Service-Learning Policies and Practices:
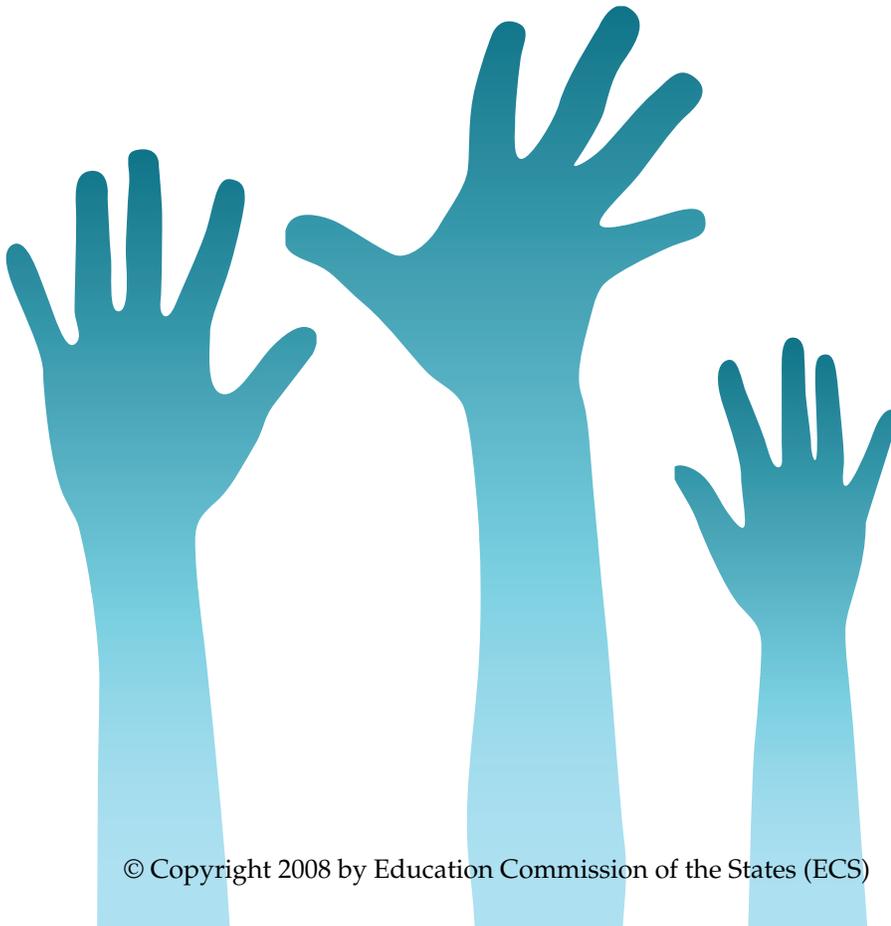## A Research-Based Advocacy Paper

Terry Pickeral, Executive Director
Tiffani Lennon, Policy Analyst
Jennifer Piscatelli, Policy Analyst

Education Commission of the States
National Center for Learning and Citizenship
700 Broadway, Suite 810
Denver, Colorado 80203-3442
303-299-3600

Education Commission
of the **States**

NCLC
NATIONAL CENTER FOR
LEARNING AND CITIZENSHIP

Executive Summary

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) promotes service-learning as a critical pedagogy for student academic, civic, social emotional and career development. To that end, NCLC designed and implemented *Learning That Lasts: How Service-Learning Can Become an Integral Part of Schools, States and Communities,* and *Learning That Lasts: Field Guide*. These efforts identified policies at the state and district levels that encourage, support and reward quality service-learning; created resources, products and forums to share information with policymakers and education leaders; aligned service-learning within ECS' organizational priorities; and established collaborations with national organizations to increase the prevalence of quality service-learning and corresponding infrastructure through policies.

Service-Learning Policies and Practices: A Research-Based Advocacy Paper is the third generation of NCLC initiatives that seeks to build upon existing work, and supports the adoption and implementation of policies and practices based on rigorous qualitative and quantitative research. This paper translates service-learning's research-based evidence for education leaders by identifying practices and policies in alignment with the data that shows what works. This paper also provides a research-based service-learning framework encompassing the simultaneous renewal of five critical components shown to institutionalize and maximize service-learning effectiveness: vision and leadership, curriculum and assessment, community-school partnerships, professional development and continuous improvement.

NCLC will release a fourth-generation project on a series of comprehensive case studies detailing the adoption of the simultaneous renewal framework in 2009. The case studies will offer school leaders and administrators a "how-to" for quality service-learning that leads to student success and achievement.

We believe this statement from *An Investment Prospectus: Strengthening Education and Democracy Through Service-Learning*, and as a result, continue to document successful policies and practices:

> *"A growing body of research describes the positive impact service-learning can have on young people. Well-implemented service-learning can help them achieve academically; strengthen their job and career-related skills and aspirations; and increase their self-efficacy, respect for diversity, self-confidence, collaborative skills, avoidance of risk behaviors, and resilience. A significant part of the research examines the potential of service-learning to help young people develop civic skills, attitudes and behaviors."*[1]

Service-learning processes and programs that are fully sustained in schools require consent and support from all education stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, district administrators and state policymakers. We have learned, however, that bringing together diverse stakeholders at the state, district and school levels raises several challenges. One of the most critical challenges is how to help policymakers and education leaders understand that service-learning research and evidence inform and influence their efforts to advance student achievement and success. The timing to implement and sustain *Service-Learning Policies and Practices* could not be better. In July 2006, led by former Chair Dr. William Cirone, the ECS National Center for Learning and Citizenship developed the chair's agenda, focused on service-learning *research* and *advocacy*.

We extend a special recognition to our collaborator, RMC Research Corporation, whose research we have relied upon extensively.[2]

Research Rationale

Schools integrating quality service-learning policies and practices have demonstrated significantly improved student achievement rates and development of pro-social attitudes and behaviors. Quality service-learning entails: (1) meaningful service; (2) intentional link to curriculum; (3) reflection; (4) recognition of diversity; (5) youth voice; (6) mutually beneficial partnerships; (7) ongoing progress monitoring; and (8) appropriate duration and intensity to meet community needs and outcomes.[3]

The current education landscape, focused on *accountability,* requires stakeholders to critically assess research demonstrating positive impacts on student achievement prior to adopting any educational strategy. As a result, this advocacy paper synthesizes research conducted over the last 20 years illustrating that quality service-learning unequivocally leads to greater student achievement and success.

This paper highlights five critical components found in quality service-learning projects and curricula that have proven successful. Several studies have found that successful schools simultaneously adopt all five components [see diagram 1A below] as a strategy for institutionalizing service-learning. This simultaneous adoption requires continuous renewal and commitment to each component. We will refer to this adoption and commitment as "*simultaneous renewal.*" In almost all cases, the following five components are present:
- Vision and leadership
- Curriculum and assessment
- Community-school partnerships
- Professional development
- Continuous improvement.

This paper also offers example policies and practices incorporating the five essential components that have proven successful in institutionalizing service-learning.

SIMULTANEOUS RENEWAL OF FIVE CRITICAL COMPONENTS
Diagram 1A

Five Components of Quality Service-Learning

Five service-learning components emerge from the research to substantiate and frame best practices and policies. These five components outlined below offer evidence supporting their adoption. For administrators to improve student success and achievement, they must first institutionalize or create sustainable service-learning initiatives by adopting all five of these components simultaneously. Research demonstrates that administrators should not view and/or adopt these five components insularly. Instead, administrators should adopt and continuously improve upon all five components.[4]

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership is not the exclusive domain of one person, or even a few people, but is something shared by many people throughout a school district. For successful engagement and learning, it is critical that school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, students, parents and community partners contribute meaningfully to the leadership picture. This kind of multi-level leadership effort is characterized by a well-understood plan, clear and consistent communication, and a pervasive sense that service-learning is not just an option, but an essential and necessary part of every student's educational experience. The following research conclusions emphasize the necessity of creating a climate and culture of change, and institutionalizing service-learning.

Build a Collaborative, Diverse Group of Leaders: Creating Better Stakeholders

A study of 11 New Hampshire Learn and Serve programs conducted by RMC Research Corporation[5] found that collaborative leadership among teachers, students, principals and district leaders[6] led to successful implementation of quality service-learning by creating buy-in and supportive, key stakeholders.

Institutionalize Service-Learning

Research found that high-achievement rates and student success existed when schools and districts institutionalized service-learning. Student achievement and school success is therefore contingent upon the institutionalization of service-learning.

Institutionalization was more likely to occur when leaders connected service-learning with other school reforms in the district and endorsed service-learning as a strategy to implement the district's vision statement. To illustrate, Billig found when there was "consistent support from the district and [omit] leadership," and when service-learning was included in the "district's mission, strategic plan or policies," the institutionalization of service-learning resulted.[7]

Moreover, a qualitative study of CalServe district partnerships found that district administrators and teachers where service-learning was required of students were more likely to support service-learning and its institutionalization than those in districts where service-learning was not required of students.[8]

> **Research found that high-achievement rates and student success existed when schools and districts institutionalized service-learning.**

Characteristics of Visionary Leaders

A multi-method study of middle-level principals by Brown and Anfara (2003) found that successful service-learning, and therefore successful students, had visionary principals. The study found the following characteristics among successful principals: time to devote; courage to make changes; open to exploration; and involvement of all staff in the changes. The exhibition of such characteristics thereby allowed for successful and effective changes.

Additionally, a review of the literature[9] revealed that what a principal does after developing a vision is important as the school creates a "climate and culture of change."[10] Lashway concluded that the successful principal accomplishes this "by speaking about the vision often and enthusiastically; by encouraging experiments; by celebrating successes and forgiving failures; and by remaining steadfast in the face of the inevitable problems and missteps."[11]

Finally, a research review of studies on school leadership practices by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) concluded that successful educational leaders develop their districts and schools as effective organizations by strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures, building collaborative processes, and encouraging participation and involvement from students, staff and faculty.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The persistent drumbeat of school reform, standards-based education and testing emphasize the importance of integrating service-learning into high-quality curricula that include assessments aligned with state standards. Service-learning advocates, therefore, the need to enlist the support of all involved in curriculum work if they are to succeed and service-learning is to endure. In addition to the frontline of teachers, curriculum directors can be close allies if they are convinced service-learning can help students demonstrate achievement of standards. Students, administrators and community organizations also can help integrate service-learning to match their own interests, beliefs and goals.

Integrated Learning

Youth Service California has seven elements of high-quality service-learning, one of which is integrated learning.[12] The indicators of integrated learning are clearly articulated knowledge, skills or value goals that arise from broader classroom or school goals. Similarly, Conrad and Hedin (1980) demonstrated that students had the greatest increases in problem-solving skills when the challenges they experienced in the field were parallel to those discussed in class. In a study of over 500 students, Dewsbury-White (1993) found that students who participated in a content-integrated model of service-learning significantly outperformed peers in an isolated service-learning model on a measure of subject matter knowledge.

Hamilton and Zeldin (1987) showed that high school students learned more when issues, which were being discussed in the legislative sessions they observed, matched those being discussed in the classrooms.

Alignment of Service-Learning with Standards

Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) found that using service-learning to teach standards or curricular objectives was the strongest predictor of all academic outcomes. Teachers who aligned their service-learning activities with standards had students who scored higher on measures of academic efficacy and engagement than those who did not.[13]

Additionally, other studies have shown that with strong integration, students' test scores in the subject matter area with which service-learning is integrated can increase significantly.[14]

Clarity of Goals and Learning Connections
Finally, Ammon, Furco, Chi, and Middaugh (2002) found that the factors that seemed related to higher academic impacts were clarity of academic goals, clear connections between goals and activities, reasonable scope and support through reflection activities. These attributes should be emphasized in the professional development of teachers and students so they can incorporate and implement recommendations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Whether personnel are novices or experienced service-learning practitioners, they need structured time to learn new skills, explore possible projects, share insights with colleagues, and develop curriculum and assessments. Since service-learning is a teaching methodology, not a prepackaged curriculum, service-learning professional development can be found in different forms, including seminars, one-on-one work between faculty and service-learning coaches, and coursework for professional certification and graduate credit.

Structured Professional Development
In a study of districts in California that implement service-learning, Ammon et. al (2002) reported that teachers who received structured professional development experiences before implementing service-learning projects were more likely to report greater success and fewer challenges.[15]

Likewise, in a retrospective study of W.K. Kellogg Foundation, K-12 service-learning grantees, Billig and Klute (2002) found that sustaining service-learning practice was related to development of relatively permanent structures such as formulation of policies, support networks, forums for sharing and increasingly advanced professional development.

...service-learning is a teaching methodology, not a prepackaged curriculum...

*Training Experience for Both Teachers and Students*
A study of service-learning in higher education found that the quality of the training experience for faculty and students involved in service-learning served as a highly influential predictor of outcomes.[16]

Include Community Partners
Sally Berman (2006) reported that community partners benefited from attendance at professional development sessions on service-learning. Practice was better supported and more consistent when community partners were present at these sessions.

Emphasize Teacher Quality and Link to Teacher Performance
Teacher quality influences student achievement more than many other factors, including class size and student demographics.[17] More specifically, teachers must ensure consistency with goals and available materials and resources.[18]
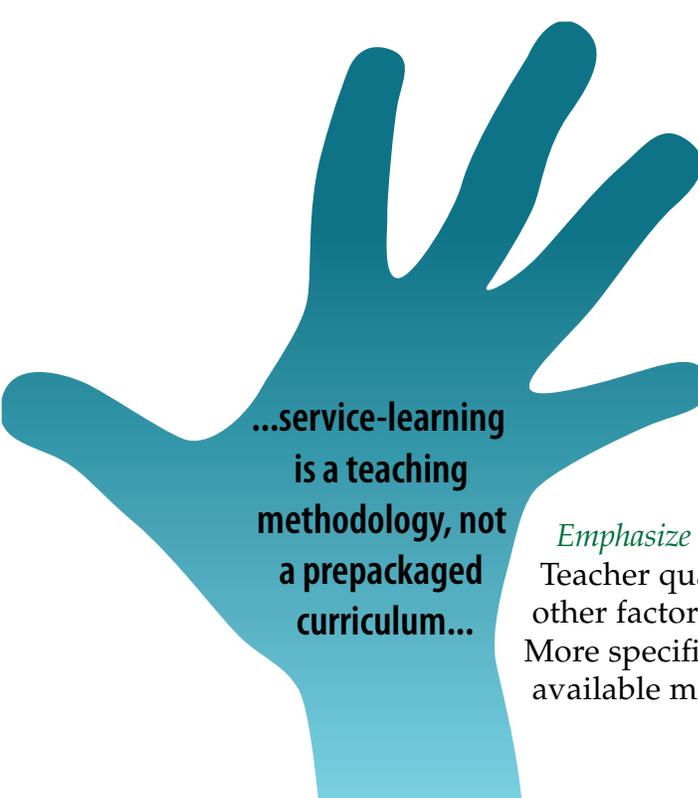
A study of 205 classroom teachers in 11 public K-12 schools in New York showed that professional development was most effective when it was linked to the teacher evaluation process. Therefore, professional development was most often effective when it was job-embedded, based on individual development plans, tied to school district's goals and linked to student achievement.[19]

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development
Professional development was most successful when it was tied to reform rather than to conference participation or workshops. Professional development also was more successful when it was longer in duration.[20]

Additionally, Newmann, King and Youngs (2001) found that a comprehensive approach included consideration of knowledge, skills and dispositions of staff members, program coherence, professional community, technical resources and principal leadership.

In summary, the U.S. Department of Education (1998) identified 10 principles of high-quality professional development reflecting research-based best practices. These principles include:
- Focusing on teachers as central to student learning, but including all other members of the school community
- Focusing on individual, collegial and organizational improvement
- Respecting and nurturing the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, students and others in the school community
- Reflecting best available research and practice in teaching and learning
- Enabling teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies and other essential elements in teaching to high standards
- Embedding continuous inquiry and improvement in schools
- Collaborative planning by those who will participate in and facilitate professional development
- Requiring substantial time and other resources
- Being driven by a coherent long-term plan, and
- Evaluating on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; this assessment should guide subsequent professional development efforts.[21]

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Community-school partnerships are an essential element of service-learning...

Community-school partnerships are an essential element of service-learning experiences in which students, teachers and community partners design projects to address community needs as part of their academic studies. Community-school partnerships can help students to increase their understanding and commitment to civic responsibility, and can help community organizations meet their goals. These partnerships may include community or faith-based organizations, grassroots or advocacy organizations, other schools, colleges or businesses, or government agencies.

Recognition and Adaptation of Cultural Differences

Batenburg (1995) concluded that schools and agencies represent two radically different cultures and needed to take the time to identify and work through their differences.

What schools need to communicate to the community partner is a clear definition of service-learning, the essential elements of a service-learning program, the benefits to the community, the academic and curricular standards for which teachers are held accountable and the role of youth voice in implementing projects. What the community partner needs to communicate to the school is the mission of the organization, the capacity of the organization to provide service-learning opportunities, and both the resources available and the costs required to support the service-learning partnership (Batenburg 1995).

Reciprocal Relationships and Mutual High Regard

A three-year, in-depth evaluation of the CalServe initiative (Ammon, Furco, Chi, & Middaugh, 2002), which was created to promote sustainability and institutionalization of service-learning in California's K-12 schools, underscored the importance of reciprocal partnerships as one of the foundations of program sustainability. The study also found that school and/or community partnerships were frequently strengthened by "a focus on an 'issue' area in which most of the students' service-learning activities occurred."[22]

Kramer (2000) also cited reciprocal partnerships as one of eight essential categories. He reported that "projects became successful and permanent by developing stable long-term relationships with other stakeholders, particularly at the local level."[23]

To further substantiate research findings, Billig (2002) added that one of the key factors leading to service-learning sustainability was enduring partnerships that featured mutual high regard and reciprocity. School service-learning leaders often found multiple ways for partners to work together to build long-term interest and commitment.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In schools and districts that embrace the institutionalization of service-learning, personnel continually review their efforts and look at ways to improve and enrich all aspects. High-quality continuous improvement provides an opportunity for staff, students and community members to learn from and support each other on a regular basis, to improve practice, to take responsibility for their own learning, to celebrate successes and to reflect upon student contributions. While continuous improvement is embedded within the other topics contained in this paper (vision and leadership, curriculum, professional development and community-school partnerships), it is important for a district to think strategically and comprehensively about the manner in which continuous improvement efforts are structured throughout the district.

Assessment and Evaluation

Billig, Root and Jesse (2005) found that service-learning assessment and program evaluation, including progress and process monitoring, were related to students' enjoyment of subject matters, civic knowledge and efficacy.

Written Feedback and Reflections

Shumer (1997) concluded "the process of learning from experience is dynamic; it requires methods of reflection and feedback to continually monitor its flow and direction."[24] More specifically, Greene and Diehm (1995) demonstrated that students who received more frequent written feedback on their written reflections were more likely to find their experiences valuable than those who received checkmarks or non-written reflections. Research also indicated that students were more personally invested in the service.

Similarly, Schunk and Pajares (2002) reported that students developed a sense of efficacy based, in part, on feedback and whether they are given enough opportunity to improve to meet standards.

Curriculum-Based Measurement

One form of scientific progress monitoring is curriculum-based measurement (CBM). Research on CBM shows its utility for: identifying students in need of additional or different forms of instruction, its effectiveness in helping teachers plan more successful instructional approaches and programs, and raising achievement scores. Progress monitoring improves upon instructional time, organization of instructional components, specific teaching and learning strategies, assessments, classroom management, school climate and personal relationships.[25]

For example, the instructional team monitored instructional processes to ensure that quality practices, including high expectations, safe and orderly climate, and ongoing measurement for decision making, were in place. Then, "[p]rocess data were [omit] generated to align resources and to continuously improve support process."[26]

Research-Based Position Statement

Sustainable, quality service-learning has demonstrably led to greater student success and achievement. The evidence-based framework to ensure sustainable and quality service-learning consists of the simultaneous renewal of five critical components: vision and leadership, curriculum and assessment, community-school partnerships, professional development and continuous improvement. When the framework is instituted appropriately, students achieve and succeed at much higher rates. (See Diagram 1B on page 9.)

**Student Success
and Achievement**

**Simultaneous
Renewal**

**Sustainable
Service-Learning**

Policy and Practice Illustrations

The following examples demonstrate how school leaders and administrators can successfully incorporate the five components. The illustrations offer examples of effective policies and practices, and when implemented simultaneously, will allow for quality and successful service-learning.

VISION AND LEADERSHIP: POLICIES

Emphasize the Importance of and Expectations Around Service-Learning
Many districts' mission and vision statements reflect the importance of service-learning. To illustrate, "the mission of the Greendale School District, in partnership with students, families and community, is committed to leadership in educational excellence and to develop each student's unique abilities to achieve success and contribute positively to society" (Greendale School District, Wisconsin). Additionally, "[s]ervice-learning builds school ties with the community, while providing meaningful, hands-on opportunities for students to learn. It can be effectively used in any subject and at any grade level" (Los Angeles County Office of Education, California). Finally, "[d]evelop and demonstrate responsible citizenship through school and community service" (Millbury Public Schools, Massachusetts).

Invite Leadership from Members of the Community and Schools
Other districts demonstrate their visions in the following ways.

(1) "The Gary Community School Corporation is committed to the effective engagement of staff, students, parents and community in providing a quality education in a safe and orderly environment" (Gary Community School Corporation, Indiana).

(2) "Promote high levels of collaboration and communication with staff, students and community. Encourage parent and community involvement to improve student learning and community relations. Provide opportunities for meaningful parent/community involvement in the learning process" (South Whidbey School District, Washington).

Additionally, students in Cumberland, Maine, along with the superintendent, all administrators and teachers from each school, serve on the district-wide Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Committee. The committee coordinates everything in the district related to instruction, curriculum and professional development, and assessment systems. This group meets once a month for two hours and is composed of several working groups (School Administrative District 51, Cumberland, Maine).

Include Service-Learning in Strategic Plans
In California, a superintendent released a five-year strategic plan, *Excellence for All*, which focuses on equity issues. The plan identifies service-learning, in conjunction with school-to-career, as a key instructional strategy "to increase the academic achievement … and narrow the existing academic achievement gap between students of different races, ethnicities and English-language learner status" (San Francisco Unified School District, California).

Incorporate Service-Learning as Part of High-Level Officials' Responsibilities
In Duluth, all service-learning activities are guided by a committee comprised of community partners, high school students, district teachers and administrators, and students and faculty from a nearby university (Duluth Public Schools, Minnesota). In Minnesota, the Duluth, St. Peter and Moorhead Public School districts also provide a service-learning orientation to curriculum advisory committees and accountability committees that advise and inform the school boards.

In South Carolina, service-learning is part of every principal's professional growth plan (Marion School District Seven, South Carolina). Elsewhere, the service-learning coordinator is also the director of community relations, a high-ranking administrator who works directly for the superintendent (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

Youth service programs should help build constructive links between the community and schools.

Create Service-Learning Youth Councils
An integral part of a service-learning initiative is the creation of Service Learning Youth Council, which allows students the opportunity and experience of interacting with teachers and community members on a working board, making decisions, setting goals, establishing timelines and using diplomatic skills (Millbury Public Schools, Millbury, Massachusetts).
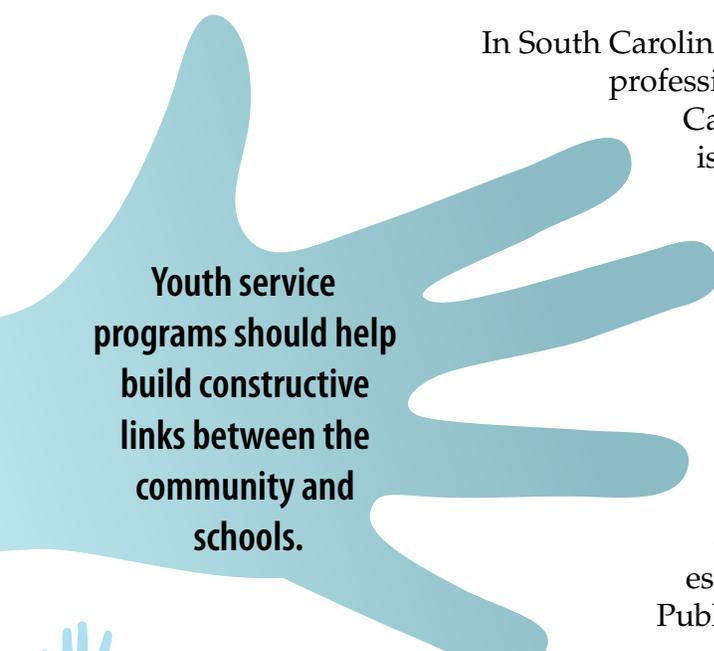
VISION AND LEADERSHIP: PRACTICES

Emphasize the Importance of and Expectations Around Service-Learning
Expectations regarding quality service-learning should begin at employee interviews. For example, in Encinitas Union School District in California, principals ask questions about service-learning experience during the interview process for prospective employees (Encinitas Union School District, California).

Invite Leadership from Members of the Community and Schools
Youth service programs should help build constructive links between the community and schools. Some programs also involve members of the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such programs (Millbury Public Schools, Millbury, Massachusetts).

Involve Students, Parents and Build Support
Students frequently update school board members on service-learning projects, which build ongoing support for service-learning as an instructional strategy (School Administrative District 20, Ft. Fairfield, Maine). In South Carolina, the district informs parents about the content of service-learning classes (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

CURRICULUM: POLICIES

Align Service-Learning with Standards
A district in Louisiana has identified six graduation goals that form the basis for all subject areas and curriculum. The successful implementation of the district's curricular and assessment program enable students to become involved citizens who actively contribute time, energy and talent to improve self, family, community and the quality of life within a global environment (St. Charles Parish Public Schools, Louisiana).

In Oregon, a district demonstrates its commitment to preparing students for active participation in the community by fostering values and personal qualities that lead to participation through a program of service-learning. This district "… believes that service to fellow students and the community encourages a sense of responsibility for self and others. The District will support and encourage age-appropriate school and community service consistent with District resources" (School Administrative District #51, Maine) (See also Canby School District, Oregon).

Another district in Oregon restructured its high school curriculum to meet state standards by incorporating service-learning and addressing community needs (Crook County School District, Oregon).

Whereas in Maine, service-learning forms an integral part of the district's comprehensive assessment system, which measures student achievement of state education standards (School Administrative District 51, Cumberland, Maine).

Another approach employed by Maine's District 19 uses a mini-grant application that requires teachers to connect service-learning projects to standards, list aligned assessment measures, and assure student ownership and community partnerships. A service-learning advisory team, which includes the principal, several teachers and students, reviews the applications and approves funding (School Administrative District 19, Lubec, Maine).

Additionally, consider policies adopted in Kentucky where the district applied core concepts and principles from mathematics, sciences, arts, humanities, social studies and life skills to service-learning projects. (Campbell County Schools, Kentucky).

CURRICULUM: PRACTICES

Promote and/or Require Service-Learning as a Key Instructional Methodology
In Oregon, district policy cites service-learning as a key instructional strategy. The district also authorized use of district buses for service-learning activities (Nestucca Valley School District, Oregon).

In New York, the school district, "endorses Service-Learning Projects and Community Service Projects as part of an intentional K-12 initiative aimed towards educating students on community, civics and real world application of knowledge. Service Learning Projects, while not a requirement for teachers, are highly recommended as an exemplary teaching methodology. Service Learning Projects are viewed as a method for teachers to move towards a distinguished level of performance and as a strategy to guide students towards active learning and higher levels of engagement" (Albion School District, New York).

Similarly, Colorado districts ensure that service-learning is a method of teaching that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and communities through careful integration with established curricula. Lessons gained from hands-on service heighten interest and enhance academic achievement, citizenship and character development (Poudre School District, Colorado). (See also policies adopted by the Santa Barbara County Office of Education, California.)

These districts found that utilizing service-learning and the other innovative methodologies listed make learning come alive for students, engage them in their communities and simultaneously meet the academic goals of the required grade level curriculum.

### *Assist Teachers to Align Service-Learning with Standards*
A broader approach adopted in South Carolina involves district curriculum and assessment staff helping teachers align service-learning projects with academic standards, encourage interdisciplinary work and authenticate performance assessment of student learning (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: POLICIES

Institutionalize Partnerships and Emphasize their Importance
In New York, the following student learning objective is put forth to emphasize the importance of community-school in particular: to encourage a cooperative spirit between the school and the community (Albion School District, Albion, New York). Additionally, the Los Angeles County Office of Education seeks to "earn[omit] the public's confidence by: making the school the hub of the community, making the most efficient use of financial resources, bridging the 'digital divide' in technology access and content, and developing collaborative partnerships for students, parents and community" (Los Angeles County Office of Education, California).
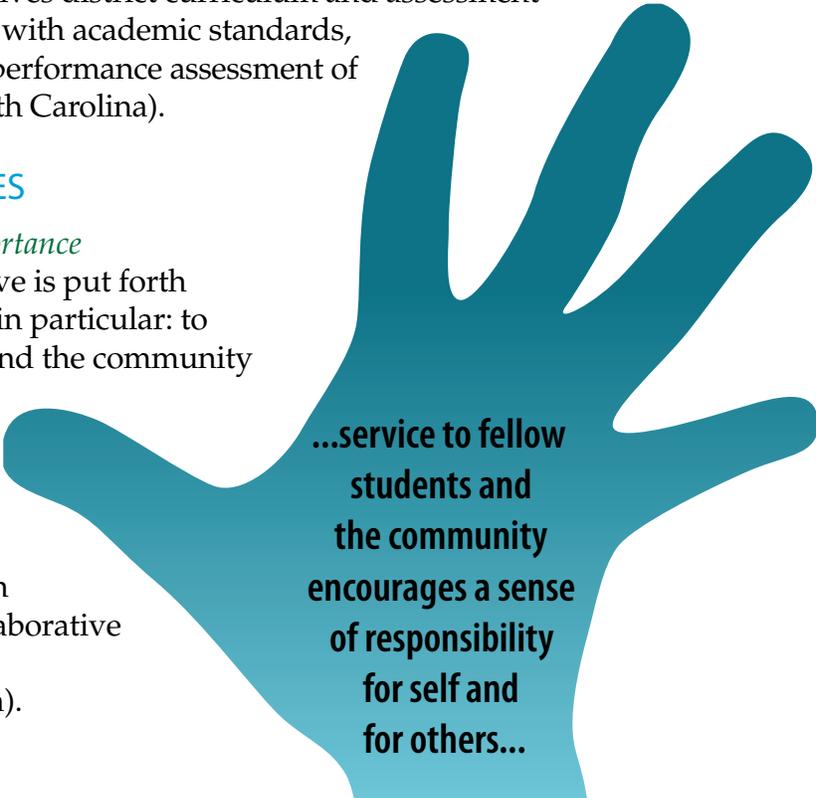
...service to fellow students and the community encourages a sense of responsibility for self and for others...

Involve Students to Help Build Community-School Partnerships

Some districts memorialize their commitment by establishing a policy around community involvement. For example, "[t]he District is committed to preparing its students for active participation in the community and believes that one way to foster the values and personal qualities that lead such participation is through a program of service learning. The District will support and encourage age appropriate school and community service consistent with District resources" (SchoolAdministrative District #51, Maine). Additionally, a Massachusettes school district proposes that it will, "[d]evelop and demonstrate responsible citizenship through school and community service" (Millbury Public Schools, Massachusetts).

Other districts have come to believe that service to fellow students and the community encourages a sense of responsibility for self and for others (School Administrative District #51, Maine). Utilizing service-learning and the other innovative methodologies listed makes learning come alive for students, engages them in their communities and simultaneously meets the academic goals of the required grade-level curriculum (Santa Barbara County Office of Education, California).

Enhance Community-School Relations

In Maine, the district has developed policies directly enhancing community-school relationships (School Administrative District 51, Cumberland, Maine).

Similarly, in California, a district identifies how service-learning projects support the institutionalization of the district and community partnerships (Alameda County Office of Education, California). Some districts include community partnership development in their annual reports (See Tillamook School District, Oregon).

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: PRACTICES

Institutionalize Partnerships and Emphasize their Importance

Engage the community by instituting an active and diverse planning and advisory committee with representatives from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Stakeholders include students, parents, business and community members, school and district administrators, teachers, and representatives from government and private agencies. This will enable strong community-school partnerships and institutionalization for service-learning programs. The committee members evolve over time to reflect new and expanded partnerships (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

Involve Students to Help Build Community-School Partnerships

Students collaborate with partners (community experts, organizations and businesses) to identify needs in the community, problem solve solutions and experience civic responsibility. Service-learning builds "community," empowers and prepares students for future citizenship, through real life learning experiences (School Administrative District #53, Maine). Service-learning projects at Marion School District Seven in South Carolina also are student-driven and address a real need.

Enhance Community-School Relations

In New York, the Board recognizes the need to develop a school volunteer program to support district instructional programs and extracurricular activities. The purpose of the volunteer program is to:
a) Assist employees in providing more individualation and enrichment of instruction
b) Build an understanding of school programs among interested citizens, and thus stimulating widespread involvement in a total educational process
c) Strengthen school and/or community relations through positive participation. (Albion School District, Albion, New York).

Schools make community partners aware of student and teacher expectations and are in turn made aware of the agency's needs and expectations. Partnerships have clear agreements on objectives and outcomes (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

Additionally, meetings with community partners occur frequently and feature structured time for reflection and clarification of expectations (Encinitas Union School District, California). Community partnership meetings should also occur frequently with structured time for reflection and clarification of experiences (Alameda County Office of Education, California).

Community agencies also present on their work regularly at a district service-learning workshop, giving an opportunity for teachers and agencies to discover how they could work together and benefit one another (Duluth Public Schools, Minnesota).

In Maine, the district has developed policies directly enhancing community-school relationships (School Administrative District 51, Cumberland, Maine).

Consider California's approach where a district identifies how service-learning projects support the institutionalization of the district and community partnerships (Alameda County Office of Education, California). Some districts include community partnership development in their annual reports (See Tillamook School District, Oregon).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: POLICIES

A district and/or university partnership on student-teaching includes service-learning methodology in preservice and continuing licensure work (Richland School District Two, South Carolina). Service-learning projects are viewed as a method for teachers to move towards a distinguished level of performance (Albion School District, Albion, NY).

Include Service-Learning as Part of Professional Development Goals
Teachers include service-learning as part of their professional development goals (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

All new staff members are required to take part in a core practices seminar, which includes service-learning, so they can quickly become involved. Both new and continuing teachers can use sample projects that have been developed by experienced practitioners in the district (School Administrative District 27, Fort Kent, Maine). Professional development is offered both to new service-learning practitioners as well as experienced practitioners. Those who are already actively involved in service-learning have opportunities to develop new teaching methods and projects (Tillamook County, Oregon).

Offer Teacher Incentives
Teachers are offered a free graduate-level course in summer in which they learn and experience service-learning (School Administrative District 17, Oxford, Maine).

Each semester, the district provides a course that can be used for graduate credit, as well as toward certification (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

Another district provides financial resources to teachers in order to develop curriculum and assessments for graduation standards including service-learning (Duluth Public Schools, Minnesota). A similar example includes a district that funds teachers who take on leadership roles in the district's service-learning development (Alameda County Office of Education, California).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PRACTICES

Include Service-Learning Best Practices in Teacher Workshops
State education agency staff and the Minnesota Effectiveness Education Program (MEEP) coordinators hold regional workshops for teachers that focus on writing curriculum, graduation standards and quality service-learning practices.

Other Opportunities for Teachers
The district includes service-learning training as a way for teachers to move toward advanced licensure and advance on the district pay scale (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

Finally, youth service should be integrated whenever possible with opportunities for reflection, discussion and evaluation.

Teachers receive graduate credit or college extension units for participating in service-learning workshops and can advance on the district pay scale (St. Peter Public Schools, Minnesota).

Teachers receive professional development units for participating in the Service-Learning Leadership Development Program, a year-long professional development program (Alameda County Office of Education, California). Another state education agency encourages education specialists to attend service-learning conferences and workshops (Oregon).

Detailed memoranda of understanding outline the district's role in supporting teachers in staff development efforts related to service-learning, including financial obligations (Alameda County Office of Education, California).

Monthly check-ins with service-learning teachers allow for troubleshooting, presenting new material and reflection (Alameda County Office of Education, California).

Offices within the state education agency also have service-learning on their meeting agendas. Specialists throughout the agency design, support and attend the service-learning institute (Oregon).

Create Opportunities for Students
Effective student service is preceded by training and support so that the students involved will be prepared to offer useful service and derive the greatest benefit from their involvement in the program. Service opportunities should also be cooperative in nature, with emphasis placed on group problem solving and team building. Additionally, youth service programs should help build constructive links between the community and the schools and whenever practicable involve members of the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such programs. Finally, youth service should be integrated whenever possible with opportunities for reflection, discussion and evaluation (School Administrative District #51, Maine).
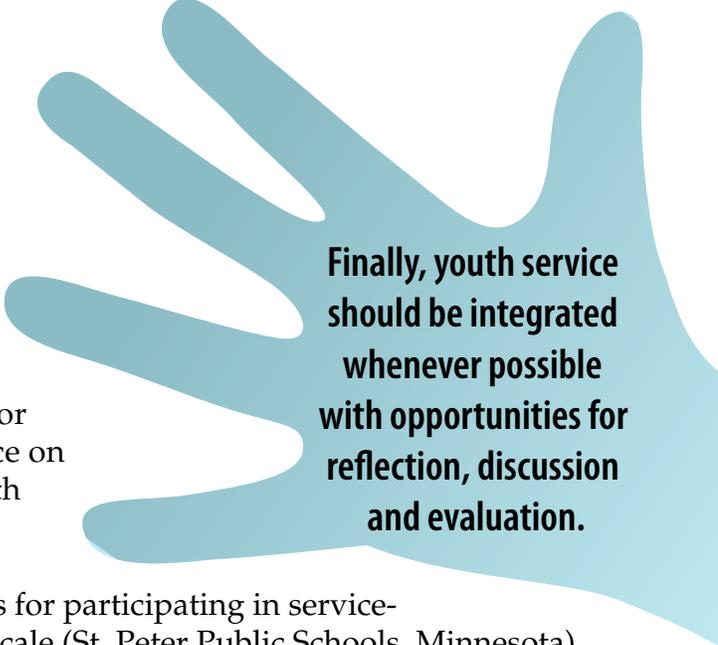
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: POLICIES

Incorporate Service-Learning in School Plans and Evaluations
District policy recognizes that common planning time and teacher release time are critical for innovative, effective teaching (Richland School District Two, South Carolina). Teachers are also held accountable for integrating effective service-learning practices, and are reviewed accordingly in their annual performance evaluations (School Administrative District 58, Kingfield, Maine).

Moreover, service-learning is included in the school improvement plan (Churchill High School, Oregon). Additionally, service-learning is included in many districts' requests for proposals and grant processes (Richland School District Two, South Carolina).

With assistance from numerous community stakeholders, another district wrote a new vision statement focused on connecting student learning to "real-world situations" (Auburn School District, Maine).

Some school committees and superintendents have jointly developed goals accompanied by measures of progress. The goals are carried out through a creative approach based upon full community participation (Cambridge School Committee, Cambridge, Massachusetts).

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: PRACTICES

Ensure that Continuous Improvement Practices are Part of Culture
An early release program every Wednesday allows teachers in the district to meet and create curriculum, share projects and formulate assessments on a weekly basis (School Administrative District 51, Cumberland, Maine).

Some administrators also use formal and informal channels to emphasize the importance of service-learning to teachers and students (Marion School District Seven, South Carolina).

Others organize monthly meetings with allotted time for practitioners to raise issues and work on program improvement (Alameda County Office of Education, California).

Involve Students in Every Component but Particularly with Continuous Improvement
Finally, student involvement in evaluating the impact of service-learning is essential for success (Marion School District Seven and Richland School District Two, South Carolina).
All districts and schools should evaluate the impact of service-learning and make improvements accordingly. Successful service-learning programs have continuous improvement at its core permeating all aspects of simultaneous renewal.

CONCLUSION

Research has demonstrated that quality, sustainable service-learning leads to greater student achievement and success. Sustainable service-learning encompasses the simultaneous renewal of:
- Vision and leadership
- Curriculum
- Community-school partnerships
- Professional development
- Continuous improvement.

By simultaneously incorporating all five components, service-learning positively impacts student achievement and success. When provided with opportunities for quality learning, students' academic scores improve, and they develop greater pro-social skills and dispositions.

NCLC's fourth generation of service-learning products anticipated in 2009 will synthesize best practices and policies for administrators and leaders by offering comprehensive case studies of how successful schools and districts simultaneously incorporate all five components. The cases studies will walk administrators and leaders through their own adoption and simultaneous renewal of the five critical components of student success and achievement.

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Endnotes

[1] The W.K. Kellogg Service-Learning Consortium, *An Investment Prospectus: Strengthening Education and Democracy Through Service-Learning*, October 2005, (p. 1).

[2] RMC Research is widely acknowledged as one of the leading research organizations in the field of K-12 service-learning. RMC Research recently completed a national study of the impacts of participation in service-learning on high school students' academic and civic engagement; the study distilled key factors with strong effect sizes. Their work is being used to formulate new standards for the field. In addition, they are currently involved in a project to "unpack" the standards, leading to tools that will help practitioners to understand implications for service-learning program design. In addition to this work, RMC Research has conducted over 20 other studies of service-learning and has developed the Service-Learning Quality and Sustainability Index; the Service-Learning Quality Review; and multiple information briefs on Linking Federal Programs and Service-Learning. They have authored dozens of books and articles on service-learning and are widely known as a credible resource in the field.

[3] NYLC, 2008.

[4] Billig, 2003.

[5] Billig, 2002.

[6] Billig, p. 258.

[7] Billig, p. 258.

[8] CalServe, 2006.

[9] Lashway, 1997.

[10] Lashway, p. 4.

[11] Lashway, p. 4.

[12] Youth Service California (2006).

[13] Billig and Brodersen, 2007.

[14] NYLC, *Growing to Greatness: The State of Service Learning (2007)*.

[15] See also the research conducted by Ammon, Furco, Chi, and Middaugh (2001), where they found that the following factors were related to higher academic impacts: clarity of academic goals, clear connections between goals and activities, reasonable scope, and support through focused reflection activities.

[16] Billig, Fredericks and Northup, 2006.

[17] Darling-Hammond and Youngs, 2002.

[18] Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon and Birman, 2000.

[19] Lowden, 2006.

[20] Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon and Birman, 2000.

[21] U.S. Department of Education (1998), p. 3.

[22] Ammon, Furco, Chi and Middaugh, 2002, p. 7–27.

[23] Kramer (2000) p. 35.

[24] Schunk and Pajares, 2004, p. 36.

[25] Bernhardt, 1998.

[26] Bernhardt, p. 10.

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700 Broadway, Suite 810
Denver, CO 80203-3442

www.ecs.org
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