

# **Establishing Service-Learning in Maine School Districts**

*A Companion to Service-Learning in Maine*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Portions of this publication were adapted and reprinted from *Learning That Lasts*, *Learning That Lasts Field Guide*, and *Service-Learning Policies and Practices: A Research-Based Advocacy Paper* with permission from the Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Citizenship.

For a complete list of references and resources used for this publication, see the bibliography at the end.

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National Youth Leadership Council and RMC Research Corporation

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Illinois State Board of Education

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This material is supported by a grant to the Maine Commission for Community Service from the Corporation for National and Community Service under Corporation for National and Community Service Award 11VSAME001. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Maine Commission for Community Service or the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## FOREWORD

Maine's public school systems have always been at the nucleus of the communities they serve, with dedicated educators and administrators working to educate their students, alongside engaged parents and community members to build and strengthen the bonds between their schools and their communities. Their efforts have resulted in strong scores nationally for civic engagement and community service by young people in Maine.

As our communities evolve, so do our educational needs, including how we teach and learn. With the transition to a standards-based educational system, in which student advancement and graduation are based on student demonstration of proficiency in meeting educational standards, Maine's teachers are introducing exciting methods and models in schools across the state that focus on the needs of the learner. Schools and their communities are more fully and broadly engaging in teaching and learning, and are providing their students with more educational options and approaches.



Service-learning is one methodology we know works to engage students in meaningful ways not only with their academic needs, but also with their communities. Studies have shown time and again that students who learn through high quality service-learning experiences achieve higher academic test scores, develop strong leadership and partnership skills, are more engaged in their schools and communities, and are less likely to drop out.

We see examples of this great work being done in schools across Maine. Educators from Kittery to Fort Kent are beginning to incorporate service-learning into their curriculums, while others have been using service-learning in their lessons for years. Ensuring and sustaining the promising outcomes available through service-learning requires institutionalizing the efforts of these early adopters through district-wide policies, professional development, procedures that build and strengthen community partnerships, and the practice of continuous improvement through reflection and evaluation.

In the guide that follows, each of these core areas is addressed in detail, including key concepts, indicators, and strategies for achieving them. The result is a toolkit that can help move more Maine schools to this model of learning, developing workforce-ready skills, and community partnerships. Such a move builds on the innovative work already being done in schools across Maine and offers ways to increase collaboration and the sharing of best practices.

Effective, learner-centered instruction, that puts students in charge of their learning, should be an integral part of each student's learning experiences.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Bowen'.

Stephen Bowen, Commissioner  
Maine Department of Education

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# INTRODUCTION

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## SERVICE-LEARNING IN MAINE'S LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

(Adapted from *Infusing Service-Learning into Learner-Centered Education in Maine*)

As Maine schools strive to improve performance and adopt learning strategies that engage their students, many are implementing related, but different, education models. Some of these models highlight a learner-focused approach that provides real-world content. Others intend to connect the learner and school with the surrounding community. Each is intended to improve students' learning results.

Service-learning, a pedagogy that integrates curriculum with service by focusing on community needs that are targeted by students for action, has been proven to do that and more. Numerous studies conducted over the past two decades overwhelmingly conclude high quality service-learning is directly linked to improved academic achievement and engagement, positive civic attitudes and behaviors, and enhanced social and personal skills. The quality of service-learning is an important predictor of its impact on academic outcomes, including students' school engagement and motivation to learn.

### High quality service-learning standards

Service-learning is an instructional method that develops critical thinking, problem-solving, communications, teamwork, creativity, information literacy, and action-planning. More than just community service, it is intentionally integrated into the students' academic curriculum and is aligned with the state's education content standards. Service-learning lets students learn and develop by actively participating in meeting community needs via school-community collaboration. It uses regular assessment to engage in data-based decision-making and continuous growth and development.

Its effectiveness, as previously mentioned, is linked with the quality of its implementation. There are eight nationally-recognized standards for quality service-learning practice in K-12. Service-learning—

1. Has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.
2. Is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and content standards.
3. Actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.
4. Provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.
5. Promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.

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6. Partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.
7. Incorporates multiple, challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
8. Engages participants in continuous improvement through an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

### Maine Learning Results, Common Core State Standards, and Next Generation Science Standards

*Service-Learning in Maine – A Guide to Implementing Quality Service-Learning* explains how service-learning is already a part of the Maine Learning Results. In 2007, the Maine Board of Education amended the Learning Results to define service-learning as “a teaching strategy through which students identify, research and address real community challenges, **using knowledge and skills learned in the classroom.** Through service-learning, students meet local curricula and state learning standards. **Service-learning should not be confused with community service.**”

Service-learning is a key performance indicator of the Maine Learning Results' for social studies. It calls for students at all grade levels to select, plan, and participate in a civic action or service project. As a teaching strategy, however, service-learning can be applied across the eight content areas (i.e., career and education development, English language arts, health education and physical education, math, science and technology, social studies, visual and performing arts, and world languages).

The Common Core standards, adopted by Maine in 2011, are a core set of academic standards in mathematics and English Language Arts, which includes literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These standards focus on developing college- and career-ready skills and represent critical learning targets for literacy and numeracy.

The Next Generation Science Standards, likewise, are a new set of academic standards that define the science concepts and content Maine students will need to learn to be successful in the workforce, economy and society of the coming decades. These science standards allow students and teachers to focus more on inquiry and investigation than standalone fact memorization.



The eight national standards for service-learning align perfectly with both the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards. Already a part of the Maine Learning Results, service-learning is a learner-centered pedagogy that enables youth to apply classroom knowledge to address authentic community problems. It develops essential workforce and college-ready skills through engaging students with adults in planning, implementing, and evaluating their actions to solve local issues. Finally, the investigative or inquiry process begins every service-learning engagement, which makes service-learning suitable for applying scientific methods.

## Service-learning enhances education models favored in Maine schools

In many ways, academic service-learning parallels the lessons school administrators, educators, and parents have learned about what effective instruction looks like. School reform efforts should always demonstrate best practices in education. Many of these best practices are exemplified in the use of high quality service-learning and produce meaningful results.

We will look at instructional practices that are already being effectively applied in Maine and how high quality service-learning integrates with these strategies to produce actively engaged citizens and strengthen academic achievement across all subjects.

**Place-based education** focuses on using the local community as an integrating context for learning at all levels. By fostering partnerships between schools and communities, place-based education works to boost student achievement and improve the community's environmental quality and social and economic vitality. With learning situated directly in the community and focused on local issues and opportunities, place-based programs bring the resources of the community into the learning process. They also enable students to apply skills to local issues to create relevant learning opportunities.

Service-learning enhances this partnership when the students are at the center of the process, identifying a community issue and actively collaborating with the community members and organizations to develop a solution, while the teacher ensures learning opportunities are directly connected to the curriculum and content requirements. Incorporating multiple, challenging reflection activities and engaging the students in continuous improvement are also key elements of high quality service-learning that can easily be integrated into this model.

**Inquiry-based instruction**, also called **project-based inquiry science**, is a pedagogical approach that invites students to explore academic content by posing, investigating, and answering questions. Commonly called "inquiry," this approach puts students' questions at the center of the curriculum and places equal value on the component skills of research, knowledge, and understanding of content. Inquiry is most often applied to science and math education here in Maine, yet the approach can also be used to teach the humanities.

While both inquiry and service-learning are tied to the curriculum, and both value youth voice as an integral element, inquiry could be conducted entirely within the classroom, while service-learning involves the students in the community by addressing a locally-relevant issue. High



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quality service-learning also emphasizes reflection and continuous improvement. When students engage with local leaders, community residents, and organizations to apply the knowledge and skills they are obtaining through inquiry, they are able to draw connections between academic content and their own lives. They are more likely to understand the diversity of their community, develop confidence in themselves, and become more civic-minded.

**Problem-based learning**, also known as **problem-based science and math**, is often used interchangeably with **project-based learning**. The curriculum consists of carefully selected and designed problems that demand the learner acquire critical knowledge, problem-solving proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and team participation skills.

In this model, students assume increasing responsibility for their learning, giving them more motivation and more feelings of accomplishment. Teachers become resources, tutors, and evaluators, guiding students in their problem-solving efforts. Students involved in problem-based learning acquire knowledge and become proficient in problem-solving, self-directed learning, and team participation. Problem-based learning fosters collaboration among students, stresses the development of problem-solving skills, and promotes effective reasoning and self-directed learning.

This model resonates with service-learning on three fronts: it develops problem-solving skills, it promotes collaboration among students, and it supports self-directed learning. However, the instructor is solely responsible for selecting and designing the problem or issue to be addressed. By contrast, numerous studies have shown when students have a voice in their learning they become more engaged and perform better in school.

Other components of high quality service-learning also enhance problem-based learning outcomes and shift the role of the teacher to a facilitator of learning. With service-learning, the teacher ensures that the problem or issue is linked to the curriculum and provides overarching guidance. The students lead the planning, implementation, and evaluation. Importantly, when the students select a locally relevant issue, they increase their community awareness and involvement, and the community's ties with the school are fortified.

**Challenge-based learning** has its roots in **problem-based learning** and John Dewey's educational theories. At the center of this model is the creative use of technology by students to solve real-world problems. It requires students to work with peers, teachers, and experts in their communities and around the world to ask questions, deepen subject knowledge, accept and solve challenges, take action, and share their experience. Challenge-based learning attempts to increase student engagement and is promoted as a strategy for students most at risk of dropping out. The approach asks students to reflect on their learning and the impact of their actions and publish their solutions to a worldwide audience.

Service-learning augments this instructional methodology by drawing students' attention to real-world problems in their surrounding community. When students work with experts in their own community and engage in meaningful and personally relevant service activities, both the students and their community benefit. The service-learning approach helps strengthen the integration

of school and community through increased mutual awareness and appreciation.

**Project-based learning** organizes learning around projects. Projects are based on challenging questions or problems that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended periods of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations.



Other features include authentic content, authentic assessment, teacher facilitation (not direction), explicit educational goals, and the use of cognitive (technology-based) tools.

**Expeditionary learning** adds to project-based learning features of comprehensive school improvement, community service, and multidisciplinary themes. Learning expeditions are defined as “intellectual investigations built around significant projects and performances.” These expeditions combine intellectual inquiry, character development, and community building.

Expeditionary classrooms differ from project-based classrooms conceptually and structurally. Conceptually, expeditions involve fieldwork, service, teamwork, character building, reflection, and building a connection to the community. Students keep portfolios, and schools develop a “culture of revision” and craftsmanship. Structurally, expeditionary learning is a framework for whole-school improvement. Thus, classrooms have unique structural features, including flexible or block scheduling, heterogeneous grouping, school organizational changes, and increased involvement of parents and community partners. The most unique feature is that teachers work with the same group of students for two years or longer (known as looping).

With many overlapping salient features, project-based and expeditionary learning are well suited for the integration of service-learning. Expeditionary learning highlights building a connection to the community, transforming connections into partnerships that are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs. Ongoing reflection and continuous improvement are other elements of high quality service-learning that can be incorporated to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals. The results would then be used for improvement and sustainability.

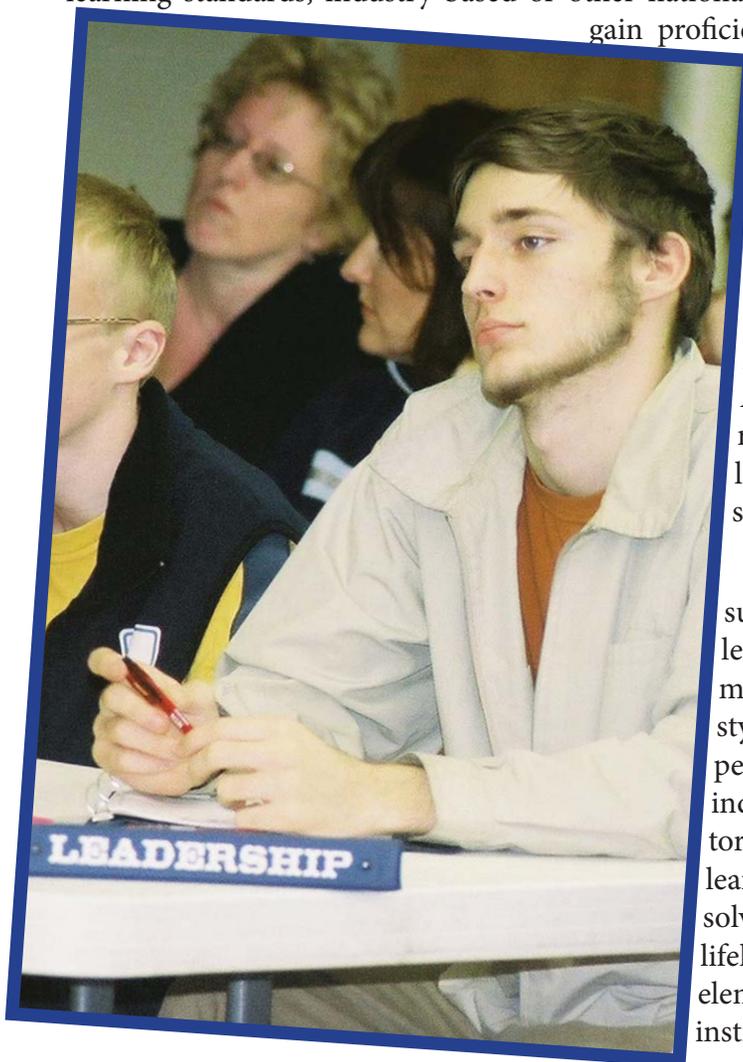
### Service-learning supports Maine's proficiency-based diploma requirement

With the adoption of LD 1422, “An Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy,” Maine students must demonstrate proficiency in meeting state standards in all content areas to earn a high school diploma. Here we will explore how service-learning can be a successful pedagogy within the frameworks that support this requirement.

Proficiency-based learning, also known as competency-based learning, is a system in which learning is driven by standards and not by time or grade-level. It allows students flexibility to learn in ways that engage them and gives them choice in how they demonstrate what they've learned. Schools grant credit if the student demonstrates defined levels of proficiency or mastery of recognized standards (e.g., state academic content standards and essential skills/career-related learning standards, industry-based or other national or international standards). Students may gain proficiency through multiple pathways, and they may demonstrate proficiency in a variety of ways, including teacher-designed or student-designed assessments, portfolios, performance, exhibitions and projects.

Mass-customized learning, one strategy that supports a proficiency-based education model, is influenced by the modern manufacturing and services industries. As the label suggests, it is the capacity to routinely customize education modules and learning resources to meet specific learning standards..

Mass-customized learning can yield substantial benefits and enable teachers and learners to succeed by expanding teaching methods to accommodate a range of learning styles, utilizing technological resources, and personalizing learning programs to meet the individual needs of each student. When educators show students there are different ways to learn, students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success, and become lifelong learners. In Maine, technology is a core element of this strategy as a tool for delivering instruction.



Service-learning as a teaching methodology is well suited for proficiency-based education frameworks and differentiated learning models. A salient characteristic of high quality service-learning is youth voice: Students play a critical role in determining the community need, working directly with community partners to research, plan, and implement solutions, evaluate their progress, and reflect on their personal and interpersonal growth. With facilitation from the teacher, learning is directly tied to the curriculum and students are empowered to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways.

### **Becoming an advocate for institutionalization**

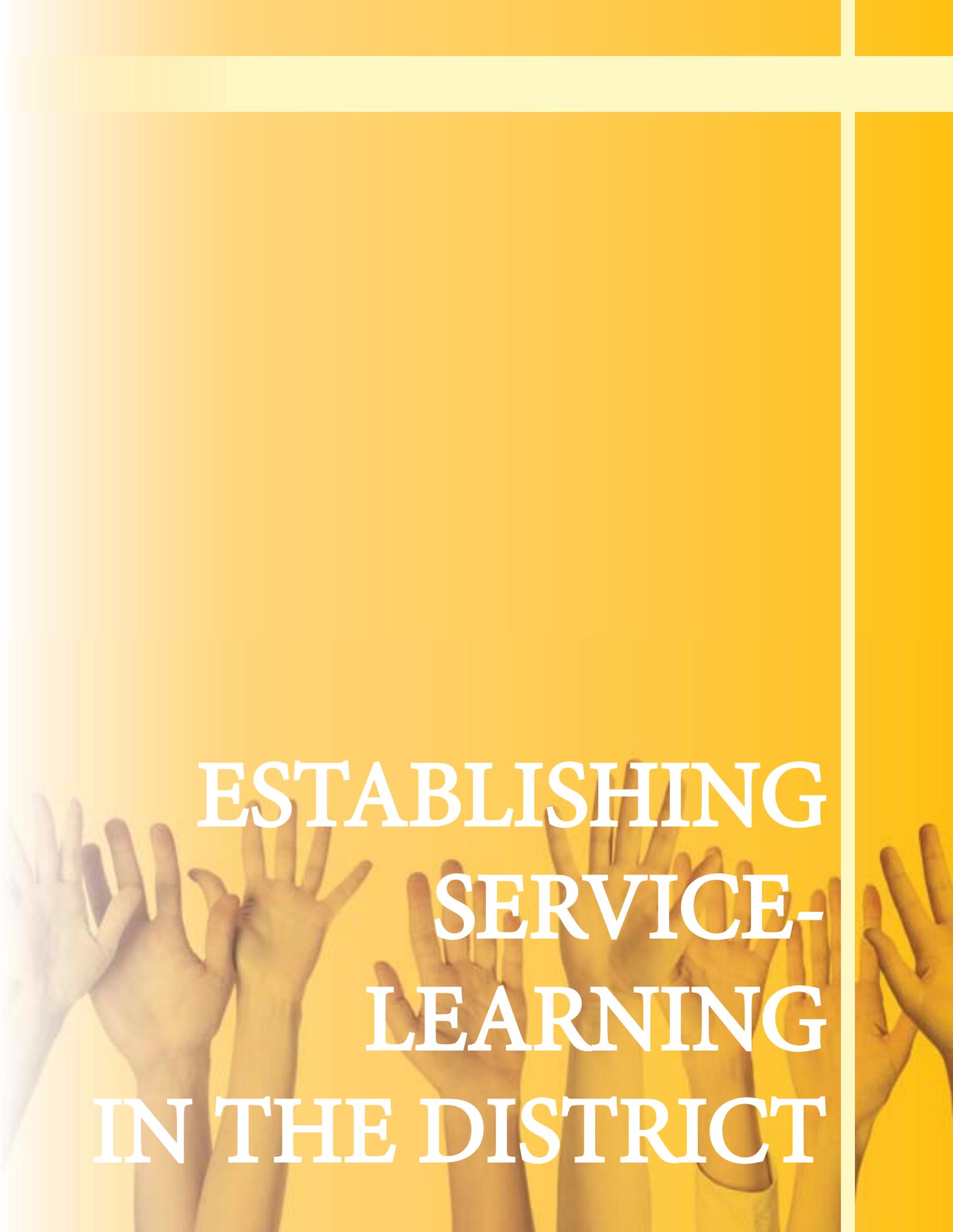
(Reprinted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

It is not a great leap of intention to go from being a service-learning advocate to being an advocate for institutionalization. Institutionalization simply represents a richer, fuller, more comprehensive and more permanent portrait of service-learning. Being an advocate primarily requires an understanding of the “big picture” of what service-learning is capable of becoming—and what already exists in a number of places.

Advocates can help others see that with institutionalization, service-learning has the attention of all and not just a few, and is present across the grades, in every school district. Within institutionalization of service-learning, students enjoy a continuity of service-learning experience, and teachers, whatever their level of experience with service-learning, have opportunities for professional growth and support. Institutionalization means there is time to do the needed work of service-learning—whether that is developing curriculum, creating assessments, or sharing projects. It means that leadership is in the hands of many and that benefits for students in the academic, social, and personal arenas are multiplied. It means that there is greater support and satisfaction for everyone throughout the education system.

The path to institutionalization is not a simple one. Change is never easy, and educators have had more than their share of it. Institutionalization requires formidable changes on multiple fronts—in the way the system is organized, the way the students and teachers relate to one another, the way learning is delivered and assessed. Still, the discomfort caused by learning new skills and altering relationships can be greatly diminished if an advocate is able to show people what to expect beyond the present upheavals. If an advocate can convey a powerful vision, then others will see that the many smaller steps are taking them somewhere they want to go.





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### **WHEN SERVICE-LEARNING IS ESTABLISHED IN THE SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND STATE**

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

As any serious observer can attest, there is a wide continuum of efforts captured under the umbrella of “service-learning.” At one end are schools or districts that confine the combination of service and academics to a single class. A little further along the continuum are places where service-learning is employed within a handful of academic classes by a few dedicated teachers, but largely ignored by administrators and teachers alike. Further yet are districts in which service-learning is tacitly endorsed by administrators and practiced by a number of teachers and students. At the far end of the continuum are districts where most of those who are affected by the school system in some way—students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members—perceive and support service-learning as an essential component of the education process.

There is not one set formula or set of strategies that define institutionalization. Yet, thanks to the efforts of practitioners and researchers, there is a great deal of information about the things that facilitate, as well as hinder, the process. While institutionalization will look different from district to district, there are a number of common characteristics.

#### **What institutionalization looks like**

The many indicators of institutionalization are discussed in detail in the following chapters. In general, though, service-learning is characterized by—

##### ***A model of shared leadership***

Leadership in service-learning typically comes from a variety of people throughout the system. Researcher Dorothy Aguilera writes, “Because service-learning requires collaboration to be successful, shared leadership is a much more effective model for building support because it involves giving all relevant stakeholders—most notably students, teachers, parents, families, community members, program directors, and coordinators of public and private organizations—input and voice.”

##### ***A vision, shared by a broad cross-section of stakeholders, that defines service-learning as an effective means for achieving broad education goals***

When service-learning becomes an essential tool for accomplishing education goals, then system leaders determine—and take—the steps needed to make that possible. Systemic decisions for hiring, instruction, and resource allocation are guided by that vision.

##### ***Ample time for planning and collaboration***

Teachers, administrators, students, and community members have regular, structured time in

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which to design curriculum and assessments, discuss progress, structure projects, and address concerns. Coordinators or teacher-facilitators provide training, consultation, and technical assistance.

### *Training that addresses all levels of experience*

Successful service-learning efforts recognize it is not enough to introduce new employees to the concepts and practice of service-learning. Places that have institutionalized service-learning also pay attention to renewing and revitalizing the practice of experienced personnel.

### *Adequate resources to fund personnel, training, and other costs*

While many service-learning efforts begin exclusively with grant funding, they do not stay that way in institutionalized settings. Rather, they become a line item or are in other ways build into the budget of the district or state. Service-learning is seen as essential to the system's operation, and grant monies are used to enhance, but not support, basic functions.

### *Open communication*

All stakeholders are kept well-informed of projects, successes, curriculum, training opportunities, and other matters. Problems and concerns are dealt with quickly, honestly, and respectfully.

### *Well-established feedback methods*

Participants in service-learning efforts use a variety of feedback mechanisms—from informal check-ins between individuals to questions asked at staff meetings to formal evaluations that include external stakeholders—to continually improve and strengthen their work.

### *A pervasive sense of shared purpose and trust*

When education is invested with meaning and students see the connection between what they do in their classes, who they are as people, and what they want to accomplish in the world, then school has more meaning for them. Service-learning can alter the structure of education and change relationships between people in a positive way.



### What helps and hinders institutionalization

There is nothing automatic about the process of institutionalization. Even in places where service-learning has been well-implemented, there is no guarantee that it will progress along the continuum and become part of the infrastructure. Researchers Michael Huberman and D. P. Crandall label education innovations as “highly perishable goods,” noting that “taking institutionalization for granted—assuming somewhat magically that it will happen by itself, or will necessarily result from a technically mastered, demonstrably effective project—is naïve and usually self-defeating.” The research on institutionalization, as it generally pertains to education reforms in general and specifically to service-learning, sheds light on the interplay of factors that promote or prevent sustainability.

James Toole, Senior Fellow of the University of Minnesota School of Social Work, writes that service-learning “may be more difficult to implement than many other innovations [because] it challenges both teachers’ beliefs about how students learn ... and about their school’s organizational features.” Toole points out that at the heart of service-learning is a change in all the relationships that education comprises—relationships among students, among teachers, between students and teachers, between the school and the community, and between students and their learning. The magnitude of change required by service-learning, and the disruption of the status quo, may be more than the personnel of many systems are willing to undertake.

In his research on seven schools that had used service-learning for at least four years, Toole found there was a high level of correlation between levels of trust and institutionalization. Service-learning acted as a kind of lightning rod in the schools he investigated, either tending to create greater closeness and cohesion among the staff or fostering deep and lasting divisions. Some of the factors that engendered mistrust were—

1. Teachers feeling that their contributions were not as valued as those involved in service-learning
2. Lack of communication about the activities of instructors involved with service-learning
3. An inability or unwillingness to share instructional materials
4. Lack of shared leadership that created an “us-and-them” mentality

Toole contends that to fulfill service-learning’s mission as a strategy that fosters social capital and a civil society, the school itself must become a civil society. If the school is filled with teachers who are mistrustful and angry, then “a mismatch develops between the stated goals of service-learning ... and the organization itself.” Service-learning cannot be sustained in such an environment, he says.

In his work on the “learning organization,” best-selling author Peter Senge similarly emphasized the importance of relationships between those facilitating the innovation and others in the system. Without carefully attending to those relationships, he said, innovators may be seen as lacking credibility or even perceived as threats to the system. He and researchers Bonnie Nardi and

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Jennifer O'Day outlined some steps that can be taken to address these issues and increase the likelihood that an innovation can be sustained:

1. Maintaining open, frequent, and straightforward communication between the innovators and others
2. Respecting the reasons some people are unwilling to embrace the changes
3. Initiating dialogues and providing mentoring to help others understand the nature of changes
4. Appealing to a common sense of purpose and values

In addition, Senge says that for an organization to take the leap from implementation to institutionalization, it must have both the willingness and capacity to make the transition. It must have adequate flexibility to accommodate the changes. Innovators need to express what they have learned and build networks of support. At the same time, others in the system need to possess some degree of control over how and when the innovations are adopted. University of Maryland psychology professor Benjamin Schneider and his colleagues also emphasized the centrality of relationships to sustainability efforts. They pointed to three factors that make sustainability possible: a sense of mutual trust, a stake in the decision-making process around the innovation, and an experience of the work being challenging.

Researcher Shelley Billig examined 11 sites in New Hampshire—eight schools and three districts—funded to implement service-learning as an education reform strategy. In the one site in which service-learning activities were discontinued after two years, she encountered “a weak support system, no critical mass, a lack of leader commitment, no assessment results that showed tangible evidence that the project was impacting student achievement, and no purposeful plan for expansion.” Another site, while continuing some practices, progressively declined in self-assessment scores. Teachers attributed this decline to the “top-down” nature of the adoption and implementation process” and perceived service-learning as “the superintendent’s baby.” Even the superintendent’s departure from the district did nothing to change the downward slide since instructors had already distanced themselves from the practice.

In the places where service-learning became well-established, Billig found that “sustainability was clearly connected to continued resources, compatibility with teaching and learning philosophy, visibility of projects, and evidence of success.” The resources were sometimes connected with grants, but more frequently were matching funds or line items in the budget. Visibility, she said, “came in the form of media attention, recognition ceremonies, and community presentations.” The schools and districts defined success based on testimonials from teachers, students, and community members, as well as quality assessments and student achievement measures. Not surprisingly, the more formal measures had greater credibility among stakeholders than did the anecdotal information.

Billig cautions that institutionalization efforts need to demonstrate they can affect student achievement and be aligned with other desired student outcomes, such as character education and career preparation.

Billig concluded that sustaining service-learning in those schools and districts was associated with—

### *A strong and visionary leadership*

Leadership did not necessarily come from the top but was always supported by the top. It “stimulated the development of a shared vision, encouraged action and allegiance to the project, and provided continuity and growth through development and implementation of systemic succession plans.”

### *Cultural norms and organizational expectations compatible with service-learning*

These included “two-way communication systems, appropriate human and fiscal management, feedback loops for identifying and understanding needs, and ways to improve continuously, enduring partnerships, [as well as] mechanisms for problem-solving and strategies for professional growth.”

### *Incentives that attracted people to service-learning and encouraged their continuing involvement*

Incentives included people being recognized for their contributions, participants seeing the results of their work in meeting genuine community needs, and “feelings of efficacy and potency.”

### *Visibility*

Communication was such that individuals “could easily learn about the service-learning project, understand its purposes and benefits, and support activities.”

### *Availability of adequate financial resources*

Funds generally came from a variety of sources and were not dependent upon a single funder.



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Jane Kendall, president of the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, and her colleagues suggest that time, effort, and patience are all required to establish service-learning within the education system. Institutionalization occurs on two levels: systemic, which is “infinitely complex,” and on the more manageable level of “small steps to strengthen service-learning within different areas of the institution.” They say, “It is the very nature of the broader goal of institutionalizing service-learning to be slow and complex because it is reaching to the heart of the academic enterprise—your school’s mission, style, curriculum, faculty expectations, quality, administrative structure, and purse strings.” They say that both the long-range vision and the incremental steps are necessary to achieve institutionalization and efforts to do so are worthwhile because service-learning “will strengthen [the] institution’s capacity to fulfill its multiple missions.”



### What service-learning proponents can do to help

Everyone with a stake in service-learning has a role to play in institutionalization efforts. Each of the stakeholders mentioned below can serve on a service-learning advisory group at either the district or state level.

#### *Students*

Students are the most effective advocates for service-learning. They can direct efforts at the school, district, and state levels and help design and present training sessions to others. They can help evaluate efforts and share with administrators, school board members, and others the impact that service-learning has had on them and their peers.

#### *Parents*

Parents who have witnessed firsthand the benefits of service-learning can encourage its adoption with local policymakers. They can explain service-learning to other parents and encourage teachers to use this strategy. They can serve as volunteers in classes and help facilitate activities.

#### *Teachers*

Teachers have a central and pivotal role as the ones who implement service-learning efforts in their classes. Their willingness to invest time and professionalism in their efforts translates into a sound curriculum that supports standards, as well as projects that address community needs and engage students in the learning process.

#### *Administrators*

Administrators are often the ones who hold the vision for institutionalization and ensure the entire system is moving toward this end. Their visible support for service-learning and allotment of appropriate resources sends a signal to the entire school community of the importance of service-learning. Their willingness to create a model of shared leadership establishes the basis of successful long-term efforts.

#### *School board members*

School board members develop policies that give direction and support local efforts.

#### *State policymakers*

State policymakers can create resources for service-learning through the passage of legislation that mentions service-learning as a means of achieving school reform and other desirable student outcomes. The endorsement of state policymakers can mean increased visibility and credibility for service-learning among all constituents.





# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

This toolkit is intended for readers who understand the benefits and outcomes of service-learning and are interested in the practical strategies to move their efforts forward to institutionalize service-learning as a proven practice at the district level.

The following chapters address five facets of successful institutionalization. Among the additional resources at the end of this toolkit, readers will find the national standards for high quality service-learning, an assessment rubric to measure the national standards, steps toward institutionalization, and a readiness rubric.

Each chapter includes a description of the facet, followed by key concepts, indicators, strategies, and a local example of the practice.

Readers can use this toolkit's information in several distinct ways. They can use it to—

1. Gain a better understanding of the process of institutionalization and how it applies specifically to service-learning
2. Identify both strengths and gaps in their own efforts to build service-learning into their organization's infrastructure
3. Find appropriate strategies to help them move their service-learning efforts further along the continuum of institutionalization
4. Form the basis of a presentation or training on the topic of institutionalization.

### Five Components of Institutionalizing Quality Service-Learning

(Adapted from *Service-Learning Policies and Practices: A Research-Based Advocacy Paper*)

Five service-learning components emerge from the research to substantiate and frame best practices and policies. These five components outlined below offer evidence supporting their adoption. Research demonstrates that administrators should not view or adopt these five components insularly. Instead, administrators should adopt and continuously improve upon all five components.

#### *Vision and leadership*

Leadership is not the exclusive domain of one person, or even a few people, but is something shared by many people throughout the school district. For successful engagement and learning, it is critical that school board members, the superintendent, principals, teachers, students, parents, and community partners contribute meaningfully to the leadership picture. This kind of multilevel leadership effort is characterized by a well-understood plan, clear and consistent

communication, and a pervasive sense that service-learning is not just an option, but an essential and necessary part of every student's educational experience.

### *Curriculum and assessment*

The persistent drumbeat of school reform, standards-based education, and assessment emphasizes the importance of integrating service-learning into high quality curricula that include assessments aligned with state and national standards. Service-learning advocates, therefore, need to enlist the support of all involved in curriculum work if they are to succeed and service-learning endures. In addition to the frontline of teachers, curriculum directors can be close allies if they are convinced service-learning can help students demonstrate achievement standards. Students, administrators, and community organizations also can help integrate service-learning in their own interests, beliefs, and goals.

### *Professional development and structural support*

Whether personnel are novices or experienced service-learning practitioners, they need structured time to learn new skills, explore possible projects, share insights with colleagues, and develop curriculum and assessments. Since service-learning is a teaching methodology, not a prepackaged curriculum, service-learning professional development can be found in different forms, including seminars, one-on-one work between faculty and service-learning coaches, the designation of building or grade-span coordinators to provide ongoing guidance and support, and course work for professional certification and graduate credit.

### *Community and school partnerships*

Community-school partnerships are an essential element of service-learning experiences in which students, teachers, and community partners design projects to address community needs as part of their academic studies. Community-school partnerships can help students to increase their understanding and commitment to civic responsibility, and can help community organizations to meet their goals. These partnerships may include community or faith-based organizations, grassroots or advocacy organizations, other schools, colleges, or businesses, or government agencies.

### *Continuous Improvement*

In schools and districts that embrace the institutionalization of service-learning, personnel continually review their efforts and look at ways to improve and enrich all aspects. High quality continuous improvement provides an opportunity for staff, students, and community members to learn from and support each other on a regular basis, to improve practice, to take responsibility for their own learning, to celebrate successes, and to reflect upon student contributions. While continuous improvement is embedded within the other chapters in this guide, it is important for a district to think strategically and comprehensively about the manner in which continuous improvement efforts are approached throughout the district.



The image features a solid blue background with a prominent yellow crosshair that spans the entire width and height. At the bottom of the frame, several human hands are raised, palms facing forward, in various positions. The text 'VISION AND LEADERSHIP' is centered in the lower half of the image, overlaid on the hands and the blue background.

# VISION AND LEADERSHIP



## VISION AND LEADERSHIP

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

Most service-learning efforts begin with one person—an administrator, teacher, curriculum director, or counselor—who is passionately committed to the idea and helps to initiate, organize, and coordinate activities. That person—or, in some cases, a small group of people—has a clear vision of what service-learning can become in the school or district and inspires others to become involved. No service-learning endeavor can exist without such a person. Yet, if the leadership is confined to one person's enthusiasm, service-learning will not last. That person can easily leave the school, district, or agency, be reassigned, or retire. At best, one individual's legacy will be what Beverlee Jackson, former service-learning specialist with the Oregon Department of Education, labels as “pockets of great service-learning [that] will never become integrated throughout the system.”

### Policy development and program coordination

While organizational details may vary from site to site, one clear pattern distinguishes places that have integrated service-learning into the workings of the system. At those sites, leadership is not the exclusive domain of one person, or even a few people, but something shared by many people at many levels. Typically, superintendents and principals, as well as significant numbers of teachers, students, parents, and other community members, all contribute meaningfully to the leadership picture. Furthermore, these multilevel leadership efforts are characterized by a well-understood plan, clear and consistent communication among and between different groups, and a pervasive sense that service-learning is not just an option, but an essential part of the way that things are done.

Leadership at the top is a necessary component if service-learning is to be made part of every student's experience. At the same time, leadership at the top is not always a prerequisite for the establishment of service-learning, but comes later. With widespread reality of frequent administrative changes, many service-learning leaders have no choice but to gain support after efforts are well under way. Administrative changes do not necessarily derail efforts to embed service-learning within the infrastructure, but they can slow the process considerably.

Many education systems have administrators who view service-learning as an add-on or another questionable reform effort, although they sometimes have changes of heart when they witness students' excitement and accomplishments and teachers' commitment. Nonetheless, without the support of top administrators, there will be a lack of vision, coordination, and resources needed to institutionalize service-learning.

### School board recognition

No less important than top administration is the leadership of the school board, coordinators, students, teachers, and others at the school and district. The school board's recognition of the value

of service-learning and its willingness to make resolutions and allocate funding for service-learning is essential. Coordinators provide organization, training, support, and focus. Teachers instruct, coach, and inspire other teachers. Students not only participate in service-learning but also make important decisions about the content and conduct of their classes. Parents and other community members publicly support service-learning. When all these are present, they add up to a strong indicator that service-learning will stay in the system. Leadership, ownership, and expectation shared by many people and spread throughout the layers can help a system weather the inevitable and difficult impacts of budget cuts, key personnel leaving, and other changes.

When leadership is not diverse, it has predictable consequences. Evan Goldberg, service-learning coordinator for the Bay Area Alameda County Office of Education in California, reports that “with no paid position at the district level and the coordinator located at the county level, there’s a kind of ‘ordering out’ complex at the district. People in the district often don’t see service-learning as something that is there. If you’re creating something yourself, it’s only natural that you invest more time than in something that’s being formed elsewhere.” His office has addressed this situation by sponsoring a service-learning trainer certification program to ensure more committed teachers within the districts overseen by his staff.

Naturally, institutionalization efforts are not constructed overnight. They take years of planning, meetings, and training sessions. They require their share of mistakes, frustrations, and retrenchments. Policy is essential, but it must be grounded in practice.

### Local financial support

With institutionalization, funding becomes part of the district budget. It can be either a line item or allocated as part of the budget for instructional activities. While the start-up costs can be substantial, due to the need for training personnel and time devoted to developing policies and procedures, service-learning should not require a disproportionate amount of resources once it has become a part of the structure of an organization.

Most systems, even those that have reached the place of sustainability, continue to look for additional resources to grow efforts. Such resources can be used to create advanced training opportunities, pay for conferences and travel, create mini-grants or other incentives for teachers, develop new activities or publications, or purchase materials. Often, higher education institutions are important partners in identifying and writing grants.

One of the best sources of funding comes from alignment with other state and federal reform initiatives. It makes both organizational and economic sense for service-learning to become an integral part of these other efforts. Service-learning is an allowable strategy for school-to-work, character education, migrant education, special education and proficiency-based learning.

Funding, like all the other aspects of institutionalization, should be part of the strategic plan developed by the leadership or advisory committee. It has to be tied to specific objectives and in tune with the district’s overall plans for improving the quality of education.

One innovative strategy being employed by districts around Maine is to create regional co-ops. While these regional co-ops, which can comprise anywhere from three or four to as many as eleven or twelve districts, will share fuel, food, and office supplies costs, they also pool their resources to maximize professional development training opportunities for their staff members.

There are many examples around the state of neighboring districts partnering to maximize their scarce financial resources. With just nominal contributions from its member districts, the Central Aroostook Council on Education, a PK-16 partnership consisting of Easton, MSAD 1, MSAD 20, MSAD 32, MSAD 42, MSAD 45, RSU 39, the Maine School of Science and Mathematics, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle, is able to bring in nationally-recognized trainers and speakers to provide high quality professional development for its teaching, administrative, and non-teaching staff members. Western Maine Educational Collaborative, comprising Lisbon, AOS 97, Mt Blue RSD, RSU 4, RSU 10, Maranacook, SAD 44, RSU 58, RSU 73, North Anson, and Rangeley, operates similarly, partnering with the University of Maine at Farmington to provide high quality professional development opportunities for its staff members. The Sebago Education Alliance, comprising Bonny Eagle, Westbrook, Gorham, Scarborough and Windham-Raymond, is another example where districts are partnering to provide professional development for their staff. There are other alliances and collaborations just like these in other parts of the state.

It is these kinds of creative solutions, spread across borders and involving multiple districts, that will maximize scarce funds and permit the high quality professional development necessary to properly institutionalize and sustain service-learning in Maine school districts, even in times of financial distress. As districts enter what is sure to be another difficult budget season, officials should consider participating in existing regional co-ops or forming their own partnerships with their neighboring school departments.





### Vision and strategic plan

Many Maine school districts' mission and vision statements already reflect the importance of service-learning. The standard educational philosophy and mission statement (NEPN/NSBA Code: AD) adopted by many school boards begins with, "the Board considers proper and adequate support of schools to be a civic responsibility shared by all citizens." It continues with, "[in] order to achieve our goals and to implement this philosophy, we believe that all schools must secure the involvement of the community, students, staff, parents, and citizens. Educational responsibility must be shared with important community institutions. We strongly believe that our school system's success depends on good rapport and cooperation with our communities and its institutions."

Additionally, below are examples of Maine school districts that have developed districtwide mission statements that mention or closely align with service-learning, or have separate mission statements dedicated to service-learning practices.

Sanford School Department's vision includes this: "Students learn in a variety of settings and choose from an array of learning opportunities supported by technology. PreK-adult learning experiences include service-learning, career technical education, college coursework, apprenticeships, traditional coursework and enrichment activities. The community and the schools collaborate to provide authentic projects for students and lifelong learning for adults."

RSU #67 (Chester, Lincoln, Mattawamkeag) states how its mission will be fulfilled: "STUDENTS will be actively engaged in their own learning by ... contributing positively to their fami-

lies, schools, and communities; STAFF will promote high expectations for all students as they facilitate active learning by ... working collaboratively with others to meet the needs of diverse learners; THE ADMINISTRATION will provide educational leadership by ... communicating effectively with all stakeholders; THE COMMUNITY will support school programs by ... staying informed of the district's needs and working collaboratively to meet those needs, [and] utilizing services provided within the district as needed." This district also has a separate policy specifically for service-learning, which can be found at the end of this chapter.

RSU #34 (Alton, Bradley, Old Town) also has a separate mission for service-learning: "The mission of the RSU #34 service-learning program is to encourage innovating service-learning projects that will promote high expectations for all students and help students meet the challenges of the changing world by honing research, decision-making, and communication skills through authentic service-learning opportunities within the school and community learning environment."

Oxford Hills School District (Harrison, Hebron, Norway, Otisfield, Oxford, South Paris, Waterford, West Paris) includes in their district mission that instructional techniques require "involvement and communication with parent and community" and "use of manipulative, technology, and community resources." The district also recognizes that "achieving the mission ... is a collaborative process that requires communication and shared responsibility by the school board, all staff, students, parents and guardians, and the communities." Following are some of the various accountabilities: The school board and all administrative, instructional, and non-instructional staff shall, among other responsibilities, "encourage active parental and community involvement [and] maintain awareness of community needs and concerns." The students are required to "demonstrate responsible citizenship in the school and community, encourage active parental and community involvement, [and] share expertise." Parents and guardians are asked to "take an active and continuing role in their children's education, assist the implementation of the district mission, [and] share expertise." Finally, the district's communities are asked to "provide resources, facilities, and support to ensure a quality education for all students, encourage new ideas in education, [and] participate in a collaborative process with the school to ensure student success."

## Participation policies

More and more school districts across Maine are developing policies for students to complete a required number of hours of community service to graduate. While community service itself is not bad, community service for the sake of accumulating hours and that is not tied to learning or curriculum requirements does not produce the same benefits that service-learning does. There are many schools and districts that realize this and have created participation policies specifically for service-learning activities.

Brunswick High School has a community service requirement for graduation, but offers two service-learning classes each semester that help fulfill the community service requirement. According to the school's website, "[the] service-learning classes have ... led the way in establishing several potential long-term relationships and projects with surrounding agencies, schools, and nonprofit groups in Brunswick."

### KEY CONCEPT

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A DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS HAVE A SHARED VISION AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

#### Indicator

A broad-based leadership team and a respected coordinator oversee service-learning efforts.

#### Strategies

1. Align service-learning to support the district's vision/mission and key goals of its strategic plan
2. Align service-learning to support the goals of the school board.
3. Actively involve teachers, students, and community members in decision-making regarding service-learning plans and activities.
4. Give students meaningful leadership roles in all aspects of service-learning projects and activities.

### KEY CONCEPT

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DISTRICT AND BOARD GOALS, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIC PLANS PROVIDE PERMISSION AND RESOURCES FOR SERVICE-LEARNING.

#### Indicator

Local financial support and resources are provided for service-learning.

#### Strategies

1. Include service-learning as a line item or allocated as part of the budget for instructional activities. Service-learning should not require a disproportionate amount of resources once it has become part of the structure of an organization.
2. Continue to look for additional resources to grow efforts. Often, higher education institutions are important partners in identifying and writing grants.
3. Align service-learning activities with other state and federal reform initiatives. Service-learning is an allowable strategy for school-to-work, character education, Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, migrant education, special education, and proficiency-based learning.
4. Tie funding for service-learning to specific objectives and the district's overall plans for improving the quality of education.

## KEY CONCEPT

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SERVICE-LEARNING IS ALIGNED WITH THE CURRENT AND EMERGING LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL POLICIES AND PRIORITIES.

### Indicator

Service-learning is aligned with other school reform initiatives being implemented.

### Strategies

1. Include knowledge of service-learning as a factor in the hiring process and in orientations for all new administrative and teaching staff.
2. Ensure key building, district, and community leaders connect service-learning and the civic mission of the district.
3. Include service-learning participation policies as part of the district's strategic or accountability plan for youth development.
4. Educate administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders about service-learning as a pathway for proficiency-based education, school-to-work, and other school initiatives.
5. Communicate regularly with local policymakers and support their efforts and goals.
6. Monitor emerging education issues for alignment with service-learning.

### Example—RSU 67, Lincoln, Maine

(Reprinted from RSU 67's website)

#### RSU 67 MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

**Mission**—The RSU 67 Service-Learning Leadership Team promotes service-learning as a methodology by which all students have opportunities, K-12, to connect and apply concepts and skills learned in the classroom to meet real needs in their communities.

**Vision**—RSU 67 is a community of adult and student learners who embrace service-learning and work collaboratively to meet real needs and to build mutual respect and tolerance of one another. The RSU 67 Board of Directors supports service-learning annually via policy and budget; and the curriculum affords all students opportunities to engage in meaningful, applied learning. As a result, students are engaged in and take responsibility for their own learning and actively seek ways to be responsible, contributing citizens within and beyond their schools. In turn, community members are involved in the schools and truly value contributions made by students.

#### **Goals**—

1. Identify and promote shared definitions of and interest in service-learning.
2. Seek funding and develop policies that support service-learning.
3. Facilitate opportunities for students to engage in service-learning as a way to apply concepts and skills in contexts that are authentic, engaging, and meaningful.
4. Identify and recognize exemplary models of service-learning.

*Approved by LSA Leadership Team on 03/17/10*



### RSU 67 SERVICE-LEARNING POLICY

The RSU 67 Board of Directors encourages community service, volunteerism, and service-learning opportunities for all students, PK-12, and supports service-learning as a teaching/learning strategy capable of helping fulfill the district's mission of empowering students to "become responsible, contributing citizens in an ever-changing global society." In doing so, the Board also embraces the mission of the Service-learning Leadership Team that seeks to promote "service-learning as a methodology by which all students have opportunities --- to connect and apply concepts and skills learned in the classroom to meet real needs in their communities." Additionally, the Board shows support for service-learning by having approved the social studies curriculum that includes "select[ing], plan[ning], and [implement[ing] a civic action or service-learning project based on an asset or need and analyz[ing] the project's effectiveness and civic contribution." [Maine Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction, Social Studies A3 (2007)] for all grade spans.

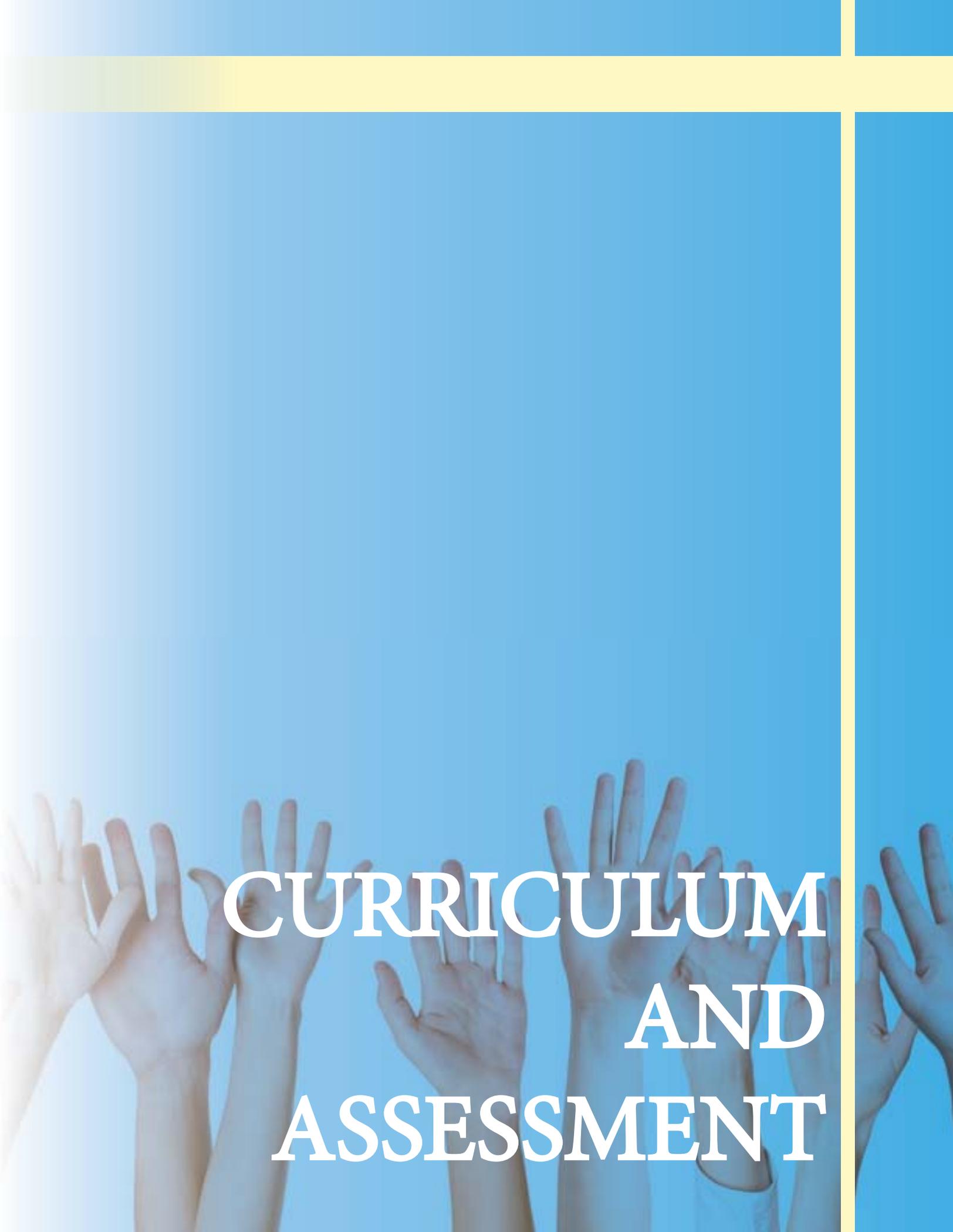
#### *RSU 67 supports service-learning by—*

1. Allocating resources needed to transport staff and students to sites where they can work with and/or learn from community partners or provide some kind of service;
2. Encouraging the use of training and professional development funds and release time to train staff as needed within the district and/or through participation in out-of-district workshops;
3. Providing stipends for teacher leaders willing to coordinate and assist with service-learning projects within each grade span; and
4. Providing financial support for materials needed to complete service-learning projects.

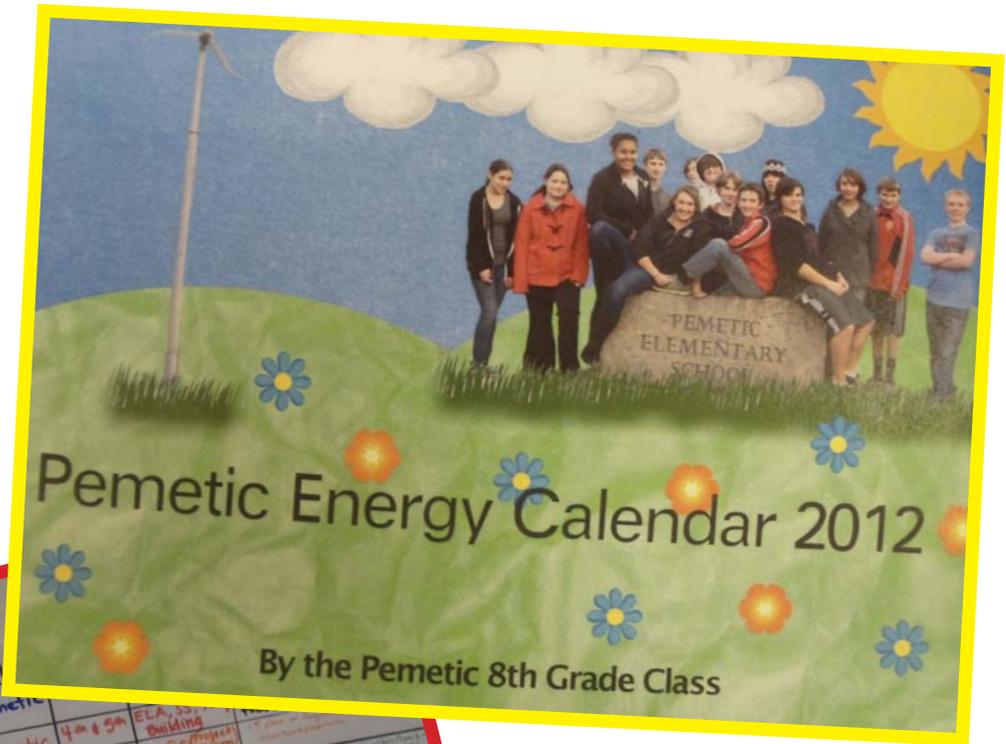
As a result of the district's commitment to service-learning, all middle school students at Matanawcook Junior High School (MJHS) are provided with multiple opportunities to engage in high quality service-learning during their 5th – 8th grade experience. In order to transition from middle school to high school, students will be required to participate in at least one curriculum-embedded service-learning project. Transfer students who have attended MJHS less than one full school year are exempt from the transition requirement.

*Adopted June 2, 2010; Revised May 4, 2011*



The image features a solid blue background with a prominent yellow crosshair that spans the entire width and height. In the lower portion of the image, several human hands are raised, appearing to be in a gesture of participation or agreement. The hands are rendered in a semi-transparent, light blue color, blending with the background. Centered over the lower half of the image is the text "CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT" in a large, white, serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: "CURRICULUM" on the top line, "AND" on the middle line, and "ASSESSMENT" on the bottom line.

# CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT



Name	School	Grade	Content	1 Thing We should know about the project
Bonnie Burne & Andrew Hutchinson	Pemetec	4th & 5th	ELA, SS, Building	It was an interesting... (partially obscured)
Carol Mault & Bob Sattler	Pemetec	6th	SS, Project Extension	It was an interesting... (partially obscured)
Steve Gabel-Edwards	Emerson	K	ELA, SS, Science	Highest quality of SL so far this year - Stronger community partner than ever before.
Rosie Brachlin & Caroline Fournier	Connors	9th	Global Literacies	Sustainable projects w/ many next steps. Incredible feedback and support from community partners (esp. Elm St).
Ian Braun (Becky Leamon)	MDI HS	9th	Global Literacies	Sustainable projects w/ many next steps. Incredible feedback and support from community partners (esp. Elm St).
Shelagh McLaughlin (Kate Muzzy)	MDI HS	9th	Global Literacies	Sustainable projects w/ many next steps. Incredible feedback and support from community partners (esp. Elm St).
Gail Dwyer & Nancy Eddy	Trenton	1st & 4th	ELA, SS, Guidance	It morphed from the Community Partners original idea - In a "Grip Walk".
Snow Ross	Trenton	3rd	ELA, SS, Technology	Community built 100 boardwalks.
Crystal DaGraca & Sandy Bernick	Tremont	3rd & 4th	ELA & SS Math, Technology	Community built 100 boardwalks.
Susan Edgdon	Tremont	1st	ELA, SS, Science, Math	Community built 100 boardwalks.
Gayle Gray	MDES	6th	ELA, SS	Community built 100 boardwalks.
Julie Leddish	MDES	1st	ELA, SS, Science	Community built 100 boardwalks.
Kim Alibeth & Britin Leber	Swans	3rd, 4th, 5th	ELA, SS	Community built 100 boardwalks.

## CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

“Unless you align service-learning with school reform and standards,” cautions a district curriculum coordinator, “it’s going to disappear.” With school reform, standards and assessments being pervasive features in virtually every state and district, no one doubts that blunt message. The long-term presence of service-learning depends upon a well-crafted curriculum combined with assessments and aligned with state standards.

Service-learning advocates need to enlist the support of all those involved in curriculum if they are to succeed in making it an integral part of studies. In addition to teachers, who are the first line of support, curriculum directors, if convinced of the capacity for service-learning to address standards, can be close allies. They can urge instructors to consider using service-learning methodology and can advise teachers on developing curricula in conjunction with standards.

Students can be another ally. There are many examples of students who have helped their teachers develop curriculum, not only high school students, but also middle school and even elementary students. In Maine schools and districts that already use service-learning as an instructional strategy, students at all levels are expected, encouraged, and guided to assist teachers in developing service-learning projects and curricula.

Because curriculum writing requires time, that most precious of resources, administrative support for individual or group planning periods is essential. With administrative blessing, some districts sponsor inservice training sessions or classes in which time is provided for researching and writing curriculum and developing assessments; other districts designate planning time, during or after school, for this purpose.

### Alignment of service-learning with state and national standards

(Adapted from *Service-Learning in Maine—A Guide to Implementing Quality Service-Learning*)

In 2007, the Maine Learning Results were amended by the state Board of Education to incorporate service-learning in the social studies curriculum. This revision provides Maine youth the opportunity to become active citizens in their communities through the integration of service-learning. The revised social studies standards call attention to the practical application of processes, knowledge, and skills with the objective that “students apply critical thinking, a research process, and discipline-based processes and knowledge from civics [and] government, economics, geography, and history in authentic contexts.” A key performance indicator in the standards calls for students at all grade levels (PreK – Diploma) to “select, plan, and participate in a civic action or service-learning project.”

The Maine Learning Results defines service-learning as “a teaching strategy through which students identify, research, and address real community challenges, using knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. Through service-learning, students meet local curricula and State learn-

ing standards. Service-learning should not be confused with community service.”

As a teaching strategy, service-learning is not an outcome, but rather a tool for teachers and learners to achieve outcomes and meet the learning goals of the Maine’s learning standards. Many districts in Maine, therefore, do not restrict the use of service-learning to the social studies curriculum, but recognize it as an instructional or learning strategy that can be applied to all subject areas, school-to-work programs, and character development, and one that is especially useful for students in acquiring 21st century skills.

### **Balance in emphasis on service and learning**

While many school districts in Maine now require anywhere from 30 to 100 hours of community service from its students to graduate, The Education Commission of the States points out in their issue paper, “Service-Learning: An Administrator’s Tool for Improving Schools and Connecting with the Community,” service alone is not enough to meet schools’ goal of turning out educated students and thoughtful citizens. When service is integrated into rigorous curriculum and schools give students an opportunity and framework to reflect on their experience, service-learning becomes a powerful tool for connecting students and their communities. School and district administrators play a central role in ensuring that service-learning is at the core of achieving education reform goals.

### **Civic leadership development and social growth**

As detailed in *Service-Learning in Maine—A Guide to Implementing Quality Service-Learning*, the learning goals in the Maine Learning Results identify knowledge and skills required for college, career, and citizenship in the 21st century. Service-learning directly aligns with the following guiding principles that each Maine student must leave school as a clear and effective communicator, a self-directed and lifelong learner, a creative and practical problem-solver, a responsible and involved citizen, and an integrative and informed thinker.

### **Application of high quality service-learning characteristics**

*Service-Learning in Maine—A Guide to Implementing Quality Service-Learning* identifies eight nationally recognized standards for quality service-learning. These eight standards—duration and intensity, link to curriculum, meaningful service, youth voice, diversity, partnerships, reflection, and progress monitoring—directly support the development of 21st century skills in learning, innovation, life, and career.

## KEY CONCEPT

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THE STRUCTURES AND FRAMEWORKS TO DEVELOP AND REVISE CURRICULUM ALLOW FOR THE INTEGRATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING.

### Indicator

Service-learning is acknowledged as a key instructional strategy in policy.

### Strategies

1. Develop districtwide, schoolwide, or grade-span committees for each content area.
2. Service-learning should be an integral part of the district's comprehensive assessment system, which measure student achievement of Maine's education standards.

### Indicator

Service-learning is aligned with the state's content standards.

### Strategies

1. Develop districtwide, schoolwide, or grade-span committees for each content area. Service-learning should be an integral part of the district's comprehensive assessment system, which measure student achievement of Maine's education standards.
2. Ensure curriculum coordinators know about and support service-learning. District curriculum leaders should maintain continuous communication with building or grade-span coordinators, share information, and provide support.
3. Ensure teachers use Maine's learning standards as they facilitate service-learning activities.

## KEY CONCEPT

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS ADDRESS CURRICULAR DEMANDS, STUDENT INTERESTS, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS.

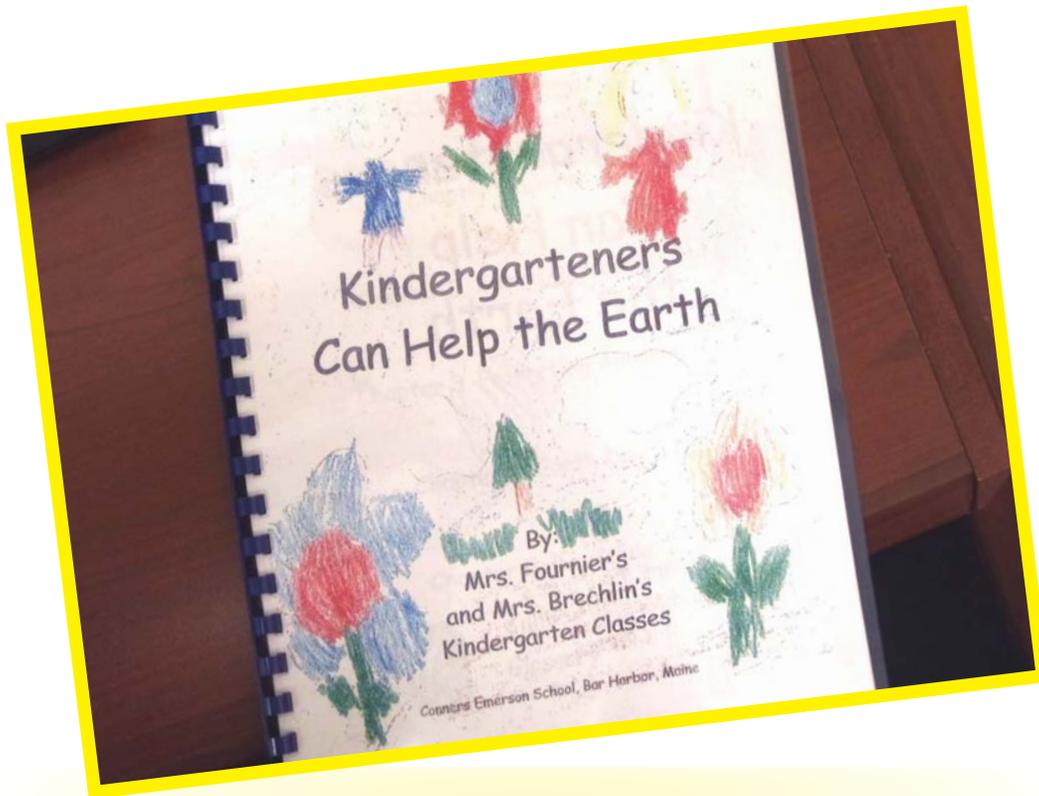
### Indicator

Students are involved in the planning and design of service-learning curricula.

### Strategies

1. Ensure both students and teachers have input when identifying community problems and project ideas. Students can participate in school- or districtwide committees or working groups on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
2. Provide training and support for teachers to learn how to incorporate student interests, community needs, and curricular demands when doing a service-learning activity.
3. Provide training and support for teachers to learn how to create a collaborative environment in the classroom that allows students to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills.
4. Provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other teachers to develop interdisciplinary projects.





## KEY CONCEPT

STUDENTS LEARN AND APPLY PLANNING, DECISION-MAKING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

### Indicator

Students demonstrate and articulate the knowledge and skills contained in Maine's learning standards they acquired through service-learning.

### Strategies

1. Encourage students to articulate what they are learning in addition to the service they provide. This could be through completing a "capstone" project or presentation. Service-learning is a recognized pathway in proficiency-based education.
2. Incorporate both formative and summative assessments of students' service-learning projects.
3. Organize opportunities for students to demonstrate and celebrate their service-learning outputs through school- or districtwide public events or fairs for parents, community partners, and other stakeholders.

### Example—AOS 91, Mount Desert Island, Maine

(Reprinted from *Mount Desert Island Regional School System Service-Learning Handbook for Teachers*)

#### MOUNT DESERT ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM (MDIRSS) POLICIES SUPPORTING DISTRICTWIDE LEARNING

MDIRSS created a service-learning district coordinator position in 2005 and instituted a service-learning leadership team that meets regularly. This team includes five building principals, the assistant superintendent, a teacher from each school building, three students, and three community partners. The team meets monthly as a large group and biweekly in focused subcommittees. The team has clarified expectations with formal job descriptions for the service-learning coordinator, building representatives, and student representatives. Each year they develop an action plan that dovetails with their district's educational vision and serves to improve the quality of the service-learning experiences in the schools.

Currently the leadership team is working to align teachers' practices with the National K-12 Standards for Quality Service-Learning Practice. In the fall of 2010, the team developed a handbook to help guide teachers' service-learning work and to provide the school community with a handy way to access forms and related documents. The handbook includes a statement of beliefs about service-learning and a running list of current assets and plans used to promote service-learning with all faculty. Additionally, MDIRSS has an active website that serves as a communication tool for teachers and community members looking for ideas or information about the service-learning programs. MDIRSS has full support for service-learning from the school committees. Engaging students with their communities is a vital aspect of the district's mission and the board knows this method strengthens both the community's perception of schools and their willingness to support the schools' budgets.

The district supports service-learning projects with mini-grants and one-on-one teacher support in every building. The mini-grant application is based on best practices for high quality service-learning.

Service-learning is embedded in the curriculum. The district's mission stresses the need for teachers to design activities where students can use the community as a learning lab. All eighth grade students participate in a service-learning project using the Project Citizen model, and all ninth graders take a yearlong integrated English and social studies course called Global Literacies that culminates in individual service-learning projects. This course is team-taught by two faculty members from the social studies and English learning areas.



### MDIRSS SERVICE-LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Approximately 800 MDIRSS students participate in service-learning projects each year. In the elementary schools, most projects involve whole classes or grade levels and can be focused on the full range of academic subjects. Recent projects include a phytoplankton monitoring project where students made weekly treks to their local beach to conduct water tests for phytoplankton species that can be harmful to humans. At the beach, students worked with their teachers and a marine biologist to test the water for a species of phytoplankton that causes red tide—a condition that causes paralytic, diuretic, or amnesic shellfish poisoning in the humans who consume them. Students were alerted to this problem when a scientist from a local lab came to their classroom to give a presentation about saltwater ecology. They learned about the need for collecting regular water samples as part of an ongoing study. After returning to school from the beach, they entered the data they collected in a national database that monitors red tide and triggers the opening and closing of areas for harvesting shellfish in Maine. This project is ongoing.

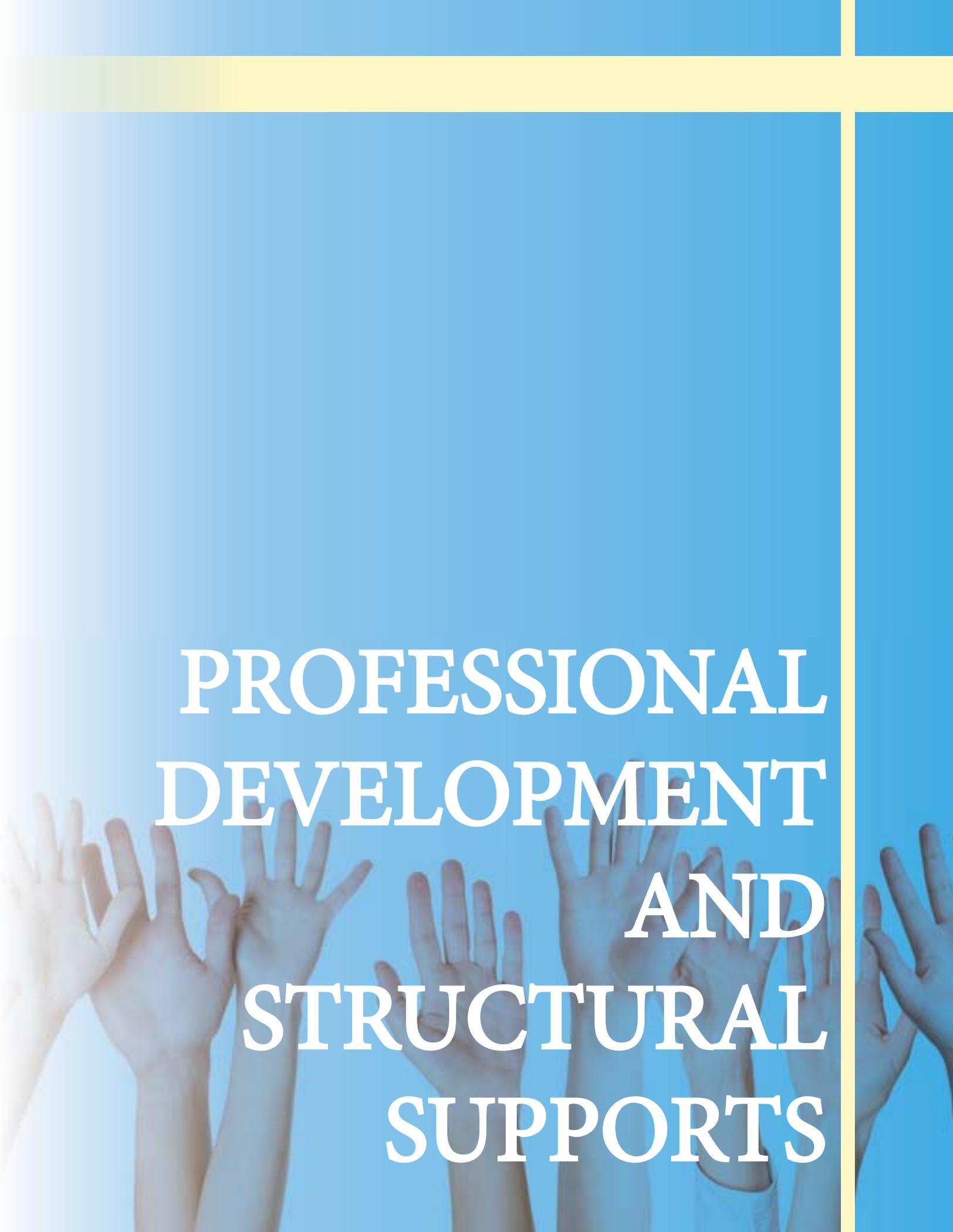
In another school in the district, 4th grade students reacted strongly to a fatal bicycle accident on a roadway in their town. They began working with partners from the Department of Public Safety to research the problem and found that bicycle safety has been a concern in their area for a long time. They joined with members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force to create and provide seminars for both adults and children about bicycle safety. In addition, they prepared and delivered a compelling presentation with recommendations to local officials about the need for bike lanes on particularly dangerous stretches of roadway in their town.

In another nearby school, 3rd graders worked with their wastewater management officials to educate tourists about the consequences to marine life of dumping waste into the town storm drains. By stenciling information signs onto the roadways around the drains, students were able to succinctly and effectively communicate that waste dumped into the drains ends up in the bay, which has a severe effect on both local aquatic life and the tourism industry upon which the town's economy relies for sustainability.

In still another school, students were alarmed at the volume of trash generated by their cafeteria and decided to focus on how they could reduce the amount of trash going into the waste stream. They researched how to accomplish this by using the 3 Rs—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—and embarked on a multiyear schoolwide effort to reduce (stop or limit the use of products that generate trash), reuse (repurpose paper, plastic containers, and other waste-generating materials), and recycle (recycle all products that are recyclable, as opposed to just a few or none at all).

Another group of students responded to a concern about the amount of energy being wasted in their school building. They decided to educate their school community about the benefits of reducing energy use and partnered with the Maine Energy Education Program to present simple measures to cut back on energy consumption. As part of their project, they investigated the cost of the exit signs in their building and wrote a grant that enabled them to have all their exit signs replaced with energy-efficient light bulbs, saving the school more than \$2000 a year in electricity costs.



The background features a light blue sky with a bright yellow crosshair. In the lower half, several hands of various skin tones are raised, palms facing forward, against the sky. The text is overlaid on this scene.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS



### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS**

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

Professional development is the lifeblood of service-learning. Whether personnel are novices or experienced practitioners, they need structured times to learn new skills, explore possible projects, share insights with colleagues, and develop curriculum and assessments.

Professional development is found in different forms. Districts and schools across Maine that already embrace service-learning have sponsored “Service-Learning 101” for interested practitioners. Some, such as Mount Desert Island Regional School System, offer more advanced support and coaching from professional trainers to assist teachers in creating and scoring assessments. Much professional development takes place on a one-to-one basis, when coordinators or faculty coaches work with teachers to establish or improve their practice. What practitioners often prize above all is simply the time to meet with colleagues, reflect upon practice, learn about other projects and develop needed materials.

Some districts have found innovative ways of creating common planning time for teachers. In MSAD 51 (Cumberland and North Yarmouth), the superintendent created an early-release program once a week so all K-12 teachers can meet to plan curriculum and assessments for service-learning. Other districts around Maine have also established a delayed-start or early-release program for teachers to plan and collaborate with one another, so this existing time can be used to look at opportunities to infuse service-learning techniques into lesson plans.

Some districts employ a train-the-trainer model. In this model, the service-learning coordinator or curriculum director annually trains a number of teachers throughout the school district to sustain and develop service-learning. They, in turn, will train staff members at their schools and make sure service-learning is written into the schools’ plans. Variouslly called site advocates, peer coaches or trainers, building coordinators, or grade-span coordinators, these individuals play a significant role in bringing knowledge of service-learning directly to the people who need the information. In other places, or sometimes in addition to school-based trainers, it is teams of teachers, or teams comprising students, teachers, and administrators, who lead staff development. Typically, the school-based trainers meet regularly with the service-learning coordinator or this service-learning team to plan training activities and discuss insights and issues.

Administrative support is essential for professional development; it helps to secure the necessary time and resources. Lacking that support, it is difficult to access teachers, much less hold a training session. Unless administrators see service-learning as essential to the district’s goals, they will not, in a time of shrinking resources and increasing demands for standards and assessments, make room for inservice training opportunities.

Additionally, Districts that are proximate to colleges or universities with education departments are able to forge collaborations with these institutions to have service-learning woven into preservice teacher education requirements, as well as to provide staff development to districts.

### Grade-span or building coordinators



Districts in Maine and other states have determined grade-span or school building coordinators, in addition to a district-level service-learning coordinator, are essential to improve and sustain coordination and implementation of service-learning. When there is only one person in the district to provide leadership, technical assistance, information, and other resources, institutionalization becomes problematic and sustaining service-learning will be challenging.

Grade-span or building coordinators assist the district service-learning coordinator in implementing service-learning activities. Typical responsibilities include disseminating information about service-learning to teachers and building staff; encouraging and coaching teachers to use service-learning as a teaching strategy; monitoring progress and reporting outputs and outcomes; and other activities that support the work of the district service-learning coordinator. The role of a service-learning coordinator is critical in promoting and sustaining service-learning relationships with schools, community partners, and students.

Grade-span or building coordinators are often art or music teachers, librarians, guidance counselors, or teaching staff with smaller loads who are paid a stipend for taking on these additional responsibilities. To retain effective grade-span or building service-learning coordinators, schools and districts must ensure that they are well-supported professionally and financially.

### Districtwide service-learning leadership team

In addition to a district service-learning coordinator and grade-span or building coordinators, many districts that are working to institutionalize or sustain service-learning develop district service-learning leadership teams that meet regularly. These teams are often composed of the service-learning coordinator, grade-span or building coordinators, district or school administrative members, youth representatives, and key community partners. The participation of school and community partner staff, and students builds personal, organizational, and neighborhood support for service-learning.

The service-learning leadership team considers how service-learning can help schools achieve their mission. Some of the work of the team includes identifying issues and setting priorities, planning and implementing service-learning activities aligned with the curriculum, measuring progress, and continually assessing and making revisions.

Mount Desert Island Regional School System's Service-Learning Leadership Team promotes service-learning in its schools and to connect service-learning goals and projects with MDIRSS goals. The intended audience includes teachers, administrators, students, parents, school board and community members.

### Data collection and measuring impact

One important key to sustaining service-learning districtwide is demonstrating its impact. To do this, school staff need to be prepared to collect data. The service-learning leadership team will need to develop an evaluation framework that includes indicators and data collection methods consistent with the district's framework. Data collection is a resource-intensive effort, and the school staff who will collect it will need adequate training and an ongoing support structure. The most useful and accurate data are collected by staff that understand its importance, work in teams to collect it, and that receive support and recognition for their efforts.

Meaningful data can also be translated into useful information that will direct continuous improvement efforts. This information is used to look for positive trends and to help ask what requires attention or change. The leadership team establishes priorities, makes determinations on what changes can be made internally and what changes require higher-level input, such as policy changes, professional development, or technical assistance.

Communicating the information gleaned from the data is important. Communication should include not just evaluations, but also relevant best practices, and field experiences that can illuminate strengths, concerns, and opportunities. The service-learning coordinator or service-learning leadership team should prepare periodic reports organized into overarching goals and objectives of the district's strategic plan. These reports should be presented to the administration, school board, community partners, students and parents.



### KEY CONCEPT

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SCHOOL AND DISTRICT FACULTY AND OTHER EMPLOYEES HAVE REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN TRAINING AND TO CREATE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AROUND SERVICE-LEARNING.

#### Indicator

There are established policies and practices governing district-level professional development.

#### Strategies

1. Offer professional development opportunities that include service-learning more than once a year.
2. Through coaching, mentoring, support groups, or cascading, create a follow-up structure to formal training that provides other opportunities for ongoing service-learning professional development.
3. Make sure there are incentives—and not disincentives—for school faculty and district staff to receive professional development in service-learning.
4. Provide trainings that include discussion of developmentally and age-appropriate activities, stages of service-learning planning, essential elements of service-learning, expected outcomes of activities and ways to assess service-learning.

#### Indicator

The district has partnerships with community-based organizations, higher education institutions, or others to provide high quality staff development opportunities.

#### Strategies

1. Engage teachers, students, and community partners in reflective practice as they learn together and provide support and critical feedback to each other.
2. Facilitate stakeholders to visit or interact with other districts and communities engaged in service-learning.
3. Include youth as trainers for service-learning trainings. Consider the kinds of leadership roles students can play in trainings and project development.
4. Invite community partners to participate in service-learning training activities.
5. Engage local higher education institutions to involve preservice teachers in service-learning activities in your district and ask them to include service-learning as a teaching methodology for education majors.
6. Practice experiential learning: include a service-learning experience in your service-learning training

### **Example—Maryland State Department of Education**

(From interview with Julie Ayers, MSDE Service-Learning Specialist, and the MSDE website)

An early adopter of service-learning, Maryland is the only state in the US that requires its high school students to engage in service-learning activities as a condition of graduation. The requirement is 75 hours, including preparation, action, and reflection. Each of the 24 school districts in Maryland implements the service-learning graduation requirement differently, because they tailor the specifics of their program to their local community.

### **SERVICE-LEARNING FELLOWS PROGRAM**

The Maryland State Department of Education has operated a statewide service-learning fellows program since the state officially adopted service-learning as a graduation requirement in the spring of 1993. The program's mission is to promote excellence in service-learning programs and provide peer leadership in this field in Maryland and throughout the nation.

Fellows are teachers who create exemplary service-learning experiences for their students and are willing and able to share their expertise and enthusiasm with their peers. They mentor and train teachers and administrators in service-learning. They are also members of their school district's service-learning team, and write curricula and articles, and promote the use of service-learning as an effective teaching tool.

Up to 10 new Fellows are selected each year to join the state's pool of master service-learning teachers. As of 2010, Maryland had more than 212 fellows representing all 24 school districts in the state. While graduates of the Fellows Program can earn two continuing education service credits, not all participants take advantage of it. Fellows also receive a letter of recognition from the State Superintendent.

Additionally, MSDE offers two online courses with the same content--one is more in-depth than the other--where participants can earn two or four credits, depending on which course they take. The online courses have had a great response, according to Julie Ayers, the Service-Learning Specialist with MSDE. The online courses are led by a live instructor, last for six weeks, and are composed of 12 modules, including video presentations, guided discussions, and participant's examples of students engaged in service-learning.

Originally, Fellows earned an annual stipend of \$1000 to \$2000 for their services. That was later presented in the form of a gift certificate to Free Spirit Publishing. Now, financial restrictions have eliminated the stipend, but that has effected the continued interest among teaching staff to become Fellows.

### SERVICE-LEARNING FELLOWS OUTCOMES

These are the expected outcomes of full participation in the Fellow's Program. The bullets underneath each outcome are delineated as either a program requirement or an option for meeting the outcome. Fellows' action plans may include additional activities not reflected on this list.

**Outcome 1**—Each Fellow will participate in MSDE activities designed to promote your professional development as a service-learning expert.

- Attend annual retreat in winter and annual convening of service-learning leaders in the fall. (Required)
- Attend the National Service-Learning Conference or other regional service-learning events. (Recommended but optional)
- Read service-learning articles and publications, in addition to the MSDE generated material provided at the training. (Recommended but optional)
- Participate in state or national boards/committees/commissions on service-learning. (Recommended but optional)

**Outcome 2**— Each Fellow will serve as a resource to your local service-learning team.

- Operate a service-learning program which conforms to Maryland's Best Practices in Service-Learning. (Required)
- Work in partnership with local education agency service-learning contact. (Required)
- Train teachers in service-learning in your school, county and other counties. (Recommended but optional)
- Write service-learning curricula for your local education agency (LEA). (Recommended but optional)
- Serve on the LEA service-learning advisory board. (Recommended but optional)
- Host visitors from in- and out-of-state who want to observe exemplary service-learning programs. (Recommended but optional)
- Work cooperatively with National Service program participants in Maryland (such as AmeriCorps) who are also working to enhance service-learning. (Recommended but optional)
- Collaborate with local higher education institutions to integrate service-learning into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. (Recommended but optional)

**Outcome 3**—Each Fellow will generate 3 positive media events or pieces in local, state or national outlets each year.

- Generate 3 positive media pieces. Send out news releases, invite your local politicians, etc. (Required)
- Write/collaborate on service-learning articles to enhance the field. (Recommended but optional)

**Outcome 4**—Each Fellow will mentor two teachers or one teacher team each year and create resources to support other teachers.

- Act as mentors and provide technical assistance to at least two other teachers or one teacher team as they develop programs. (Required)
- Replicate exemplary service-learning programs by working with other teachers to help them establish programs. (Recommended but optional)
- Host visitors from in and out of state who want to observe exemplary service-learning programs - same requirement as Outcome #2. (Recommended but optional)
- Write a summary description of your program (see complete listing of program descriptions below), how and why it works, for dissemination on the MSDE website by January. (Required)

**Outcome 5**—Each Fellow will engage in at least two local service-learning leadership meetings each year to strengthen your fellowship, reflect on your experiences, and share your learnings with other Fellows and your peers.

- Establish a mutual mentoring relationship with other Fellows through your study circle. (Required)
- Replicate exemplary service-learning programs by working with other teachers to help them establish programs - same requirement as Outcome #4. (Recommended but optional)



The image features a solid blue background with a prominent yellow crosshair that spans the entire width and height. In the lower portion of the frame, several human hands are raised, palms facing forward, creating a sense of collective participation or agreement. The text 'PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY' is centered in the lower half of the image, overlaid on the hands and the blue background.

**PARTNERSHIP  
AND  
COMMUNITY**



## **PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY**

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

Community partnerships serve a multiplicity of functions: They host needed projects for service-learning; provide instruction and guidance for students; give “real-world” context that students crave in their learning; and provide valuable resources for the school in the form of money or goods or staff time. Through the structured activities these partnerships offer, they can help students achieve academic standards and provide vision and leadership for service-learning efforts in their school or district.

Community partnerships can also win support for the school. When community members see young people providing meaningful service and acting in helpful, responsible ways, they are far more likely to perceive the schools and students in positive ways. While improving public relations is not the primary goal of service-learning, it is a byproduct.

However they work, community partnerships are instrumental in institutionalizing service-learning. They provide needed resources and ground service-learning in genuine community needs. They create an expectation, both inside and outside the school, that service-learning is part of the way that high quality education is accomplished.

### **Developing and maintaining partnerships**

Community partners need to be carefully nurtured by the school district, since most are initially unfamiliar with service-learning and such concepts as youth voice and service tied to curriculum. Susan Abravanel, Vice President for Education at Youth Service America, points out that “community partners aren’t trained in the language of service-learning. In fact, service-learning is not on their agenda. If youth are involved at all with these organizations, they are usually volunteers for particular projects, where they are told what to do and how to do it.” Abravanel says community partners need to understand that in service-learning students are more than volunteers; they are learners who need to acquire specific knowledge and skills from their experiences.

At the same time, community partners have needs that must be understood and acknowledged by school staff. They need to know what financial and personnel resources are being asked of them and what liability they assume. They have expectations for productivity, reliability, and timeliness. They need to understand how their supervisory responsibilities mesh with those of the school. Both schools and community partners want some kind of evaluation process that lets them know if the partnership is successful from all perspectives—from their own, as well as those from clients, students, and parents.

Community partnerships are frequently initiated by a teacher, who sees a fit between what students need to learn and what that agency or organization has to offer. Service-learning coordinators often play a pivotal role in identifying community partners and making initial contact, and trying to match community partner profiles and school needs. Occasionally, a community partner

approaches a school about collaborating on a project. However it occurs, school personnel and partners need time together to review the curriculum, standards, and projects, and make mutual expectations clear.

### **Partnership roles and responsibilities**

Most schools and community organizations develop contracts or memoranda of understanding that specify the roles and responsibilities of each partner. There needs to be a good fit between the school and the organization.

### **Communications**

Good communication with community partners usually is grounded in a protocol that is established early on in the partnership, which should be a part of any memorandums or agreements with community partner organizations. Key factors include identifying who to contact, what information to regularly share, when and how regularly to communicate. During the school day it may be challenging to reach school contacts, and emails can slip by unnoticed in full mailboxes, so these are some things to consider, as well, when developing a communication protocol.

Communications can also include media coverage of service-learning activities to draw attention to the positive outcomes created from youth through school-community service-learning partnerships. Most districts have existing media policies in place; these may require review and adaptation to cover school-community partnerships.

### **Evaluation of service outcomes**

As with any program, continuous monitoring and evaluation using appropriate assessment tools is key to improving the program's deliverables and impacts. Using appropriate assessment tools to measure impacts or outcomes is also important not only for school boards and district administrators but for community partners to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of service-learning programs. Any evaluation of service outcomes must include participation and feedback from the community partners as well as the community beneficiaries of the service.

## KEY CONCEPT

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES EXIST TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS.

### Indicator

The district and its partners have developed policies and practices that govern the operation of school-community partnerships.

### Strategies

1. Identify which local government agencies, community- or faith-based organizations, other schools, colleges, or businesses to contact, and what their areas of expertise are. Involve teachers, students, and parents to identify personal and professional connections in the community.
2. Consider community needs and the district's service-learning goals to determine what community experts could be involved.
3. Develop basic training in school-community policies and practices for staff, students, community partners, and other stakeholders.
4. Consider organizing a community-school forum or a service-learning advisory committee to explore partnerships.
5. Ensure all stakeholders agree on common interests, goals, and budget issues before entering partnerships.



### KEY CONCEPT

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COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS BENEFIT SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND PARTNERS.

#### Indicator

School and community partners have ongoing opportunities to meet, discuss expectations, and when necessary revise the operations of service-learning activities.

#### Strategies

1. Ensure that partner agreements have clear communication requirements and opportunities for reflection and continuous improvement built in.
2. Review district or school policies (e.g., liability, supervision, transportation) to ensure they cover students' out-of-school service-learning time with community partners. Work with community partners to ensure they have appropriate policies in place to enable students to spend service-learning time with the organization.

#### Indicator

Mechanisms are in place to evaluate the impact of the partnership and the viability of service-learning activities.

#### Strategies

1. Develop assessment tools and practices to evaluate the impact of the partnership and the viability of service-learning activities.
2. Ensure that service-learning partnerships create a context for education beyond the classroom. Identify how these partnerships add context and expertise to service-learning.
3. Consider how partnerships help students, teachers, and the community partners increase understanding and commitment to civic responsibility, and what other benefits might be had (e.g., school-to-work skills).

#### Indicator

Districts and community partners share trainings and other resources.

#### Strategies

1. Identify the organizational and resource needs for service-learning activities and partners. Consider how districts and community partners may share services and resources that are mutually beneficial.
2. Consider how partnerships can increase resources (e.g., funding, products, service, public opinion), as well as how students help community-based organizations meet their missions and goals.

## KEY CONCEPT

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COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS ARE DOCUMENTED AND PUBLICIZED.

### Indicator

Community leaders, partners, parents, and the public acknowledge and support service-learning.

### Strategies

1. Arrange project visits by community partners, administrators, public officials, and the media.
2. Develop models and tips for documentation, presentations, and reflection activities.
3. Publicize the results and benefits of service-learning and community partnerships through public recognition events, publication, award ceremonies, or other activities.

## KEY CONCEPT

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PARTNERSHIPS NEED NOT BE EXCLUSIVE TO THE LOCAL LEVEL; CONSIDER POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS AT THE REGIONAL, STATE, NATIONAL, OR INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.

### Indicator

District teachers and students have liaised with organizations beyond the local or school community.

### Strategies

1. Review broad school reform or community improvement programs that may relate to your service-learning activities and warrant consideration as new partnerships.
2. Explore the potential benefits and opportunities in broadening partnerships to include county, regional, state, national, or international partnerships.
3. Connect with organizations that advocate civic education.
4. Identify national resources and organizations that can support your district's service-learning activities.

### Example—MSAD 17, Oxford Hills School District

(From interview with Pat Carson, MSAD 17 Health Coordinator, and the MSAD 17 website)

#### THE OXFORD HILLS COMMUNITY EDUCATION EXCHANGE

For about two decades, the Oxford Hills Community Education Exchange has operated with the goal to improve the education of its students by involving the Oxford Hills community in its schools. While this exchange serves many purposes, its framework is ideal for identifying service activities and community partnerships that support service-learning.

The Education Exchange achieves this through a number of partnerships with community organizations and businesses:

- **School-Business Partnerships** – One of its original programs, these partnerships positively affect students' academic achievement and strengthen the communities in which the students live. These partnerships provide countless volunteer hours, academic enrichment and financial support to all students and staff in the district's middle school and eight elementary schools.
- **Computerized Student Job Database** – Begun in 1999, this database gives all high schools students access to volunteer, after-school, and summer employment opportunities. This is a free service for the Oxford Hills business and non-profit community.
- **Community Internship Program** – Begun in the fall of 2000 with seven students, the Internship Program has provided more than 200 high school juniors and seniors with a real-life experience in their intended college major. Nearly all of the students who have participated in this program have gone on to post-secondary schools.
- **OHCHS Student of the Month Program** – Partnering with the Oxford Hills Rotary Club, this program has honored 280 students for their exemplary citizenship over the past ten years.
- **Staff Member of the Month Program** – Partnering with the Norway-Paris Kiwanis Club, this program has honored 70 District administrators, teachers, secretaries, bus drivers, food service workers, maintenance and custodial staff over the past ten years.
- **Financial Fitness Fair** – Partnering with Oxford Federal Credit Union, this initiative has taught OHCHS seniors real life money management and budgeting skills over the past five years. Approximately 1,300 seniors have participated in the event to date.
- **OHCHS College Fair** – Begun in 2007 with 52 post-secondary schools attending Oxford Hill's first college fair, over 70 schools were represented in 2010. OHCHS students, community members and other area high school students attend this annual event.

**PARTNERSHIP WITH WESTERN FOOTHILLS LAND TRUST ROBERTS FARM PRESERVE**

Oxford Hills School District has formed a partnership with the Western Foothills Land Trust to utilize the Roberts Farm Preserve in Norway as an experiential education site offering year-round service-learning and extended learning opportunities for its K-12 students. The preserve hosts two STEM classrooms, several hoop houses, and acres of vegetable fields where students grow about 5,000 pounds of vegetables annually for donation to Maine Harvest for Hunger, which distributes it directly to families in the Oxford Hills area.



Students participating in the district's summer program spend their days planting and harvesting vegetables, receiving math and literacy instruction, and outdoor exercise. The goal is two full hours of activity a day and the students revel in the challenge. The District has collected data that demonstrate the participating students—primarily at-risk youth—not only stop the learning loss that naturally occurs over the two-month summer break between school years, but actually show academic gains.

The district also utilizes the farm preserve for high school programs. Students from Oxford Hills High School participate in a youth employment program there several days a week where part of their time is spent working with the middle school students as role models.

In 2012, Oxford Elementary School pioneered a new program that followed the success of the middle school summer program. The school's 5th graders have many of their classes at the farm preserve three days each week. After an initial group activity, the students split into small groups and rotate through activities including team-building, gardening, fitness and nutrition. The program evolves as teachers collaborate ways to use the space and connect the fifth grade's STEM, ELA, and Social Studies curriculum to activities at the farm.

Students that have participated in the Roberts Farm Preserve programs have said how much they have taken away from their experiences. They note the program has made them more responsible and better prepared for the next school year. The programs have helped them stay focused on their studies and want to remain in school. District administrators also say the students' service-learning experiences at the farm preserve enable the students to return to school energized and excited.

While the Roberts Farm Preserve is located on an isolated hilltop overlooking Pennessewassee Lake, it is not removed from the community. The district acknowledges these programs could never have happened without support from the Western Foothills Land Trust, that manages the Preserve, or help from the district and community.



The image features a solid blue background with a prominent yellow crosshair that spans the entire width and height. At the bottom of the frame, several human hands are raised, palms facing forward, in various positions. The text 'CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT' is centered in the lower half of the image, overlaid on the hands and the blue background.

# CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

(Adapted from *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States, and Communities*)

In schools and districts that embrace institutionalization of service-learning, personnel continually review their efforts and look at ways to improve and enrich all aspects. Staff members are committed to a process of reflection and revitalization. Continuous improvement provides ongoing opportunities for all stakeholders—teachers, staff, students and community members—to learn from and support one another, to improve the utilization of service-learning as a teaching and learning method, and to reflect on students' outcomes and contributions. It is important for a district to think strategically and comprehensively about the manner in which continuous improvement efforts are structured throughout the district.

To encourage this process, some schools and districts have created structured opportunities for practitioners to meet and review their activities. Some places do this weekly; others do it monthly. While the timing and composition of these meetings vary greatly from school to school and district to district, practitioners agree on one thing: without some sort of structure, these meetings do not happen.

Information for evaluation is typically gathered in a variety of ways, through formal and informal channels. Some information is obtained through one-on-one interviews with teachers, students, administrators, and community partners. Other information is collected in evaluation surveys to key stakeholder groups. Many district service-learning coordinators use regular meetings with site contracts as a means to assess progress and problems, and brainstorm needed changes. Minor modifications as well as major changes are made as needed.

Evaluation activities do not focus just on the quality of structure and working relationships, but on student outcomes as well. Service-learning has to demonstrate its effectiveness in stimulating positive growth in educational, social, civic, and psychological arenas. Some of this information may be available in existing school records, such as attendance reports, results of standardized tests, and disciplinary records. Other results require more sophisticated kinds of research that may be outside of the time and expertise of school personnel. This is one area in which a higher education partner may lend invaluable help.

Evaluation efforts do not need to be complicated. They can, in many cases, be tailored to the needs and interests of faculty members. Students can also be invaluable allies in the evaluation process. They can design surveys, conduct interviews, and tabulate data.

Admittedly, the downturn in the national economy is making it difficult to maintain efforts at current funding levels, much less assess, grow, and enrich them. Enormous budget cuts are threatening the infrastructure in many states, and service-learning is being deeply affected. The stark budgetary realities make evaluation and assessment efforts even more imperative. When administrators are forced to slash budgets, only those efforts that have an established track record of success will survive. Administrators, teachers, and parents will not support service-learning unless it demonstrates success in achieving academic standards and other desired outcomes.

### KEY CONCEPT

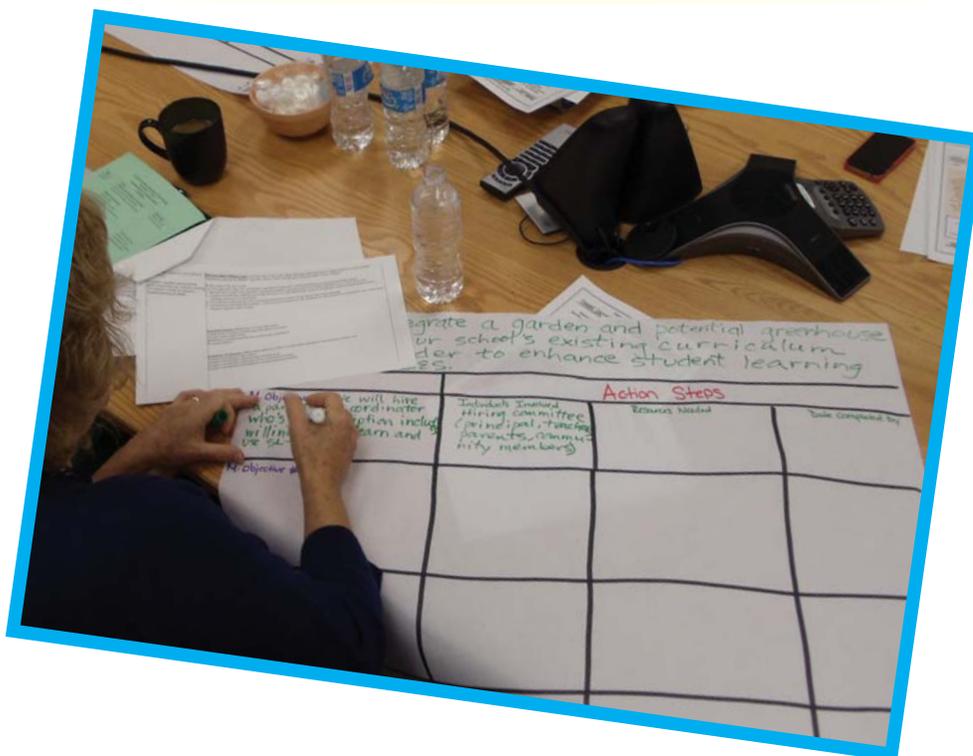
THE DISTRICT PROVIDES FORMALIZED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSESSING SERVICE-LEARNING AND FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE-LEARNING PRACTICE.

#### Indicator

There are continual efforts to evaluate the impact of service-learning and to make modifications as needed.

#### Strategies

1. Develop or adapt assessment tools to evaluate service-learning outcomes and the impact on district performance measures.
2. Develop or adapt tools for collecting data for reflective thought and action.
3. Link other school or district assessment efforts with service-learning assessments.
4. Create opportunities among district staff, students, and community members for sharing and collaboration to learn and support one another, to improve practices, to take responsibility for learning, to celebrate successes, and reflect upon contributions.
5. Identify and address the predictable concerns that teachers, staff, students, parents, and community partners are likely to face creating continuous improvement opportunities.



## KEY CONCEPT

HIGH QUALITY CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS SUSTAINED THROUGH DISTRICT POLICIES AND PRACTICES.

### Indicator

The district provides ongoing opportunities for experienced service-learning practitioners to improve their skills and share information with others.

### Strategies

1. Evaluate the capacities of the district and state to provide or support opportunities for high quality continuous improvement.
2. Identify community partners and higher education institutions that can assist or support high quality continuous improvement.

### Indicator

Service-learning is included in school or district improvement plans.

### Strategies

1. Consider how the district can provide time for substantive discussions of common problems, collaborative planning, and refining practice that leads to student learning.
2. Encourage leadership among teachers, staff, students, and community partners in continuous improvement activities.





The image features a solid blue background with a prominent yellow crosshair that spans the entire width and height. At the bottom of the frame, several human hands are raised, with fingers spread, as if in a gesture of agreement or participation. The hands are positioned across the width of the image, with some appearing more clearly than others. The text 'MOVING FORWARD' is centered in the lower half of the image, overlaid on the blue background and the raised hands.

**MOVING  
FORWARD**



## MOVING FORWARD

Although there is no longer federal funding to specifically support service-learning initiatives, and local school budgets continue to tighten, advocates across Maine and other states are moving beyond budget issues and refocusing efforts to expand high quality service-learning as an effective instructional tool. With support from the school board and administrators, adequate and ongoing professional development, and solid reflective practices that include all key stakeholders, service-learning can be institutionalized and sustained with minimal fiscal investment.

At the federal level, service-learning was traditionally funded through Learn and Serve America, but that funding was eliminated by Congress in 2011 and will not likely be restored in the near future. There are still other opportunities through national service programs such as AmeriCorps State/National and AmeriCorps VISTA for Maine school districts to build capacity in utilizing and sustaining service-learning initiatives. The Maine Commission for Community Service administers grants for these programs, and can explain how to apply. A summary of these grants can be found at <http://www.maineservicecommission.gov/grants/>.

Around the nation, several states that were early adopters of service-learning continue to serve as models for other states that embracing service-learning: Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Wisconsin, to name a few. Other states, such as South Dakota and Florida, have recently implemented state laws to promote and include service-learning in graduation requirements.

So, there continues to be support for service-learning within Maine and across the country. There are field experts here and in other states whose expertise can be leveraged to help school districts move toward institutionalization of service-learning. The expertise of community partner organizations can also be leveraged.

The Maine Commission for Community Service oversees a Service-Learning Task Force that addresses its strategic goals for promoting and supporting service-learning. The Commission is also developing a growing network of service-learning coordinators and practitioners in Maine to share information and best practices, and provide mutual support for teachers and administrators who are new to service-learning. This community of practice can be found on the Maine Learning Network provided by the Maine Department of Education at <http://mainelearning.net/>.





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## National Standards for High Quality Service-Learning

(Adapted from *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice*  
by National Youth Leadership Council and RMC Research Corporation)

These standards and indicators were vetted through a series of “reactor panels” convened nationwide by the National Youth Leadership Council and RMC Research Corporation. The panels were composed of young people, teachers, school and district administrators, community members, staff from community-based organizations, policy-makers, and others interested in service-learning. The process was much like content-setting standards in other fields. Each panel considered the work of the two before them, revising the standards and indicators to ensure that they included the strongest aspects of quality, and to make the wording clearer, measurable, and actionable. For more information, visit [www.nylc.org/standards](http://www.nylc.org/standards).

### Duration and Intensity

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

#### Indicators

1. Service-learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. Service-learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. Service-learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.

### Link to Curriculum

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

#### Indicators

1. Service-learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. Service-learning is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curriculum.
3. Service-learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
4. Service-learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

## Meaningful Service

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

### Indicators

1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

## Youth Voice

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

### Indicators

1. Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
2. Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experiences.
3. Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. Service-learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
5. Service-learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

### Diversity

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

#### Indicators

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

### Partnerships

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

#### Indicators

1. Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service-learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

## 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.

### Indicators

1. Service-learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
2. Service-learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
3. Service-learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
4. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
5. Service-learning reflection 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.

## 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.

### Indicators

1. Service-learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
2. Service-learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service-learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
3. Service-learning participants use evidence to improve service-learning experiences.
4. Service-learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service-learning understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

## National Standards for High Quality Service-Learning Assessment Rubric

	NOVICE	INTRODUCTORY
Duration and intensity	Project is brief (less than two weeks) and addresses an immediate need without providing a long-term solution. Processes of investigation, planning, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration of impacts are weak. Minimal amount of time and intensity are provided or included.	The service-learning experience is carious out over a short time period (a few weeks), addresses an immediate need and provides only a start to a long-term solution. The processes of investigating community needs, planning, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration drive the project somewhat, resulting in limited time and intensity.
Link to curriculum	Project uses skills that can be found in the standards, but they are not the foundation from which the project grows. Skills incorporated into the experience are at lower levels of the hierarchy of learning. Service is not intentionally connected to learning and is seen as mainly an add-on or enrichment activity.	Students master basic skills through the service-learning project, but the link to curriculum is weak and not intentional. Experience does not align with the content standards and is not used to push learning to higher levels of application. Students are recognized on school records, but no formal school or district policy is in place identifying or promoting it to enhance learning.
Meaningful service	Students provide indirect service with no contact with population being served. Project is determined without a community needs assessment and does not lead to attainable and visible outcomes. Experience is not appropriate for students' age or developmental level, or the issue is not personally relevant. Students have little or no significant roles in service design.	Community needs assessment is done in isolation from the community. Project includes some contact with those being served. Outcomes are attainable and visible, but do little to contribute toward lasting change. Students do not understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed. Students have some voice and roles in service design.
Youth voice	The teacher determines the project with very limited or no student input. Task completion is determined and monitored by the teacher. The teacher evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience without the students' input.	The teacher determines the project and offers strong guidance in organizing and completing project tasks. Students are allowed to provide input into decisions, but the final determination is made by the teacher. The students have limited opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and decision-making skills.

EXPERIENCED	ADVANCED	
<p>The process of investigating community needs, planning, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration is used on a limited basis. Service-learning is conducted over a significant period of time. The project addresses a community need but falls short of achieving all learning outcomes.</p>	<p>The process of investigating community needs, planning, action, reflection and demonstration/celebration of learning and impacts on self and community is used consistently. Service-learning is conducted during blocks of time across a period of weeks or months, providing time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.</p>	Duration and intensity
<p>Project work leads students toward mastery of more complex skills in a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Instruction assists students in completion of projects, though the link may not be direct and intentional. Service-learning is an integral part of the academic expectations for students throughout the school or district.</p>	<p>Participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another. Service-learning is explicitly aligned with academic curricula; learning goals are clearly articulated. Students construct knowledge through challenging tasks in a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Service-learning is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.</p>	Link to curriculum
<p>Project addresses a real need connected to a personally relevant issue and provides direct contact with those being served. Outcomes are attainable and visible, but may not be highly valued by those being served in the school, local, or global community. Students have meaningful roles in project selection, design, and implementation.</p>	<p>Experiences are developmentally appropriate, address personally relevant issues, and encourage participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed. Interesting and engaging service activities lead to attainable and visible outcomes that have significant impact on participants and others. Students have leadership roles in project selection, design, and implementation.</p>	Meaningful service
<p>The teacher works with students in determining the project based on standards. All students work collaboratively to develop a project plan and take leadership in carrying out tasks. The teacher helps to shape decisions throughout the process, but places primary emphasis on student voice.</p>	<p>Youth are engaged in generating ideas, identifying learning outcomes, and decision-making during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Youth acquire knowledge and skills to enhance leadership and decision-making and are involved in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience. Youth and adults are involved in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.</p>	Youth voice

(Reprinted from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2009 modified rubric based on K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice by NYLC)

## National Standards for High Quality Service-Learning Assessment Rubric

	NOVICE	INTRODUCTORY
Diversity	Students' preconceptions and stereotypes are not challenged. Multiple perspectives are not intentionally sought or incorporated into service-learning experiences. Decisions are made by vote rather than consensus. The project lacks diversity of participants, partners, and activities.	Understanding of multiple perspectives is limited to tolerance and acceptance of others. Students' preconceptions are challenged on a limited basis but the project could do more to address engaging the perspective of recipients of the service (people or places). The project has limited diversity of participants, partners, and activities.
Partnerships	The project is determined and implemented with little involvement from community partners or is ground in meeting a need for service presented by the community partner or school. A shared vision and collaborative partnership has not been established or maintained.	Partnerships are few or limited. Limited interactions with community partners lead to meeting a minimal community need. The project reflects a partial shared vision with minimal collaborative work between the partners. Service is not designed to be reciprocal or of mutual benefit to both the servers and the served.
Reflection	Basic reflection is provided for at the end of the service-learning experience using one or two different methods (e.g., journal, discussion). Reflection is limited in depth and does not demonstrate complex analysis of broader social and civic issues. Examination of preconceptions and assumptions is not incorporated into the reflective process.	Reflection consists of documenting progress of the project and has no clear connection to the skills being developed. The project could do more to deepen the level of reflection for students and challenge them to identify, research, and discuss alternative solutions.
Progress monitoring	The teacher and students follow implementation plans without collecting data to guide decisions or measure impacts on the servers and the served. No clear connection exists to specific goals and learning outcomes.	The teacher assesses the outcomes of learning activities separately from the service-learning experience. The teacher and students gather evidence of progress, but do not base decisions on data collected in a formative or summative way.

**(Continued)**

EXPERIENCED	ADVANCED	
Some time is spent identifying and overcoming stereotypes and valuing different points of view. Students' preconceptions and stereotypes are somewhat challenged. Some collaboration incorporating multiple perspectives is developed. Service activities provide direct opportunities for diverse interactions and experiences.	The project has participants analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives, develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and decision-making, recognize and overcome stereotypes, and understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service. Decisions are made through a consensus process.	Diversity
Some communication and ongoing interaction with community partners is central to the project. Students work with partners to develop common goals. More opportunities could be provided to encourage students to see community members as collaborative partners and resources, and not just recipients of service.	A variety of partners are engaged. Partnerships engage frequent and regular communication, establish a shared vision and set common goals, and 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.	Partnerships
Meaningful reflection is planned and integral to the project and is used to teach or reinforce core academic skills or content. Reflection includes some emphasis on higher order thinking skills. Students are prepared for service-learning tasks in connection with skill instruction. The project challenges students to identify, research and implement alternative solutions	Participants think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions and examine a variety of social and civic issues. Participants examine preconceptions in understanding their roles and responsibilities as citizens. It occurs before, during, and after the experience and includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.	Reflection
Evidence collected provides a picture of students' progress throughout the service-learning experience and guides both instruction and project implementation. Students are involved in measuring impacts of their efforts.	Evidence of quality service-learning implementation and progress toward meeting specific goals and learning outcomes is collected from multiple sources throughout. Evidence is used to improve experiences and progress toward goals. Evidence of progress is communicated with the broader community to deepen the understanding of service-learning and ensure high quality practices. Students have significant roles in measuring impacts on themselves and those who are served.	Progress monitoring

(Reprinted from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2009 modified rubric based on K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice by NYLC)

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric Scoring

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Policy Development

#### 0 – 5

Policy development is critical to institutionalization and sustainability of service-learning efforts. Begin with organizing a leadership team with broad representation of all stakeholders, including the school board, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community partners to build consensus and understanding of service-learning as an effective strategy for school reform goals. Districtwide coordination is needed and is ideally done by a curriculum director or designated service-learning coordinator.

#### 6 – 10

Teachers that have mastered service-learning should serve as grade-span or building service-learning coordinators to provide support and guidance for other teachers, ensuring consistent and continuous utilization of service-learning in the curriculum. Including a stipend for the additional responsibility is a motivational strategy. Frequent and regular communication with the school board and promotion to the community through media and public school events demonstrating students' service-learning projects will help sustain support for service-learning. Collect and evaluate data on students that participate in service-learning to track student attendance, academic performance on standardized assessments, behavior, and other criteria to determine the effect of service-learning.

#### 11 – 15

Continue to monitor emerging state and national policies on education for alignment with service-learning. Work with state policymakers to model and develop state-level frameworks, guidance, and resources for institutionalizing service-learning activities.

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Policy Development

	1	2	3	SCORE
School board recognition	No official school board recognition or other recognition in support of service-learning program.	School board has occasionally acknowledged local service-learning activities.	School board has issued a strong resolution in recognition of the value of service-learning. It received and takes action on periodic reports on the service-learning initiative.	
Local financial support	Little or no financial support for the service-learning program from local funding sources.	Local funds are allocated to provide some support for service-learning activities, but no provisions to eventually support the program without federal assistance.	Local resources are allocated on an increasing annual basis to eventually culminate in the program's independence from federal funds.	
Staff development and hiring	Very limited provision for training or other administrative support for teachers involved in service-learning activities. New hires are not interviewed about service-learning.	Staff training and support are provided, but not on a consistent, ongoing basis. Candidates for employment are sometimes interviewed about service-learning, but not consistently.	Staff training is provided on a regular basis, consistent with best practices in the field. All candidates for administrative and teaching positions in the district are interviewed about service-learning knowledge and experience.	
Program coordination	Independent service-learning activities across the school district. No service-learning coordinator or director.	Occasional coordination across the district, but no central direction or planning.	Service-learning director or coordinator has been identified and provided with time and resources to effectively coordinate all service-learning activities.	
Participation policies	District policies or lack thereof result in very limited student and teacher participation in service-learning activities.	District policies ensure substantial participation of students and teachers, but only in selected courses or grade levels.	District policies ensure broad participation in service-learning across all grade levels and courses of study.	
			<b>TOTAL</b>	

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric (Continued)

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Balance with Learning

#### 0 – 5

While requiring students to serve a number of hours for volunteer activities is a step in the right direction, tying community service to learning requirements has been proven through numerous studies to benefit students' engagement, academic performance, and attendance. Work with teachers to align community service and volunteer activities to academic learning results while developing important workforce skills, such as leadership, communication, needs assessment, planning, teamwork, monitoring and evaluation.

#### 6 – 10

As an instructional strategy, service-learning works well with many school reforms and with the development of essential workforce skills. Policies that support service-learning as a preferred instructional and learning method, coupled with professional development opportunities and coaching support for teachers will help ensure quality implementation and continued alignment with learning results.

#### 11 – 15

Involving students with age-appropriate responsibilities and input at all levels is a useful strategy and provides additional opportunities for students to develop leadership skills. Students can participate in school- or districtwide service-learning committees, report to the school board, and take ownership in their learning. Continue to monitor application of service-learning to ensure curriculum alignment.

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric (Continued)

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Balance with Learning

	1	2	3	SCORE
Balance in emphasis on service and learning	Primary focus is on student service (e.g., hours) rather than on student learning.	Student learning is acknowledged as an important purpose of service-learning, but is still secondary to the concern with community service.	There is a documented balance in the program's emphasis on community service and student learning.	
Alignment of student learning with Maine Learning Results and Common Core	Academic learning objectives are very general or not specifically linked to learning results or common core requirements.	Academic learning objectives have been linked to the Maine Learning Results or Common Core, but not at the level of the specific benchmarks.	Academic learning objectives are closely aligned with the specific standards and benchmarks of the Maine Learning Results or Common Core requirements.	
Civic leadership development and social growth	There are no clearly defined goals for student civic leadership development or social growth.	Some general goals for student civic leadership development and social growth have been identified.	A set of specific civic leadership and social competencies have been identified and targeted.	
Students' roles in service projects	Students do not participate in assessing community needs or selecting the service project.	Students participate to a limited extent in assessing community needs, selecting and planning the project, implementing and evaluation with significant teacher direction.	Students are fully engaged in every stage of the project: assessing needs, project selection, planning, implementation, and evaluation.	
Number of students impacted	Low levels of student participation limit the overall impact of the service-learning program on student learning in the district.	Substantial participation of students at selected grade levels broadens the impact of service-learning in the district.	Participation of students in service-learning activities across all grade levels ensures maximum impact of the program on student learning.	
			<b>TOTAL</b>	

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric (Continued)

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Impact on the Community

#### 0 – 4

Invite students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders to participate in an asset mapping exercise to identify potential community experts, organizations, and other partners, and how they might support to service-learning activities. Personal connections are the most common way to identify and expand local partnerships. Consider organizing a community partner fair, along the lines of a career fair, where local agencies and organizations can demonstrate what they do and how they might be able to collaborate with the district's schools. Develop basic agreements with community partners to establish expectations, roles, responsibilities, communications, and evaluation criteria.

#### 5 – 8

When working with community partners, make sure they understand the district's requirements (e.g., school calendar, curricula requirements, learning goals) and that the district understands the community partner's needs. Good communication from the outset and including the community partners in the communication loops helps avoid misunderstanding and frustration down the road. Including community partners in evaluation and reflection of service outcomes will offer a valuable perspective and feedback for making continuous improvements to service-learning programs and activities.

#### 9 – 12

Make sure the evaluation criteria measure outcomes (i.e., the impact the service activity had on the beneficiaries) and not just the outputs (e.g., the number of cans collected, the miles of trails cleaned). Community impact assessments should be a collaborative effort between the school and the community. It is important in collaborative partnerships to regularly and continuously assess communications, roles and responsibilities, and academic integrity, then make improvements to strengthen the partnership and the impact on all members of the collaborative partnership.

## Service-Learning Readiness Rubric (Continued)

(Adapted from *Illinois Service-Learning Readiness Rubric* by the Illinois State Board of Education. Scoring and recommendations added by the Maine Commission for Community Service.)

### Impact on the Community

	1	2	3	SCORE
School-community partnerships	Teachers and students have only minimal experience with community partners and are just beginning to learn about community issues and resources.	Teachers and students have previous experience with community partners and have some knowledge of community issues, resources, and history.	Teachers and students have developed a rich knowledge of community resources and issues, and have exchanged ideas with a number of potential community partners.	
School-community communications	One-way communication or no clear line of communication between school district and community-based organizations.	Lines of communication are established and remain open during the project. Feedback and discussion are encouraged throughout.	Communication remains open during the project with continuous evaluation to respond to issues in a timely manner.	
Partnership roles and responsibilities	The teacher sets up a project and offers it to the community partners. Then students implement the service plan at the community partner site or with partner assistance. Community partners have little involvement in the educational aspects of the project.	The roles and responsibilities of the school and community partners have been discussed and mutually accepted before the project begins, with increasing cooperation among school and community partners for both the service and learning components of the project.	Community partners see themselves as significant partners in improving education and the school partners accept their responsibility to improve the community. Community partners and the school have learned that students are a valuable resource. Roles and responsibilities have been discussed and mutually accepted in the planning stages of the service project.	
Evaluation of service outcomes	The evaluation plan for the project is developed by the teacher near the end of the project or after the service project is completed in order to comply with the request of the funding agency.	The evaluation plan is created before the project begins and students have significant input into the design of the plan and its implementation. Evaluation takes place during as well as after the service, and is used to make needed improvements in the project, as well as to make recommendations for future projects.	The evaluation plan is created before the project begins. Students, community partners, and teachers have significant input into the design and implementation of the plan. The plan includes an evaluation of the impact of the service on those being served, as well as the impact on those doing the service. Evaluation results are shared with all stakeholders, including community partners, parents, faculty, school board members, and the public.	
				<b>TOTAL</b>

## School District Service-Learning Leadership Quality Assessment Rubric

(Adapted from *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of LEA Service-Learning Leadership*  
by the Maryland Student Service Alliance of the Maryland State Department of Education.)

Scoring legend located at the end of the rubric.

SCORE	
Professional Development and Training	
	<p><b>1. Central office staff members are educated so they can engage students in high quality service-learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No education evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Brief overview of service-learning practice and policy presented</li> <li><b>10</b> Training presented that explores service-learning basics (preparation, action, reflection) and policy implications in school system</li> <li><b>15</b> Comprehensive training provided that includes service-learning basics, quality standards, system policies, and the connection of service-learning to the curriculum and other education reform initiatives</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2. School administrators are educated so they can engage students in high quality service-learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No education evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Brief overview of service-learning practice and policy presented</li> <li><b>10</b> Training presented that explores service-learning basics (preparation, action, reflection) and policy implications in school system</li> <li><b>15</b> Comprehensive training provided that includes service-learning basics, quality standards, system policies, research standards, and the connection of service-learning to the curriculum and other education reform initiatives</li> </ul>
	<p><b>3. School-based personnel are educated so they can engage students in high quality service-learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No education evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Brief overview of service-learning practice and policy presented</li> <li><b>10</b> Training presented that explores service-learning basics (preparation, action, reflection) and policy implications in the school system</li> <li><b>15</b> Comprehensive training provided which includes service-learning basics, quality standards, system policies, and the connection of service-learning to the curriculum and other education reform initiatives</li> </ul>
	<p><b>4. Individual or group training offered for administrators, teachers, or community-based organizations needing additional support with service-learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No support evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Staff members needing support receive additional materials on service-learning (e.g., handouts, website)</li> <li><b>10</b> Individuals or groups encouraged to attend existing training opportunities and given materials</li> <li><b>15</b> A training plan is developed and implemented based on the need of the individual (e.g., one-to-one mentoring relationship)</li> </ul>

## SCORE

## Accountability (Instructional Design, School-Level Support, Organizational Roles and Responsibilities)

	<p><b>1. Staff associated with service-learning (e.g., service-learning coordinator, curriculum specialists, supervisors) are aware of and utilizing standards for high quality service-learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> Service-learning standards not used</li> <li><b>5</b> Standards for service-learning made available to staff (e.g., lending library or website)</li> <li><b>10</b> All relevant staff aware of standards for high quality service-learning</li> <li><b>15</b> All staff completely aware of and utilizing standards for all service-learning</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2. Quality of service-learning is monitored in schools by central office personnel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No monitoring evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Some district schools reviewed or visited to assess quality</li> <li><b>10</b> A rubric or standard for quality service-learning is applied to some schools each year</li> <li><b>15</b> A rubric or standard for quality service-learning is applied to all schools each school year</li> </ul>
	<p><b>3. Quality of infused service-learning curriculum or projects developed by school system is assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No assessment evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Projects are assessed to determine if they met basic or minimum service-learning criteria (preparation, action, reflection)</li> <li><b>10</b> Service-learning projects are assessed according to the high quality service-learning standards and are expected to meet all of the standards</li> <li><b>15</b> Service-learning projects are assessed using a rubric to measure high quality</li> </ul>
	<p><b>4. Service-learning is implemented in each school as specified by the district plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No verification process in place</li> <li><b>5</b> Teachers verify classroom implementation</li> <li><b>10</b> School administration monitors individual classroom implementation</li> <li><b>15</b> Implementation observed and documented by school administration and verified by central office personnel</li> </ul>
	<p><b>5. Annual assessment or review of service-learning implementation plan performed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No assessment conducted</li> <li><b>5</b> Assessment conducted by school district service-learning coordinator only</li> <li><b>10</b> Assessment conducted involving school system personnel only</li> <li><b>15</b> Comprehensive assessment conducted including feedback from community partners, students, parents, other school system staff, and other stakeholders</li> </ul>
	<p><b>6. Student completion of service-learning documented</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>0</b> No documentation evident</li> <li><b>5</b> Service-learning documentation available to school personnel only</li> <li><b>10</b> Service-learning documentation available to students, parents, and school personnel</li> <li><b>15</b> Service-learning documentation in students' permanent records and available to all</li> </ul>

## School District Service-Learning Leadership Quality Assessment Rubric (Continued)

(Adapted from *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of LEA Service-Learning Leadership*  
by the Maryland Student Service Alliance of the Maryland State Department of Education.)

SCORE	
Communication	
	<p><b>1. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the district service-learning coordinator and other central office staff</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>2. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the central office and principals</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>3. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the district service-learning coordinator and school-based coordinators</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>4. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the content area directors and the schools or department chairs</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>

SCORE	
Communication (Continued)	
	<p><b>5. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the central office and students and their families</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>6. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the central office and the school board</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>7. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the central office and service-learning committee</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>
	<p><b>8. Communication mechanisms are established for exchange of information about service-learning between the central office and community organizations</b></p> <p><b>0</b> No communication evident</p> <p><b>5</b> An annual communication on service-learning conducted (e.g., meeting, handout, survey)</p> <p><b>10</b> Periodic communication on service-learning conducted (2 - 4 times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, handouts, announcements, reports, surveys)</p> <p><b>15</b> Service-learning practices and policies featured routinely (5 or more times a year) through a variety of communication mediums (e.g., meetings, newsletters, announcements, emails, memos, reports)</p>

### Scoring legend

“0” for any indicator	“5” or “10” for any indicator	“15” for any indicator
School and district should develop a corrective action	School and district should review and develop an improvement plan	Demonstrates proficiency

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## Additional Information

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*Advancing Volunteerism. Strengthening Communities.*

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The Maine Commission for Community Service builds capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities by funding programs, developing managers of volunteers and service-learning practitioners, raising awareness of sector issues, and promoting service as a strategy.

