

**Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn**  
*A View from Higher Education*

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# TECSL Participants

## COPPIN STATE COLLEGE



**Beatrice T. Riley, M.S.**  
*Campus Coordinator*



**Elizabeth H. Brooks, Ed.D.**



**Juanita Gilliam, M.A.**



**Thomas James, J.D.**



**Alfred Sutton, Ed.D.**

## SALISBURY UNIVERSITY



**Nomsa Geleta, Ed.D.**  
*Project Director/Campus Coordinator*



**Ernest Bond, Ph.D.**



**Carolyn Bowden, Ph.D.**



**Joel Jenne, Ph.D.**



**Edward Robeck, Ph.D.**

## TOWSON UNIVERSITY



**Barry Frieman, Ed.D.**  
*Campus Coordinator*



**Lijun Jin, Ed.D.**



**Barbara Laster, Ed.D.**



**Elizabeth Wilkins, Ph.D.**



**Nancy Wiltz, Ph.D.**



**Douglas Ball, Ph.D.**  
*Project Evaluator*  
*Salisbury University*



**Barry M. King, M.S.**  
*Program Director*  
*Salisbury University*



**Kent Kimmel, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Program Director*  
*Salisbury University*

# Teacher Education Consortium in Service-Learning (TECSL)

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## MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

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### **Coppin State College**

A historically black college founded in 1900 as a one-year training program focused on preparing teachers for schools in a public urban center, Coppin's current mission is to provide high-quality undergraduate and graduate education in the arts and sciences and in pre-professional and professional areas including teacher education and nursing. Coppin State College has the unique mission of primarily focusing on the problems, needs and aspirations of Baltimore's central city and its immediate metropolitan area. As a model comprehensive, urban, liberal arts college, Coppin serves many Baltimore residents from very diverse ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

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### **Salisbury University**

Founded in 1925 as a college for the preparation of teachers, Salisbury University has progressed to become a comprehensive regional university emphasizing undergraduate liberal arts, sciences, pre-professional and professional programs, with several select, mostly applied, graduate programs. Located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, the University has remained staunchly loyal to its communities and heritage while serving an increasingly diverse student body from across Maryland, other states and nations. In recent years, the University has achieved both regional and national distinction among its peers and has been acknowledged in several national publications as one of the best public comprehensive universities in its class.

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### **Towson University**

Established in 1866 in downtown Baltimore as the Maryland State Normal School to train teachers, Towson University has grown to become the largest comprehensive university in the Baltimore area. Nationally recognized for programs in the arts and sciences, communications, business, health professions, education, fine arts and computer science, the campus is located in the suburban community of Towson, MD, just eight miles north of downtown Baltimore. Excellence at Towson University begins with its commitment to a sound liberal arts education for every student. Students at Towson develop a range of intellectual skills that enrich and shape their lives long after their formal education has ended.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Teacher Education Consortium in Service-Learning gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Learn and Serve America Program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. This project would simply not have been possible without the funding and technical assistance provided through this partnership. The Maryland Student Service Alliance delivered technical assistance through a gifted staff that was instrumental in the formative stages of the project. We are indebted to administrative leaders on each of the consortium campuses for their support, both financial and moral, and for their ongoing commitment to the enrichment of teacher education programs. A final acknowledgment goes to the project participants, whose sustained commitment to teaching, learning and scholarship produced the results reported in this document.

Nomsa Geleta, Ed.D., Project Director  
Barry M. King, M.S., Program Director  
Salisbury University, Salisbury, Maryland



# Introduction

**Barry M. King, Program Director,  
Salisbury University**

Service-learning instruction for preservice teachers has particular importance in Maryland, the only state in the nation with a universal public high school service-learning graduation requirement. This requirement was instituted by the Maryland State Department of Education in 1993. Local education agencies have addressed faculty development needs created by this requirement primarily through in-service training. Such an incremental approach to teacher training resulted in implementation across the state that was very uneven both in practices employed and program quality.

The Teacher Education Consortium in Service-Learning (TECSL) was formed in 2000 under the auspices of the Institute for Service Learning at Salisbury University with grant support from the Learn and Serve America program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The consortium created a partnership among Coppin State College, Salisbury University and Towson University for the purpose of integrating service-learning instruction into teacher education programs on these University System of Maryland campuses. These campuses, all of which were historically state teachers colleges, have large and vibrant teacher education programs that continue to play an important role in producing competent teachers for Maryland schools. Equipping graduates with the knowledge and skill to use service-learning effectively in their teaching will provide an ongoing source of new professionals who will, over time, help the State Department of Education more closely approximate the educational potential of the service-learning requirement.

The primary audiences for this publication are faculty and policy makers in teacher education programs and colleges of education. It includes lessons learned from a three-year collaboration among faculty who have pursued a scholarly inquiry of service-learning, integrated service-learning into curricula, altered their teaching, forged partnerships with community-based organizations and developed measures and methodologies for assessing results. Since most consortium faculty came to this project as novices in service-learning, it is our hope that the publication will be of particular

assistance to teacher education faculty who are not familiar with this pedagogy, but who have an interest in exploring it as a means of enriching their scholarship and their teaching, and preparing graduates who will be effective practitioners.

The deans of education from each consortium campus supported this project and assisted in identifying a faculty member to serve as campus coordinator and project participant. The campus coordinators were instrumental in recruiting four additional colleagues to the project, so that each campus team was comprised of five faculty. Selection of faculty was guided by the goal of integrating service-learning into program curricula in a way that would result in it remaining as a permanent offering. It was important, therefore, that each campus identify which faculty and which courses would best achieve this end. Project management support was provided by Salisbury University and a sixth member of the Education Department faculty was hired as project evaluator. Faculty participants and campus coordinators received stipends from the Learn and Serve America grant.

The primary objective for year one of the project was to introduce faculty to service-learning pedagogy and best practices for implementing and assessing service-learning instruction. Important training and technical assistance was provided by staff from the Maryland Student Service Alliance and Worcester County Board of Education at three training sessions conducted during the first year. Participants received readings and Internet resources, including the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, to supplement training. A TECSL Web site was created to facilitate ongoing exchange among the faculty, and travel to professional conferences was supported by grant funds. At the end of the first year each faculty participant developed a syllabus that incorporated service-learning into one course they would be teaching the following year.

Year two of the project was designed as the pilot integration phase, when faculty actually implemented service-learning instruction. Three consortium meetings were held during which information, challenges and results were shared among participants. Professional

conference attendance continued to be supported with some faculty having papers or presentations accepted to disseminate their experiences to the field.

The third and final year of the project was devoted to final integration of service-learning into curricula, with modifications having been made based on the pilot integration experience. Given the particular nature of service-learning pedagogy, it is anticipated that lessons will continue to be learned that will inform ongoing refinements.

Collaboration among institutions of higher education can present a unique set of challenges. To engage a talented, seasoned and richly diverse group of faculty from campuses with different cultures and traditions in changing their curricula in a common direction made this collaboration a particularly ambitious undertaking. Two primary factors led to the success of the TECSL collaboration.

First, those leaders on each campus who contributed to the project design and selection of faculty participants provided a clear purpose and brought to the project individuals who contributed not only their talent as educators but also a generous spirit of collegiality and mutual support. Consortium meetings were marked by honest discussions and exchanges of viewpoints that were often spirited and always

intellectually stimulating.

The second key to the success of this collaboration was the role and work of the campus coordinators. Their leadership, diligence and willingness to master the arcane world of grants management were crucial to keeping project activities on schedule, keeping their teams informed, and collecting data for reports. They fulfilled these responsibilities, often against the pressure of deadlines, with good humor and grace.

This publication has been designed to describe the potential of service-learning as a pedagogical tool and the variety of approaches and outcomes available to practitioners. Even though TECSL faculty began with a common definition of service-learning, discussed in Chapter One, and used a common assessment model to gauge results, described in Chapter Three, the reader is referred to Chapter Two to see how it was actually integrated into a range of courses. For example, individual faculty developed different learning outcomes, employed a variety of strategies to identify appropriate service projects and, although a common assessment model was used, different measures were emphasized. Finally, Chapter Four offers some concluding thoughts and identifies common strands that emerged across courses through this collaboration.

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Service-Learning

**Nomsa E. Geleta, Ed.D., Salisbury University**  
**Juanita Gilliam, M.A., Coppin State College**

# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Service-Learning

Nomsa E. Geleta, Ed.D., Salisbury University

Juanita Gilliam, M.A., Coppin State College

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### SERVICE-LEARNING DEFINED

According to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, service-learning is defined as a teaching strategy by which students learn and develop through active participation in a thoughtfully organized service. It reinforces specific educational objectives while also engaging students in a meaningful and structured service to the community. A well-planned service-learning project allows students to learn and develop through active participation in a carefully planned service that is specifically developed to meet and address real community needs. Connecting community service with academic goals and objectives helps to enhance and enrich the educational experience of students. It encourages them to draw upon what they learn in class to meet the needs of the community. Service-learning infused into the curriculum expands each student's sense of community. At the same time, participation provides the opportunity to apply what they learn from the community to meet specific course requirements. Therefore, service-learning works best when it is an integral part of the curriculum. As Kolb (1984) established in his theory of experiential learning, what students learn in the classroom as theory is better grasped when it is practiced in real-life situations.

Literature on service-learning suggests that the benefits of engaging students in service-learning include greater retention of course material due to the fact that students begin to see the relevance of their learning as it pertains to real life experiences and issues (Dewey, 1938; Kinsley & McPherson, 1989; Verducci & Pope, 2001). Furthermore, students learn personal and social responsibility. From their involvement and participation in service-learning projects, attributes of leadership and civic duty also emerge. Through service-learning projects students take responsibility for their own learning, and they begin to see themselves as leaders, problem solvers and achievers. Such activity encourages creativity for both teachers and students as they figure

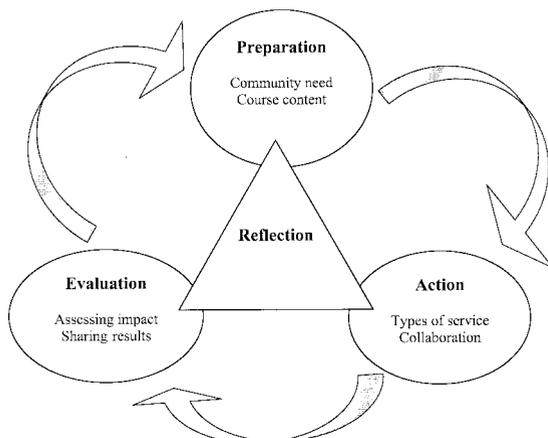
out ways to make the classroom content relevant to community service.

The chapters in this volume were generated out of the authors' experiences with service-learning in teacher education through a consortium established with funding from Learn and Serve America, Corporation for National Service-Learning. The consortium members contributing to this volume used the following essential elements identified in the literature on service-learning to develop effective service-learning projects in their own teaching:

1. Preparation
  - a. Identifying of community need
  - b. Presenting of course content that will enable the student to provide meaningful service to the selected community
  - c. Considering of logistical procedures of performing service
  - d. Reflecting on the fit between the content addressed in class and the ability to meet the selected community need
2. Action
  - a. Making decisions about the type of service to provide (direct, indirect or advocacy)
  - b. Establishing partnerships and collaboration with the community
  - c. Providing the service that has been mutually agreed upon
  - d. Reflecting on the service experience
3. Evaluation
  - a. Reporting of final outcomes of the service-learning experience
  - b. Reflecting on the impact of service-learning on self in enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for the development of intellectual capacity and civic responsibility
  - c. Assessing the impact of the service to the community
  - d. Sharing the results with the community at large

Reflection, as illustrated in the following diagram, is central to each phase of service-learning. Students reflect in the preparation phase as they identify the community need, considering if the knowledge that they develop at each stage is sufficient to provide the needed service. In the action phase, students actually perform the service. At that point, they constantly reflect on their ability to provide the service, on the state of the partnership, and the challenges and successes that they encounter. During the final phase, the sharing of results, students not only discuss among themselves and the teacher their thoughts about the service experience, but they also prepare a written assignment detailing their reflections on the service-learning activity. This assignment gives the students an opportunity to reflect on everything that they learned and practiced. At this stage, students discuss how the service-learning activity influenced their thinking and their perception of the total experience. This assignment also gives them an opportunity to revisit their earlier reflections and what they learned from them, analyze the questions that were raised, and discover areas still in need of improvement. This stage requires a lot of thought and guidance from the instructor as students attempt to evaluate their service, and the impact on those they served. The final report is usually oral, providing an opportunity for the whole class to benefit from these experiences. A written copy can be graded based on criteria established to meet the goals and objectives set forth in the syllabus for the course.

## SERVICE-LEARNING COMPONENTS



## SERVICE-LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are many compelling reasons for integrating service-learning into teacher education programs. Several of the reasons that have been given for service-learning inspired the consortium members to undertake this project. These reasons are grouped into four broad categories which include considering:

- Service-learning as a state initiative
- Service-learning as an effective teaching strategy
- Service-learning as an education reform
- Service-learning as a conduit for meeting educational standards.

These reasons are compelling and can provide inspiration to educators considering integrating service-learning into their courses.

## SERVICE-LEARNING AS A STATE INITIATIVE

The popularity of service-learning programs is growing. In 1993, Maryland became the first state to institute participation in service-learning for all students in the middle grades through high school as a condition of graduation. The *Code of Maryland Regulations* outlines specific requirements related to service-learning. While the state of Maryland requires 75 hours of service before high school graduation, the state has failed to provide a comprehensive plan for education reform, which includes integration of service-learning into the teacher education programs. Proponents of service-learning know that a seamless approach to education reform that includes all institutions, even higher education partners, has a potential to accomplish the intended outcomes. For effective service-learning programs to occur, teacher-education programs must commit to integrating this concept into their academic programs. Only with such commitment can reform result in a cadre of well-trained teachers who are skilled in designing effective service-learning projects. Current trends in global education require teacher education programs to prepare candidates who are capable of instilling in their students knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable them to competently apply the knowledge gained through their education in solving real-life problems.

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## SERVICE-LEARNING AS AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

Service-learning is a sound teaching strategy rooted in various theoretical and philosophical frameworks (Anderson & Guest, 1993). Service-learning is closely associated with experiential learning/hands-on learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), multicultural education approaches (Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Banks, 2001), and social reconstructionist/curriculum transformation (Allam & Zerkin, 1993; Noddings, 1992), learning theories that are at the heart of teacher-education programs nationwide. The value of applying the knowledge gained through classroom content to real-life situations is central to service-learning. It provides a direct avenue for students to internalize and experience the content first hand. The process of applying content gained during classroom instruction to real-life situations requires sophisticated skills in negotiating one's personal meaning of the knowledge in the context of a given situation.

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## SERVICE-LEARNING AS AN EDUCATION REFORM

The Comprehensive School Reform incorporated under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, gives well-defined guidelines for a model to be considered an education reform. Four of those guidelines from the legislation are fundamental to service-learning programs. These are that the reform:

- employs proven strategies based on scientifically based research and effective practices.
- provides high quality teacher and staff professional development.
- provides for meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in planning, implementing and evaluating school improvement activities.
- has been found, through scientific research, to significantly improve the academic achievement of students.

In a comprehensive study conducted by Pearson (2002) service-learning was found compatible with leading education reform models such as Accelerated Schools Project, America's Choice, ATLAS Communities, Purpose-Centered Education, Center for Effective

Schools and the Coalition of Essential Schools. The results indicated that of the 28 leading education reform models surveyed, 24 ranked the essential components of service-learning highly compatible or compatible. Specific service-learning components cited include:

- teacher use of a variety of learning materials other than books
- opportunities provided for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life situations
- instructional methods that include project-based learning and applied learning
- curriculum that addresses specific local community needs
- time provided for student reflection in journal entries and classroom dialog
- alternative assessments such as portfolios, presentations and rubrics

(p. 11)

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## SERVICE-LEARNING AS A CONDUIT FOR MEETING EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Through service-learning, teacher-education programs can effectively meet the standards of excellence in teacher preparation set forth by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) 2000. In particular, Standard One states that "teacher candidates consider school, family and community contexts in connecting concepts to students' experiences, and apply the ideas to real-life problems." It further states, "Candidates' work with students, families and communities should reflect the disposition expected ... candidates recognize when their own disposition may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so" (p. 18). Standard Four requires teacher candidates to have experiences that help them to confront issues of diversity and to develop proficiencies for working with students from diverse backgrounds and students with exceptionalities. Through well-developed service-learning projects and thoughtfully designed reflections, teacher candidates can effectively meet the expected outcomes. Content standards and state performance standards can also be easily aligned and met through service-learning activities that are thoughtfully integrated into the curriculum.

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