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“Every person is the architect of their own character.”

George Boardman

Getting Started:

All children in America should have a “snapshot” in their pockets, a positive picture of themselves and their lives in relation to the American dream. If our kids don’t believe that they can change the world when they leave school, then perhaps we ought to say that our education has not been powerful enough.

Peter Negrone

Facilitators who decide to introduce service learning pedagogy are often very excited and enthusiastic. They and their students delight in a marvelous idea, and they jump into a complex activity without the experience to make it successful. Though we applaud such energy and caring, we suggest that facilitators/teachers set aside appropriate time to think about the following initial considerations:



Questions:

1. What are the **limitations**, if any, for a service activity in my class?
2. What are the learning **objectives** of this course and how can I insure that our service learning will foster them?
3. What are the prerequisite **conditions** for service learning activities and how can I accomplish them?

Limitations

Objectives

Conditions



Question One **What are the limitations, if any, for a service activity in my class?**

As young children we instinctively know that we must crawl before we can walk or run. This is a truism for beginning service learning activities as well. **START SMALL**. Consider the time, number of people involved, costs, etc. Experience has demonstrated that when teachers and students take on small, easily doable service projects, they not only understand the curriculum connection, but they also feel great pride in their success. They learn from the experience and thus are better able and more eager to expand and improve their service. A small activity also offers more opportunity for student leadership because students need to build their skills through a gradual, experiential process. If a facilitator/teacher and students take on a large beginning activity, the students are often not equipped to play the key leadership roles, thus making burdensome work for the facilitator while reducing the benefits of the experience for the students. Often the most successful service learning projects start as small enterprises and grow from there.

sTART SMALL

Question Two What are the learning objectives of this course and how can I insure that our service learning will foster them?

The primary responsibility of teachers/facilitators is the learning of their students. It is critical for teachers to remember that the academic learning objectives should never be secondary to the service activities of the classroom. Therefore the first consideration of service learning teachers/facilitators should be the integration of the service activities into the academic curriculum. Teachers should be aware that there are basically **three strategies** for such curriculum integration.

The Three Strategies

The first

is students teaching others. This strategy is applicable across all curricula and grade levels. As every educator is aware, Glasser's research established the learning pyramid which states:

Students remember:

- 10%** of what they read
- 20%** of what they hear
- 30%** of what they see
- 50%** of what they hear AND see
- 70%** of what they discuss with others
- 80%** of what they experience by doing
- 90%** of what they teach to others

Every time students articulate knowledge, explain a concept, or guide the solution of a math problem, they are coming to a better understanding of the subject themselves.

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Question Two

A second

strategy for curriculum integration is students creating and or developing a product that will be useful to others. Family and Consumer Science students who create a quilt and donate it to the domestic violence shelter are using their practice of important skills to benefit someone else. Math students who learn fractions through adapting recipes and then utilize their results to make bread for senior citizens, and art students who together with math students design and create a Japanese meditative garden for their community are all examples of service learning through product creation.

A third

strategy for curriculum integration is students providing a service and/or solving a community problem. Science and math students who complete important water quality studies and present their results to the appropriate community agencies are providing the people of their region with a valuable service. Students who research the pros and cons of a new power plant and present both sides to a school/community forum are also assisting their community to solve a community problem.

When service learning is thoughtfully integrated into academic curriculum, significant learning takes place. There is strong evidence that former students who played a significant role in service learning during their schooling often recall the activity with pride for many years to come. The activity had been meaningful to them and thus the associated learning remains memorable.



Question Three What are the prerequisite conditions for service learning activities and how can I insure such conditions are in place?

Before effective service learning can take place, students must feel that they are members of a safe, comfortable, learning community. There are numerous activities recommended for establishing and maintaining such a community.

We strongly suggest that facilitators utilize at least one of the following activities before embarking on service learning as an educational strategy.

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**Creating Community
Name Stories**

Objective _____
To help students get to know each other in a fun, non-threatening, quick manner.

Materials _____
None.

Physical Setting _____
Comfortable circle.

Description _____
When storyteller Becky Holder first suggested we try this activity, we thought it too simple. We quickly learned we were wrong. It is a very powerful tool in establishing group comfort and familiarity. We have not found a better activity for helping students learn each others' names. The facilitator explains that each person will tell a brief (2 minutes) "story" about his/her name. The story centers upon first, middle or last name. Popular themes involve nick-names, name origins, or personal responses. The facilitator should model his/her "story" first. One participant volunteers to go next and then chooses whether the group will move left or right. Participants often tell delightful stories that provide insight into their personalities.

Processing _____
This activity processes as it goes. The facilitator needs to be encouraging, pleased with all "stories", and keep the activity moving. At the end, the facilitator makes brief congratulatory remarks, provides opportunity for comment and asks, *what connections did we find?*

Variations _____
There are many other introductory activities that focus upon learning names of group participants. An old but effective one has each participant choose an adjective that describes himself/herself and also begins with the same letter as his/her first name.

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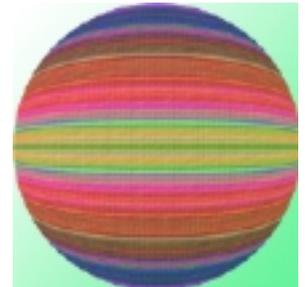
**Creating Community
Rainbow Circles**

Objective _____

To help students feel a sense of belonging and begin to reflect and share.

Materials _____

Have available about twice as many 12" pieces of ribbons as you have participants and metal or plastic circles 8-10 inches in diameter. (One for every 12 participants.) Ribbons should be a wide variety of textures and multi-colored patterns.



Physical Setting _____

Space for comfortable circles of 10-12.

Description _____

Facilitator explains that in many cultures, a circle has historically been a special symbol of perfection, equality and/or eternity. From a bag of multi-colored ribbons, each person chooses a ribbon that represents himself/herself—whether it is his/her personality or his/her participation in a service activity. The facilitator goes first and models. This is key because the quality of the first ribbon "story" will be echoed by all of the others. After each person explains his/her choice, he/she ties his/her ribbon to the circle and passes it to the person next to him.

Processing _____

At the conclusion the facilitator asks each group to draw some conclusions about its finished ring: Similarities? Differences? Discuss how the ring represents the diversity of the group members who come together to act as one team to make a positive difference. After the discussion, each group adds its ring to a display that will remain prominent throughout the group's work. If there are several, facilitators may wish to ask for comparisons among them.

Variations _____

Participants sometimes choose to make something to put on the circle that can later be worn home (such as a necklace). Thus the participant takes something symbolic of the experience home with him as he/she takes home the skills and experiences learned during the activity to utilize at later dates.

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**Creating Community
Partner Introductions**

Objective _____

To get to know each other and to begin to feel comfortable speaking to group.

Materials _____

5 x 7 cards, pencils or pens.

Physical Setting _____

Adequate space for students to sit in a circle and see each other.

Description _____

Pair participants in a low risk manner (same birthday season) and give each partner a 5x7 card and a pencil. As the facilitator refers to a large model that all can see, he/she explains that each person will interview a partner. Choose appropriate questions for partners to ask and place them in the corners of the card. In the center goes the person's name, school and grade. Questions ask for non-threatening information (favorite pastime, animal, season, song, musician, entertainer, place, subject, food, happy memory, dream, fantasy vacation, accomplishment). Allow about 3-6 minutes for partners to interview each other. If there is an uneven number in the group, the facilitator interviews a partner. The facilitator models the introduction by either introducing his/her partner or himself/herself to the group. Each individual places a hand on the shoulder of his partner and then introduces him/her to the group. The introduction should take about one minute and include specific details, but it should not get bogged down in a lengthy account.

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**Creating Community
Partner Introductions**

Processing _____

Ask:

- In what ways are we similar?
- Can we draw some general conclusions about this group?
- What surprised you?

At this time, it is sometimes appropriate for the group to select a group name based on some of the information they have shared. This is particularly effective if this group will be working together over a period of time.

Variations _____

There may be times when it is more effective for group members to introduce themselves. Be careful when you do this; however, it may be time consuming.

“Share our similarities—celebrate our differences.”

M. Scott Peck

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Creating Community
Human Treasure Hunt

Objective

To learn about each other quickly and discover commonalities while having fun.

Materials

HTH Sheets (A different master for every 8-10 participants), pencils.

Physical Setting

Space for individuals to move about freely.

Description

This is by far the most well liked, universally applicable introductory activity. It is highly effective as a mixer and comfort builder with almost any group of people whether the number of people is eight or one hundred. It gets everyone moving about in a non-threatening situation where they speak and laugh with a good proportion of the participants. Prepare beforehand lists of ten to twenty "treasures" for which participants must "hunt." If there are many participants, some can receive duplicate lists, but if the number of participants is fewer than twenty, each list should be unique. Every list contains items applicable to everyone and some that apply only to a few. You may include a very special, non-threatening fact about a particular participant such as someone who has six sisters or has won an award. You can also target the hunt to highlight a specific subject or theme. For service learning activities, each list should contain one or two service treasures. For example, an item might say, "find someone who has helped an elderly neighbor."

Suggestions for "treasures" include:

Find someone who:

- owns a blue bathrobe, red slippers, a maroon car, a wig
- fought in WWII (Korean, Vietnam, Gulf) War
- was born in California (New York, outside the US, at home)
- went to church (movies, restaurant, concert, shopping mall) last week

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Creating Community
Human Treasure Hunt

Description

- can fly a plane (drive a truck, ride a motorcycle, water ski, golf, roller skate/blade, ride horseback, do Karate, train an animal, canoe, sail)
- likes spinach (brussel sprouts, lima beans, caviar, peanut butter and banana)
- loves Bruce Springsteen (Mariah Carey, Tiger Woods, Britney Spears)
- has lived in Florida (Oregon, Europe, Brazil, New Jersey)
- has green (blue, brown, gray) eyes
- has a garden (dog, cat, horse, fish, turtle, Mercedes, six grandchildren)
- plays golf, baseball, tennis, soccer, football, Bridge, the piano, trumpet, violin,
- is wearing nail polish (contacts, yellow socks, a belt, four earrings)

Participants move about the room attempting to find the "treasures" listed on their sheets. They must ask other participants questions based upon their lists. They can not put another participant's name on their sheet without asking him or her, even if they know it to be the truth. They may use the same person only **ONCE** on their sheets. The first person to complete his/her sheet wins; the second comes in second, etc. Wait until 10-12 people have finished and then call a stop to the "hunt." Give out inexpensive prizes.

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Creating Community
Human Treasure Hunt

Processing

Wait until everyone is seated.

Ask:

- What treasures could not be found?

Inquire if anyone in the room fits that description and point out any who do. Repeat this question until you have covered all those "treasures" not found. Other possible questions include:

- What surprised you? What treasures were easiest to find? Why?
- Were treasures that you expected to find in one age group found in another?
- Did you find individuals with whom you have something in common? Who? What do you share?
- How do you feel now that you have completed this activity?

When processing this activity within a small group, have each participant read his list of finds. Such sharing brings delighted discoveries of shared characteristics or experiences and gives everyone information into the character of the group as a whole.

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**“No matter what accomplishments
you make—somebody helped you.”**

Althea Gibson

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**Creating Community
Human Treasure Hunt**

Variations

Connections

In **Connections**, participants complete a sheet of likes and dislikes. Many of these can be the same topics as in the HTH. After five minutes to complete their sheets, participants seek others who share their preferences. Process this as you would HTH. Ask a participant how he/she felt when he/she was unable to find someone who matched one of his/her responses.

**Common
Categories**

Common Categories is basically the same exercise as Connections played in a more active manner. Call a certain category such as birthday month. Participants must then organize themselves according to those who share the same answer (i.e. those who have two brothers).

**Connection
Basket**

Connections Basket is a variation on the old young children's game of Fruit Basket. Have the children sit in a circle. Take a few chairs away so a few are left standing. Then call a category such as, "Everyone who has a pet dog!" All those with a pet dog must jump up and get a new seat while those without seats try to grab a chair.

