



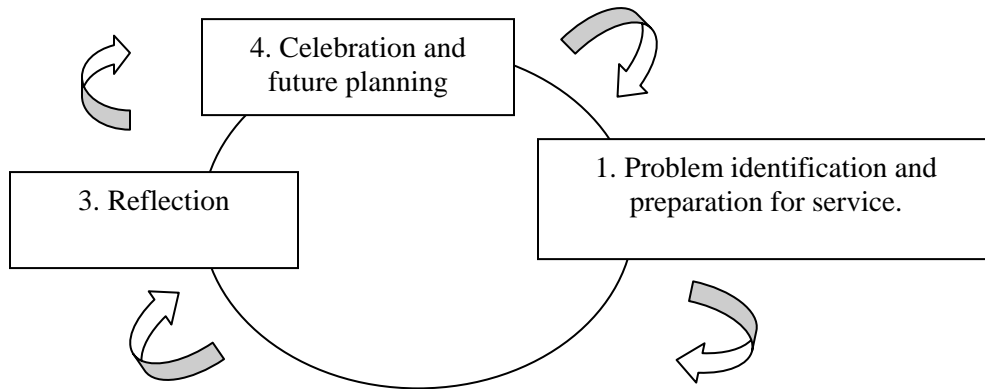
## **Quick Guide: Curriculum Development for K-12 Service-Learning**

**Source: RMC Research Corporation, Denver, CO  
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High quality service-learning can contribute to student academic achievement and civic and social development. However, for these outcomes to occur, service-learning projects must be organized to maximize the meaningfulness of both service and learning.

Service-learning is considered a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Constructivists (e.g., Brooks & Brooks, 1999) advocate allowing students to actively create knowledge by grappling with essential academic ideas in a personally and socially relevant context. Many constructivists also recommend that instruction be organized around a problem, and that students acquire knowledge and skills within the problem-solving experience. Service-learning shares this emphasis on active learning and problem solving. However, it is unique in that the problems that students encounter are real community needs, and the knowledge and skills gained, those needed for informed, engaged citizenship.

Although there are several useful models for organizing service-learning projects, in a constructivist framework, service-learning is viewed as a cyclical process with four interlocking phases: problem identification and preparation for service, the service activity itself, reflection, and celebration and future planning. The following figures explain these steps in more detail.



**1. Problem identification and preparation**  
 Teachers, students, and community members:

- ❑ Identify learning goals and objectives
- ❑ Define the service need and project
- ❑ Determine scope and sequence of activities
- ❑ Tackle logistical issues
- ❑ Gain orientation and training

**2. The service activity**  
 The “heart” of the project.

- ❑ Should meet an actual community need.
- ❑ Can be:
  - Direct (involving contact with service recipients)
  - Indirect (a process or a product intended to benefit the community)
  - Advocacy (producing social change through expression of voice)
- ❑ Reflection on service-learning process and progress should occur throughout the activity.

**4. Celebration and future planning**-  
 This step recognizes the efforts of students and community volunteers.  
 Celebration:

- ❑ Can consist of informal, minor events or formal, culminating ones
- ❑ Should include planning for future service to acknowledge the ongoing nature of community problems and need for active citizenship.

**3. Reflection**  
 Reading, writing, doing, or telling about the experience. Reflection encourages students to:

- ❑ Link class concepts to experience and vice versa
- ❑ Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the service experience
- ❑ Gain increased academic learning, self-awareness, moral development, and social responsibility

Regardless of the type of project, service-learning should incorporate standards for best practice. According to ASLER (the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, 1995), effective service-learning

- ❑ Strengthens both service and academic learning.
- ❑ Provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk taking and rewards competence.
- ❑ Includes preparation and reflection
- ❑ Recognizes young people's efforts
- ❑ Involves youth in the planning, and
- ❑ Makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

## References

Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform. [Standards of quality for school-based and community-based service-learning](#). Alexandria, VA: Author 1995.

Brooks, Jacqueline Grennon, Martin Brooks. In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms. Alexandria, VA; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1999.

## Resources:

### Web Resources:

Youth Service America

<http://www.ysa.org>

Youth Service America is a consortium of 300+ organizations “dedicated to making service and service-learning the common expectation and common experience of all young people in America.” YSA sponsors the annual National and Global Youth Service Day, as well as SERVENet (<http://www.servenet.org>), a website dedicated to linking youth to service opportunities. YSA offers a volunteer resources link with project ideas, publications, and a bookstore.

National Youth Leadership Council

<http://www.nylc.org>

Founded in 1983, NYLC is one of the oldest organizations in the nation to advocate for youth service-learning and community service. Their website offers teaching resources, as well as information about NYLC's annual national conference and professional development opportunities for teachers.

The Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://www.learnandserve.org>

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>

The Corporation sponsors two websites with valuable information for teachers of service-learning. The Learn and Serve grant program site offers introductory background on service-learning (e.g., definition, goals, and impacts), as well as classroom resources, including the Students in Service to America Guidebook. The National Service Resource Center site links to building blocks for effective service programs, as well as online resources, publications, and effective practices. The effective practices section is a great resource for ideas for service-learning projects.

Youth Voice.Net

<http://www.indiana.edu/~ythvoice/>

This website is designed mainly as a resource for youth to extend their political voice. However, a “Teacher’s Desk” link offers access to numerous service-learning lesson plans, and service-learning and civic education organizations and resources. Teachers can also join the YouthVoice.Net Teacher Network and the Teacher’s Oval Office.

Service-Learning Quality Review

<http://www.servicelearningtool.com>

The Quality Review is an online self-assessment tool for measuring the quality of service-learning programs. Respondents rate the importance to their program of quality criteria in 7 categories, as well as their progress toward achieving each criterion. When finished they submit their results and receive a quality score, as well as ideas for improving their programs, and resources.

The Cesar E. Chavez Foundation

<http://www.chavezfoundation.org>

The Chavez Foundation was founded to honor and advance “the legacy and universal values of civil rights leader Cesar E. Chavez.” The Foundation seeks to empower individuals to improve their communities through programs in Education, Arts and Culture; Civic Engagement; Sustainable Communities; and Nonviolence. Useful links for teachers include the Youth Corner with interactive classroom activities for teaching about Chavez’ principles, and a Resources link.

Center for Civic Education

<http://www.civiced.org>

The Center is committed to promoting democracy in the United States and other nations. It publishes two civics textbooks, “We, The People,” and “Foundations of Democracy.” The website includes a curriculum materials section, with sample lessons from the textbooks.

Constitutional Rights Foundation

<http://www.crf-usa.org>

The site offers a range of on-line lessons on constitutional rights and/or service-learning issues.

Peace Corps

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/service>

This Peace Corps site includes links to major topics in service-learning practice, such as the definition of service-learning, “getting started”, and project ideas. The “getting started” link leads readers through the four phases in service-learning lesson, and includes a list of helpful resources at each phase. The site also offers a service-learning curriculum unit organized around the concept of the common good.

Global Response Network

[http://www.globalresponse.org/kids\\_teachers.php](http://www.globalresponse.org/kids_teachers.php)

Global Response Network is dedicated to fostering citizen partnerships to protect the global environment. Its website issues Action Alerts with information about threats to the global environment, and people and organizations involved in addressing them. Teachers can involve students in letter-writing campaigns regarding environmental issues.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

<http://www.mlkday.org>

This site is devoted to the recently established national day of service to commemorate the work of Dr. King. The site offers a toolkit with guidelines for organizing projects.

Disney Channel

<http://www.disney.go.com/disneychannel/learningtoserve>

This site offers resources for developing a service-learning project to enhance students’ acceptance of special needs individuals. A video and accompanying service-learning plan are available.

## **Print Resources**

Eyler, Janet, Dwight Giles, & Angela Schmiede. *A Practitioner’s Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University. 1996.

Kaye, C.B. *The Service Learning Bookshelf* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) ABCD Books. 2000.

Kaye, C.B. *The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum and Social Action*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2004.

Stephens, Lillian. The Complete Guide to Learning through Community Service. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. 1995.

Wade, R. Community Service-Learning: A Guide to Including Service in the Public School Curriculum. Albany: SUNY Press. 1997.