



FROM VISION TO REALITY: A PLAN FOR SERVICE-LEARNING IN MAINE

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning is an instructional strategy that offers a unique opportunity for students, from kindergarten to college, to be involved with their communities in a tangible way by infusing curriculum-based learning with service that addresses local needs.

On June 17, 2010, the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS) adopted its strategic plan for 2010 – 2013. The second goal of this plan directly addresses service-learning: “Maine schools and community youth development programs support academic success among youth by adopting service-learning as an educational strategy.” To that end, in 2011, MCCS and service-learning stakeholders developed and adopted a common vision and plan to increase and strengthen the adoption and practice of service-learning in K-12.

VISION

All Maine youth will have frequent opportunities to engage in high quality, meaningful service, in both the context of the learning they are purposefully engaged in during the school day, and in other venues with curriculum-based learning opportunities.

BELIEFS

- Service is a critical component in the development of civic-minded, engaged, and responsible citizens.
- Service provides a unique opportunity for instruction that presents learners with real-world problems and a chance to solve them.
- Service-learning is not something that occurs only in school settings during the school day.
- Service-learning is for students of all ages, talents, and abilities.
- Service-learning supports the health of communities through the provision of needed services and the increased educational attainment of its youth.
- Service-learning has the potential to address a variety of educational challenges while addressing local, national, and global needs.

CONSIDERATIONS

There is no single group or agency in the state that has the resources to bring this vision to fruition and realize the outcomes of service-learning. Changes in traditional approaches and ingrained teaching practice require changes not only to the everyday activities of thousands of teachers and students, but also to assumptions and attitudes. A sense that these changes are both desirable and possible coupled with a groundswell of support is needed. With this, the force needed to begin widespread adoption is minimized while the effect is maximized, and it becomes, as Malcolm Gladwell aptly noted, a “tipping point.”

To move to this tipping point, certain conditions and supports are required. First, recognition should be given to the significant work of organizations, such as KIDS Consortium, Learn and Serve America, Maine Campus Compact (MCC); the University of Maine Cooperative Extension; the commitment of many districts and teachers; policy efforts, such as Learning In Deed; and ongoing efforts by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and MCCS that have helped build a foundation for change, models for adoption, and superb examples of high quality practice to be shared and emulated.

In addition, there are a few specific conditions that need to be created to ensure widespread and continued change:

1. There must be a broad understanding of what service-learning is and the benefits it yields for youth, educational programming, and the health and vitality of our communities.
2. There must be an established and identifiable set of support structures (including policy, professional development, and peer support) for service-learning practitioners and their community partners, as well as a variety of entry points for those interested in adopting the methodology.
3. There must be funding to provide incentives and support for schools and agencies willing to take up the involved task of complex change. However, this funding need not be extensive or long-term. The change from one pedagogy to another has little inherent long-term cost: Teachers will still teach, and schools and students will still consume the same resources, though perhaps in a

different way. Instead, the funding is needed to encourage the initial steps, to assist in the realignment of policies, and to compensate for the inevitable cost of time, training, and community education that implementation of a new pedagogy—in this case, service-learning—entails.

4. And, perhaps most importantly, there is a critical need to involve young people in this effort, hear their input, learn from their experience, and heed their warnings and encouragements regarding the practice of service-learning. It is also important that young people are engaged in outreach and training related to implementation, and to let youth with service-learning experience train the trainers.

Detailed in the following pages are a set of outcomes based on the vision, the core beliefs, and the conditions identified above.

OUTREACH AND PROMOTION

Outcomes	Strategies	Key partners
<p>Mainers understand the term “service-learning” as defined above, know how it differs from community service and other teaching methodologies, and recognize the potential of this teaching approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reach out through public service announcements, press releases and media coverage of service-learning activities, blogging and utilization of other social media. ▪ Publish a Maine guide to service-learning. ▪ Include service-learning workshops at the Blaine House Conference. ▪ Present at other nonprofit conferences. ▪ Host an annual service-learning conference. ▪ Reach out regionally through the Maine Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Project. ▪ Publish white papers (e.g., service-learning in dropout prevention and student engagement, career preparation, community development). ▪ Host competitions encouraging videos of service-learning impacts. 	<p>Time Warner Cable, KIDS Consortium, MDOE, VISTAs, youth ambassadors</p>
<p>Key constituencies* understand and support broad-based implementation of service-learning as a strategy to engage youth in learning, decrease dropout rates, and meet the goal of having all students leave school as responsible and involved citizens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in and present at annual conferences of the Maine School Management Association, Maine School Board Association, Maine School Superintendents, and Alternative Education Association of Maine. ▪ Present information and share resources through the curriculum coordinators’ listserv and relevant professional organizations. ▪ Reach out to faculty in the University of Maine (UMaine) system and other colleges providing teacher preparation, including the community college systems. 	<p>MCC, KIDS Consortium, Maine School Management Association, MDOE, Maine Department of Labor, UMaine system</p>

* MDOE Commissioner Stephen Bowen and staff; school superintendents, administrators, curriculum leaders, school board members, classroom teachers, and parents; alternative education and other educational program providers; faculty in teacher preparation and advancement programs; legislators (especially the Education and Cultural Affairs Joint Committee) and local policymakers; Maine Governor’s Children’s Cabinet, Maine Afterschool Network, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Jobs for Maine’s Graduates, Maine Jobs Council, and Workforce Investment Boards.

Outcomes	Strategies	Key partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present to the Education and Cultural Affairs Joint Committee. ▪ Reach out to extended learning and after-school education providers. ▪ Participate in and present to professional development coalitions (e.g., Western Maine Partnership). ▪ Promote service-learning in the faith-based community as a strategy that promotes values, provides community support, and mirrors or enhances faith-based initiatives. ▪ Promote models for the development of service clubs within schools and youth-serving programs. 	
Youth are actively involved in the promotion and development of service-learning as a grassroots initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage and educate existing youth-led organizations in service-learning and its benefits. ▪ Highlight and circulate information related to youth-driven service-learning activities. 	Maine Youth Action Network, 4-H, youth ambassadors
Schools and other educational programs have useful and simple strategies for connecting with community partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add VolunteerMaine.org functionality to identify “service-learning certified” community partners. ▪ Reach out through Volunteer Generation Funds to partner agencies and schools. 	KIDS Consortium, VGF sites

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Outcomes	Strategies	Key partners
<p>All teachers in Maine have access to high quality professional development opportunities in service-learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offer regular training opportunities (e.g., KIDS Consortium, Blaine House, service-learning conferences). ▪ Incentivize service-learning training. ▪ Focus MCCS Professional Development Fund on service-learning training. ▪ Sponsor courses via the community college system. ▪ Research available online credit-bearing coursework and publicize information and links on Commission websites. ▪ Identify, incentivize, and support practitioners to establish and maintain service-learning “communities of practice” (e.g., by providing small cash stipends, service-learning practitioner certification). ▪ Package and publicize a toolkit for service-learning institutionalization 	<p>MCC campuses, Maine VISTA Project</p>
<p>Preservice teachers in all disciplines receive training in service-learning as an instructional methodology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify faculty at schools of education currently instructing students in service-learning methods, and work with them to approach faculty senates and departmental leadership to expand service-learning offerings. ▪ Promote the use of service-learning among all schools of education faculty members. ▪ Identify cooperative teachers who are effective service-learning practitioners, and create connections between them and college faculty. ▪ Host faculty-focused dialogues about service-learning on college campuses. 	<p>UMaine campuses, private institutions (e.g., St. Joseph’s College, UNE), MCC, Board of Education</p>

Outcomes	Strategies	Key partners
<p>Community organizations likely to benefit from service-learning activities understand and are prepared to support the unique needs of participating learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop curricula for a simple online certification procedure for nonprofits interested in partnering with schools. ▪ Register organizations on VolunteerMaine.org after they receive online certification ▪ Provide training in service-learning to Foster Grandparent and RSVP program leaders. 	<p>VGF</p>
<p>Instructors in programs offered outside of the school day have access to professional development opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide personally-tailored training for extended learning opportunities, such as after school and summer programs, to outside (non-profits) agencies. ▪ Provide access to training opportunities for K-12 teachers. 	<p>21st CCLC, After School Network, MDOE</p>

FUNDING

Outcomes	Strategies	Key partners
<p>Funding from a variety of sources and in a variety of forms, will support service-learning adoption and implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide funding and technical assistance through key partners to school districts that commit to implementing service-learning districtwide in a sustainable manner. ▪ Provide small seed grants to teams of teachers and community partners. ▪ Utilize VISTA and other national service resources to build capacity and share proven approaches and models within and among regions. ▪ Encourage AmeriCorps applications from schools and programs interested in implementing service-learning. ▪ Support continued relationships with current and past funders who have supported service-learning implementation. ▪ Identify and engage new and potential funders, in particular national and local supporters of service-learning. ▪ Encourage local organizations and local affiliates of national organizations already funding school programs to utilize service-learning as an approach that can help them meet their objectives. ▪ Engage local organizations, especially those with service arms (e.g. Rotary, Kiwanis), to support service-learning. ▪ Identify one or more funders willing to tie new or existing scholarship programs to Summer of Service programs. ▪ Promote and encourage local applications for national service-learning grants and project funds. 	<p>Time Warner Cable, Youth Service America, Rotary, Kiwanis, Maine Philanthropy Center, Maine VISTA Project, CNCS State Office – Senior Corps programs</p>