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**SERVICE LEARNING:
The Classroom Companion to
Character Education**

A Resource Guide for Teachers & Facilitators

by Arlene Ida and Jean Rose





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Arlene D. Ida

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FOREWORD

Today it is possible for America's teenagers to finish high school yet never be asked to participate responsibly in life in or out of school, never be encouraged to spend time with older people...to help a child, or even to do something meaningful at the school itself.

Ernest Boyer

Modern educators have many directors. The traditional education leadership requires specific curricula, the content of which has in recent decades increased exponentially. National and state officials have mandated far reaching testing systems and character education across grades levels and subject areas. Employers are vociferously demanding graduates with the skills necessary for the world of work. In this book, we hope to encourage educators to embrace service learning pedagogy as a powerful tool to help them meet all of the demands upon them. Service learning makes academic subjects meaningful and memorable to students as it fosters young men and women who are prepared and experienced in taking on real responsibilities and making real life decisions. Through service learning, students responsibly apply curriculum knowledge and understanding to contribute positively to the well being of their schools and communities. To quote one student, "Service learning has been an unforgettable, real life lesson!"

For nearly thirty years we facilitated a service learning program in the capital region that began with a few students and senior citizens coming together at Scotia-Glenville High School and expanded to eventually include thousands of K-12 students in Albany, Schenectady, Scotia-Glenville, Troy and Schodack. During the many years of our collaboration we designed and implemented a myriad of service learning/character education activities long before they became the issues of reform education they are today. All of the ideas and activities we suggest are the result of our own trial and error over the years. We present them to you with our insights and suggestions as to how they can be most effective. We learned to find activity ideas everywhere—in the comments of students, colleagues, community members and local media, and in the practice of our colleagues. We adapted them to fit our needs. We hope you will do the same with the information presented here.

We wish to express our gratitude to the dedicated professionals with whom we have worked over the years. Without them, our success would not be possible:

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Brandeis National Study on Service Learning, 1997 Report to Scotia-Glenville High School Chris Kingsley, Brandeis University

Specifically, Scotia-Glenville High School's Learn and Serve Institute Initiative clearly showed positive, statistically significant impacts on more than ten different measures. These include:

Civic/Social Attitudes

- a measure of attitudes toward personal and social responsibility
- acceptance of diversity
- service leadership (a student's sense of her/his own ability and commitment to organize and lead service projects)
- work orientation

Volunteer Behavior

- total hours of volunteer work in last six months
- involvement in at least one form of volunteer activity in last six months

Educational Impacts

- personal sense of educational competence (e.g. a student's sense of his/her ability to succeed in school)
- school engagement
- Core GPA (English, math, social studies and science)
- Course failures (a reduction in failures in one or more academic subjects in a semester)

The range of impacts and their high level of significance strongly suggests that your efforts are making a difference for your students and that your approaches to service learning can be a valuable means of strengthening and/or enriching the educational processes at your school.

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