# The Fundamentals of Service Learning as a Curriculum Model

## HOW DOES SERVICE LEARNING WORK?

There are many successful models for doing service learning. Robin Fogarty (1997b) suggests that they all have the following elements or steps in common:

- Selecting the need for service
- Finding a community partner
- Aligning the service experience with educational goals
- Managing the project or program
- Fostering reflective student learning throughout the process

The order of these elements often varies from project to project. The teacher may identify a curricular goal, such as learning the importance of exercising for fitness, and ask students to decide how they can help other children obtain specialized exercise equipment (i.e., ice skates or in-line skates) that children rapidly outgrow. Students and teacher discuss the value of "recycling" usable equipment through the community rather than letting it gather dust in the back of a garage. For another service project, a student may suggest that a local food pantry or soup kitchen needs more volunteers. Then the students and teacher identify nutrition and food preparation goals that tie content learning to volunteer work at a local community food pantry or kitchen.

All service learning projects in this book use the five elements mentioned above and serve to make community service projects the context for curricular learning. In addition, project (Chapters 2–10) involves teacher and students in a frequent

review of both the service goals and the content learning goals to see how well students are meeting those goals. A chart showing such alignment is provided for each project.

## Selecting the Need for Service

As students and teachers explore service learning opportunities, they begin by finding out what service needs exist in the community and how to go about offering their services. Students can discover what is already being done in the community by talking with their parents, teachers, neighbors, members of service organizations, and religious leaders in the community. Networking further, students can consult with the community relations contact person from a local hospital or elder care facility or from the police, fire, or community service department within the municipality. In addition, students can look for service organization announcements printed in the local newspaper or broadcast on the local television or radio station. Regularly watching the community "bulletin board announcements" that often are part of local-access cable television channels provides further leads on community needs.

As a result of such research, students are able to identify and locate

- Community food pantries or soup kitchens that need volunteers to make food baskets or prepare meals for the needy
- Hospitals or elder care facilities in the area that need volunteers to deliver mail or visit patients
- Municipal agencies that need help in keeping streets clean or parks landscaped
- Counseling services or help (phone) line services that need to have funds raised
- Child care agencies that need tutors

Students can also search the Internet for ideas about service learning projects. With adult supervision, students who use a search engine such as Google or Yahoo! and key words "service learning," "ideas," "projects," and "sources" find a wide variety of ideas for projects. Students also are able to find rich material about this model at Web sites for the National Service-Learning Partnership, Learn and Serve, and the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.

Students and teachers will want to consider a variety of factors before deciding on a service learning project. These factors include interest in the project, need for the service, access to the service site or to necessary funds or materials, age appropriateness of the project work for the students, duration of the service learning project, and the availability of community support. A rubric, such as the one shown in Figure 1.1, can be very helpful to students evaluating the viability of a project. This form is duplicated for the teacher's convenience in the Reproducible Masters section at the end of this book.

To use the rubric for scoring, the teacher tallies all individual student rankings; then the students compute an average ranking for each of the factors or criteria. For example, if a class of 25 students rates a community soup kitchen project and if the teacher reports that 7 students said that they had *high* interest in the project, 15 students said their interest was *medium,* and 3 students rated their interest as *low,* students then do this set of calculations:

High = 7 students × 1 (ranking) = 7

Medium = 15 students × 2 (ranking) = 30

Low = 3 students × 3 (ranking) = 9

Total ranking score = 7 + 30 + 9 = 46

Overall ranking = 46/25 = 1.8

The ranking is closest to *medium* interest in the project.

Students repeat the calculations for each of the other factors. Here are sample results for the soup kitchen project:

| | |
|---|---|
| Interest | 1.8 |
| Need | 1.1 |
| Accessibility | 1.0 (for an in-school soup kitchen) |
| | 1.0 (for an off-site soup kitchen or food pantry with school bus to the site) |
| Appropriateness | 1.3 |
| Time Frame | 3+ (all year) |

As the teacher and students decide whether or not to do a project, they also will want to discuss the weight or importance of each of the various factors and criteria in the rubric. For the soup kitchen project, the students and teacher may decide that the most important factors are community need, access to the service site, and appropriateness ("fit" or alignment with service project goals and curricular goals). Note that in the scenario above, these three factors all have average ratings close to 1.0, which is the *best* overall rating that students can give. If students and teacher decide that a yearlong time frame really is best for this project because the longer time frame helps the students get feedback about their content and life skills learnings, the teacher and students decide to do the soup kitchen project.

| Figure 1.1 Project Evaluation Rubric | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proposed Project Title: _____ | | | | |
| Ranking / Criteria | 1 (high) | 2 (medium) | 3 (low) | Comments |
| **Interest** | High | Medium | Low | |
| **Need** | Great | Some | Little | |
| **Accessibility** | Easy | OK | Difficult | |
| **Appropriateness** | Good | Fair | Poor | |
| **Time Frame** | Just right | Somewhat rushed or prolonged | Much too rushed or prolonged | |

The best piece of advice that I would give another teacher wanting to get started with service learning is to start small. After the students have had a chance to participate, they will be begging for more!

—Nicole Hite, Teacher, Temperance, MI

## Assessing Risks: Establishing Protocols for Health and Safety

While teachers, parents, administrators, and students all acknowledge the bene-fits of service learning to everyone in the community, a primary concern is the safety and well-being of the students who provide the service. Students need to work in sites that are physically and emotionally as safe as possible. If the work site is some distance from the school, students need reliable, secure transportation. Teachers,

community liaison persons, or project coordinators want to know that students have arrived safely at work sites, so communication procedures must be in place before students begin working at remote sites. When teachers want to bring outside speakers into the school, they first need to determine the legal requirements that those speakers must meet. Teachers and students need to plan carefully before they begin a service learning project so that they address concerns that all interested parties may have.

Each service learning project has its own safety and health concerns. Students and teacher, with input from administrators, parents, and community partners, need to develop a list of potential sources of injury, illness, or distress associated with the project. One way to develop and gather ideas is for students to discuss the issue with parents and other adults and for the teacher to talk with the administration and community partner. Students and teacher then have a class discussion during which they produce a list of concerns. During the advance planning for the project, teacher and students address each item on the list. From these discussions, they develop a set of health and safety protocols that students agree to follow when they do the project.

Common sense can guide the development of health and safety protocols, and resources available online also provide helpful tips. Doing an Internet search with the key words "service learning" combined with "risk," "safety" or "concerns" produces numerous results. Some service organizations, such as Lions-Quest, provide excellent online resources on this topic (Anderson & Witmer, n.d.). Many universities have service learning programs, and their Web sites include sections on risk management or health and safety. The most common suggestions include these:

- Selecting community partners carefully so that students work in lower-risk sites
- Giving students training—actual practice—in using all safety equipment
- Simulating accidents so that students have the physical experience of "first responding"
- Establishing communications procedures for students and partners (students need to notify teacher and partner when they leave school for a work site, and partners need to contact the teacher if the student does not arrive in a timely fashion)
- Involving all stakeholders in planning the project and the protocols for managing risks

## Finding a Community Partner

The teacher and students contact appropriate community agencies or groups to ask if they are willing to be the community partner for the project. The teacher telephones each agency to explain the service project, establish agency interest, network with an agency person who can be the project liaison, and set up an appointment to discuss the project in more detail.

Typically, the agency wants to know the educational goals that are targeted by the project, how many students are involved, what kinds of work they are willing to do, and how the teacher and students see the project developing.

Preparing to be interviewed by the agency contact, the teacher and students prepare to answer questions:

- What is the goal of your service project?
- What will you be doing at the service site, and how often will you be doing it?
- What are you doing in school in relation to the project?
- Are you willing to do any job assigned to you?
- What jobs do you think we have?
- What do you need to do to complete each job?
- How long will we be working together?
- Are you willing to commit that length of time to doing the project?
- Could this be an ongoing project? In other words, do you want to "will" this project to next year's class?

For the soup kitchen project, the teacher and students prepare a script, such as the following, in case the agency contact or community representative (partner) asks for an explanation of how the project works and what specific goals are.

### Interview "Script"

As we do this service learning project, we will be learning about the importance of good nutrition to overall physical and mental health. We will be learning about the food pyramid and using it to plan balanced body- and brain-healthy menus. In addition, we will be learning about food preparation and kitchen cleanup and practicing what we learn in a school foods lab. At the service site, we will use the skills that we have practiced in school to help with cooking and serving the food, cleaning up the kitchen, and storing leftovers.

We want to work in the soup kitchen for the entire school year, performing community service by helping prepare and serve two dinner meals a month. The school will provide bus transportation for students to and from the soup kitchen. To carry on the project, we will write a letter to next year's class encouraging them to continue school involvement with the soup kitchen.

As the relationship develops, a dialog is set up between the agency and the students with both sides involved in the planning and implementation of the project. In a successful service learning situation, the students, teacher, and community partner agree on how they can work together to help the students meet the curricular learning goals and the service goals. The teacher and community partner want to let the students plan and do as much of the project as they can. The more responsibility students have for the project, the more they learn and the more social growth they experience.

## Reciprocity: The Community of Learners

The term *service learning* is used to describe a wide range of service and experiential learning projects. One of the earliest definitions, from Robert Sigmon, specified that service learning is reciprocal; both those who provide service and those who receive it learn from it (Furco, 2005). Students who provide services learn content and service information, processes, and skills throughout the project. Each of the nine projects that make up the bulk of this book contains a table showing the alignment among service actions and curriculum standards. That alignment is what makes these Service Learning (capital *S,* capital *L*) projects. Students who do projects like these make progress toward mastering grade-level or subject matter standards as a result of providing the service.

Recipients of the service learn a wide variety of things. Most recipients learn that the service providers, regardless of age, are capable, caring community members who want to help others. Other learnings flow from the content focus of individual projects. Teachers, parents, and community liaisons encourage students who are service providers to teach recipients what they are learning about reading skills, legislative processes, community action, nutrition, plant propagation, or mural design. As students learn the joy of giving to others, service recipients learn to see the students as valuable sources of knowledge, skills, and caring.

## Aligning Service and Educational Goals

Because service learning projects include academic and service goals, the students and teacher must be certain that the goals are clearly stated and aligned with the academic and service project work. For example, the academic goals for students who work in food pantries (e.g., making food baskets) or in soup kitchens (e.g., making meals) include the ability to display the following skills and knowledge:

- Nutrients that are essential for good health and their effects on human physiology
- Strategies and guides for planning daily menus, such as the food pyramid
- Food preparation skills
- Metabolism of food and the effects of metabolism on factors like circulatory health, diabetes, and brain function

The service goals might include these understandings and skills:

- Identifying the needs of the community
- Planning and doing a service project that addresses those needs
- Acquiring and demonstrating curricular knowledge that aligns with the service learning project
- Seeing the value of school and community partnerships for service
- Demonstrating civic responsibility and ethical development by participating in the service learning project

Students transfer what they have learned about academic content, the community, and themselves as service providers by reflecting on the service learning experience. Life skills goals include caring for others, working on a team, and empathy

for others. A chart showing alignment of service, life skills, and educational goals is provided for each project.

Teachers and students must be very clear about curricular and service goals and not lose sight of either. They must know the indicators that show that the students are learning the educational content and skills that align with the service and life skills goals for the project. They must be certain that specific, targeted academic learning is taking place and that students can transfer that learning, the service learning, and the life skills learning to new situations and apply them in new settings. The service project gives students the rich experiences that lead to lifelong learning of content, skills, and attitudes.

Because different students learn best in different ways, at different rates, and perhaps even on different days, teachers know that the best way to engage all students in learning is to differentiate instruction. The teacher structures lessons so that all students have opportunities to learn in ways that are personally comfortable and effective. The nine projects in this book use Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a lens through which to sharpen the focus on differentiation. These service learning projects offer students a variety of experiences, and this invites engagement and participation. As they execute the service learning projects, students learn skills and content with the support and encouragement of teacher and teammates. It is not the purpose of this book to provide an in-depth discussion of differentiated instruction or the theory of multiple intelligences; teachers who use these service learning projects will find embedded applications in each project.

## Tapping Into Multiple Intelligences: Structuring Learning Teams

*The Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Multiple Intelligence*

At the beginning of the school year, take some time to collect information about your students that signals their personal comfort zones. Use this information to assign students to cooperative learning teams. In every classroom, teachers find some students who are strong verbally and logically (these are often the high achievers), some who are comfortable visualizing and creating images, and others who have strong connecting and leadership skills. To maximize the synergy that teamwork creates, the teacher assigns one student with each of these strengths to each team.

To make the teams work, give each student an assigned role or job. Here are some ideas:

- The Correspondent: checks with teammates for understanding, makes a written record of team ideas, reports answers to the rest of the class (verbal/logical)
- The Conductor: keeps the team on time and on task, checks for progress toward completion of the task (interpersonal/leader)
- The Dry Cell: creates images or graphics, encourages and energizes the team using appropriate humor (visual/natural)

To facilitate the teamwork, coach students and give them practice in using cooperative teamwork skills. Here are some very helpful skills:

- Get into teams quickly and quietly.
- Stay together, physically and mentally.
- Use very quiet voices.
- Take turns contributing to the flow of ideas.
- Do a fair share of the work.
- Communicate for understanding.
- Use put-ups, not put-downs.

Students who work in cooperative teams, with guidance from the teacher, find that they produce high-quality work and learn more than they do when working alone. During the planning phase of a service learning project, students do much of their brainstorming in these teams. Students who brainstorm in teams contribute to class discussions freely and willingly because they have the power of the team behind them.

The Internet is an excellent source of information about cooperative learning. The teacher's commitment to this practice is the key to making it work.

## Managing the Project

Managing the project involves three key components: preparing, monitoring, and evaluating. Once the teacher and students have selected a service learning project and aligned the service and educational goals, they need to pick a site for the service, plan what needs to be done and who does it when students are at the service site, arrange for students' transportation to and from the site, and plan adult (parent, community partner liaison, or other volunteer) participation in the project.

In a typical service learning situation, the teacher may decide to contact a site representative to set up an interview to discuss when the students can be at the site, how many students will be involved, and what they will be doing (what jobs need to be done to complete the project). The teacher will want to encourage the site representative to include students in this planning discussion. If the service learning project involves more than three or four students, the teacher often asks for parent volunteers who can escort students to the site and act as site facilitators. An adult from the site serves as the overall job coordinator. The students and teacher discuss the project in detail so that each student knows what to do at the site. The site representative and the teacher work together to help each student learn the skills and knowledge needed to do the job.

Monitoring the project includes observing students and helping them plan for future project work, troubleshooting and problem solving when things go wrong, giving feedback, reviewing the academic goals of the service learning project, reviewing and scoring curricular assignments, spot-checking the use of journals and logs, and encouraging ongoing student self-evaluation and reflection. Figure 1.2 is a guide that the teacher can use to assist the students in self-evaluation.

Adults from the site, volunteers, or parents can be particularly helpful in monitoring service project work. The monitoring work can become almost overwhelming for a teacher who is trying to do it alone. The teacher can use scoring devices such as rubrics to assess progress on curricular assignments, doing some concurrent

**Figure 1.2** Sample Self-Evaluation and Reflection Guide

1. What was my best service action today, and what are my reasons for picking that action?

2. What was my most valuable insight from today's service, and what are my reasons for focusing on that insight?

3. What did I already know about today's content information? How is that prior knowledge connected to my new learning?

4. What are three other skills or pieces of content learning that I want to remember?

5. What service skill do I most want to improve the next time I do community service? Why is this skill valuable to me?

assessment of work (when appropriate, having students review the work of other students). If the students and teacher have done a thorough job of planning the project and defining jobs, the teacher and others can monitor service project work and academic work in a timely, effective manner.

The prompt feedback about progress toward curricular and project goals from self-evaluation and from adult observations helps students remember the overall project and academic goals and understand what they need to do to complete the service learning project and fulfill the academic learning goals successfully.

Students from Saint Paul made these points about having a voice in selecting and planning the service learning project:

- An idea that excites adults may not have strong appeal for students, and they need to feel excitement about their service learning project.
- They really like projects in which students do much of the decision making.
- They enjoy hearing ideas that other students have, and they feel excitement about the creativity that comes from brainstorming.

—(Johnson, M., 2001, p. 14)

## Fostering Reflective Learning

Service learning projects must include student reflection on both the service experience and the academic learning. This reflection engages students in thoughtful remembrance that leads to heightened understanding of learning and relevant transfer of learning and skills.

Students use a variety of tools and strategies to record experiences and learning. They can use daily learning logs and journals to "ink their thinking," audiotapes to think out loud, and time sheets to keep a record of what they did and when they did it. Also, students may use the following opportunities for reflection:

- Peer-partner sharing sessions to free-associate and brainstorm, discovering the implicit meaning and value of student experiences
- Essays or visual graphics that demonstrate learnings

Students use reflective journals, interviews, and conferences as opportunities for reflection, revisiting their service project experiences, fitting the pieces together, and identifying areas of personal growth and change. By reflecting early and often, students give their brains the frequent, specific feedback that cements learning. They gain new insights each time they revisit their learning. They discover new ways to combine the academic, service, and life skills learning so that the whole of the learning is truly greater than the sum of its parts. Reflection deepens, broadens, and reorganizes learning and transfers it into unsuspected parts of students' lives (Sylwester, 1995).

Sample reflective journal pages, tailored for elementary, middle school, and high school students, are included for each of the service learning projects in this book. These journal pages or reflection log samples consist of reflection lead-ins that focus on the work that was done; the need for the work; progress the student made in reaching academic, service, and life goals; and transfer of the learning to new situations.

For maximum effectiveness, each student does a written reflection log entry after doing some major service project task. Students may also want to record impressions on audio- or videotape, associating project experiences with performances and creation of songs or poems; and they may want to use images or mind maps to create visual impressions of their learning. The reflective log is one way that students can give themselves immediate feedback about the details, meaning, and implications for the future of their service learning experience. Brain research experts say that this kind of reflection and feedback is vitally important to storing learning in the memory for future use (Jensen, 1995).

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My students learned several things while completing service learning projects. The most beneficial were the following: all students (no matter their economic or academic status) working together for a common goal. The second is the self-confidence in themselves that they gained for having completed a project that helped their school community. And last, service learning projects made school "fun!" It took them beyond the four walls of the classroom.

—Nicole Hite, Teacher, Temperance, MI

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## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN SERVICE LEARNING

Assessment and evaluation of student work and learning on a specific service project must be planned before students begin working at the project site. Teachers and students will want to use a variety of authentic assessment tools to gather information about student learning during service projects, determining the final grade—as may be necessary—when the project is completed.

Observation checklists that detail on-the-job behaviors can be used to gather information about how often students contribute to the service project, how intently they are engaged in doing the work, how much work each student does, and how well each student works with members of the service project team. Both the teacher (or other adult sponsor) and the student fill out these checklists so that each can co-verify the other's observations.

Observation checklists can also be used to keep a record of punctuality, preparation for the job, consistency of work, and other specific behaviors that signal the student is achieving the goals of the project. Students and the teacher can brainstorm a list of behaviors and design these checklists before the service work begins. See Figure 1.3 for a sample observation checklist for a service learning project focused on work in a community soup kitchen.

**Figure 1.3** Sample Observation Checklist: Working in the Soup Kitchen

| Ranking / Criteria | Awesome (5) | Acceptable (3) | Absent (0) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Observed actions | | | | |
| Came prepared to work | | | | |
| Worked smoothly with assigned team | | | | |
| Focused on the task | | | | |
| Accomplished the assigned work | | | | |

Because the most user-friendly checklists focus on no more than five behaviors, students and teacher often decide to develop two or three different forms. They agree to include an evaluation of performance as part of the students' final grades.

A rubric for evaluating teamwork during a project ("Evaluating Service") is offered in the Reproducible Masters section, along with a writing evaluation rubric.

Students answer content-knowledge questions during discussions, take traditional content-knowledge quizzes and tests, complete project activity logs, keep daily learning logs, write essays, create visuals and images, compose poems and lyrics, develop surveys for gathering information, collect and analyze ideas and facts, and demonstrate what they have learned by sharing portfolios. Each student compiles a project portfolio.

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The most discouraging roadblock in working with service learning is finding the time to implement all of the steps in the process. I overcame this roadblock by making the service learning project a priority and trying to tie in other areas of my curriculum with the project.

—Nicole Hite, Teacher, Temperance, MI

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Representative portfolios that show growth over time include these kinds of items:

- Performance (professionalism) checklists filled out by the student, teacher, and a representative-of-the-community partner for the project
- The student's daily learning log and service project reflective log
- Audio or video media on which the student has recorded insights, learnings, and reflections
- Rough and final drafts of essays
- Poems, song lyrics, or recordings of songs
- Graphics that represent a processing of content learning
- Quizzes and tests that demonstrate accuracy of content learning
- Photos of the student at the service project site
- Other artifacts that show what the student learned and how he or she learned it

The teacher uses a planner such as the one shown in Figure 1.4 to set up assessment plans for the project.

Students evaluate their own academic, service, and life skills learning throughout the project. When the project is completed, the teacher and each student have an evaluation conference during which they discuss a final grade; highlight the

**Figure 1.4** Sample Planner: Assessing Soup Kitchen Learning

**Quizzes and Tests**

Food pyramid quiz
Diet and wellness quiz
Diet and brain function quiz
"Kitchen contagion" quiz
Menu-scaling quiz
Test 1 (topics?)
Test 2 (topics?)

**Checklists**

#1
#2
#3

**Feedback and Reflection**

Journal/reflective project log
Reflections on steps in project
Record keeping
Self-feedback

**Products**

Breakfast menus (2)
Lunch menus (2)
Dinner menus (2)
Food kitchen poster
Food pyramid poster

student's most memorable academic, service, and life skills learnings; and set goals for future community service.

The assessment and evaluation techniques for service learning projects may sound complex. Such techniques, however, result in a more accurate picture of student learning than a simple paper-and-pencil test. Furthermore, these assessment and evaluation techniques mirror those used by managers in today's world of work. This authentic assessment and evaluation is one more way in which service learning helps prepare students to become effective members of society and the future workforce, and—just as important—responsible members of the local community.

## WHAT ABOUT CHALLENGES?
## HOW CAN THEY BE MANAGED?

Teachers who facilitate service learning projects with their students report several challenges to using this experiential curriculum model. These include the following:

- Time for planning and implementing the project
- Knowledge of techniques, strategies, and logistics
- Funds for materials, transportation, and incidentals
- Liability for student health and safety
- Transportation of students to and from the work site
- Assessment that demonstrates progress toward local, state, and national standards
- Student buy-in to learning while providing service to others

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Challenges? Roadblocks? Just do it! It's important for kids to help others. To help with your time, provide time for kids to brainstorm their project and anticipate the challenges and develop plans to overcome the problems.

—Gerard O'Brien, Teacher, Palatine, IL

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Here are some ideas for managing these challenges.

*Time.* Teachers need planning time, and administrators need to recognize this and provide teachers with inservice hours, workshop days, or subsidized summer preparation time. Planning time is an ongoing need; it must be provided each year or the quality of the service learning projects will suffer. Often teachers report that they receive planning time during the first year their school district commits to service learning and they receive no time in following years (Ammon, Furco, Chi, & Middaugh, 2002). Administrators need to remember that planning time is an essential component of the process and that they must make it readily available even for "legacy" projects that continue from one year to the next.

To make the introductory experience with service learning less overwhelming, teachers need to remember the KISS guidelines: They need to Keep It (the project) Short and Simple. Discomfort with change is part of the human condition. Teachers who begin with a short, simple project are more likely to experience successes from which they can learn and upon which they can build (Billig, 2005). A successful project is a great tool for building support among colleagues and administrators and encouraging the growth of service learning throughout a school district.

*Knowledge.* Teachers who receive carefully structured professional development before doing service learning projects report greater success and fewer problems (Ammon et al., 2002). Well-designed professional development courses and workshops provide teachers with strategies, insights, tools, and advice from practitioners. Because they gain insight into the service learning model and how it works, community partners also benefit from attending these professional development sessions (Holdsman & Tuchmann, 2004). The district administration needs to survey teachers to determine whether to use in-house experts in the field or outside consultants to lead the professional development program. Many districts find that using a blend of both works well. Outsiders provide an initial burst of energy and enthusiasm; insiders offer ongoing support, advice, and celebrations of success.

*Funds.* Doing a service learning project does require buying necessary materials, providing transportation to and from the work site, and paying for incidental expenses such as sun screen for students who are working outdoors, water or healthy snacks for students who are doing physically strenuous work, and other items that make students more comfortable on the job. Fortunately for teachers who want to do service learning projects, minigrants are available. Teachers need to prepare and submit grant proposals, and this encourages them to refine and tighten their project ideas (Holdsman & Tuchmann, 2004). Teachers need to remember to

give the students a voice in the final planning of the project. If grant proposal deadlines fall during the summer recess, teachers and students work together after the start of school to finalize project selection and planning.

Some of the projects in this book suggest alternative sources for some funds. If costs are small, each student in a class may contribute a small amount toward the total needed. Parent groups often donate funds to support school projects, and community service organizations may have funds set aside for this purpose.

One final suggestion: In their quest to identify potential community partners, teachers often overlook the schools in which they work. Schools have many needs, from additional library books to hallway decoration to outdoor landscaping. Students who want to design and produce a mural as a visual-arts project can decorate a large white space in the school such as a hallway wall. Instead of working in a soup kitchen, students can help with food preparation in the school cafeteria. A creative teacher and his or her students can approach the school administration and say, "These are the learning standards we want our service learning project to target; how can we help the school and meet these standards?" In-school projects provide service and connect students and the school in ways that benefit both.

*Liability.* Teachers need to ask the school administration for information about a variety of liability concerns. Most districts have policies in place that address these issues. Teachers need to be sure that they follow established guidelines for the following:

- Working at remote sites. Most schools have policies regarding field trip parameters and protocols. Service learning trips off school grounds follow these policies.
- Acquiring transportation. School districts have lists of licensed transportation providers. Some districts have their own fleet of buses. Teachers use the approved transportation companies to move students to the work site and back to school. If the work site is close to the school, students may walk between the two.
- Supervising students. The required number of adult supervisors or chaperones is often stated as a ratio—a maximum number of students per adult. Teachers need to adhere to these policies, and they also need to be sure that adult supervisors have passed any required background checks before they are allowed to work with students.
- Taking steps in an emergency. Teachers need to know and follow school regulations detailing the protocols to follow in the event that a student becomes ill or is injured. All illnesses and injuries must be reported to the teacher by a student or adult supervisor.

*Assessment*. Assessing learning and determining grades require collection of information about all aspects of learning. Traditional report cards communicate content-learning results to parents. Results of service learning projects need to be shared with the administration, parents, the community partner, and other interested parties. To do this, the teacher and students can schedule a "celebration of learning" during which students report on what they did and what they learned about school subjects and being a service provider. These celebrations help to build community support for service learning in the schools.

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Doing this project helped me deal with some personal stress. I'm really proud of all of my classmates who care and want to help others.

We didn't do all we set out to do. At first I thought we failed, but then I thought again and decided the project was a success because of what we did accomplish.

This (providing service to the community) is the most important thing I've ever done.

—Students, Palatine, IL

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*Student buy-in.* Before doing their first service learning project, teachers report concern that students will not buy into the concept (Ammon et al., 2002). When they evaluate the effect of challenges after finishing a project, teachers often say that this was a nonissue. Students, once they are introduced to the process, are usually willing participants in service learning.

Making the experience participatory is key to keeping students involved. Students who help to select and plan projects see themselves as important stakeholders who have vested interest in the success of the project. As they move into actively providing service to others, students discover a sense of self-worth and dignity that flows from the ability to be of help to others. Teachers report that students' buy-in is greatest in projects when the students help to select and plan.

Support from the teacher and peers keeps students engaged. Cooperative learning teams play a huge role here. As students check in with their teammates each day and tell each other stories about experiences they had "on the job," they give each other encouraging words and celebrate mutual successes. Teachers and students review content learning standards, and students use tests, quizzes, rubrics, checklists, and other assessment tools to see how much progress they are making toward learning goals.

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I make clear my expectations (about contributing to the success of the project), and I lead the class to agreeing that service learning projects are cool and worthwhile. I give kids time to brainstorm so that they build the confidence they need to see the project through.

—Gerard O'Brien, Teacher, Palatine, IL

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# USING THE PROJECT IDEAS IN THIS BOOK

*Service Learning: A Guide to Planning, Implementing, and Assessing Student Projects* features nine projects (Chapters 2–10), each focused on a specific service learning experience. Teachers are encouraged to skim through all nine to see what is available before selecting one or more for detailed investigation. The nine projects in this book vary in complexity, with the first three being fairly basic, the next three

intermediate in complexity, and the last three rather advanced. Projects can be used as is or modified to suit various student needs—at the teacher's discretion. These service learning project ideas can also serve as models for teachers to use as they brainstorm new service learning projects—for themselves and for their students.

"Managing the Service Project" is a feature that gives teachers a grid format or chart for management planning that shows the entire service learning project at a glance. Teachers are encouraged to use this grid to do their initial planning, or to modify it to fit individual needs, rather than write their plans in paragraph form.

## Tapping Into Multiple Intelligences: Managing the Management Plan

*Visual, Logical, and Intrapersonal Multiple Intelligences*

Do not overplan in advance. Because a person never knows what forks a road may offer or what roadblocks may present themselves, it is best to be open to change. Begin with the end in mind (Covey, 1989), and be flexible. Here are some tips:

Before beginning a management plan for phase 1 and after selecting the project, give each student 10 to 12 small sticky-notes. Build definitions for the terms *planning, monitoring,* and *evaluating.* Tell students, "If you want to come to class tomorrow prepared to help your team, you will think of at least three components of the service learning project that need to be done during each of these categories during phase 1 of the project." Ask for questions and check for understanding of the assignment.

The next day, before students arrive in class, tape three large sheets of chart paper on the wall. Label one "Planning," the second "Monitoring," and the third "Evaluating." Direct student cooperative learning teams to go through the sticky-note ideas that members have and weed out any duplicates. Then tell one person from each team, probably the Dry Cell, to place the unduplicated sticky-notes on the proper sheets of chart paper. When all of the sticky-notes are in place, read them aloud to students. Ask, "Is this where we want to keep these ideas? Do we need to rearrange?" Draw on your experience to suggest relocating any of the sticky-notes that seem to be out of place and ask students for permission to add sticky-notes of your own if you know that there are gaps in the plan that need to be filled. Leave the sheets of chart paper on the wall and make a small version of the plan. Setting up a table in a good word-processing program will give you a grid that you can use to do this. Duplicate the small version so that each student has a copy.

Repeat the process with the sticky-notes at appropriate times throughout the service learning project. Take down the sheets of chart paper only when that phase of the service learning project has ended. You and the students can save some time by moving sticky-notes from one phase of a project to another if the action on that sticky-note is repeated or if it was misplaced. Doing the planning this way gives students a genuine voice in planning the service learning project and enhances their roles as stakeholders.

Research shows that the brain responds well to patterned "maps" that show the big learning picture because initial stages of information processing seem to be parallel rather than serial (Jensen, 1996). Concrete visual images also promote more powerful thinking and reflection. The performance management grid (or another mapping tool that shows the entire management plan in a powerful graphic) is the most brain-friendly way for teachers to do their planning.

In the "Fostering Reflective Learning" section of each project, teachers find suggestions for reflective log lead-ins or sentence stems for elementary, middle school, and high school students. These specific lead-ins help students focus their thinking and writing, and the visual organization helps them do better, more reflective, deeper thinking about their learnings. The reflective log also provides a way for students to get immediate self-feedback after working on a service project. Project plans suggest that students share their reflections with peers in small-group discussions. This self- and peer feedback, brain research suggests, also helps students to mentally file the learning more effectively (Jensen, 1996).

The "Assessment and Evaluation" section of each project (or chapter) includes a list of the portfolio pieces for the project. Teachers will want to stress that each portfolio contains some pieces that are chosen by the student. One goal of a project portfolio is to allow the students to show growth over time. As students look at the personal artifacts that they have collected during the life of a particular service project, they reflect on the service learning (project) experience, select key portfolio pieces, reflect on their meanings, and visualize where their learning started—as well as how far they have come. Students give themselves another deep feedback experience that cements the academic, service, and life skills learnings that have occurred through immersion in the service project experience.