



LINKING COMMUNITY
WITH EDUCATION:
An introduction to service learning

A publication of
HeartWood Institute

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This booklet compiles interviews with students and teachers from a number of schools in Nova Scotia, including Robert Jamison Elementary School (Harbourside), Leslie Thomas Junior High School, and Sacred Heart School of Halifax, Sir John A. MacDonald, and Acadia University, as well as information gathered in the past five years from HeartWood's service learning initiatives and trainings with schools across the province. The National Youth Leadership Council, The Compass Institute, the Alliance for Service Learning Education Reform have also contributed greatly to HeartWood's service learning resources.

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Introduction

“When you do a project like this it is for you but it’s for other people too,” concluded Ashley Ward when asked to sum up what she thought about her class’ service learning project. Ashley’s Grade 8 Independent Living Skills class at Leslie Thomas Junior High built an interactive map display with push-button lights to illuminate past and present airfields in Newfoundland and Labrador for the Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum, located near the Halifax International Airport. When interviewed about this experience the students all said they thought at first that it would be too hard to do, but shortly thereafter, with hands full of sawdust and the pieces beginning to come together, felt proud of what they were doing and realized how capable they were of building something real and useful for their community. “It’s their project. They’ve really taken ownership of it now,” stated their teacher, Rob MacIlreith. When asked what they were learning the students listed woodwork-ing, electronics, math, geometry, and map reading then quickly added, “...a lot of teamwork, communication and listening skills, too.” Near the end of one interview student Chris Brodie said, “It makes me feel like I can do almost anything.”

“As teachers, the way we teach our subject matter can be stimulated considerably if we rethink the way we teach and how we set assignments or use examples so that they reflect service to other people, reflect compassion... and once we do that then we get the notion of service learning.”

Dr. Anthony Richards, Professor and Service Learning Consultant, Head of St. Margaret's Bay, NS

Nova Scotia schools are enriching learning by connecting with their communities in meaningful ways. One popular approach is referred to as service learning. The term “service learning” is not used frequently in Nova Scotia, however the concept - blending of both service and learning goals in such a way that both occur and are enriched by the other - is being practiced more and more as we recognize the disengagement of so many youth from their schools and broader community. An essential ingredient to healthy communities is the active participation of youth. Sandra, a Sir John A. MacDonald High School student interviewed about her experience with service learning, “Kids aren’t as involved with programs that connect

them with their community, and they have to find that connection somehow. I think that's the most important thing about service learning – it's your opportunity to take responsibility for the state of your community.”

Service learning is not a new concept. It is, however, now spreading as an educational approach due to its ability to assure purpose and meaning in education and to address the issue of youth engagement, positioning youth as learners and valued members of society. This booklet is an introduction to service learning, supplemented with images, comments, and local examples. While there are some very helpful resources available which highlight the practices of service learning elsewhere, the time has



come to celebrate and share some tips and perspectives from those with service learning experience here in Nova Scotia.

The purpose of this booklet and accompanying video is to serve and inspire all of us in our pursuit to create meaningful educational opportunities that, in the short and long run, contribute to stronger communities and a healthier society, and that recognize youth as valued contributors who each have the ability to create positive change.

Many thanks to the current and past students of service learning (whether it was called that or not), and to the teachers, administrators, and community partners who shared their experiences, adding a personal and relevant grounding for this resource. Please visit HeartWood's Web site, at www.heartwood.ns.ca for further information and links regarding service learning and youth engagement. In particular, check out Nova Scotia teacher Andrew Foran's Service Learning Manual and his Master's thesis *The ABEL Experience: A Lived Curriculum*, addressing his personal experience with service learning and experiential education. Hopefully our next edition of this publication will contain comments and stories of linking community with education from you, the reader, and your students.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 students at Robert Jamison (Harbourside) Elementary School learn math, art, science, and social skills while building a straw bale shelter and cob oven as part of their outdoor classroom. Local artists, builders, and volunteers help guide the project.

WHAT IS

service learning?

Service learning is a term that has been embraced by many educators. It intentionally connects the process of learning and the action of service to each other, and links that marriage to the community and the planet. By experiencing the act of being compassionate through a service project, students may also learn new skills, gain knowledge, and place existing knowledge in a real-world context. Innovative teachers may create projects and assignments within the syllabus for the benefit of someone else other than the teacher or the students themselves. Thus, service learning can be transformed from a service experience into a learning experience, making learning experiences the stimulus for acts of service.

Service learning is an educational approach that works at all grade levels and with all types of students or participants. While it has been found to be one of the most effective strategies for helping high-risk students stay in school and succeed academically, it is also a way to help students have more meaningful learning experiences in any subject area, whether academic or applied. It is not an add-on subject, but rather a powerful methodology which can be

used across the disciplines to help students grow personally, socially, and academically while at the same time benefiting schools and communities.

The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990 defines the term “service learning” as a method:

- “under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;
- that is integrated into the student’s academic curriculum and provides a structured time for a student to think, talk, write, (or reflect in any form) about what the student did and saw prior, during and after the actual service activity;
- that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.”

(Adapted from Connecting Communities Through Service Learning, National Dropout Prevention Center)

Service learning is distinguished from community service and volunteerism in that as much emphasis is placed on the learning as the service. It is about asking the question, “How can what we are learning be of benefit to our community or beyond?”, or likewise,

“How can helping our community enrich our learning?” Adding the learning component to service initiatives enables the intended academic goals to be achieved along-side goals of personal, social, intellectual, and emotional growth.



Grade 8 students at Leslie Thomas Junior High build an interactive map display of airfields for the Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum.

Service Learning initiatives are designed to emphasize the outcomes of both the service opportunity and the learning objective of the curriculum. In doing so, the moral benefits of community service and volunteerism become a complementary partner to the existing curriculum.

When they (service learning methodologies) are carefully tied to curricular objectives, contain academic content, involve the student in reflection, and contain an evaluative component, they can be considered service learning. If these components are missing, they fit more comfortably into community-based learning or volunteerism.

(Kraft, 1998)*

Examples of combining service with learning

Recognizing the needs of incoming kindergarten students, a grade 4 class makes personalized ABC books to be given to the new students during a tour they host on the first day of school. This book becomes the starting point for their Learning Buddies program.

After a series of personal interviews, Grade 10 English students collaborate to produce a booklet which documents the folk culture and skills of a generation of older neighbours. Stories from the booklet become skits put on by a drama class and are presented at a public gathering.

Grade 9 science students study local plant life and develop a map and trail guide for public use. An opening ceremony is held where each student guides an invited adult, senior citizen, or student along the trail.

“Service learning is a process of learning about yourself, learning about other people, learning about your community - which is essentially going to be for the rest of your life - by trying to better it... It's not one specific thing, it's the way that students will begin to see things, begin to see themselves, and then they can apply that to everything in their lives including their academics - especially their academics - because if they learn this way in one part of school they can apply it to the rest of their school experience.”

Jennifer Coolen, 4th-year
Acadia student

reflecting on her service learning experience as a student at
Sir John A. MacDonald High School, Tantallon, NS

The benefits of service learning

“Man (or woman) does not learn by head alone.”

Alec Dickson, C.B.E.,
LL.D. founder of
VSO and CSV

The encouraging nature of effective service learning practices and other methods of linking community with education becomes a win-win situation for all participants, with youth, teachers, school community, and community being served, and local partners invited to share their skills. All involved can learn that they are valuable members of their community, and each has the capacity to make a positive difference. Andrew Foran wrote, “The most important

outcome in education is what our students do with the knowledge and skills they have learned.” Through service-learning experiences, students apply what they are learning not only in a real-life context, but in a way that serves a greater purpose and shows them a positive outlet in which to express their skills and abilities in the future.

“For citizenship to occur, I believe our youth must experience community, at their level and in terms they can understand. The important question for me is whether or not civic mindedness is transferred into the daily lives of our graduating students after they leave the school setting... With my students we experienced moments that allowed the curriculum to live in our hearts and intellect as powerful pedagogical moments.”

Andrew Foran, teacher,
Sir John A, MacDonald,
excerpt from Master’s thesis,
The ABEL Experience, A Lived
Curriculum, 2000.

One example of service experiences linked with schools and agencies is regular student volunteer placements in community organizations, such as a Boys and Girls club, a family resource centre, or a food bank. Often these are done during Exploratories, and, if the students have structured time for reflection and transference of what

they are learning, then the experience is enriched and becomes service learning versus volunteerism. At the Sacred Heart School of Halifax, grade 11 religious studies students partake in a program called Social Action. They begin by discuss ways to help locally, then select an organization they would like to volunteer with once a week.

There is orientation, preparation, and training involved, as well as reflection time through journaling, presentations to their classmates, and presentations at an school open house event in the spring. One of the students, Anna, sums up her experience as follows,

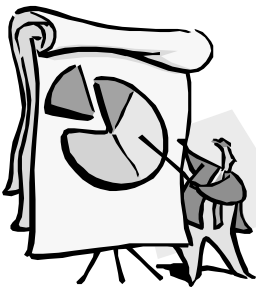
“I think this class is amazing. It’s really getting people out in the community in various ways. I think it gives you a lot of experience. It really makes you globally aware, you become less self-centred. It’s a really good thing to do because you learn how to apply what you’re learning in school in the world around you.”

Annette Campbell, the teacher who designed the Social Action program, describes the purpose and approach:

“The main focus is to learn to help in the community, to give some thing back, to give of their talent, and to become involved. I try to teach them that they will get out of it what they put into it. It really is up to them.”



An analysis of the more recent research reveals that when service opportunities are infused into learning experiences they:



- enhance academic performance and engagement of youth
- improve self-concept and self-worth
- develop critical-thinking skills
- promote a caring school climate
- teach both leadership and group-work skills
- promote a view of youth as valued citizens
- broaden perspectives and understanding of a wider range of people, issues, and places
- build attitudes and skills for active citizenship
- increase sense of social and civic responsibility
- provide career exploration and job-related skills

Summarized from The Compass Institute, the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, The National Dropout Prevention Centre, and HeartWood research in Nova Scotia)

A service learning project...

Harbourside Elementary School, part of the Robert Jamison Family of Schools on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia, collaborated with local artists and builders in their community to create an outdoor classroom. The project was funded by the 4C's Foundation, based in Halifax. Students began by discussing their ideas on an outdoor classroom which would include a cob oven, a straw-bale shelter, an edible garden, a simple labyrinth, a rain collector for garden water, a worm composting system, and a large oval picnic table. The next step was led by local artist Jude Major: "My part of the project was the first thing that happened where we taught the kids simple book binding. We recycled paper and cardstock from the school and each student made an 8x11 book to use as a journal to document the progress of this project over the course of the school year." Using math, science, art and social skills, as well as developing community awareness and environmental ethics, the students worked with teachers and community members on

everything from designing plans to selecting what should be in the garden to planting to stacking straw bales and mixing cob, to create a unique masterpiece built out of local resources and environmentally friendly materials. For an added personal touch, every student was invited to make wishes for themselves, their community, and the world, and weave them into the shelter. Jim King, the Lead Principal of the Robert Jamison Family of Schools, summarized the benefits: "From a school's perspective, it strengthens the reason for being here and the focus on the whole child so well. From a school-wide perspective, it strengthens the culture of the school... Not everyone may be working on the project but everyone's involved in some way, shape, or form, or at least they're going to that school where it is happening – which creates a sense of pride, which creates a focus... For the community, I think the strength is that it brings the community into the school in a real way – not to come in to help, but to come in to be partners and to be leaders, indeed, in education."

The learning...

In this project, the learning comes from all the skills acquired in the short-and long-term opportunities, such as learning to build with simple natural resources in a sustainable way, learning to calculate dimensions, learning about soil composition and healthy gardening, learning about life cycles by composting the food from their lunch, maintaining the worm-composting system, and much more. Some of the ways this project is a service are that it provides an enticing outdoor space for education and gathering, both for the school and broader community, it provides a means of fundraising by baking cookies or pizzas in the oven, and provides a service to the environment by choosing to build with local natural materials and educating others on how to do so.

Comments on...

service learning & linking community with education

"It kind of keeps you grounded not to get mixed up in all the things you do, to take time for other people."

Ainslie, Grade 10 student

"One of the neatest things is that the students get a lot of insight into the skills and abilities and the wide range of things that people in their community are capable of that they don't encounter on a day-to-day basis."

School Advisory Board member,
Robert Jamison (Harbourside) Elementary School, Clam Harbour, NS

"As teachers, we have to be aware of various learning styles and likes and dislikes, so this was a great avenue to provide for kids who are perhaps more hands-on learners. This project touched on all their senses."

Kathleen Canning, teacher,
Robert Jamison (Harbourside) Elementary School

"Increasingly there's more and more of a concern about standardized education and outcomes-based learning but really, it doesn't change anything. Yes, there's an end result that a student should be able to achieve but there's nothing to say that the path in achieving these outcomes can't be done in many different ways... A project like this brings the curriculum to life."

Jim King, Lead Principal,
Robert Jamison Family of Schools

"I think when you get young people joining older people like us, it's just like our grand-kids and they do so much for us. They take special interest in the people who otherwise may not participate in our programs. They help us stay young, I don't know if that's possible but I hope so!"

Mrs. Sitland, NorthWood Manor, Halifax,
referring to weekly visits from local students.

"I think more projects should be based on giving back to the community because the amount of other projects that we do just get thrown away after using all the materials but if we did more projects like this it'd be better for our society."

Brandon, grade 8 student,
Leslie Thomas Junior High, Sackville, NS

Effective service learning

Effective service learning responds to the needs of the community as well as to the developmental and learning needs of youth. Any service learning approach can be modified to reflect the maturity and capacities of youth at different stages of their academic development. Duration of the service role, type of service, desired academic outcomes, and the structure or evaluation and reflection must be designed by the teacher to be age appropriate. Service



Chester Youth Action Team, 2002, raking leaves for community members.

learning is most effective when it combines community needs and

student interests, and is compatible with their skills and abilities. As a teaching approach, service learning develops a community ethic and promotes lifelong learning as a belief within the staff and student body engaged in serving their communities.

(Andrew Foran, Teacher, Sir John A. MacDonald, Service Learning Component, Tantallon, NS, 1998)

Standards for service learning

Members of the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform (ASLER) have developed standards to promote quality in school-based and community-based service learning programs.

- 1 Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.
- 2 Model service learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk taking and rewards competence.
- 3 Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service learning.
- 4 Youth's efforts are recognized by those served, including their peers, the school, and the community.
- 5 Youth are involved in the planning.
- 6 The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.
- 7 Effective service learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.
- 8 Service learning connects the school or sponsoring organization and its community in new and positive ways.
- 9 Service learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school or sponsoring organization and its community.
- 10 Skilled adult guidance and supervision are essential to the success of service learning.
- 11 Preservice training, orientation, and staff development that include philosophy and methodology of service learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.

(Standards of Quality for School-Based and
Community-Based Service Learning,
Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, 1995)

66 We should start with the very simple things that people can latch onto, understand, and enjoy. That may be caring and sharing for each other in their classroom, gradually building on that and becoming more and more complex with our service experiences. Some of the service experience with high school, college or university students, may be, for example, a project dealing with AIDS in Africa, dealing with some environmental issue in our country, dealing with global warming at a very high level but still it's the notion of caring and sharing for the planet, so the motive for doing that work comes from the heart, not just the head.

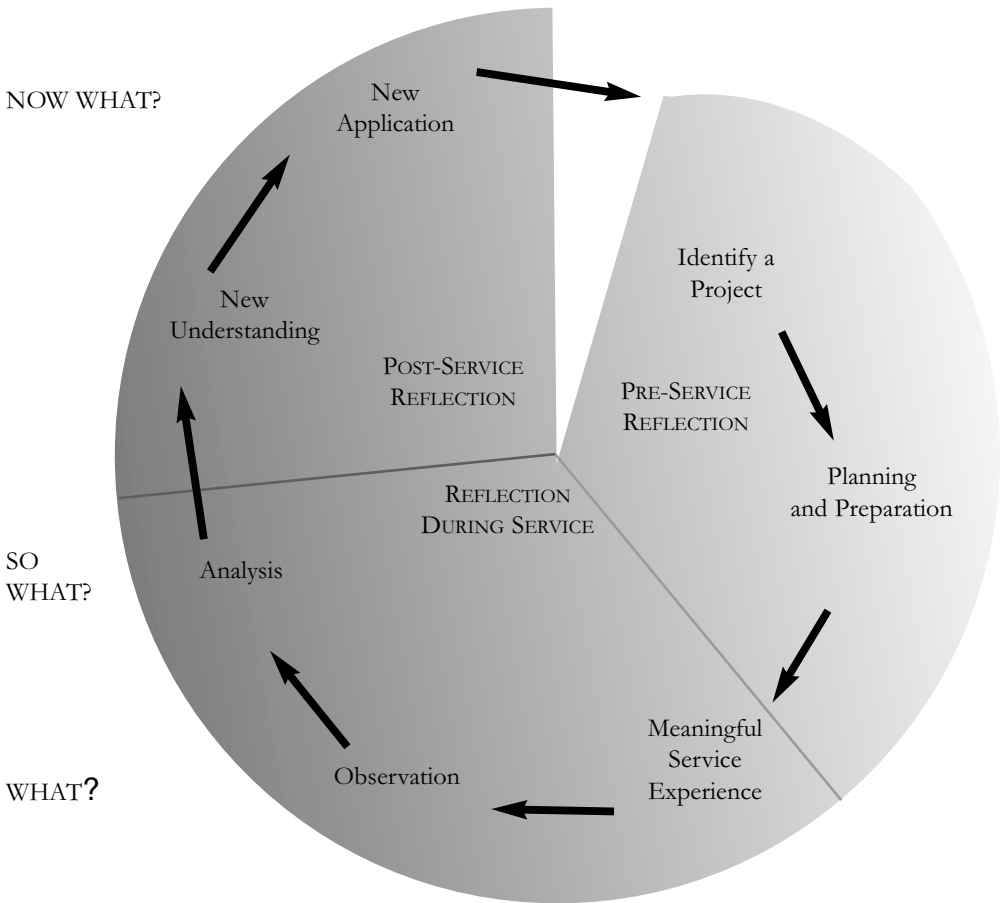
Dr. Anthony Richards,
Professor and Service Learning Consultant,
Head of St. Margaret's Bay, NS, 2003

Service learning is a form of experiential learning in the sense that all involved are learning by doing, reflecting on their experience at various stages in order to apply their new knowledge, experience, skill-set, and beliefs, to future experiences. A series of stages, known as the service-learning cycle occur both on large and small scales throughout the process of the project or initiative:

- Orientation and training
- Planning and preparation
- Meaningful service
- Structured reflection
- Celebration
- Transference of learning (new knowledge, skills, and attitudes)

The **Service-learning cycle** can be a useful tool in framing and working through these phases.

Service Learning Cycle



Reflection

to consolidate the learning

A strong reflective component where students use higher-order thinking skills to make sense of and extend their learning from the service experience is an integral part of the process. Reflection enables us, firstly, to notice what we are learning and, secondly, to transfer what we are learning into other aspects of our education, our lives, and future situations.

“Reflection can occur in all sorts of ways, but it does have to happen for the learning to be consolidated.” Dr. Anthony Richards, Professor and Service Learning Consultant, Head of St. Margaret’s Bay, NS

For the reflective process to be most successful, it needs to happen at various stages throughout the experience, in the preparation and planning stages, throughout the actual service experience, and during the completion or transition phases. For example, reflection can happen while decisions are being made about the type of service, in regards to group work in the planning stages, as a way of making improvements during the service itself, and afterwards in order to extract meaning from the experience. There are as many creative opportunities in designing reflection as there are in designing the service experience itself, and when appropriate, students can choose a method of reflection which is most effective for them or most fitting for the type of service.

Options for reflection

Speaking

- Group/partner discussion and debrief (structured and informal)
- Individual or group presentations to class, other students, selected audience, community partners
- Public speaking
- Storytelling
- Teaching younger students
- Testimony before policy-making bodies

Writing

- Journaling (personal and group)
- Learning log
- Narrative
- Storytelling
- Scrapbook
- Thank you notes
- Newspaper article or school newsletter
- Guide for future students/participants
- Evaluation (self/group/service experience)

Activities

- Analysis and problem solving
- Surveys of community assets and needs
- Research information in order to better understand service
- Recognition and celebration of experience
- Service fairs, forums, student conferences and workshops
- Training other students or selected participants
- Guiding younger students or seniors through related activities

Multimedia and Performing Arts

- Video, photography, multimedia, PowerPoint or slide show presentation
- Drama (Human slide show, skit, tableaux)
- Art (sculptures, drawings, collages, creative timelines, murals, visual/audio/sensory representations of learning)
- Music
- Song
- Dance

"It is my belief that reality changes ever so slightly each time an event has been reflected upon. I have had countless reflections in the area of service learning that my students were involved in. The reflection during the planning, the delivery and post project revealed learning connections to the course material, a greater understanding of community, and an enhanced value for the purpose of service learning as an experiential instructional tool. However, it was the growth of the person, the student in front of me, which surprised me."

Andrew Foran, teacher,
Sir John A. MacDonald, Tantallon, NS

A framework to forming reflection questions

One model frequently used to frame reflection questions presents three simple starting points:

What?

What are we doing? What happened? What did you notice? What was the experience like for you? What have we learned? What skills have you learned?

So What?

What are we doing this for? What might be the outcomes? How do you feel about it? How can we help make this experience successful? As meaningful and why/why not? How might this experience impact us/others?

Now What?

Where do we go from here? Where else could we use the skills we've learned here? What from this experience would you like to carry into other things that we do? How could we use what we have learned here in other situations? What has this prepared us for?

Sample Reflection questions:

IN REFLECTION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE.

- What could we do to help with this issue?
- What steps will we need to take for this to work?
- What expectations do you have about your service experience?
- What are all the possible roles we could take?
- What do you see your role as in this project?
- What is most important to you in how we approach this project?
- What are some things we need to keep in mind as we begin/during/as we complete this project?
- How do you feel we are doing in regard to teamwork/accomplishing our goal/communication/staying on task/being mindful of other's needs?
- What did you notice when...?
- What did it feel like when...?
- What could each of us do to make this experience as successful as possible?
- How will we know if we are successful?
- How did you solve any problems that came up?
- Did anything surprise you, if so, what and why?
- What academic skills or information did you use?
- What was most challenging for you?
- What was your highlight/low point today/throughout this experience?
- What could we/you do differently if we/you were to do something like this again?
- How does this service relate to what we are learning in class?
- What is something that you did during this experience that you would like to continue doing?
- What have you learned about your community through doing this project?
- How can you/we share our learning with others and raise awareness around this issue?
- What recommendations would you make for others doing something like this?

The learning and the service can go one step further when the results of their reflections are shared with others, whether through speaking, writing, activities, or multimedia/performing arts presentations. For example, students can capture their learning in a mural that could then be put on display at the school, at the service site, or at another chosen location where others can learn from their experience.

initiative & project ideas

The opportunities with service learning are multidimensional. Service learning can happen with any age group, ability level, and subject area. It can also take place on an individual, group, class-wide or school-wide level. Schools often choose to blend one grade with another at different stages of the project, or for different classes to take on age and skill-appropriate aspects. For example, social studies students may conduct a survey on a particular issue, such as teen health, then computer studies and math students may compile the results and shape them into a presentable format. Reading buddies or math buddies is one of the most common examples of service learning in Nova Scotia schools, whereby older students are empowered in their abilities by helping younger students to read. The learning in a project like Reading Buddies is enhanced when both groups of students have the opportunity to reflect on their experience and to see the vast array of benefits and skills learned beyond the reading itself.

Here is a sampling of some of the many school-based service-learning ideas, collected from Nova Scotia schools, HeartWood, and various education centres across North America. Note that many of these could be linked to other subject areas and adapted according to age and skill level. In some cases, there may be a fundraising opportunity linked to the service to support subsequent steps of the service project or a local organization, or a chosen global issue the students are addressing. For example, art or computer studies students could design bumper stickers to raise awareness around animal rights or environmental responsibility to sell in order to raise funds to support their cause.



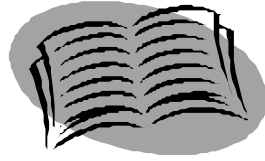
Elementary school girls teaching classmates the fun of labyrinths.

Art

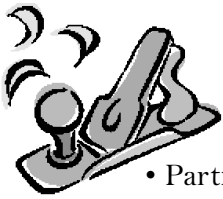
- Create artwork for local agencies, the school itself, animal shelters, youth centres, senior citizens' homes, and hospitals. Art can represent the history or dynamics of the community, be representations of stories collected and be inspirational pieces in otherwise lifeless locations.
- Design living art in the form of edible gardens, flower gardens, land-scaping.
- Create functional art, such as a cob oven decorated with sculptures, painted outdoor benches, garbage cans, gathering spaces.
- Undertake school beautification, indoor and outdoor.
- Design and decoration of information-based brochures and posters.
- Make handmade books for younger children.
- Collaborate on community sculpture.
- Paint murals on harmony, nonviolence, educational matters, community assets.
- Make coloring books for hospitalized children.
- Draw/photograph portraits of local citizens who have made a difference.
- Make photograph journals related to community, for example, local organic farmers.
- Carve and decorate pumpkins for family resource centre/women's shelters.
- Create handmade nontoxic games for family resource centre.
- Design of T-shirts, note pads, bumper stickers around a chosen educational topic.
- Hold a student art auction and community education event.
- Create happy face pillows for children in long-term hospital care.
- Create peace quilt for local community centre or national cultural centre.
- Make ceramic tile mural – cross-age, cross-generational, theme-based designs.
- Make handmade stuffed animal donations for children at homeless shelters.



English / language arts



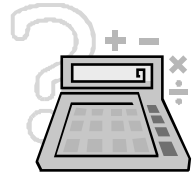
- Tutor recent immigrants in ESL or FSL/make information pamphlets for them about community events, maps, places to explore and bus routes.
- Write and publish newsletters for school audience or broader community.
- Write letters to political leaders around issues of concern, attend and speak at town meetings.
- Write letters to the editor and track responses.
- Set up storytelling time with younger children, with school or community daycare, or other child-serving organizations, such as children of recent immigrants.
- Compile a book on local heroes or moments that contributed positively to the community.
- Record favourite or created children's stories to donate to visually-impaired children (directly or through local organization servicing the visually impaired).
- Read works of literature around service-related topics and share learning through essays, flyers, pamphlets, posters with other students or chosen audience.
- Write poems related to service experience.
- Contribute to local newspapers or global journals regarding issues of concern, solutions and service-related stories.
- Help those in need to write letters and correspondence.
- Respond to Santa letters from a partner elementary school (local or distant).
- Arrange for service project when away on language-related school/class trip.
- Record and publish stories and histories of local senior citizens.
- Record and publish stories of similar-aged youth from another part of the country or world to help in cultural understanding of one another.
- Write books that teach the alphabet for younger students, or other children's stories to give to primary level on their first day of school, or to children in hospital.



Industrial art / wood-working

- Build an interactive map display for local museum.
- Partner with local not-for-profit, charitable organizations serving the community to construct necessary items such as picnic tables, shelving units, display cases, children's toys, dog houses and cat playpens.
- Build theatre sets, props, lighting systems for school plays related to service-minded and educational topics (or simply for entertainment).
- Join with other classes to construct school amphitheatre or outdoor classroom.
- Survey other students to learn about desired items for school beautification and spirit – construct ping-pong tables, tables and chairs for student lounge, plant boxes, outdoor basketball courts, skateboard park, and recycling systems.
- Help design and create local youth centre.
- Teach bicycle repair, small-engine repair.
- Build boardwalk with students' names engraved for local protected wilderness area.

Math



- Partner with other classes involved with service learning to calculate measurements, complete statistical analysis, design models to scale of structures being built, develop and help maintain budget, and do inventories of resources available and needed.
- Analyze the cost and energy efficiency of home-heating systems, both for purposes of affordability and energy conservation, then publish results in local newspaper.
- Statistical analysis of social, health, and science-related topics, such as percentages of teens that smoke, rise of incidence of children with AIDS, and mineral content in local streams.
- Partner with peers, younger students, or adults returning for their GED for math tutoring.
- Develop a weekly budget for low-income families to be shared through family resource centres – test it first by living as closely to the recommended budget as possible for one week.
- Develop a school Web site for on-line math tutoring.
- Assist low-income families with their income tax returns (anonymity required).

- Develop review sheets for current and future math classes.
- Complete wildlife and tree inventory for local parks.
- Interview local business people as to how they use math, analyze and share findings.



Performing arts/music

- Research any topic that would be of service to others, including people with various learning and physical challenges, develop performing arts/music piece to convey message and share with school, public, seniors' centres, and political leaders. This can work very well in partnership with social studies and English/French classes.
 - Host a public drama-skills workshop (age specific).
 - Learn and teach others by example on the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed.
 - Use theatre games to help peers develop teamwork, communication, listening, empathy, and other social skills.
 - With found, recycled objects, host workshops on how everybody can create rhythm.
 - Plan a random-act-of-music event in cafeteria over lunch period to raise school spirit.
 - Organize and host a monthly coffee house and/or open-mike event to raise school spirit, showcase student talent and raise awareness and money around a chosen current event or community or global issue.
 - Sponsor and organize a community fair with local youth and adult musicians.
 - Learn songs enjoyed by local seniors and assemble a cross-generational musical gathering.
 - Present conflict resolution plays or improvisational skits that invite student participation in finding solutions.

Physical education / health

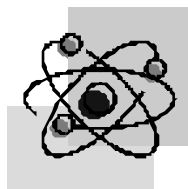
- Invite younger students or senior citizens to a fitness fair or physically active lifestyles workshops.
- Pair with younger students throughout school year to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles, implementing trail walks, games, and healthy snacks.



- Partner with local seniors' centres to lead a monthly exercise program.
- Host a community run/walk/bike fundraiser and raise awareness on a chosen health topic.
- Survey other students around specific health topics, share results.
- Educate peers on any health-related topics.
- Host a cooperative games day to raise school spirit or as an after-school event for children of single parents.
- Partner with local organic farmers to host an organic food fair.
- Offer biweekly lessons on preferred sport for other students (lunch hour, exploratories, or after school).
- Organize and run Special Olympics.
- Design and build a community exercise course.
- Provide teeth cleaning kits for sister organization in another country.

Science

- Study local natural water or soil systems, document and report findings and make recommendations regarding pollution (e.g. Adopt-A-Stream).
- Undertake school beautification: gardening, bird feeders, bat houses, compost systems, nature trails, educational walks highlighting plants and wildlife.
- Plan a community garden project for local food bank.
- Participate in environmental education programs then facilitate for younger students (e.g. EarthKeepers, Mysterious Encounters Earth).
- Host science fairs.
- Create local maps of trail systems with geographical and environmental education content for public use.
- Conduct food research for local food bank (cross-curricular with Health).
- Educate other students on purpose behind reduce/reuse/recycle practices with information cards at recycling stations.
- Develop energy conservation awareness program.
- Research effects of pesticide use and inform public of alternative methods.
- Work with local humane society or nature centre to assist injured animals in helping them return to their natural environment.
- Develop system for collecting rainfall, testing for acidity, report findings, and use water for other testing purposes or watering school garden.
- Assist in science-related museums.





Social studies

- Educate and involve other students in discussions around current societal issues and, when possible, take this a step further by having the outcomes of the discussions result in some action, such as creating educational resources or writing letters to political leaders.
- Participate in placements with local service-minded organizations such as Oxfam, family resource centres, and Meals on Wheels.
- Host a public brown-bag lunch forum to brainstorm community assets and needs that can be addressed as service-learning projects in various subject areas.
- After researching topic and designing an effective way to facilitate the learning of this topic, host public workshops through the local library, such as how to engage youth in their communities, the history of Africville, and bullying. These sessions could be filmed not only to be shown in other venues, but also for the students to evaluate themselves.
- Work with municipal governments to help find solutions to youth-related issues, for example in a town where the youth are rallying for a skateboard park, students can research and work to find a solution that works for all parties involved.
- Create a map illustrating all the assets of the school community, or broader community, and give to art students to design mural.
- Invite community members to share in a skill-swap event, where students and adults share a variety of skills and celebrate their wealth of abilities and diversity.
- Prepare youth-related stories and invite elders in for an afternoon of cross-generational storytelling. Record stories to compile as a journal.
- Research local history and develop educational resources for other classes or put on a mock scenario for others to witness, then discuss in a facilitated forum.
- Study and restore local historic sites.
- Develop a walking tour that highlights historical, geographical, community-linked aspects of the area, and create partnership with Tourist Information Centre to turn this information into a usable resource.
- Interview students who have immigrated from other countries, developing a better understanding of cultural differences. Host a cultural fair for all or selected classes. The same can be done with adult immigrants, people with varying physical abilities, the elderly, and others.

Web-based resources:

Andrew Foran Master's Thesis, "The ABEL Experience: A Lived Curriculum and Service Learning Manual", can be found as a link through HeartWood's Web site at, www.heartwood.ns.ca

HeartWood Institute
www.heartwood.ns.ca

Association for Experiential Education
www.aee.org

Lions-Quest International
www.lions-quest.ca

National Drop-Out Prevention Center
www.dropoutprevention.org

National Service Learning Clearinghouse
www.servicelearning.org

National Youth Leadership Council
www.nylc.org

“Being aware of the wide diversity among our schools, the students, and the communities, the service-learning criteria is broad enough to be applied across varied regions and populations, yet concrete enough to be translated into action. Effective service learning responds to the needs of the community as well as the developmental and learning needs of youth. Any service-learning approach can be modified to reflect the maturity and capacities of youth at different stages of their academic development. Duration of the service role, type of service, desired academic outcomes, and the structure for evaluation and reflection must be designed by the teacher to be age appropriate. Service learning is most effective when it combines the community needs and students’ interests, and is compatible with their skills and abilities. As a teaching approach, service learning develops a community ethic and promotes lifelong learning as a belief within the staff and student body engaged in serving their communities.”

Andrew Foran, teacher,
Sir John A. MacDonald, Tantallon, NS



HeartWood Institute
Linking youth and community



Support provided by
Metro United Way



Hand-drawn wavy lines on the shingles, possibly representing water or a decorative pattern.

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