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“Character is what you know you are,
not what others think you have.”

Marva Collins



CHAPTER ONE: understanding the concept

Service Learning is:

[Character Education](#)

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Service Learning is

students learning and developing through integrated classroom and service activities. Students utilize the skills and knowledge they are acquiring in their classes to make a positive difference in their schools or communities. Service learning provides real life application of academic knowledge and skills to real life community or school needs.

This text presents a variety of service learning models. All involve teachers and students designing and carrying out activities that utilize their academic learning to make a positive difference in their schools or communities. Some service learning activities focus upon a specific unit of study such as earth science students carrying out water quality studies and presenting their results to appropriate local agencies. Others utilize a whole range of classroom-based skills such as high school Spanish students developing and teaching an after school Spanish language program for elementary students.

Sometimes larger groups of students, perhaps even an entire school will carry out long or short-term, theme-based service learning activities. In such cases, students organize, plan, develop and carry out activities to help meet a perceived school or community need. An example of such a whole school activity would be a promotion of tolerance and peace campaign.

Service Learning must be carefully differentiated from volunteerism and/or community service. Volunteering involves performing a service or good work without pay of any kind. Community service is volunteering for a defined community that might be a school or village or city. Service learning is community service that directly connects to the knowledge and skills learned in our classrooms. In service learning, the interwoven service and learning outcomes derive from a singular, distinct pedagogy.

Chapter One **Service Learning is Character Education**

Character Education holds that there are widely shared, pivotally important core ethical values—such as trustworthiness, citizenship, caring, honesty, responsibility, fairness and respect for others and self that form the basis of good character. As members of a caring, service learning classroom community, students learn to divide tasks among members of a cooperative team and to reach consensus in a class discussion or team meeting. They make real choices, solve real problems and keep real commitments. Service learning breaks all of the common barriers in our education system. It integrates ages, races, cultures, ability levels and social strata. Students gain self-respect, empathy and civic responsibility.

All students have an equal opportunity to succeed. Service learning is meaningful, memorable character education.

Reflective thought and discussion of the service activity is essential to character education. Service learning facilitators must insure that reflection as well as the activity process includes awareness and practice of good character. Although all service learning activities lend themselves to character education, some activities particularly target character development.

We have noted these character development activities with the symbol:



“You can’t always control what goes on outside. But you can always control what goes on inside.”

Wayne Dyer



Chapter One **Service Learning Is School To Work**

School-to-Work is an approach to learning based on the proven concept that education is most useful for careers when students apply academic skills and knowledge in real life/real work situations.

When students work in non-profit agencies, these partners become centers of learning, providing real life experiences that foster the development of the skills and competencies identified as important for employability and responsible citizenship.

The United States Department of Labor detailed what it considered behaviors that work “requires of schools.”

These **SCANS: FOUNDATION SKILLS** and **COMPETENCIES**, the fundamental goals of school-to-work programs, are also critical to service learning.

SCANS **Secretary's** **Commission** **on** **Achieving** **Necessary** **Skills**

S C A N S

Foundation Skills

Basic

- Reading
- Writing
- Arithmetic
- Mathematics
- Listening
- Speaking

Thinking

- Creative Thinking
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Seeing in Mind's Eye
- Knowing How to Learn
- Reasoning

Personal Qualities

- Responsibility
- Self-esteem
- Social
- Self-management
- Integrity/Honesty

Competencies

Resources

- Allocates time, money, material, facility + human resources

Information

- Acquires + evaluates information
- Organizes + maintains information
- Interprets + communicates information
- Uses computers to process information

Interpersonal

- Participates as a team member
- Teaches others
- Serves clients/customers
- Exercises leadership
- Negotiates decisions
- Works w/cultural diversity

Systems

- Understands systems
- Monitors + corrects performance
- Improves + designs systems

Technology

- Selects technology
- Applies technology to task
- Maintains + troubleshoots technology



Chapter One **Service Learning is Collaboration**

The breath and depth of Service Learning as an educational tool is expansive. It can be as simple as a school bulletin board created by a classroom teacher and students to teach others in the school what they have learned in a recent lesson. It can also be as complicated as a long term, school/community project that involves students in other K-12 schools and adults from higher education and the community. Most service learning activities fall somewhere in between these two examples.

For many years, we coordinated a service learning collaborative that includes a myriad of models. Three inner city school districts, one suburban district, one rural district, two higher education institutions and multiple community agencies comprise the collaboration. Within this collaboration, teachers and students find the means and the opportunities to develop and implement service learning activities that meet their own criteria. In addition, all participants, whether they be teachers who choose to carry out a small, short term activity in their classrooms or service learning facilitators of large scale community projects, have the opportunity to come together for discussion, expert assistance and collaborative partners.

In this publication, we have included a wide variety of service learning collaborations, models and examples. You should be able to find helpful hints for whatever type of service learning you have in mind.

Chapter One **Service Learning is Effective Facilitators**

As in all classrooms, the role of the teacher/facilitator is key. Students will follow his/her lead in attitudes toward the class and program in general, toward each other and even themselves. Thorough in-depth preparation is essential. Facilitators must pay careful attention to materials and supplies and physical structures as well as the activities themselves. Facilitators must have stamina and belief in the worth of each activity and in each individual involved.

Facilitators risk an enormous investment of self and must do so without expectation of reward. They share ownership and responsibility for the class with the class members, but never assume that tasks have been completed. When an activity is in progress, facilitators must monitor it closely, providing encouragement and support as needed.



Facilitators navigate a very delicate balance. They must be sensitive to the needs of individuals and respond specifically to those needs. Students who have the skills and opportunity to carry out a task to which they have committed themselves must be allowed to fail if that failure is due to a lack of time and/or effort on their part. They must learn the consequences of **NOT** keeping a commitment. On the other hand, facilitators can not let the entire program be damaged by one student's irresponsibility, nor should a student fail because he or she has not received the proper training or understanding. The facilitators should frame service learning in such a way that students will have responsible, leadership roles. They must also insure that the community partners are supportive, committed and able to provide the experiences needed for student learning.

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Chapter One

Facilitators should at all times be consciously nurturing the student toward self-reliance. They should practice using the word "we." As the leaders of the group, they do have a lot to say about the activity, but should never sound like dictators. If possible, facilitators should have a partner, another teacher and/or agency representative who shares their vision and can provide mutual support and encouragement. Collaboration with a partner who shares your goals is in and of itself a deeply satisfying experience; the facilitation is richer for having two minds and bodies instead of one. Such a partnership provides students with an excellent collaborative model for democratic responsibility and decision making as well as richer, more varied reflective experience.

In essence, the task of the facilitator is to insure that students make sense of what happened. This "sense" should take place on a number of levels—self-knowledge, academic integration and community relationships—whether that community be classroom peers or co-workers at the work/service site.

“If you don’t run your own life,
somebody else will.”

John Atkinson

Chapter One

Service Learning is Competent Student Leaders

One of the most important aspects of service learning is the leadership role of students. To nurture such leadership, facilitators must model effective leadership strategies at all times in both the service and the reflection components of the activity. All students should learn the skills of group leadership:



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Group Leadership Skills

-
- Listening actively
 - Generating respect among all participants
 - Forming effective groups
 - **NEVER** allow students to choose their own groups. Spend time with your group member selections. Create a balance that will work. Aim for diversity in age and ability, but try for harmonious combinations.
 - Being firm and resourceful, insuring conversation is respectful and fair
 - Allow no interruptions, monopolizing, put downs.
 - Call time when necessary to keep discussion flowing.
 - Framing open-ended questions
 - In what ways might we....
 - What are your thoughts concerning....
 - Insuring silent meditation time before discussion
 - Processing all service and reflection activities
 - Add think time before processing.
 - Don't be afraid of silence...wait for answers.



SERVICE LEARNING INTRODUCTION

Chapter One



Creating Competent Student Leaders Animals Lead

Objective

To offer students an opportunity to explore and discuss with peers the qualities of leadership.



Materials

Six large pieces of cardboard, colored markers or pictures of animals.

Physical Setting

Space for students to move about freely.

Description

Create six large signs with a symbol, picture or name of one of the following animals on each sign: owl, ostrich, fox, snake, giraffe, monkey. Students should think carefully and individually about the characteristics of each animal. Then ask them to stand under the sign of the animal that best represents their own style of leading. They should make their own individual decisions. Then place a flip chart sheet under each sign. Students near that sign should list the leadership characteristics of that animal. Some students may be alone and some may be with others. Then the whole group should discuss the resulting lists and agree to add or delete the characteristics.

- Would anyone now wish to change his or her original choice? Why?

Processing

Ask:

- Does any one animal have the perfect characteristics? Why or why not?
- If you now show them a sign of a human
- Can you develop a list of desired qualities of a leader?
 - Are some of these characteristics more important and/or more important for a man or a woman? Why or why not?

Variations

Heroes Lead

Rather than animals, you might use famous people of the past such as: Barbara Walters, Oprah Winfrey, John Kennedy, Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Winston Churchill, etc.



SERVICE LEARNING INTRODUCTION

Chapter One



Creating Competent Student Leaders Youth Leadership Seminar

Objective

To gain leadership skills as a member of a diverse multi-age, multi-ethnic committed group.

Materials

Variable depending on chosen activities.

Physical Setting

Conference facilities with accommodations for both large and small group work.

Description

This is a one-day seminar attended by 6 students in grades 4-12 selected by 20 schools in our service learning collaboration. The day's objectives include that students from each school will through interactive, interage activities observe student leader role models and develop their own concepts of leadership. In addition, they will leave the day with a plan for leadership in their own schools. Students sit in assigned seats at small round tables accommodating 10 persons. Participants at each table are diverse in age and home school and headed by an appointed student leader who trained for this important position. (The group leaders previously attended an evening training at which they were the participants with the trainer as leader to model leading the activities.) The day begins with a large group activity to establish objectives and a sense of community and then small group activities culminating in a large group share-out and closure activity.

The following **Youth Leadership Seminar** proved very successful.

8:30 a.m. Registration and Pastry

9:00 a.m. Human Treasure Hunt [Section 2 page 2.11](#)

9:20 a.m. Partner Introductions [Section 2 page 2.9](#)

9:45 a.m. Group Name [page 2.10](#)

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Chapter One



**Creating Competent Student Leaders
Youth Leadership Seminar**

Description

10:00 a.m. Circles for Success With facilitation by the student leader, small group members brainstorm the qualities of effective leaders. They must agree on the six most important qualities. (Insures discussion) Then they receive a sheet of flipchart paper with a small circle in the middle surrounded by a very large circle. The center small circle reads, "Qualities of a Good Leader." Using magazines, paper, scissors, glue, colored markers, group participants create a poster to represent their groups' conclusions. They must agree on what qualities they want to display, how they will represent them and what tasks each group member will do. Each member of small group signs the completed Circle Poster.

10:40 a.m. Share-Out Two students from each small group present their group's Circle for Success and then turn to the large circle audience for comments. They then display their Circle in a prominent spot in the room.

12:00 p.m. LUNCH at tables with own schoolmates

12:30 p.m. Journey Maps In same-school small groups, students develop step-by-step plans for their leadership in their school's service learning activities.

1:00 p.m. Share-out Journey Maps

1:20 p.m. Au Revoir Circle **Section 3 page 3.38**

1:45 p.m. Student Evaluations **Section 5 page 5.29**

Students complete a response form to evaluate the day. It is important to require this before students leave. This is the best (and sometimes ONLY) way to be sure all students complete an evaluative activity.

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Chapter One



**Creating Competent Student Leaders
Youth Leadership Seminar**

Processing

Each activity in this day has processing imbedded in it, and the full day is processed through written evaluation. Many facilitators, however, often take the opportunity to process it more completely the next day in class or even on the bus ride returning to school. Questions they ask include:

- How will you be a better leader after attending today?
- Which of the activities might help us in our school and why?

Variations

We have tried many models of leadership training. Each has its own good points.

This one represents two of our strong beliefs:

- 1) Students should develop their own concepts of good leadership.
- 2) They do so more effectively when they are members of a diverse group with specific time dedicated to leadership development.

CHAPTER TWO: researching the efficacy of service learning

The research is summarized as follows:

Research in the field of service learning has increased multifold in the last few years.

It has been correlated to three primary areas of study:

- Personal/Social Development
- Civic Engagement
- Academic Achievement

The Impact on Student Personal and Social Development

- SL has a positive effect on the personal development of public school youth.
- Students who participate in SL are less likely to engage in "risk" behaviors.
- SL has a positive effect on students' interpersonal development and the ability to relate to culturally diverse groups.

The Impact on Civic Responsibility

- SL helps to develop students' sense of civic and social responsibility and their citizenship skills.
- SL provides opportunities for students to become active, positive contributors to society.

The Impact on Student Academic Learning

- SL helps students acquire academic skills and knowledge.
- Students who participate in SL are more engaged in their studies and more motivated to learn.
- SL is associated with increased student attendance.

In addition, recent research has determined that service learning helps students to become more knowledgeable and realistic about future careers. And finally, but perhaps most significantly, we now can prove that service learning results in greater mutual respect between teachers and students and improves the overall school climate. Consequently community members have more positive perceptions of schools and youth.

(Learning in Deed <http://www.learningindeed.org>)