umich.edu)

*Service Learning Center.* Michigan State University, 27 Student Services Building, East Lansing, MI 48824. Tel: (517) 353-4400. E-mail: [servlrcn@msu.edu](mailto:servlrcn@msu.edu)

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