

# YOUTH SERVICE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE/ALBEMARLE: A TOOL KIT FOR BEST PRACTICE



Commission on Children and Families

Youth Service Learning and Community Service Work Group



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Youth Service Learning and Community Service Work Group**

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# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1

Background and Introduction.....	5-6
----------------------------------	-----

## Chapter 2

Definitions.....	9
------------------	---

## Chapter 3

Benefits of Service.....	11-12
--------------------------	-------

## Chapter 4

Overview of Stages .....	13-15
--------------------------	-------

## Chapter 5: Preparation

Definition and Importance.....	17
--------------------------------	----

Role of Teacher/Leader.....	17
-----------------------------	----

Tips and Tools .....	20
----------------------	----

Role of Service Site Liaison.....	21
-----------------------------------	----

Tips and Tools .....	22
----------------------	----

## Chapter 6: Coordination

Definition and Importance.....	23
--------------------------------	----

Role of Teacher/Leader.....	24-25
-----------------------------	-------

Tips and Tools .....	25
----------------------	----

Role of Service Site Liaison.....	26-27
-----------------------------------	-------

Tips and Tools .....	28
----------------------	----

## **Chapter 7: Service**

Definition and Importance .....	29
Implementation .....	30-31
Role of Teacher/ Leader.....	31-33
Tips and Tools.....	34
Role of the Service Site Liaison .....	35-37
Tips and Tools.....	38

## **Chapter 8: Reflection**

Definition and Importance .....	39-40
Role of Teacher/Leader and Service Site Liaison .....	41-42

## **Chapter 9: Recognition**

Definition and Importance .....	43
Role of Teacher/ Leader.....	44-45
Role of Service Site Liaison .....	45-46
Tips and Tools.....	45

## **Chapter 10: Evaluation**

Definition and Importance .....	47-48
Role of Teacher/ Leader and Service Site Liaison .....	48-50

## **Chapter 11: Tools and Resources**

Tools and Resources .....	51
---------------------------	----

## **Chapter 12**

Conclusion.....	55
-----------------	----

## Chapter #1

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens  
can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.  
-- Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

# Background and Introduction

## Purpose of Manual

The Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families (CCF) sponsors the Youth Service Learning and Community Service Work Group (hereafter known as the Workgroup) to increase opportunities for meaningful and educational service experiences for youth. Youth service has been shown to have significant benefits for youth and for the community. Over the past five years -- from 1999 – 2004 -- an increasing number of local Charlottesville and Albemarle schools and community organizations have encouraged various forms of youth service. Before October 2003, there had not been a corresponding opportunity to share effective strategies among practitioners. The Workgroup was convened in October 2003 to study ways to improve coordination and encourage the use of consistent best practices across schools and community organizations to optimize students' experiences and provide valuable service. Workgroup members represent local public and private schools, service learning programs, service sites, and youth and citizen members of CCF. This guide is a product of their efforts in 2003 and 2004.

The Workgroup considered current local practices and reviewed national literature on “best practices” to develop this manual. The manual is intended as a guide for teachers, program leaders, and service site liaisons and staff to assist them in providing consistent, meaningful service

opportunities for youth and beneficial assistance to organizations utilizing youth volunteers.

Service opportunities for youth range from participation in one-time community service projects, to ongoing volunteer work, to service learning. This manual also presents an overview of youth service definitions, describes benefits and positive outcomes of youth service, and provides information about the “core components” of all types of youth service. Local and national research has demonstrated that when these components are implemented throughout youth service activities, the service outcomes and impacts are greater for youth and service recipients. The core components include:

- preparation
- coordination
- service
- reflection
- recognition
- evaluation

## **Suggested Uses**

This manual is intended to be used by teacher/leaders and service site liaisons involved in youth service as well as those who may be interested in learning more about these types of service. Those who might find the manual helpful are teachers and other school staff, service site personnel, youth counselors, and other members of the community guiding youth in service participation. Likewise, this manual should be used by all those in a service site who wish to become more familiar with youth service and its components.

## **Special Thanks**

Members of the Youth Service Learning and Community Service Workgroup conducted research and gathered the information used in this manual. They are:

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University of Virginia Curry School doctoral students, Lauren Brock and Laura Decker, assisted with compiling the manual. Gretchen Ellis and Heather Kellams edited the manual.

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## Chapter #2

### **Definitions**

Youth service can consist of many different specific types of service including community service and service learning. In this section the similarities and differences between these two types of service will be presented.

#### **Community Service**

Community service is volunteerism that occurs for the community -- action taken to meet the needs of others and improve the community as a whole. Community service activities can be offered during the school day as well as after school hours. Youth programs of all types, such as those sponsored by Girl/Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs or YMCA, often include a community service component. Many schools also participate in community service, frequently through after-school clubs and activities. Community service is not necessarily linked to formal learning objectives. Beneficiaries include the volunteer and the organization that is being helped. Community service is an effective means of introducing youth to their ability to have an impact and improve conditions.

#### **Service Learning**

Service learning combines service objectives and learning objectives with the intent that the activity will change both the receiver and the supplier of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks

with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the achievement and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge. Service learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and character education, and enhance other learning objectives, such as workplace readiness and life skills, while meeting community needs. It can be used in any subject area as long as it is appropriate to learning goals, and works at all ages, even among young children.

Service learning is often linked to school courses, and inspires the schools to build strong partnerships with community-based organizations. Service learning can also be organized and offered by community organizations with learning objectives or structured reflection activities for their participants. Whatever the setting, the core element of service learning is always the intent that both suppliers and receivers find the experience valuable.

## Chapter # 3

# Benefits of Service

## Community Service

The impact of community service has not been evaluated as extensively as service learning. However, the tangible value to the community is well established. The Points of Light Foundation cites that for every \$1.00 spent supporting youth community service, \$4.00 worth of service is provided.<sup>i</sup> Community service has been shown to produce positive results in the ethical and civic attitudes of participants.<sup>ii</sup>

## Service Learning

Youth service has tangible and intangible benefits for the community and for participants. Service learning, especially in the school domain, has been extensively evaluated. National, state, and local research<sup>iii</sup> has proven that involving youth in service learning programs that meet “best-practices” criteria is an effective strategy for achieving a variety of outcomes including:

- Improved job and social skills
- Increased community connectedness, promoting school success
- Improved school attendance and performance
- Decreased teen pregnancy
- Reduced delinquency

## Rewards

With high quality service -- which includes all of the recommended core components described in this manual -- benefits for the community, youth, recipients, school and programs are significant:

- Youth who participate in community service tend to have stronger ties and more positive attitudes towards school, peers, and the community. They also exhibit other positive social behaviors.<sup>iv</sup>
- Most schools with service learning cite strengthening relationships among youth, the school, and the community as key reasons for practicing service learning.<sup>v</sup>
- Service learning can help youth to improve academically<sup>vi</sup>, improve higher order thinking skills<sup>vii</sup>, and develop important personal and social skills.
- Service learning promotes exploration of various career pathways.<sup>viii</sup>
- Service learning is associated with more community support for schools.<sup>ix</sup>

## Chapter # 4

# Overview of the Core Components

The components described briefly below, and in greater depth later in the manual, can be applied to all forms of youth service, including community service and service learning.

### **Preparation**

Preparation is the planning phase for youth service. In this initial phase, it is important to determine short-term and long-term goals. Preparation sets the stage for both the general service experience and the specific site experience by anticipating and planning for all possible scenarios and outcomes. This phase also includes “preparing” youth to be effective service providers. When thorough preparation occurs, the chance of a successful experience is optimized and the chance of failure is minimized. Preparation helps ensure a rewarding experience for youth, teacher/leaders, parents, and placement sites.

### **Coordination**

Once the youth service goals have been determined in the preparation phase, coordination begins with initial contact between the teacher/leader and the service site liaison. This phase consists of all types of planning; from logistics to learning objectives and service project outcomes. Active communication should occur between the

teacher/leader and service site liaison. Communication and active coordination between the teacher/leader and the service site liaison should happen in this phase and throughout all stages of service. The service site liaison also takes an active role in communicating with other staff and participants. The teacher/leader communicates with other teacher/leaders, youth, administrators, and parents. All project members clearly communicate their own goals and listen to fellow collaborators' goals. Arrangements are made for transportation, food, and individual students' special needs.

## **Service**

Service is the action phase of youth service. The action of service creates an opportunity to make a difference in the community and have a positive impact on service recipients and providers. The service activity is the product or outcome of the preparation and coordination that are essential components of creating a successful service project. The service activity is also the central focus for reflection, recognition and evaluation activities.

## **Reflection**

Reflection is a tool of youth service that deliberately incorporates creative and critical thinking by the youth in an effort to understand and evaluate what they did, what they learned, how it affected them personally, and how their services affected society on a broader scale.

## **Recognition**

Recognition is the process through which organizations and individuals acknowledge and show gratitude to their volunteers; likewise, volunteers recognize the efforts of the service site liaison staff, on a daily basis, as well as the special effort they put into hosting the volunteer. Recognition works best when it takes place throughout the entire volunteer experience, not as an end product. Yet special recognition at the end of service provides important closure, communicates appreciation, and can pave the way for a future or ongoing relationship.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is a process of gathering information to measure and understand the results of service for the youth and for the community. Evaluation tools will depend on specific goals of the youth service project.



## Chapter #5

# Preparation

### Definition

Preparation is the planning phase for youth service activities. Preparation sets the stage for both the general service experience and the specific site experience by anticipating and planning for all possible scenarios and outcomes. Preparation includes setting objectives for skills to be learned or issues to consider, and includes planning projects so they contribute to learning at the same time that the service project is meeting intended community needs. Preparation also includes “preparing” youth to be effective workers during the service activity and “preparing” the service site liaisons for the youth service activity.

During the preparation phase, the “who, what, why, when, where, and how” of the service experience is determined and planned. As a teacher/leader or service site liaison, preparation is an important step in the youth service process. Thorough preparation will lead to a more productive and worthwhile experience for youth. Thorough preparation will also equip youth, teachers/leaders and service site liaisons to begin the youth service experience.

### Importance

Thorough preparation increases the chances for a successful experience and minimizes the risk of failure. Preparation helps ensure a rewarding experience for youth, teacher/leaders, and service site liaisons.

## **Role of the Teacher/Leader**

### **1. Determine the purpose of implementing youth service activities.**

Youth might be performing service to fulfill a school requirement, explore a potential career or specific interest, and/or to fulfill an altruistic urge by identifying a community need that the youth feels qualified to address. Teachers/leaders may be participating in youth service because the service experience expands the scope of a lesson and learning, it may be required by the school system, or the service reflects a specific altruistic or philanthropic interest or community need.

### **2. Develop specific learning objectives for the youth service project.**

The project may accomplish one or more objectives, including:

- Enhancing a specific academic unit of study
- Teaching character education
- Providing workplace readiness skills

### **3. Develop specific impact outcomes for the service project.**

- Outline intended service goals.
- Determine the impact of the youth service project.

### **4. Plan for logistics.**

- Determine the type of service activity to be undertaken, considering youth interests, potential for success, and community need.
- Consider transportation requirements.
- Establish a time frame for the service activity.
- Decide on the level of adult supervision required.

- Decide what supplies are needed.

#### 5. Prepare youth.

- Explain the goals, purpose and expectations for the service activity.
- When a variety of service activities are available, encourage youth to choose projects that are of interest.
- Provide preparation and training activities that will assist youth to be successful workers at service sites and help them to take ownership of the service project.
- Clarify youths' responsibilities and identify who they can contact with questions or concerns.
- Send a letter to parents explaining the service activity and obtaining parental permission, if required.
- Encourage youth to take an active role in the planning of the service project.

#### 6. Prepare service site liaisons.

- Review all logistics of the youth service project.
- Review intended goals of the youth service project.
- Assess the impact of the service project. Ensure the project is meeting a true community need.

### **Tips and Tools**

- Set the stage for a positive service experience.
- Make sure that the service project meets a community need.
- Communicate expectations and goals of the project clearly.
- Provide a range of examples or narratives of positive youth community service or service learning experiences.
- Explain the service cycle of preparation, coordination, service, reflection, recognition and evaluation, providing examples of each.
- Discuss and identify existing needs and available opportunities.
- Help generate workable solutions for what can realistically be done.
- Provide available resources.
- Provide a method such as discussion or survey to determine if preparation information is retained.

## **Role of the Service Site Liaison**

### 1. Determine if and how the agency/service site would benefit from youth service.

A service site may want youth to fill a work or production gap, may see service as a means to identify and/or train future employees, and/or help students to give back to the community. The service site liaison's role is:

- To communicate service opportunities to teacher/leaders
- To provide comprehensive job descriptions with time frames
- To identify constraints, such as uses for groups vs. individual volunteers, age limits, or the need for extra supervision for youth
- To determine the level of supervision the agency can provide and the level of supervision needed from the teacher/leader
- To discuss initial roles of the involved adults and discuss the roles of the youth

### 2. Plan for logistics.

- Decide when and where service will occur.
- Arrange for necessary supplies to be available.
- Prepare for supervision of youth.

## **Tips and Tools**

### Some questions to consider:

- What can the youth do?
- What are the youth's skills, talents, and motivation?
- What are the youth's interests?
- What are the youth's/school/program goals?
- What are the youth's time constraints?
- When and where are the placements for youth?
- How will the service be accomplished?
- How will the youth's service help my agency?
- Will staff need to be present?
- What supplies are needed?
- Is there adequate space for the service activity?

## Chapter #6

# Coordination

### Definition

Coordination is woven throughout the service project and begins with initial contact between the youth service group and the agency where the project will take place. Important elements include ongoing communication between the youth, teacher/leader, and service site liaison. Other elements involve project selection, organization, and project support.

### Importance

Effective coordination between all parties will result in more meaningful service activities for youth and satisfied agency representatives. Without coordination, youth are less likely to understand what is expected of them and agencies may become frustrated by what they perceive as a lack of responsibility from youth. Communicating frequently and clearly generally will result in a more positive experience.

## **Role of the Teacher/ Leader**

### **1. Assist youth to identify a service site.**

- Review youth service project learning objectives with youth and identify specific needs.
- Offer youth a specific service project or discuss with youth how to choose a project or agency that interests them.
- Provide a list of agencies only if the agencies have been contacted ahead of time and are interested in engaging youth volunteers.
- Encourage youth to contact the agencies for more information, but give youth guidance on respecting staff time at agencies.
- If youth select sites or projects independently, confirm that a perceived need is in fact a real need for an agency. For example, if the youth plan to collect food, clothing or other items, contact potential recipient agencies before the drive begins to determine the need.

### **2. When a service site is chosen, coordinate with service site.**

- Contact service site liaisons to provide information about what is expected of youth.
- Inform liaisons whom they can contact if they have any difficulties.
- Review roles of adults and supervision plans.
- Explain and provide any forms to be completed.
- Determine how verification of youth service will be made.
- Review how the service project will meet a community need.

### 3. Coordinate with parents/guardians.

- Contact parents in person, or by letter, email or phone, to explain the goals and logistics of the service activity.
- Obtain necessary permission forms or releases.
- If appropriate, query parent(s) about their interest in volunteering.

#### **Tips and Tools**

- In identifying a service site, assess whether the work will be structured, high-interest, and do-able.
- If youth are coordinating a collection, ask the collaborating agency to come speak to the class so that they can connect their service project with a real need. The youth will understand why their project is important for the people they are helping. If there is not an agency who will be the direct recipient of the work, identify an agency representative who is in the field who might mentor the youth through the project.
- If youth are participating in a service learning program, the teacher/leaders can consider a mid-term check via email with the agencies to discuss any potential problems or concerns.

## **Role of the Service Site Liaison**

### **1. Determine whether a youth is appropriate for a service activity.**

- Invite the youth in to discuss the potential projects.
- Match the youth according to their interests, skills and availability.
- Set a deadline for youth to make a commitment to the service project.
- If a minimum time commitment is needed, explain it to the youth. Also indicate any trainings or orientations youth will have to complete before they can begin volunteering.
- Determine what forms or evaluation youth will have to submit.
- Have youth sign any necessary Volunteer Guidelines forms, Waiver of Liability forms, etc.
- Secure parental permission when required.

### **2. Provide volunteer orientation and training as appropriate for the particular project.**

- Provide background information on the organization, including:
  - i. Information on the problem or issue
  - ii. Information on the client or constituent group
  - iii. Organizational mission and goals
  - iv. Description of programs, activities, services
  - v. Organizational history in the community
  - vi. Rationale for engaging youth volunteers and how they can further the mission of the organization
- Conduct a tour of the agency/facility.
- Introduce the volunteer(s) to key staff people.

- Conduct a teambuilding exercise – if group is working together.
- Explain responsibilities and expectations to youth.
- Provide specific information on what the youth will be doing.
- Identify to whom they will be accountable and to whom they can go to ask questions.
- Describe what behavioral expectations the organization/staff have of them, including:
  - i. What kind of rules and regulations does the organization have that youth should be aware of? Why do these rules and regulations exist?
  - ii. How will people communicate? With whom should youth discuss problems or concerns?
  - iii. By what name do individuals prefer to be called?
  - iv. Is there a dress code?
  - v. Explain any additional logistics related to the service experience (equipment, facilities, food/refreshments).
  - vi. Include written information for policies and procedures.

### **Tips and Tools**

- When a parent contacts an organization about whether their child can volunteer, request to speak with the youth directly. Speaking with the youth will help to gauge the interest level and match them appropriately.
- Be responsive to volunteer questions and concerns.
- Schedule a time to provide feedback to teacher/leaders or appropriate school staff.
- Involve youth as decisions makers and leaders. Empower them to make decisions about how the project progresses.
- Youth and agency liaisons may best communicate via email as the youth are in school when the agency liaisons are available by phone.

## Chapter #7

# Service

### Definition

Service is the action phase of youth service. The action of service creates an opportunity to make a difference in the community and have a positive impact on service recipients and providers. The service activity is the product or outcome of the preparation and coordination that are essential components of creating a successful service project. The service activity is also the central focus for reflection, recognition and evaluation activities.

### Importance

By definition, “service” or the action step of youth service is the primary activity that is used to make a positive impact on the community, the recipients and the providers. Service that has been well coordinated involves preparation, input and planning from all involved players.

Effective service is:

- Structured
- Truly meets a community need
- Is high interest and engaging
- Involves an active partnership between the service providers and recipients
- Includes ongoing evaluation and recognition

## **Implementation of Various Types of Service**

Following initial coordination and preparation for youth, teacher/leaders, and service sites, the service project is ready to be implemented; the action phase of youth service has arrived. Careful planning through the coordination and preparation phases should ensure a successful youth service experience, but may overlook small details.

### Youth Service in the community during the school day

Service in the community that occurs during the school day will mimic the planning required of a field trip. This involves planning for transportation, supervision, and meals. Generally, this type of activity will involve the entire school day and will necessitate communication with several teacher/leaders on the faculty.

### Youth Service in the classroom

Classroom service learning is service that occurs during the school day with a classroom or group of youth, usually supervised by a teacher/leader. Classroom service learning can take place within a designated class of youth (homeroom or subject area) and/or within a designated triad or team.

Service during the school day typically is scheduled outside of core instructional time, but usually integrates academic subjects/Standards of Learning (SOLs). Service can be one event or it can happen on a regular basis with the same group of youth.

## School-based non-supervised service

School-based non-supervised service is service that is coordinated by a teacher/leader, but the youth are responsible for participating in service activities on their own time. This model works best when there is a primary teacher/leader in charge of the service learning core components of preparation, coordination, service, reflection, recognition, and evaluation. A service log or other types of service documentation are helpful to verify service completion.

## Youth Service in the community outside of school

This service occurs after school, on weekends, and in the evening, and can be supervised or unsupervised. If youth are not directly supervised by an adult, it is recommended that one adult be responsible for coordination of service.

## **Role of the Teacher/ Leader**

### 1. Prior to service, review all logistics, using the following checklist:

- Do I /other adults know the exact directions to the service site liaison/activity?
- Does the service site liaison know what time youth will arrive?
- Who will I be meeting when I arrive at the service site?
- Do I/other adults have all of the necessary supplies to complete the service project?
- Have I/other adults arranged dependable transportation to and from the service site?
- Do I have all necessary permission slips from youth?
- Have I/other adults placed the youth in groups that will ensure the best chance for service site success?

- Have youth been adequately prepared about the service tasks that they will be completing, the primary goal of the service project and how the service will positively impact the community?
- Do youth understand how this service project will enhance the curriculum that they are studying in my class?

2. Facilitate a pre-service review with all youth in a setting that is conducive for a discussion.

- Review the purpose of the service activity and the primary service goal.
- Describe the service tasks in which the youth will be involved.
- Present the time frame for the day – describe the agenda.
- Present behavioral expectations and consequences if those expectations are not followed.
- Give general reminders about the service site or activity.
- Give youth an opportunity to ask questions.

3. Provide service.

- Arrive on time.
- Split large classrooms or groups of youth into smaller “service teams”.
- Have one adult supervise each team of youth.
- Help service site liaison or staff organize and delegate service tasks.
- Keep youth on task – try to keep the service structured, active and of high interest.
- Watch for problematic behaviors or negative attitudes that may develop within the service teams.

- If there are questions about how to perform a service task, ask. If the service site liaison is not available, ask another staff person the question.
- If service tasks are completed early, strategize with the service site liaison about other tasks that would be helpful for youth to complete.
- Point out youth strengths to youth throughout the project – review the positive impact of their service.
- Help youth complete any academic assignments during service without taking away from the quality of service provided.

4. Coordinate with youth and service site liaison upon completion of service.

- Communicate with service site liaison. These are some suggested questions which may assist in implementing post-service reflection and evaluation components:
  - i. Did the service that youth completed help the clients or organization? If so, how?
  - ii. Is there anything that could have been improved on that would be helpful to prepare for the next time?
  - iii. Let service site liaison know if and when there will be follow up contact.
- Communicate with youth. The following are suggested actions and activities:
  - i. Encourage youth to thank their service recipients and service contacts and say good-bye.
  - ii. Inform youth when reflection will be conducted and have them think about what they will want to remember for that discussion.
  - iii. Provide instructions about returning to school or home.

### **Tips and Tools**

- A last minute phone call to the service site liaison is usually helpful.
- If applicable, at the end of service, conducting a structured good-bye activity is helpful for successful service project termination. For example: hold circle time with young children – make sure youth sit next to their “buddy” and sing a good-bye song. At a nursing home, implement a structured time for good-byes and final talk. It will help all parties feel connected and appreciated and will enhance the reflection phase of the activity.

## **Role of the Service Site Liaison**

### 1. Prior to service, review all logistics, using the following checklist:

- Have I given the youth or adults the best directions to the service site/activity?
- Do I/other involved staff know what time the youth will arrive?
- Who has been assigned to meet the youth when they arrive at the service site?
- Do I have all of the necessary supplies for the youth to complete the service project?
- Do I have all necessary permission slips from youth?
- Have I been adequately prepared by the teacher/leader or program staff about the goal of the project, contact information, the types of youth involved and any other information that may be helpful?
- Have I coordinated with the teacher/leader or program staff about the assigned service tasks? Are these tasks feasible for the youth? Are they structured? Will the service tasks assigned take up enough time?
- Have I prepared my staff by discussing the goal of today's project, the service tasks, the types of youth involved and any additional information about the youth, school or community-based program?
- Do I understand how this service project will enhance the curriculum that youth may be studying in their class?
- What role can I play in further strengthening this service project so that it also teaches about job readiness or academic subjects?

### 2. Conduct a pre-service review with youth.

- Welcome the youth – make them feel important and helpful.
- Review the purpose of the service activity & primary service goal.
- Review the service tasks the youth will be involved in.
- Discuss the timetable and agenda for the day.
- Provide general reminders about the service site or activity.
- Give youth an opportunity to ask questions.

### 3. Facilitate service.

- Meet the youth on time.
- Work with the adults involved to organize and delegate service tasks.
- If youth are without adult supervision, get them started on their service tasks.
- If youth are without adult supervision they should be supervised by program staff.
- Keep youth on task – try to keep the service structured, active and of high interest.
- If there are concerns about how a service task is being completed, quickly talk to the youth and/or teacher/leader to find a solution.
- Be available if youth have questions or concerns. If you are not available, delegate someone who will be.
- Have some back up service tasks.
- Recognize and acknowledge youth strengths throughout the project – reviewing the positive impact of their service.

### 4. Coordinate with youth and teachers/leaders upon completion of service.

- Provide youth and/or teachers/leaders with some feedback. For example, how were the service tasks that they completed today helpful? Mention some things that youth did very well and some ways they could improve next time.
- Ask youth and/or teachers/leaders for their feedback about the project. Were the service tasks reasonable? Were adequate supplies provided? What changes do they suggest for next time?
- Provide youth with thanks and recognition for their efforts.
- Snacks, certificates, pens or small tokens are always appreciated by youth.
- Let youth know when you will see them again or be contacting them.
- Follow up with the teacher/leaders in charge if youth provide service without adult supervision.
- Youth can be an excellent source for helping your program/recipients. Think about further ways the organization can utilize youth in service.

### **Tips and Tools**

- A last minute phone call to the teacher/leader is usually helpful.
- If applicable, at the end of service, help youth structure a good-bye activity at your site. For example, hold a circle time with young children – make sure youth sit next to their “Buddy” and sing a good-bye song. At a nursing home, implement a structured time for good-byes and final talk.

## Chapter #8

# Reflection

### Definition

Reflection is a tool of youth service that deliberately incorporates creative and critical thinking by the youth in an effort to understand and evaluate what they did, what they learned, how it affected them personally, and how their services affected society on a broader scale.

Youth may analyze the experience through such means as discussion with others and reflection on the work. Thinking about service creates a greater understanding of the experience and the way service addresses the needs of the community. It promotes a concern about community issues and a commitment to being involved that mark an active citizen. At the same time, the analysis and thought after service allow the participants to identify and consider what they have learned.

Reflection is a process that allows people doing service to make careful considerations about what their experiences were all about, what they saw, who they met, and why there is a need for such services in the first place. The act of reflection, therefore, becomes crucial to a youth's education. It serves as the bridge between experiences and learning.

### Importance

Helping youth to reflect on what they learned is one of the most important goals of a youth service experience. Youth will develop their own critical thinking skills as well as the capacity to be resourceful as they

define, analyze, and interpret the new social experiences they have had working at a service agency. Have youth discuss the ways that the placement helped them to learn and grow, both emotionally and intellectually. As in the other stages of this project, help youth develop an organizational framework that aids them in exploring and keeping track of their own thoughts and feelings about the project.

In understanding the importance of reflection, it is essential to look at the tools used in effective reflection. Reflection can be implemented within a wide variety of methods and vary in time frames. Speaking, writing, various activities and multimedia are methods used for reflection in service learning.

## Role of Teacher/Leader and Service Site Liaison

Depending on the type of service activity, reflection can be conducted under the direction of the teacher/leader and/or the service site liaison.

### 1. Determine the method(s) of reflection to be used:

- Group discussion
- Journal writing
- Structured hands-on activities (such as arts or crafts projects)
- Writing poetry or songs

### 2. Determine the type(s) of reflection to use:

- **Cognitive** reflection examines the new knowledge and skills the youth gain from their service experience. This includes the kind of learning that is addressed in the curriculum (math, science, writing, social studies, etc.).
- **Affective** reflection looks at what youth feel as a result of their experience. How has this experience changed their *attitudes or opinions or sensitivities*?
- **Process** reflection considers what youth learn from *the process itself*. This includes things like how to work with others, and understanding the consequences of actions.

### 3. Select questions for reflection. The following is a list of possible questions to be used in reflection:

- What have I learned about myself through this experience?
- Did I make a difference for someone through the service project? Why or why not?

- Do I have more or less understanding or empathy than I did before volunteering?
- How did I work as part of a team?
- What did I like about the service activity?
- In what ways, if any, have my sense of self, my values, my sense of community, my willingness to serve others, and my self-confidence/self-esteem been impacted or altered through this experience?
- Have my motivations for volunteering changed? In what ways?
- How has this experience challenged stereotypes or prejudices I have or had?
- Were there any realizations, insights, or especially strong lessons learned?
- What have I learned about this agency, these people, or the community?
- Was there a moment of failure, success, indecision, doubt, humor, frustration, happiness, sadness?
- Does this experience complement or contrast with what I'm learning in class/club/program? How?
- Has learning through experience taught me more, less, or the same as the class? In what ways?
- From my service experience, am I able to identify any underlying or overarching issues which influence the problem?
- What could be done to improve conditions?
- What insights have I developed about the value of discussing experiences, ideas, and strategies? If I produced a collaboratively written piece, what did I learn from this particular aspect (of the class)?

## Chapter #9

# Recognition

### Definition

Recognition is the process through which organizations and individuals acknowledge and show gratitude to their volunteers. Likewise, volunteers recognize the efforts of the service site liaison, on a daily basis, as well as the special effort they put into hosting the volunteer. Recognition can take place throughout the entire youth service experience, not just as an end product.

### Importance

Recognition is important because it contributes to the:

- Productivity of volunteers: Volunteers who are given meaningful tasks will feel rewarded by their own accomplishments.
- Retention of volunteers: By addressing the needs of volunteers and recognizing them, volunteers feel encouraged to stay with the organization.
- Morale of volunteers: When volunteers feel connected and appreciated, their willingness to participate and their enthusiasm will increase.

## **Role of Teacher/ Leaders**

### **1. Implement recognition at the beginning of the project.**

- Know the service site liaison's and participants' names, and provide nametags.
- Model appropriate behavior for youth.
- Provide specific constructive feedback.
- Recognize personal strengths and needs of youth.
- Offer treats and snacks at the service site.

### **2. Provide ongoing recognition.**

- Write about the youth in the school newspapers.
- Have "Volunteers of the Month".
- Take photos of volunteers doing their service activities for display at school in the classroom or hallway.
- Reserve a portion of the yearbook to showcase youths' efforts.
- Celebrate National Volunteer Week.
- Nominate youth for local and state volunteer award programs.
- Track youth volunteer hours and develop hours "clubs" or recognition "levels" (i.e., 50, 100, 300 hours of service t-shirts or certificates).

### **3. Provide recognition upon completion of service.**

- Have a party, picnic, or banquet.
- Send thank you notes to the service site liaison and others.
- Have the youth write the letters mentioning benefits from participating in service learning.

- Provide awards.
- Send letters to parents of youth recognizing their work.
- Say good-bye to service site liaisons and provide closure for the volunteer experience.

## **Role of the Service Site Liaison**

### 1. Implement recognition at the beginning of the service project.

- Know the youths' names and provide nametags.
- Be prepared and have meaningful tasks for youth to do.
- Provide specific constructive feedback.
- Recognize personal strengths and needs of youth.
- Offer treats and snacks.

### 2. Provide ongoing recognition.

- Write about the youth in newsletters, websites, and in their school newspapers.
- Have "Volunteers of the Month".
- Take photos of youth doing their service activities.
- Send e-cards and e-mails with a short thank-you.
- Remember birthdays or upcoming special events.
- Celebrate National Volunteer Week.
- Nominate youth for local and state volunteer award programs.
- Track youth volunteer hours and develop hours or recognition levels (i.e., 50, 100, 300 hours of service t-shirts or certificates).

### 3. Provide recognition upon completion of service.

- Have a party, picnic, or banquet.

- Send thank you's or gifts from staff or clients served.
- Provide awards.
- Send letters to parents of youth recognizing their work.
- Say good-bye to teacher/leaders and youth, and provide closure for the volunteer experience.

### **Tips and Tools**

- Be aware of youths' interests through conversations and observation, so that recognition can be more meaningful and relevant.
- Find out what types of foods youth like, and when they are having a birthday.
- Ask other youth, clients, and staff about the youths' efforts, to get a better idea of how the youth are perceived, and how to best include them in the group.
- Be consistent with rewards and recognition.
- Base recognition on individual jobs and tasks.
- Remember that recognition can be an important learning tool: when youth fail at something, remind them of previous successes and ask them to draw on those experiences.
- Be creative.

## Chapter #10

# Evaluation

### Definition

Evaluation is a process of gathering information to measure and understand the results of service for the youth and for the community. Careful consideration of why youth service is being conducted is the cornerstone to evaluation. The purposes of youth service and the specific learning objectives developed during the preparation phase provide a baseline for evaluation. These define what benefits are expected to accrue for participants and what benefits are expected to accrue for the community. The process of evaluation determines to what extent intended outcomes were accomplished.

Once intended outcomes are clearly defined, teachers/leaders and/or service site liaisons should identify indicators and measurements that are simple and meaningful. In most cases, it is not practical or necessary to construct complex measurement systems. Rather, evaluators can use available or easily accessible data and instruments.

### Importance

Evaluation of youth performance is an important step in the youth service process to lend merit to its place in education. When service is linked to specific learning objectives, it is critical to determine the extent to which the objectives have been met.

Evaluation of the overall youth service process can be a good tool for identifying issues or concerns, as well as determining what works and what does not. It is an opportunity to improve practices for the next project. The focus for teacher/leaders should be on what the youth gained from the experience; the service site liaison focuses on evaluating the outcomes of the service experience for their own purposes.

## **Role of the Teacher/ Leader and Service Site Liaison**

### **1. Determine desired outcomes in a way that can be objectively measured.**

- Review learning objectives developed during the preparation phase of youth service.
- Identify what objectives are most critical for youth to achieve during the service experience.
- Define the objectives in a measurable way. For example:
  - i. If the objective is related to academic achievement, the measurement might be tied to accomplishing specific tasks, such as solving math problems related to scheduling or learning facts related to water pollution.
  - ii. If the objective is related to social skills development, the measurement might be indicated by a decrease in impulsive behavior or the ability to work as part of a team.
  - iii. If the objective is related to career readiness, the measurement might be the development of specific vocational skills or increased knowledge of career choices.
  - iv. If the objective is related to meeting an identified community need, the measurement might be the extent to which the need was met or the number of individuals served.

2. Define how desired outcomes will be measured. Possible approaches include:

- Tests of knowledge or skills: pre- and post-service standardized tests, tests on unit material, pre- and post-service tests of knowledge or attitude, or progress on an academic scale
- Observation of behavior: behavioral checklist, log of incidents
- Assessment of performance by service site supervisor: attendance log, performance evaluation
- Youth self-assessment, often tied to the reflection phase: completion of journals, essays
- Youth and/or service-site surveys: written survey assessing the impact of the experience, in-person or telephone survey
- Focus groups, often tied to the reflection phase: structured conversation with youth about the impact of service
- Youth presentations: youth reports to classroom or community groups about service experience and outcomes
- Tangible measure of work accomplished: amount of work accomplished, monetary value of service, concrete changes made as a result of service

3. Gather and analyze outcome data.

- Collect selected indicator data.
- Use data to evaluate individual youths' progress.
  - i. Determine whether stated learning objectives were met.
  - ii. Provide youth with feedback about individual outcomes, strengths, and needs.

- iii. Work with youth to develop and implement plan to improve future service experiences.
- Aggregate and consolidate data.
  - i. Identify trends.
  - ii. Analyze project strengths and weaknesses.

#### 4. Act on results of the evaluation.

- Share results with all parties.
- Develop strategies to address identified weaknesses.
- Implement strategies for improvement.
- Refine evaluation process for future projects.
- Use data to report to program funders or sponsors, as well as parent and school partners.

## Chapter #11

### **Tools and Resources**

Several organizations exist to aid and support the growing demand for information about service learning. These organizations can help you get started with your own program.

#### **Compact for Learning and Citizenship**

[http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/projectsPartners/clc/clc\\_main.htm](http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/projectsPartners/clc/clc_main.htm)

Compact for Learning and Citizenship is a network of chief state school officers, district superintendents, service learning professionals and other supporters of service learning.

#### **Compendium of Assessment and Research Tools (CART)**

<http://cart.rmcdenver.com>

CART includes descriptions of research instruments, tools, rubrics, and guides and is intended to assist those who have an interest in studying the effectiveness of service learning, safe and drug-free schools and communities, and other school-based youth development activities.

## **Corporation for National Service - Learn and Serve**

<http://www.cns.gov/>

The Corporation for National Service runs three major programs, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, and the National Senior Service Corps. These programs include more than a million Americans in service to their communities. This website also includes a list of all the State Commissions on Community Service.

## **Learning in Deed**

<http://www.learningindeed.org/map3.html>

Learning in Deed is a project of the WK Kellogg Foundation. It advocates service learning, and on this site you will find a "map" of service learning resources in many states all around the country.

## **National Service learning Clearing House**

<http://www.servicelearning.org/>

The National Service learning Clearinghouse offers a host of resources on service learning for youth of all ages.

## **National Youth Leadership Council**

<http://www.nylc.org/index.cfm>

The National Youth Leadership Council is in its third decade of existence. Their mission is to help build and maintain vital communities through youth participation in service learning.

## **SEANet: State Education Agency K-12 Service learning Network**

<http://www.seanetonline.org/pages/1/index.htm>

SEANet is a national network of staff from state education agencies and

other organizations that provide leadership on K-12 service learning initiatives. Here you can find out what other state education agencies are doing with service learning and keep up to date on policy decisions that effects service learning.

### **Service learning America**

<http://www.ysa.org/>

Service learning America aims to promote youth volunteering and support organizations that work on service learning issues all across the United States.

### **Service learning Colorado**

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/servicelearning/>

This organization promotes service learning as a way of teaching and learning that builds academic and citizenship skills while renewing communities within schools and community organizations around the state. Its focus is the state of Colorado, but this site can provide anyone information about service learning with its examples of programs, research and resources.

### **Wisconsin Partnership in Service learning**

<http://www.uwrf.edu/slg/pages/newWelcome.htm>

Created by the University of Wisconsin, this site will provide you with some valuable background information about service learning.

### **Helpful Websites for Volunteer Recognition**

[www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)  
[www.thankscompany.com/](http://www.thankscompany.com/)  
[www.communityfutures.ca/volunteer/](http://www.communityfutures.ca/volunteer/)



## Chapter # 12

### **Conclusion**

Preparation, Coordination, Service, Reflection, Recognition, and Evaluation are the key components to high-quality youth service. By following these practices, an organization can provide meaningful and educational service experiences for youth that will reap long-lasting benefits for the community as well as the young people involved.

As youth are given opportunities to make a difference through service, they will say, as Marian Wright Edelman did, “I have always believed that I could help change the world, because I have been lucky to have adults around me who did.”

~Thanks for giving youth this valuable opportunity to grow and develop, and to learn about our community and the importance of giving~

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<sup>i</sup> “Ten Year Review of Accomplishments” Points of Light Foundation” [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org), 2002.

<sup>ii</sup> “Executive Summary-Is Service learning Really Better than Community Service?”, A. Furco, 2002 at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

<sup>iii</sup> Compiled from National Service learning Clearinghouse [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org), Service learning America [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org) , Learn and Serve America [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

<sup>iv</sup> Metz, E. and Youniss, J. “A Demonstration That School-Based Required Service Does Not Deter- but Heightens Volunteerism.” *Political Science & Politics*, April, 2003

<sup>v</sup> Furco and Billig

<sup>vi</sup> RMC Research Corporation. “Why Districts, Schools, and Classrooms Should Practice Service learning.” Jan. 2003.



