

Introduction

At a service learning workshop in the mid-1980s, I asked twelve teachers to think back to their earliest memories of service—of giving service, receiving service, or observing service. They willingly shared images of visiting retirement homes with a youth group, collecting money for UNICEF, working in a hospital as a high school student, and tutoring a young neighbor who was struggling with reading. One woman described living in a rural community with few financial resources. Still, her mother prepared food each week that her father loaded onto the back of their pickup to deliver to families whose needs were more urgent than their own. She described watching this and wondering, “Why are they giving away our food?” She paused, reflecting. Then she said, “Maybe that’s why I take care of foster children. Maybe that’s why I’m a teacher.”

I have continued asking this question over the years and I continue to find a connection between people’s early personal experiences and memories of service and their later choice to become teachers or otherwise work with children. Teachers—along with others who work in service professions—clearly have a natural affinity with service learning. Part of what draws us into this career is the opportunity to reach children and make a lasting—even profound—difference in their lives. Service learning provides deep and wondrous ways for this to happen.

My own experience with service learning began long before the term was commonly used. I was teaching in a very small school in rural Maine. One morning, a seventh-grade student brought in a newspaper article.

“That’s my street,” she announced, pointing at the photograph. “See that tree? It’s two houses away.”

“What’s wrong with the tree?” another student asked her.

“Dutch elm disease.”

None of us was familiar with the term, but by the end of the day, we had all learned quite a bit about this disease that threatened the magnificent elms in our neighborhoods. The students wanted to get involved. Before long, they were making phone calls to the

state and local departments of agriculture and were directed to a science department at the local university. Within a week, they were trained in assessing elm trees. Clipboards in hand, they traveled from street to street diagnosing and reporting on the condition of each tree.

Suddenly, subjects came alive for our middle and high school students. The study of plant cells took on new meaning. In math classes, record-keeping methods, statistics, and percentages gained an importance they had not had before. Students described their excitement and frustrations in journals and stories with feedback from other students and teachers. As a culmination of their work, students submitted their findings to state agencies and made a summary presentation to a college class.

The students couldn’t save every tree, of course, however they did help protect some of the majestic elms. Along the way, they learned and practiced scientific reporting methods, became aware of the roles of state officials, and developed partnerships with college students. Motivated by a sense of purpose, our students identified themselves as community activists and came to speak with ease about civic responsibility.

You should know that the education of the heart is very important. This will distinguish you from others. Educating oneself is easy, but educating ourselves to help other human beings to help the community is much more difficult.

— César E. Chávez, *social activist*

Since my first experience with service learning, I have worked as a classroom teacher, developed programs nationally and internationally, assisted with advancing service learning in teacher preparation and certification efforts, stood before all sizes of groups when presenting a conference keynote or interactive session, and served as a leader of educational workshops for districts and schools. *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* reflects my experiences both as an

educator, who presents about service learning and develops and refines its concepts and practices, and as a student, who acquires new ideas from the people I meet.

The desire to incorporate service learning into education is growing exponentially across the globe. Teachers improve their delivery of knowledge and skills and become enlivened by the high level of student engagement that integrated service learning provides. Students make the essential connections that bring forth the best they have to offer and help them create meaningful, relevant experiences. Service learning is truly a win-win for all involved.

Why Is Service Learning Important?

You may approach service learning for many different valid reasons. Perhaps you're drawn to service learning based on experiences you had as a student or due to personal or community values. You may want to introduce service learning to your classroom or school after hearing about the many ways students become motivated and engaged by this hands-on teaching method. You may approach service learning to respond to specific community needs or concerns or to promote involvement with social justice issues. You may have seen the success of a colleague, heard an inspiring speaker, or read a news article that chronicled how kids took what they learned in a classroom and used their knowledge and skills for the benefit of others. Many educators see the direct link between service learning and civic responsibility, literacy, social and emotional development, and improved school culture and climate. Or perhaps you're responding to school or district requirements for incorporating service learning into curriculum and teaching methods, and you want to maximize the benefits for all involved. Regardless of which scenario seems most familiar to you, you'll likely find yourself asking—or answering—the question, “Why is service learning important?”

- Service learning provides meaningful ways for students, teachers, administrators, and community agencies and members to move together with deliberate thought and action toward a common purpose that has reciprocal benefits.

- Students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally; develop skills; explore numerous career options; and may come to appreciate the value of civic responsibility and actively participating in their community.
- Teachers make school and education more relevant for their students, often seeing students blossom and develop previously untapped strengths in the process; collaborate with their colleagues and community partners to develop exciting curriculum; and may find themselves professionally reenergized.
- School administrators may observe a boost in staff and student morale as desired academic outcomes are achieved, and the school's profile is raised in the community.
- Parents find new avenues for conversation with their children, and may help support service learning within the school and create family service experiences.
- Community partners receive much needed help and may find themselves learning from the students as they teach or interact with them.

An entire community benefits by encouraging and supporting its students' thoughtful civic involvement and participation. Young people are acknowledged and see themselves as resourceful, knowledgeable, agents of change who can harness their curiosity, creativity, ideas, energy, and enthusiasm to benefit us all.

The beauty of service learning is that something real and concrete occurs. Learning takes on new and multiple dimensions. When students engage intellectually and emotionally with a topic, they can light up with a revelation or connect two previously separate ideas. What they've learned in school suddenly matters and engages their minds and hearts. Teachers also frequently respond enthusiastically to service learning, finding their students' eagerness and curiosity invigorating. Education becomes relevant, as classroom extends to the larger community. Math, science, social studies, languages, literature, the arts, technology—all are applied, used, and placed in contexts where they really matter.

In addition to the educational benefits, our society depends on active participation of its members to thrive. Our acts of service can shape the society we live in. Even young children marvel at how their thinking and planning and doing makes a difference. Service learning enables a wealth of small and large “differences” to happen. Relationships develop between people with an attendant understanding and appreciation for similarities and differences. Eyes become accustomed to looking for needs in the community and recognizing opportunities for change.

Even though service learning is exciting for teachers as well as students, you may feel daunted by the idea of integrating service learning into an increasingly complicated curricular mix. If so, you’re not alone. Often teachers arrive at one of my service learning workshops tired and frustrated by the newest set of mandates to arrive on their desks. Then, as they hear of their colleagues in schools across the country who try service learning and use it again and again, something happens. They see the real possibilities to meet academic standards, improve literacy, increase test scores, and enjoy their profession while they enhance and strengthen their ability as educators.

The Research Is In!

Fortunately for the ever-expanding world of service learning, education researchers are actively exploring how service learning improves education for students and identifying the factors that are most compelling for successful projects and experiences. The Resources section of this book on pages 257–259 includes organizations that are portals for updates on research as service learning continues to thrive around the world.

About This Book

This book is designed to help you successfully use service learning in your classroom, youth group, or teacher education program. You will find ways to sow the seeds for a culture of service learning in your school, district, or community, or plan to initiate professional learning conversations. You will find ideas and strategies to build a strong service learning foundation, advance a well-honed practice, and be positioned as a service learning leader, as well as practical ways to implement

service learning with children of all ages. Thematic chapters cover a wide variety of contemporary issues that serve as jumping-off points for service learning. Some thematic ideas are likely familiar, others less so. All of the issues are important and the concepts and suggestions have been used in schools throughout the United States and the world.

How to Use This Book

This guide has three main parts, and it’s designed to be used in a specific order. Part One addresses the various elements of service learning, how to get started, and the different ways to use the theme chapters. Part Two is a series of thematic chapters. By reading Part One before moving on to the theme chapters, you will be prepared to apply the principles of service learning. Part Three is about advancing a culture of service within your school, district, or organization; read this chapter when you are ready to expand and grow service learning.

- **Part One: The Service Learning Handbook**, includes three chapters that provide definitions and background information on service learning and describe the necessary components for successful implementation. Chapter 1 discusses the nature of service learning in detail. Chapter 2 gives you a blueprint for how to begin using service learning in your classroom and includes discussion and thumbnails of many reproducible documents and forms to adapt and use as you engage in service learning experiences or share ideas with peers. Keep in mind that all of these forms, and more, are on the companion CD-ROM so you can download them and complete them on your computer. Chapter 3 explains how to use the theme chapters and the service learning bookshelf—annotated bibliographies—included in each theme chapter.
- **Part Two: Service Learning Themes**, is made up of thirteen thematic chapters that will give you ideas for specific areas for action, including themes such as Protecting and Caring for Animals; Safe and Strong Communities; Poverty, Hunger, and Homelessness; Healthy Lives, Healthy Choices; and Special Needs and Disabilities. Each

thematic chapter includes preparation activities, a curriculum web to help you make cross-curricular connections, theme-specific resources, examples of actual service learning scenarios, and an extensive bookshelf of nonfiction, picture books, and fiction. Each thematic bookshelf is divided into topics; for example, the topics in the Environment chapter bookshelf are “Learning from History,” “Overview of the Environment,” “Natural Resources,” “Recycling,” “Appreciation,” and “Activism.” Nonfiction and fiction titles are identified by grade level. Books are also cross-referenced where they are applicable to more than one thematic chapter, as noted on an easy-to-reference chart. Every book title is annotated. Author interviews for select titles are included on the companion CD-ROM.

- **Part Three: A Culture of Service**, includes ideas and strategies developed from my years of working within the service learning field and with a community of practitioners. This chapter includes supportive theories, strategies for meeting priorities of schools and districts, and ways to share service learning through professional development and in-service workshops. Suggestions for conversations can also be helpful as you bring other stakeholders into the process. Also included are excerpts of essays contributed by people working “on the ground” to promote service learning; the complete “Voices from the Field” essays are found on the companion CD-ROM.

The book concludes with An Author’s Reflection and a general resource list to help you further explore service learning.

About the Bookshelf: The Important Link Between Service Learning and Literature

Books and reading are the basis of all literacy and learning, and I have found they are also essential to the service learning process. Over the years, I have read and gathered many outstanding and memorable books—fiction and nonfiction—that have an authentic connection with service learning themes. A well-chosen book can become the linchpin for an entire

service learning experience or unit, introducing students to relevant issues as they start working on their ideas and plans. Compelling books can keep them thinking about the implications of their endeavors and provoke them to reflection throughout. Both teachers and students gravitate toward a well-told story.

When I travel to lead service learning workshops, books pour out of my suitcases. These traveling companions enliven service learning keynotes and presentations as educators see the relevance and connections between the books, their students, and service that meets genuine community needs. I have included hundreds of my favorite books in the service learning bookshelf sections in the theme chapters of this book. Additional book titles can be found on the companion CD-ROM.

About the CD-ROM

The companion CD-ROM to this second edition of *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* has abundant resources well worth exploring. Check out these highlights:

- **Customizable Forms.** All the forms discussed in the book can be filled in on the computer or edited and then saved to use again. This makes it possible to compile a database of completed planning templates and community contacts, and to adapt materials for specific audiences.
- **Planning Templates.** In chapter 2 on page 48, you will find a thumbnail of the Planning for Service Learning template. On the CD-ROM, you will find thirty-nine completed examples—an elementary, middle, and high school example for each of the thirteen theme chapters in the book. These examples provide a guide for new and experienced teachers to make curricular connections, verify community needs, and follow the five stages of service learning.
- **Curriculum Templates.** Every thematic chapter has an Across the Curriculum web that models how service learning can deeply connect to and enhance learning objectives in all content areas. A blank curricular web is also included on the CD-ROM, which is especially helpful in workshops (see page 249 in *Creating a Culture of Service*).

- **Additional Book Titles.** As you read the thirteen thematic chapters, you will find a theme-specific bookshelf in each. On the CD-ROM you will find additional titles, including newly published books, old favorites, and books that may be out of print but still worth finding. You will also find the complete “Recommendation from the Field” books and service learning experiences.
- **Author Interviews.** As noted at the end of every thematic chapter, author interviews are included on the CD-ROM. This edition contains eleven wonderful new interviews, plus updates and additions to the previous ones. Altogether, there are twenty-eight interviews, or “stories behind the stories,” for you to enjoy and share with your students and other teachers.
- **Voices from the Field Essays.** Thanks to the growing field of service learning, the knowledge contained in this book includes additional advice contributed by current field leaders. Each essay is briefly excerpted in chapter 17; the full essays are included on the CD-ROM.



Printing a Copy of the CD-ROM

To get the most out of the extensive rich material on the CD-ROM, you may choose to print all the PDFs on three-hole-punched paper and add them to a binder with divider pages. In this way the CD-ROM becomes a valuable resource on its own and an indispensable companion to *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*. Do you know a teacher looking for an elementary school service example involving healthy living, a middle school example of interacting with elders, or a high school example of emergency readiness? If so, you have dozens of Planning for Service Learning examples at your fingertips to share. Would you like to send the James Howe author interview to a colleague? Look in the binder. Are you leading a staff development session on curriculum connections? All fourteen Across the Curriculum forms are easy to find. Expect your CD-ROM binder to be well used, just like this book!

Is Service Learning for You?

If you're a teacher, teacher in training, youth worker, group leader, counselor, principal, administrator, or parent who wants to help kids be more engaged and effective learners and take responsibility in their communities, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* is for you. While this book primarily addresses service learning within a kindergarten through twelfth-grade school setting, service learning also thrives in many colleges and universities. Community organizations, youth groups, and after-school programs also use service learning to enrich their programs. Wherever young people's academic achievement and personal growth is the desired outcome, service learning is increasingly becoming the answer.

Above all, the purpose of this book is to encourage the practice of service learning—to offer a variety of ways you can integrate the service learning methodology of high youth engagement into different curricula so more young people will reap the benefits. Improving how we deliver academic knowledge and skills, while instilling the concept of civic responsibility and enriching educational opportunities for young people of all ages as they become engaged in social action is a gift to your students, your community, and yourself.

In reading this book, you will find that my commitment to service learning is deep. I am part of a dynamic group of countless educators, community members, writers, social activists, artists, and young people of every age who believe we are change agents who can repair, improve, and save this world—I stand with those who believe this is perhaps the finest work to be done. Welcome to the group!

—Cathryn Berger Kaye