

The Learning Network

A Newsletter for Districts and High Schools Engaged in Redesign Work

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For more information and to register for these workshops, go to www.cesnorthwest.org/registration

Service Learning: Head, Hands, Heart

By Kate McPherson

As a first-year classroom teacher, I discovered the power of service learning while struggling to find some way to engage Roger, an eighth grader with very low reading skills. After trying several unsuccessful “interventions,” I was about to join my colleagues in assuming that his home life was just too much to overcome.

Luckily, my vice principal suggested I have Roger tutor second graders. With much trepidation, we matched Roger with a struggling second-grade reader. I was amazed by the changes I saw. Roger became a different person. For the first time in his life, he was valued and he looked forward to school. He needed to learn to read—not to get a good grade, but to be helpful to his second-grader.

Roger’s reading ability improved four grade levels that year; the key ingredient was the opportunity he had to use his reading skills to help others in an authentic way.

Service learning has some unique qualities that breathe life into classroom instruction. Like many engaging instructional strategies—internships, expeditionary learning, project-based learning, etc.—service learning enables students to connect content and skills to a real context. But as the example above illustrates, service learning adds an additional key ingredient—the heart. Service learning makes the head, the hands, and the heart central to student learning.

As a teacher, I have found that students from all backgrounds are hungry to feel needed and valued. They want to put their values into action, to experience the deep joy of true service, and to see that the skills they are learning can be used.

But don’t take my word for it. Listen to the voices of students at Quest High School, a

Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) school that offers students service-learning experiences:

- *“I had no idea when I started this experience how much real learning I would actually do. So much of the understanding of something is not found in a book or classroom experience. It was only when I could actually experience the learning that it held true understanding and meaning for me.”*
- *“I think that this project gave me an understanding of the subject that I could not have gained through research alone. Being able to actually work for your cause, rather than only report about it, gives you a deep emotional connection to your topic, and I know it motivated me to learn and do more than I thought I could.”*
- *“I do not need a pat on the back or congratulations because I have already gotten that. I have gotten more than I had bargained for—a better community.”*

In the years since I watched Roger’s transformation, I’ve heard similar comments from scores of students like those quoted above. And I’ve seen students in a civics class help new immigrants prepare and pass their citizenship tests, science students gather data and provide scientifically valid reports on indicators of water quality, industrial design students design and build a wheelchair for a child with multiple sclerosis, and much more.

In this issue of *The Learning Network*, you’ll hear from more students—and from many of their teachers as well—about how service-learning projects are bringing rigor and relevance into high school teaching and learning.

Kate McPherson is a national service learning consultant and founder of Project Service Leadership, based in Vancouver, Washington. She is currently providing professional development services to the CES Service Learning Network. For more information or resources on service learning, check out Kate’s website at www.projects-service-leadership.org or contact her at 360-576-5070 or mcpbers@pacifier.com.

Network Schools Demonstrate Service Learning in Action

The articles in this issue highlight some of the service learning projects and teacher professional development implemented this year by schools in the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest (CESNW) Service Learning Network (see sidebar below).



The Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Service Learning Network was created during the 2006-2007 school year and funded by a three-year grant from The Corporation for National and Community Service. Its goals include:

- Implementing service learning across all of the disciplines
- Developing formal partnerships with community groups to address community needs
- Increasing the academic engagement of students

The eight schools below were invited to join the Network because of their previous success creating strong community partnerships and/or their commitment to the CES Ten Common Principles.

- Centennial 7–12 Learning Center, *Portland, OR*
- Clover Park High School, *Lakewood, WA*
- Commodore Options K–12 School, *Bainbridge, WA*
- Forks High School, *Forks, WA*
- Friday Harbor High School, *Friday Harbor, WA*
- Heritage High School, *Vancouver, WA*
- Riverdale High School, *Portland, OR*
- Windward High School, *Ferndale, WA*

But first, here’s our definition of service learning. It’s a philosophy, a community development model, and a teaching and learning method:

- **IT’S A PHILOSOPHY** that embraces young people as community resources and assets.
- **IT’S A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL** that takes on real issues and community needs.
- **IT’S A TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD**, a form of active learning that values critical thinking and problem solving and integrates service into academic courses and meets state academic standards.

Using the “Buddy System” to Build Science Proficiency

Participating in the science fair took on a new meaning this April for 100 sophomores from Heritage High School in Vancouver, Washington. Instead of directly participating, each high school student stood next to their fifth grade “buddy” and listened as the younger student presented their experiment and answered questions from teachers, administrators, parents, and community members.

The goal behind the “vertical teaming” was to identify students (tenth graders and fifth graders) who were struggling academically, specifically with science, says Heritage Assistant Principal Randy Brosius. “When we looked at our middle school data, there was a staggering number of students who were failing and not performing well on the science portion of the WASL,” he recalls.

“[This project] was a two-way street from planning to execution. It gave us all a greater appreciation for what happens in other buildings and grade levels in the district.”

SHERRI IKE, TEACHER,
ORCHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“The project gave us a way to prepare for the science WASL in a way that the students found relevant,” says Sherri Ike, a fifth grade teacher at Orchard Elementary. “We took components of the district’s required fifth grade inquiry exit project and combined it with WASL concepts, such as investigation.”

Beginning in December, Heritage students were each paired with a fifth grader from one of two partner elementary schools—Sifton and Orchards. During eight get-togethers, the younger students, with support from their tenth grade mentors, investigated possible science projects, developed a budget and list of materials (if it exceeded \$5.00, students had to write a grant request to their teacher), developed a hypothesis and research questions, conducted the experiment, collected and recorded data, developed conclusions, and created display boards for the science fair.

Randy notes a number of unanticipated outcomes from the partnership, including positive shifts in student behavior and attendance. “Students took ownership for their projects because they got to decide what they wanted to study,” says Randy. “A fifth grader’s grandfather approached me at the science fair and said, ‘this is all my grandson has talked about for the last three months.’”

“For our fifth graders, the relationships with the older students have been key. The students are really attached to each other; the younger students looked up to the older students and relied on their expertise,” says Sherri.

Sherri adds that for her, another unanticipated outcome was the opportunity to work with colleagues from the high school. Teachers met twice to plan

how the students would spend their time together, discuss how to prepare their students to work together, and share their lessons.

“It was a two-way street from planning to execution. It gave us all a greater appreciation for what happens in other buildings and grade-levels in the district,” she explains.

While the science WASL scores won't be known for a while, plans are already underway to expand—the vertical teaming next year with a project that will focus on history, language arts, and science. And district leaders are eager to learn more; they invited Heritage students and teachers to make a presentation to the school board in May. ◀ TLN

Students and Teachers Engage in Service Learning

Last fall, teachers at Powerhouse, a small school within Lakewood's Clover Park High School, kicked off the school year by spending one of their half-day professional development sessions participating in community service projects. The staff was divided into four groups and worked at a soup kitchen, family resource center, organic farm for disabled adults, and local wetlands. Afterwards they debriefed and talked about the implications for service learning and the possible applications to their classrooms.

“For our small school, we see service as an important component of citizenship, and citizenship is a value we all hold and one of our three core values,” explains Debra Shanafelt, administrator at Powerhouse.

“Service learning is a powerful instructional strategy for making learning more relevant and meaningful by giving students more ownership and more choice,” says Deb. “Since we are a CES school, we also like that it embraces a number of the CES Principles, including ‘student as worker’ and ‘using one’s mind well.’ Service learning is a type of instruction that engages all different types of learners.”

This year, ten Clover Park teachers—six from Powerhouse and four from other academies—are implementing service-learning

projects in their classrooms. Clover Park plans to implement service learning in all four academies and content areas during the next two years.

Kristie Fetterly, who teaches Advanced Placement U.S. History at Powerhouse, believes service learning helps connect student learning with what is happening in the community. “For the students in my class, they were given the opportunity to participate in the history, instead of just reading about it,” she explains.

Kristie started the year using the traditional AP history textbook, but soon decided that she needed to supplement it when her students reported the text was “boring.” Kristie asked her students to brainstorm topics they were interested in learning and out of their conversations developed the Lakewood History Project, which connects Lakewood history to the larger national historical context.

Throughout the project, Kristie's students partnered with the Lakewood Historical Society and the Lakewood History Museum to create a documentary on the political history of Lakewood.

For Kristie, a third-year teacher, service learning has required her to “step out of the traditional teacher role and act more like a coach. Instead of ‘stand and deliver,’ I am sharing content and helping students work on projects based on their individual interests.”

Kristie's students were so excited about the Lakewood History Project that they recently began a second project that involves research and fact checking for the Tacoma Civil Rights Project, an exhibit that will open next year at the Washington State History Museum. ◀ TLN

“Service learning is a powerful instructional strategy for making learning more relevant and meaningful by giving students more ownership and more choice. [And it's] a type of instruction that engages all different types of learners.”

DEB SHANAFELT, POWERHOUSE,
CLOVER PARK HIGH SCHOOL



Powerhouse student Tim Riley interviews David Bugher, City of Lakewood Development Planner, about the city's political history.

Cycle of Inquiry Supports Service-Learning Professional Development

At the Centennial Learning Center (CLC), a small alternative CES school in Gresham, Oregon, community service is a core value; the teachers believe that student learning happens inside and outside the classroom. But like many teachers elsewhere, the CLC teachers have struggled to connect the student learning happening outside the classroom to what was happening inside the classroom.

This year, in an effort to make stronger connections between the two types of learning experiences at their school, the CLC staff began using a cycle of inquiry (see side bar) during their staff collaboration time to plan and strengthen their service-learning projects.

Led by service-learning grant coordinator Angela Nusom, the CLC staff undertook an inquiry process that included reflection, investigation, examining the application to practice, and lastly, reflection and assessment.

During the first stage of the inquiry cycle, the CLC teachers created an inventory of service-learning activities that were already underway at their school and discussed possible ways to strengthen them.

During the second stage, the staff discussed the elements of effective practice (see page 7) and watched the Small Schools Project video *Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn*, which jumpstarted

AN INQUIRY CYCLE

The CES Service Learning Network encourages teachers to use an inquiry cycle when developing and planning service-learning projects. The cycle includes four stages:

- 1 Reflection** – To connect teachers’ prior experiences to service-learning.
- 2 Investigation** – To provide an opportunity for teachers to examine the role of service-learning in their practice and at their school.
- 3 Application to practice** – To deepen and sustain a collaborative culture for carrying out a plan of action that includes implementation with students.
- 4 Reflection and assessment** – To create a process for reflection and continuous improvement using a cycle of inquiry.

a conversation and examination of community partnerships.

During the third stage, three teachers involved in service learning shared their projects with their colleagues. Following the presentations, the staff broke into small Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) to address key issues and next steps for their project using protocols.

“The presenting teachers said the day was useful because they had a chance to work on their projects with the help of other staff. The act of talking, brainstorming and planning about real activities cracked the wall that some teachers built against service learning and many of them commented on the changing dynamic of the school,” says Angela.

At the end of the day, one of Angela’s colleagues reflected, “The discussion forced me to think about service learning as ‘part of’ rather than just another thing to do.”

“The day was an amazing success... suddenly things felt possible and minds were caught in a whirlwind of ideas,” recounts Angela. “Teachers began to clearly see a way for their academic subjects and community service to align.”

The fourth and final stage in the inquiry cycle—reflection and assessment—was scheduled for later this spring. During this time, the CLC staff planned to reflect and assess their progress this year with connecting classroom and community learning experiences and begin brainstorming and planning service learning projects for next year.

Angela believes a critical aspect of supporting and sustaining CLC’s professional development model is the availability of weekly collaboration time for teachers, as well as the regular one-on-one coaching that she is able to provide through the support of the grant.

She says, “The key to sustaining our service learning work is on-going professional development for teachers. And the key component of CLC’s professional development is providing time for teachers to plan and work together, as well as the classroom and curriculum support provided by the peer-to-peer coaching.” **TLN**

“The discussion forced me to think about service learning as ‘part of’ rather than just another thing to do.”

TEACHER,
CENTENNIAL LEARNING CENTER

“The key to sustaining our service-learning work is ongoing professional development for teachers.”

ANGELA NUSOM,
CENTENNIAL LEARNING CENTER

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Students who engage in service learning:

- ▶ exhibit higher GPAs and enhanced writing and critical thinking skills,
- ▶ are less likely to be absent from school and become more engaged in school work, and
- ▶ gain more self-confidence, resilience, sensitivity to multiple cultures and avoid “risky” behaviors.

Billig, Shelley, Support for K–12 Service-Learning Practice: A Brief Review of the Research

Studying History by Studying People: What You Can't Learn in Textbooks

This May, Windward High School (Ferndale School District) will host a community celebration to release *Echoes of History: Lummi and Early Whatcom County History*, a bound collection of oral histories from over 25 community members and Lummi elders researched and written by approximately 80 freshmen and sophomore students.

The project, spear-headed by English teacher Paul Lewis and U.S. history teachers Adam Goldstein and Katie Ruthford, was modeled after a previous oral history project the teachers had taught. That project had focused on the stories of Ferndale residents during the early part of the twentieth century; it served as a foundation for the teachers' instructional planning.

"Oral history projects are a great way to have our students experience the history that we are teaching," says Adam.

"The students are also conducting a service by recording stories that will be preserved and that could have otherwise been lost," adds Paul.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the students spent six weeks learning about the relevant history, reading locally produced texts and researching other Lummi oral histories. Working in small groups, the students developed interview questions, worked on interview techniques, and developed an awareness and sensitivity about cultural differences.

While the students unanimously described the interview process as nerve-racking, many also described facts and ideas that they learned from their interviewees, as well as new insights into a culture and group of people they didn't know much about.

"It's so different talking to real people," says sophomore Ryan Greene. "You're

talking to an actual person and hearing how history has impacted them."

Following the interviews, the student teams reviewed their notes and listened to their audio-recordings in order to write up drafts of the oral histories, which were then sent to the interviewees for editing and fact checking.

Juanita Jefferson, who works at the Lummi Archives and is a member of the Lummi Nation, was interviewed by a group of Windward students. She agreed to participate because she felt like it was an opportunity for two communities to "get to know one another and develop trust." Referencing a long history of racial tension between the Ferndale community and the Lummi Nation, Juanita says, "Through this project, Windward has taken a proactive approach to get to know the people in the community and not just accept stereotypes." ◀ TLN

"Oral history projects are a great way to have our students experience the history that we are teaching."

ADAM GOLDSTEIN, HISTORY TEACHER
WINDWARD HIGH SCHOOL

"I USED TO THINK..."

"It is important that people tell their stories. Older people have stories and we can learn a lot from them that we can't learn in textbooks... it opens your eyes to things you're never going to experience."

TINA CHANDLER

SOPHOMORE, WINDWARD HIGH SCHOOL

"I used to think that history was a big picture thing. But now I realize that it impacts people differently and when you study history, you are studying people. It's so different talking to real people. You're talking to an actual person and hearing how history has impacted them."

RYAN GREENE

SOPHOMORE, WINDWARD HIGH SCHOOL



Charlie Miller, Lummi Nation carver, describes his work to Windward students (foreground to background) Ryan Greene, Brook Tawes, and Tharyn Richards.

Reflections from the National Service-Learning Conference

Friday Harbor High School (San Juan Island School District) sent a team of teachers and students to this year's National Service-Learning Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Below are two quotes—a teacher and student share some of their reflections on the experience—and two photos.

“Since I am new to service learning and teaching in general, it was good to have another teaching strategy presented to me and to see the research that supported its success... I left the conference with many contacts and ideas about projects that could benefit the community.”

ANGELA FRYE

SCIENCE TEACHER, FRIDAY HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL

Next year's conference will take place April 8–12, 2008 in Minneapolis.

“It was a real surprise and an honor to be invited to the conference and represent my school... service learning was brand new for me and I didn't know much about it. I understand a lot more about service learning now and it was interesting to hear what other students were doing in their schools... we were able to get ideas from other kids who shared their projects with us. I'm hoping that our [school] will be able to start small groups for service-learning projects.”

GRAHAM ELLIS

FRESHMAN, FRIDAY HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL



From the Cafeteria to the Gas Tank



*By Randy Brosius
Associate Principal, Heritage
High School*

It's lunch time at Heritage High School and the teachers are discussing their weekend. Gwen Thompson, our Advanced Placement Chemistry and Physics teacher shares how she attempted to create bio-diesel in her home. Jim Neiman, the Careers in Technical Education teacher, takes an interest in Gwen's idea. Both instructors have recently purchased vehicles that run on diesels.

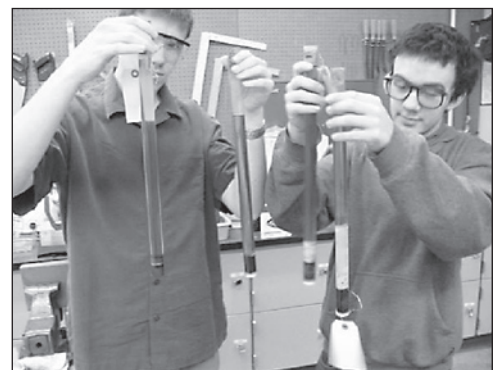
Gwen knows that the school cafeteria produces thousands of gallons of fats and oils that can be combined with other ingredients to produce bio-diesel. Why not make this a class project?

So after some discussion and joint planning, Gwen and Jim presented the idea of creating bio-diesel to their classes. Their students became highly engaged in the project and discovered how to produce bio-diesel on a large scale.

In February 2007, the students presented their findings to the Evergreen School Board with each student explaining his or her learning and contribution

to the process. The students then passed out glycerol soap (a by-product) to the audience.

continued on back page...



Principles of Effective Service-Learning Practice

As high schools incorporate service learning into their school improvement plans, they find that it provides processes and principles that deliver both academic and civic outcomes and forge authentic learning partnerships with the community. However, service learning is effective in producing academic and civic engagement only when it is implemented with high quality.

Recent research and studies clearly indicate what service learning can do and what conditions need to be in place to enable teachers to implement it effectively in their classrooms. To help teachers develop this effective implementation, a group of educators, researchers, service-learning experts, and administrators has been developing the following concise list of principles. These principles can help guide curriculum planning and the continuous improvement of programs. They can also help schools transform community service into academically strong service learning.

Rigorous Learning

- The service-learning project has clearly articulated learning goals that arise from broader classroom or school goals;
- Student learning is explicitly assessed;
- Academic, civic, and career-related skills and knowledge learned in the community are integrated back into classroom learning.

Meaningful Service

- The service is in response to an authentic community need;
- The service is designed to achieve significant benefits to the community and/or students;
- The service is age-appropriate and well-organized;
- Students are well prepared prior to service.

Reflection

- Reflection establishes connections between the student's service experiences and the academic curriculum and career-related skills;
- Reflection occurs before, during, and after service experiences;
- A variety of reflection methods which utilize multiple intelligences and encourage critical and creative thinking are used.

Civic Responsibility/Diversity

- By participating in the service-learning project, students understand how they can make a positive contribution

to the community and participate as active citizens in the future;

- The program fosters civil discourse and democratic values through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences and respect for all learners (multigenerational and multicultural).

Youth Voice

- The thinking and ideas are integrated into the selection, design, implementation and evaluation of the service-learning experiences;
- Youth are viewed as a valued resource by the school and community.

Reciprocal Partnerships

- All partners benefit from the project and contribute to its planning;
- Ongoing communication among key participants promotes effective collaboration.

Process Monitoring/Evaluation

- Analysis of student reflections and assessment measures, along with project and partnership data, promotes continuous improvement;
- The evaluation seeks to measure progress toward both the learning and service goals of the project.

Duration

- Service and learning experiences are of sufficient intensity and duration (or are equal to one semester), so that all phases of planning, through project evaluation, are included.

More information about these principles can be found at the National Service-Learning Partnership's website at www.service-learningpartnership.org.

Tools & Resources

For schools that are interested in developing a service-learning program, consultant and Project Service Leadership founder Kate McPherson has constructed a "Curriculum-Based Service-Learning Project-Planning Tool." This tool will help you articulate the purpose, standards, audience, and essential question(s) of your program, as well as consider important instructional and assessment questions and develop an action plan. You will find it on our website, www.smallschoolsproject.org under "Resources and Publications" in *The Learning Network* section.

You can also find other helpful service learning information online. If you are interested in additional research, check out www.rmcdenver.com. To learn more about the National Youth Leadership Council's work, see www.nylc.org.

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Gas Tank, *continued from page 6*

After the students received a standing ovation from the large crowd, Principal Anne Sosky marveled at how the project integrated mathematics, environmental, chemical and physical sciences while Superintendent John Deeder and members of the school board commented how impressed they were by the



students and their commitment to the project.

It's clear that Gwen and Jim's idea of integrating the curriculum and thinking outside the box has had a major impact on students and

teachers alike. The students are already talking about expanding this project next year and teaming with a marketing class, as well as the Evergreen Transportation Department, to help market the fuel. Their long-term goal is to produce enough fuel to supply some of the district's buses.

For a copy of a DVD that explains the setup of this project in detail, please contact Evergreen CTE Director Susan Dixon at 360-604-1001 (ext 4449) or e-mail sdixon@egreen.wednet.edu.

Correction

In the March/April TLN, an inadvertent misprint may have sent you to the wrong website. If you are looking for *Strategic Community Engagement: A Resource Guide*, you will find it at www.smallschoolsproject.org under "Tools" and "Build Family and Community Connections."

The Learning Network is a quarterly newsletter written and produced by the Small Schools Project, which is part of the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center.

The Project was created in 2000 to promote the understanding and development of small schools committed to providing rigorous, relevant learning experiences for all students, based on powerful relationships that support this learning. We provide support and assistance to high schools and districts committed to high school redesign and graduating all students college- and work-ready.

The Project offers a range of services, including school and district coaching and professional development activities for educators and administrators. We publish a variety of publications about small schools and produce hands-on tools to use in the classroom, school, district, and community.

For more information about the Project, to subscribe to this newsletter or print a copy, please visit <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org>.

To share information about your district or school's redesign efforts, or to suggest topics for this newsletter, please contact:

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