

# Service-Learning in Maine

*A Guide to Implementing Quality Service-Learning*



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## Foreword

The students at Casco Bay High School in Portland are engaged in their learning. Each year, the students in the junior class decide on a topic they want to study and related problems they want to solve, and weave the themes into every facet of the curriculum. The junior class' yearlong expedition is a prime example of students taking ownership over their learning, applying academic concepts to real-world situations and making a difference in their communities.

A prime example of what we need more of in Maine's schools is self-directed and engaged learning that makes academics come alive for our students – all while they're learning the skills of team work, problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication.



Service-learning is one of the techniques we can use to make that experience a common one for our students. We're asking our educators today to do something unprecedented. No previous generation of teachers and administrators has been called upon to ensure that every student – not just some, or even most – meets rigorous learning standards. We need to prepare the students in Maine's public schools today for the careers of tomorrow. And, while we don't know exactly what those careers will entail, we know the people who fill those jobs will need to be able to work in teams, think critically, communicate effectively, solve problems, and learn constantly.

If we're asking so much of our educators, we need to make sure they have access to the tools needed to accomplish the job.

If we want our students to take charge of their learning and become lifelong learners, there's no doubt more and more of our educators will discover service-learning works.

The research has shown service-learning can help schools boost attendance, decrease dropout rates and minimize discipline issues – all while instilling in students an excitement for learning.

This implementation guide offers educators a clear start in making service-learning an integral part of the learning experience.

I look forward to the results when service-learning and other instructional practices that put students in charge of their learning are the norm, rather than the exception.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Bowen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stephen Bowen, Commissioner  
Maine Department of Education



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# Overview







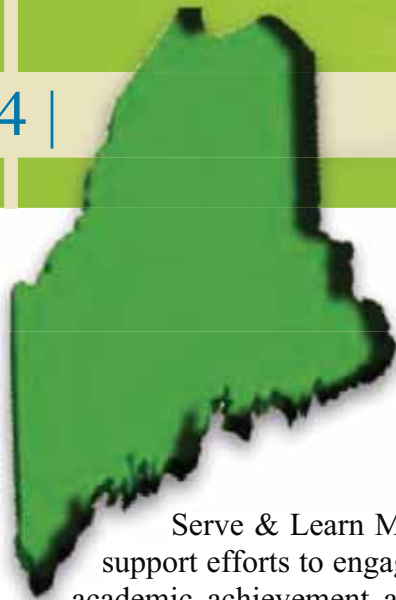
## What is Service-Learning in Maine?

In Maine, service-learning is defined as a method of teaching that integrates classroom learning with service focused on community needs targeted by students for action. When utilized as an instructional strategy, service-learning offers a unique opportunity for students, from kindergarten through college, to get involved with their communities in a tangible way by integrating classroom learning with service that addresses local needs. The strongest service-learning experiences occur when the service is intentionally aligned and ongoing in the curriculum and the learning extends into the community.

The Service-Learning Clearinghouse notes the distinctive element of service-learning is that it enhances the community through the service provided, but it also has powerful learning consequences for the students or others participating in providing a service. Service-learning is growing so rapidly because we can see it is having a powerful impact on young people and their development. It is a dynamic process, through which students' personal and social growth is tightly interwoven into their academic and cognitive development.

The Muskie Institute at the University of Southern Maine evaluated one service-learning model used by KIDS Consortium, a non-profit organization that works to strengthen service-learning implementation, and found students had increased problem-solving skills, social competence, pride in work, and more positive attitudes toward their schools and communities. An overwhelming 93% of the students' community partners involved with schools that engage in service-learning reported increased positive integration of youth into community life. While this is just one model of service-learning, research shows all models of service-learning, when done right, are a great dropout-prevention strategy and have the potential to increase the attendance and engagement of students in classrooms and schools.





## Serve & Learn Maine School-Based Goals

Serve & Learn Maine provides grants to schools, colleges, and nonprofit groups to support efforts to engage more than 1,700 Maine students in community service linked to academic achievement and the development of civic skills. Service-learning strengthens communities, improves academic engagement, and prepares young people for a lifetime of responsible citizenship. Serve & Learn Maine also provides curricula and other resources to teachers, faculty members, schools, and community groups.

Using funds from Serve & Learn Maine and other sources, the Maine Commission for Community Service (MCCS) will help shift the attitudes of teachers, students, parents, administrators and community members toward service-learning as an important way for students to learn academics and to demonstrate learning can be a hands-on process where students have the power to make a difference in their communities.

Over the coming years, the Maine Commission for Community Service will provide support and infrastructure needed for teacher-to-districtwide adoption of high-quality practice of service-learning. Students' encounters with high-quality service-learning experiences will achieve the real-world application skills necessary for a 21st-century learner. The following strategies will impact the adoption and implementation of high-quality service-learning and have the potential to reach every district in the state:

- Fund and provide technical assistance to school districts that fully commit to integrating service-learning into district operations in a sustainable manner;
- Identify and partially fund the participation of experienced service-learning practitioners in professional development that advances their skills, knowledge, and abilities;
- Create professional development opportunities for educators who implement service-learning in schools that are not pursuing district integration of service-learning by establishing a professional development fund;
- Develop and support, through small grants, a process for school districts to assess readiness for a grant supported effort to integrate service-learning into district operations;
- Articulate the traits of successful integration of individual teachers' adoption of service-learning for district adoption of service-learning over the course of three years (the duration of a districtwide implementation grant);

- Support the participation of the school boards, school district administrators, and key stakeholders in a leadership institute that focuses on applying service-learning as an effective strategy for achieving student education goals and district performance targets;
- Support the development of an interdistrict network for systemic service-learning implementation by identifying and supporting a critical number of expert practitioners who will convene their colleagues in service-learning communities of practice, foster peer technical assistance, and promote service-learning across the state;
- Provide small implementation seed grants to teams of teachers with community partners;
- Increase opportunities for prospective teachers to engage in high-quality preservice training about service-learning pedagogy by developing extracurricular programs to introduce service-learning to college students who are likely to work as teachers or with school-aged youth, and develop an approach to support student teaching opportunities with current professional staff using service-learning;

Working with its organizational and school district partners, the Maine Commission for Community Service will integrate service-learning into statewide *Learning Results* implementation efforts. A Service-Learning Task Force, which will include representatives from the commission board, will identify state and local barriers to institutionalization, and will implement policy solutions during the coming years.



## Maine's Service-Learning Strategy

### Reports and Publications

- Assess the prevalence and status of service-learning in schools (2000 – 2009).
- Develop and maintain comprehensive list of Maine educators who use service-learning.
- Create layman's guide to service-learning in Maine.

### Goals

1. Support academic success among young Mainers by encouraging and ensuring schools and community youth development programs adopt service-learning as an educational strategy.
2. Increase and strengthen the adoption and practice of service-learning in settings focused on Maine K-12 education.

### Resources and Technical Assistance

- VolunteerMaine.org
- Funding assistance
- Interdistrict networks and support groups for service-learning implementation
- Statewide promotion of service-learning
- Effective training and technical assistance to current and prospective subgrantees
- Professional development and training opportunities for educators

### Development

- Develop an approach to introduce and reward college students likely to work with school-aged youth and service-learning.
- Develop strategies for teacher-to-districtwide adoption of service-learning.

### Support

- Support student teaching opportunities with current service-learning staff.
- Connect Maine National Service programs with local organizations that have service-learning strategies.

Academic success among students

Adoption of service-learning as a pedagogy

## Service-Learning Alignment

The Maine Department of Education's Learning Results (Chapter 132, *Learning Results – Parameters for Essential Instruction*) augments and expands upon the content standards for federal accountability (Chapter 131, *The Maine Federal, State, and Local Accountability Standards*) by describing details for essential teaching and learning for eight content areas. These learning goals identify the knowledge and skills required for college, career, and citizenship in the 21st century. Academic service-learning directly aligns with the following goals of Maine's Learning Results Guiding Principles and Content Standards:

Students will be

### Clear and Effective Communicators

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- Demonstrating organized and purposeful communication in English and at least one other language, and using evidence and logic appropriately in communication
- Adjusting communication based on the audience
- Using a variety of modes of expression (spoken, written, visual, and performing, including the use of technology to create and share expressions)

### Self-Directed and Lifelong Learners

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- Recognizing the need for information, and locating and evaluating resources
- Applying knowledge to set goals, and making informed decisions
- Applying knowledge in new contexts
- Demonstrating initiative and independence
- Demonstrating flexibility, including the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn
- Demonstrating reliability and concern for quality

### Creative and Practical Problem-Solvers

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- Observing and evaluating situations to define problems
- Framing questions, making predictions, and designing data-collection and analysis strategies
- Identifying patterns, trends, and relationships that apply to solutions
- Generating a variety of solutions, building a case for a best response, and critically evaluating the effectiveness of the response

- Seeing opportunities, finding resources, and seeking results
- Using information and technology to solve problems
- Persevering in challenging situations

## Responsible and Involved Citizens

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- Participating positively in the community, and designing creative solutions to meet human needs and wants
- Accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions
- Demonstrating ethical behavior and the moral courage to sustain it
- Understanding and respecting diversity
- Displaying global awareness and economic and civic literacy
- Demonstrating awareness of personal and community health and wellness

## Integrative and Informed Thinkers

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- Gaining and applying knowledge across disciplines and learning contexts and to real-life situations with and without technology
- Evaluating and synthesizing information from multiple sources
- Applying ideas across disciplines
- Applying systems thinking



In 2007, the *Maine Learning Results* chapter was amended by the state Board of Education to incorporate service-learning in the social studies curriculum. This revision provides Maine’s youth the opportunity to become active citizens in their communities through the integration of service-learning.

The revised social studies standards call attention to the practical application of processes, knowledge and skills with the objective that “students apply critical thinking, a research process, and discipline-based processes and knowledge from civics [and] government, economics, geography, and history in *authentic contexts*.” A key performance indicator in the standards calls for students at all grade levels to *select, plan, and participate in a civic action or service project*.

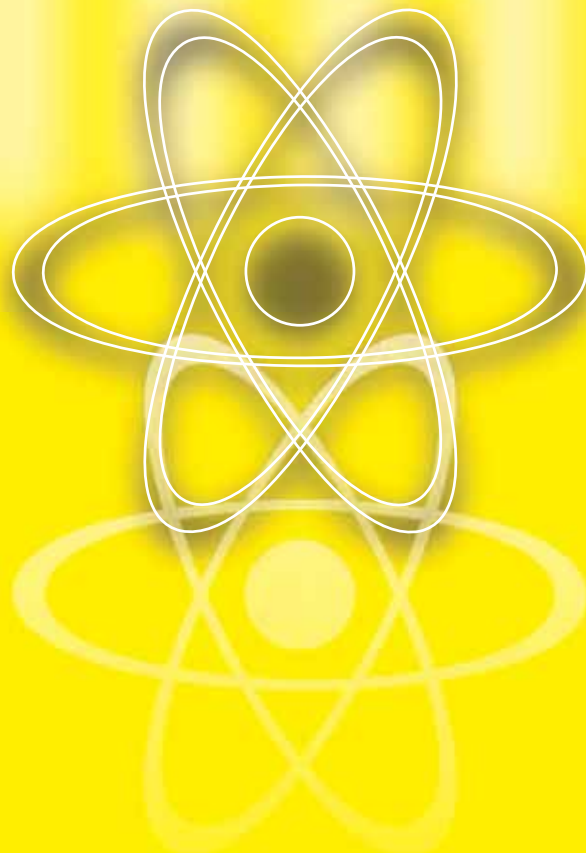
### **Taking Action Using Social Studies Knowledge and Skills**

<b>Performance Indicators and Descriptors</b>			
<b>Pre-K to 2</b>	<b>3 to 5</b>	<b>6 to 8</b>	<b>9 to Diploma</b>
Students select, plan, and participate in a <i>civic action</i> or <i>service project</i> based on a classroom or school asset or need, and describe the project’s potential civic contribution.	Students select, plan, and participate in a <i>civic action</i> or <i>service project</i> based on a classroom, school or local community asset or need, and describe evidence of the project’s effectiveness and civic contribution.	Students select, plan, and implement a <i>civic action</i> or <i>service project</i> based on a school, community, or state asset or need, and analyze the project’s effectiveness and civic contribution.	Students select, plan, and implement a <i>civic action</i> or <i>service project</i> based on a community, school, state, national, or international asset or need, and evaluate the project’s effectiveness and civic contribution.





# Service-Learning Background





enhanced awareness and understanding of social issues, greater motivation for learning, and heightened engagement in prosocial behaviors.

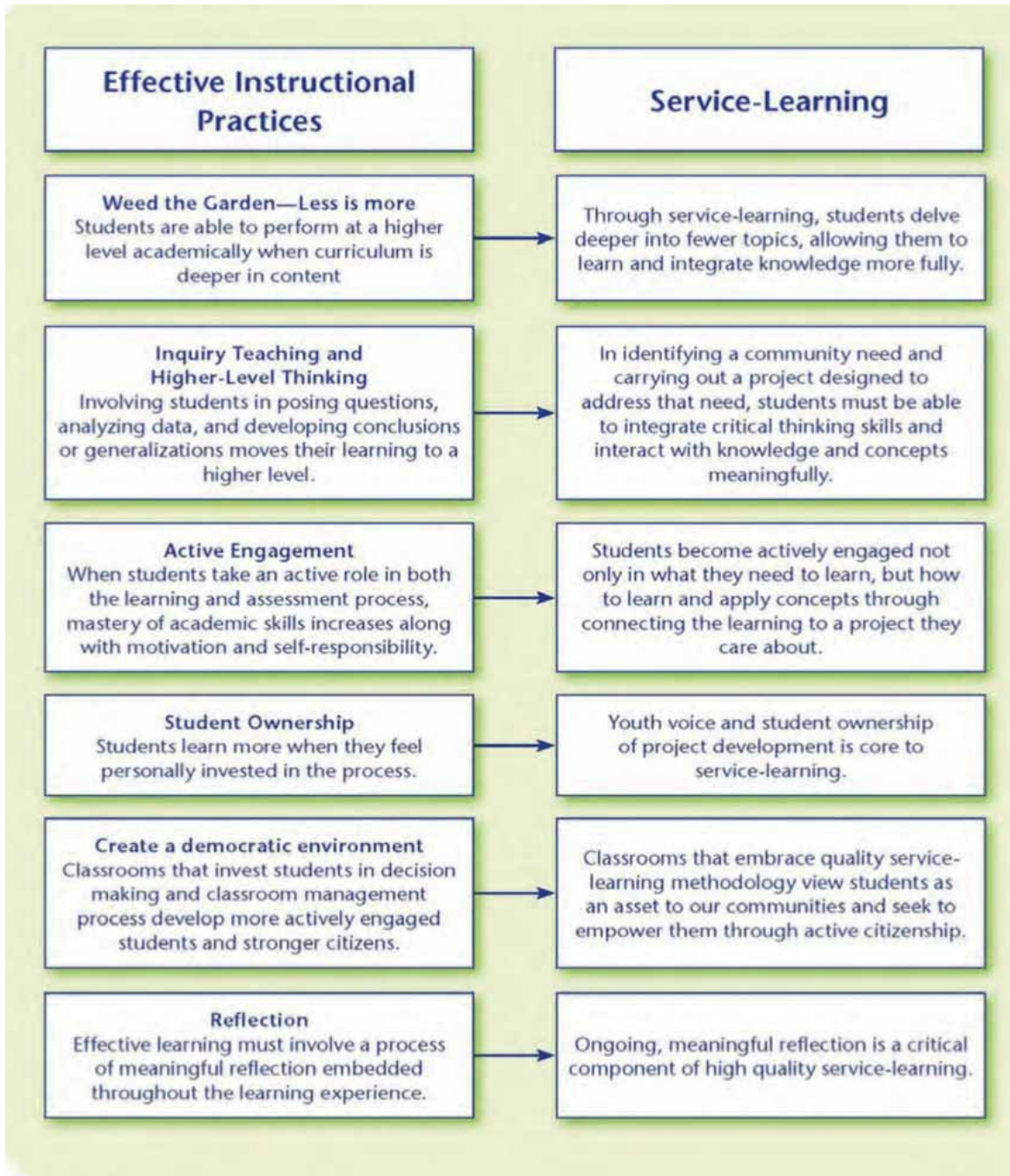
Academic service-learning holds tremendous promise for increasing graduation rates. We know academic service-learning reflects sound instructional practices. We know increasing the use of instructional strategies grounded in inquiry-based teaching, high-level thinking skills, and methods reflecting brain research moves learning to a higher level. We also know using strategies that require students to take an active role in both the learning and assessment process and take greater ownership of their learning will result in higher academic growth. As importantly, we know providing students opportunities to practice active citizenship throughout their educational career increases the likelihood of lifelong engagement in their communities. High-quality service-learning puts these principles into practice.

This pedagogy parallels the lessons we have learned about what effective instruction looks like. School-reform efforts should always demonstrate best practices in education. Many of these best practices are exemplified in the use of high-quality service-learning and produce meaningful results. Academic service-learning is an instructional method that

- Develops critical 21st century skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, creativity, information literacy, and action planning that will prepare students to compete in a global economy;
- Integrates intentionally into students' academic curriculum;
- Lets students learn and develop by actively participating in meeting community needs via school-community collaboration;
- Uses regular assessment to engage in data-based decision-making and continuous growth and development.



The following diagram compares effective instructional practices to academic service-learning. It illustrates the propensity of these strategies to not only produce actively engaged citizens, but also to strengthen academic achievement across all subjects.



## What High-Quality Service-Learning Looks Like

The following are the standards and indicators of K-12 quality service-learning:

### Duration and Intensity

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#### STANDARD

*Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.*

#### INDICATORS

- Service-learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
- Service-learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
- Service-learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.

### Link to Curriculum

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#### STANDARD

*Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and content standards.*

#### INDICATORS

- Service-learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
- Service-learning is aligned with the academic and programmatic curriculum.
- Service-learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
- Service-learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

## Meaningful Service

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### STANDARD

*Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
- Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
- Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
- Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
- Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

## Youth Voice

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### STANDARD

*Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experience.
- Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and the open expression of ideas.
- Service-learning promotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
- Service-learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

## Diversity

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### STANDARD

*Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
- Service-learning helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
- Service-learning helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
- Service-learning encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.

## Partnerships

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### STANDARD

*Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and businesses.
- Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
- Service-learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
- Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals
- Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

## Reflection

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### STANDARD

*Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- Service-learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
- Service-learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
- Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
- Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their service-learning experience so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.

## Progress Monitoring

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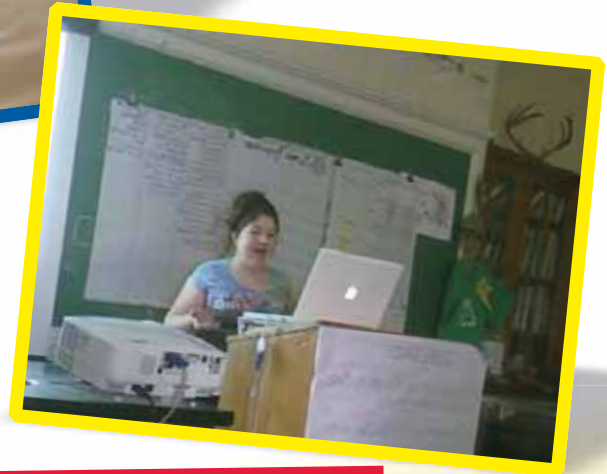
### STANDARD

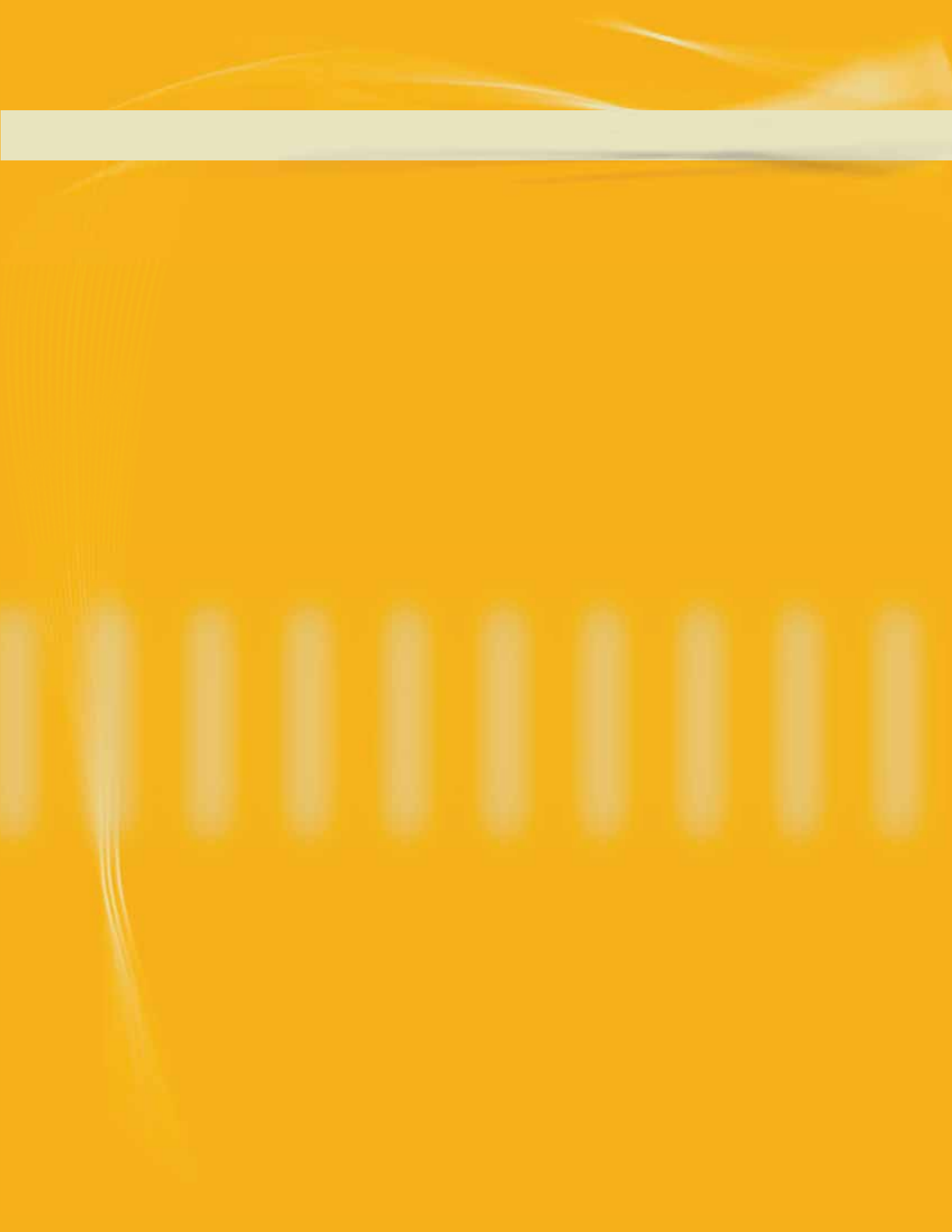
*Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and it uses results for improvement and sustainability.*

### INDICATORS

- Service-learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
- Service-learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service-learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
- Service-learning participants use evidence to improve service-learning experiences.
- Service-learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service-learning understanding and ensure that high-quality practices are sustained.







# Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide



Before you begin your planning, please refer to this section for a complete description of the core components and ongoing activities of service projects. As you work to implement high-quality service-learning in your classroom, remember the following guidelines:

**Start from where you are** – Find your comfort zone and find ways to incorporate service-learning into your instructional practices.

**Start small** – Give yourself permission to be a novice practitioner.

**Seek continuous improvement** – Gather evidence on the quality of your service-learning practices and continue to grow your skills over time.

The pathway to high-quality service-learning begins with the premise that elective service-learning is an outgrowth of the classroom curriculum. A service-learning experience is designed as a civic outcome stemming from the intentional application of knowledge gained through formal instruction as a means to furthering student mastery of the content.

In planning units that incorporate an academic service-learning experience, it is important to remember that this process is cyclical rather than linear in nature. You will need to revisit your plans as you work to incorporate students' ideas and the issues that are important to them. Youth ownership is a significant component to securing buy-in, which leads to a higher level of engagement and participation in learning. As you mesh student issues with your instructional goals, you will be able to identify opportunities for your instruction to support and facilitate their work in meaningful ways.



As the diagram below shows, each piece of the planning process is altered through the instructional lens that you set in place at the beginning of the unit by identifying the performance standards and instructional content to be delivered. The instructional plan provides the outline for skill development and instructional context for the academic service-learning experience. Once you have set the context, the sequence outlined along the arrow depicts the IPARDC process, which comprises the five core elements in a quality service-learning experience. It is important to note that reflection is not a single step within the process; it is to be incorporated throughout the service-learning experience.

Reproducible teacher and student worksheets for each step of the IPARDC process may be found in the *References and Resources* section, beginning on p. 47.



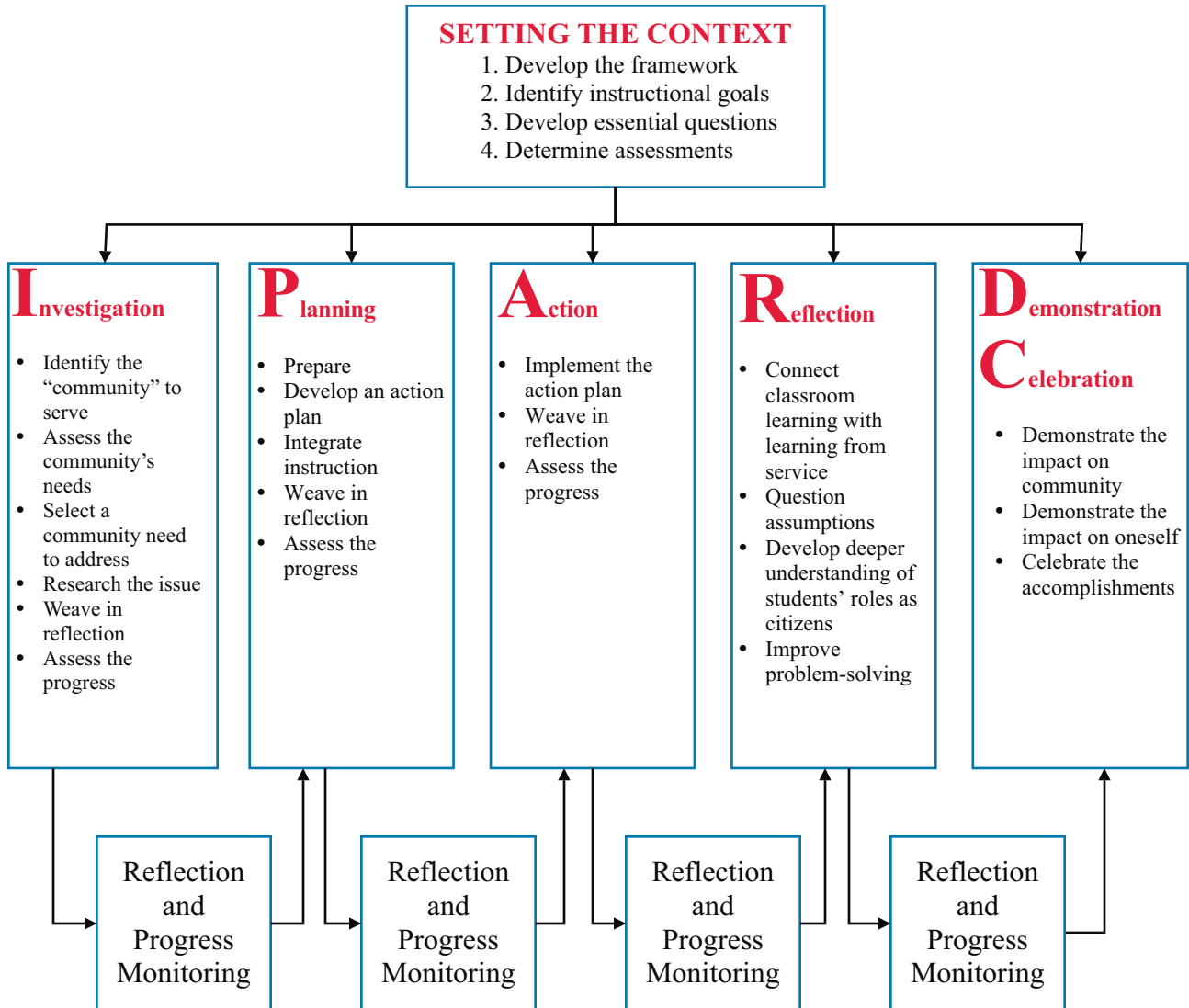
## Introduction and Overview

This guide provides a sequence for implementing high-quality service-learning experiences based on the National K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice. Research shows that service-learning experiences that incorporate these standards and indicators result in positive academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes. In high-quality service-learning practice, the standards and indicators are met throughout the implementation process, which includes five components

**I**NVESTIGATION  
**P**LANNING  
**A**CTION  
**R**EFLECTION  
**D**EMONSTRATION  
**C**ELEBRATION



Using the IPARDC process as the framework within which your students will design and carry out their service-learning experience, this guide will help you to blend instruction in core academic skills to intentionally achieve your intended goals. The first section walks you through the entire IPARDC process from start to finish. Within each section are suggested questions and resources for guiding students through each step, including segments of planning worksheets and tips for ensuring that each phase meets the *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice*. Following this section you will find the complete instructional-planning and student-planning worksheets, which can be used by you and your students in designing any service-learning experience. As you proceed through the design and implementation of a high-quality service-learning experience, you will work your way through the following process:



## Setting the Context

While there are a number of ways you and your students may come up with ideas for a service project, it is important to always filter it through your instructional lens. Academic service-learning is a pedagogy that effectively teaches core academic skills. Think of this process the same way you design any instructional unit. You may decide to explore a set of skills based on a particular teachable moment, a current issue in the community, or because of the timing or sequence of your curriculum. However you decide to embark on teaching a set of skills, the first step to a quality service-learning experience is to identify your instructional goals. This type of planning, known as backward curriculum design, asks teachers to intentionally plan the desired outcomes for instruction prior to engaging students in learning. As the saying goes, “If you don’t know exactly where you’re headed, then any road will get you there.” This guide seeks to incorporate service-learning as an effective method leading to student mastery of the core academic standards. Once you know where you are going instructionally, service-learning will become one of the pedagogies you’ll turn to again and again to teach those skills.

### Develop the framework

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Like any instructional strategy, service-learning helps students meet identified instructional goals. Before students identify a community need, it is important for the teacher to identify the essential questions and performance standards that will be addressed in the curriculum unit. This process forms the academic context for the skills that will be applied through the service-learning experience.

### Identify the instructional unit and the relevant performance standards

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The first step in planning a unit infused with a service-learning experience is to consider how your unit is laid out and which standards will be addressed. Most curricula cover a broad spectrum of material, but service-learning is best used for depth of skill development. When considering this form of instruction, identify the most important concepts you want students to address in depth and design a service-learning experience with those concepts and skills in mind. With practice, you will learn how to balance direct instruction with service-learning to cover all material. If you are a new practitioner, you are encouraged to start small as you work to increase your comfort level with this pedagogy.

Begin by framing the service-learning experience within the context of a specific instructional unit. Several related standards from other subjects can be readily identified for each unit as well, creating an excellent opportunity for cross disciplinary work. You may also find it helpful to identify the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will be addressed, along with any character education



or social skills curriculum and career or workplace skills. Students should understand your core expectations at the beginning of the unit, should be involved in identifying the skills they need to acquire throughout the unit, and should monitor their progress toward mastering those skills.

## **Brainstorm essential and unit questions related to the topic**

---

High-quality teaching calls for more than didactic instruction, which often fails to move students beyond basic knowledge and comprehension. To prepare students for success in the 21st century, we need to move them toward deeper levels of understanding. Essential questions focus on key concepts that help students make sense out of the world around them. They provide the “So what?” for your unit, pointing the way toward key inquiries within a subject. They give purpose to the learning and provide a context in which to engage students in rigorous inquiry, complex thinking, and problem-solving. Essential questions open the door to meaningful service as an application and extension of learning into real-world, unpredictable settings. The essential and unit questions help define the instructional tasks and topics to be addressed. They may also introduce relevant questions or issues you had not previously considered covering in the unit. What are the big-picture concepts that you want students to know, understand, and wrestle with? These questions should be open-ended, prompt deeper thinking, and address the core concepts rather than discrete facts that form the “So what?” of learning. Examples of essential questions might be

- Are human needs more or less important than the needs of the environment?
- What is our responsibility to others in our community?
- How does the financial welfare of individuals affect the whole community?
- How does the media affect people’s opinions?
- What impact do stereotypes have on the social and economic health of our community?
- In what ways is the Civil War still being fought today?

## **Determine how skills will be assessed**

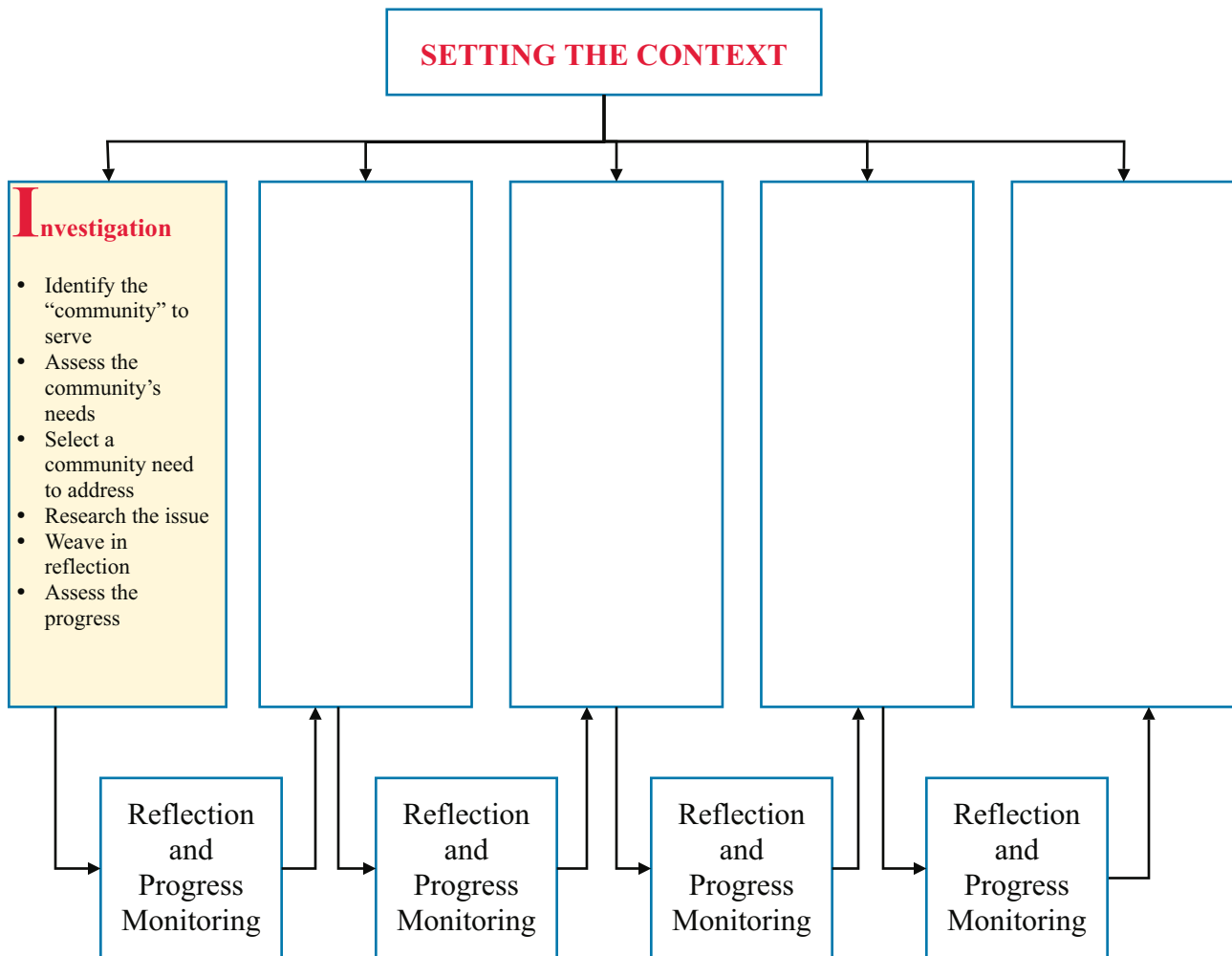
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It is important to be intentional about the academic skills you address through service-learning rather than use the experience merely as a way to justify the use of instructional time. A good litmus test is to ask yourself, “Am I going to assess student progress on mastering the identified skills?” If students have already mastered the skill, or if you do not plan to assess student progress, you probably are not intentionally teaching it. For example, you might identify letter-writing as a skill that students will use in a particular project. A high-quality service-learning experience would be designed so that students will learn how to write effective letters through the process of

investigating and taking action on an issue. Rubrics or other forms of assessment would be used to measure student progress; students would have opportunities to apply their letter-writing in new situations; mastery would be determined based on criteria set prior to the experience. In backward curriculum design, once the learning objectives have been identified, the next step is to determine which core skills will be assessed and then develop a balanced assessment process for measuring progress toward those goals. In the worksheet below, identify the skills students will be held accountable for in this unit and the assessment tools that will be utilized in gathering evidence of progress throughout the experience.



## Investigation



Now that you know where you are headed with your instruction, it is time to engage students in designing a meaningful experience to meet your identified goals. Investigation is the lynchpin to a high-quality service-learning experience. By guiding your students through a rich process of assessing, researching, and analyzing community needs, they will be better prepared to make a lasting impact on their community. Before your students can embark on this process, however, it is critical to introduce them to the instructional plan you developed in “Setting the Context.” By being made aware of instructional goals and expectations, students are more likely to take ownership

of the learning process. Sharing the context for the service-learning experience also more deeply infuses the learning and service components.

## Identify the “community” to serve

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Investigation begins with determining which community to use as a focus for this service-learning experience. Depending on your instructional goals, you may want to identify the community for your students or you may want to let them decide. For example, if you have planned to incorporate service-learning into a unit on nutrition, you may want your students to focus on their local school. Alternatively, you may opt to allow students to determine whether they want to focus on their neighborhood, city, or other definition of community. It is important to help them identify a community in which they will be able to obtain measurable results over the course of their project.

## Assess the community’s needs

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A number of effective approaches can help students identify authentic needs in the community. One effective way to engage students in the mapping of community assets and needs is to conduct a youth forum. The youth forum may take place within your classroom or may be expanded to include other classes, community partners, parents, or school staff. The youth forum provides space for a structured dialogue that lets students voice their ideas for change and identify ways to turn their ideas into action. Ideally, the forum would include members of the community and other stakeholders who can form and grow meaningful partnerships with students over the course of the service-learning experience.

Lead students in conducting a forum to identify community needs and potential project ideas. The forum is one mechanism through which students can identify resources and authentic needs in their community. The purpose of this activity is to familiarize young people with their community, as well as identify the issues or areas in which they would like to bring about positive change. Students will also align their project ideas with the instructional objectives as a tangible way to apply and demonstrate mastery of skills. This provides students with ownership of the learning process, making the purpose for learning what it should be to benefit their skill development, not “to get a good grade.” The outcome of this process is to

- Identify a core set of issues that students would like to address
- Begin to form community partnerships that could help students address the identified issues
- Understand resources in the community available to help students carry out service projects

As identified in the *K-12 Service-Learning Project Planning Toolkit*, following are other options often used by teachers to guide students in this process

## Neighborhood walk

In this type of community mapping activity, students walk through the community using a set of questions to guide their observations. They note what is going on in the environment. (Are the sidewalks or pathways littered? Does the stream look and smell dirty? Are there community agencies around the school that serve people in need? Are there places for the elderly to sit? Are there homeless people sleeping on benches?).

Community mapping activities such as the neighborhood walk often lead to selecting issues such as working with the environment, the homeless, senior citizens, hospitals, and other agencies in the neighborhood. Younger children may use a school mapping activity to investigate issues around the school, such as students pushing in line at the water fountains, students not engaged in activities on the playground during recess, or a need for a handicap-accessible entry into the school.

## Newspaper investigation

Collect newspapers for a week or two before the activity, and then distribute them to the students. Have the students identify the various strengths and challenges at the global, national, state, and local level by cutting out the articles in the newspaper and listing them. Newspaper investigations tend to lead to working on service activities that are more global in nature, which may address environmental, policy, or social issues, or utilize a current technology.

## Select a community need based on criteria

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Through a collaborative decision-making process, target one issue to address in this instructional unit. You may want to combine ideas from several groups, or let small groups address separate issues. Using the list of issues generated through one of the above brainstorming methods, students will reach a consensus on what community need they would like to address. Because it is important that the service-learning experience be relevant and personally meaningful for each student, it is helpful to work toward consensus-building rather than simple decision-making processes such as voting. In voting, at least a few students will be likely to lack ownership in the identified issue. They may become disengaged from the process, reducing the impact on their academic, social-emotional, and civic outcomes.

A variety of decision-making processes can guide your students through consensus building. It is important to help your students make informed decisions by using a set of criteria through which each idea will be measured. The following set of questions may help guide the process. By consensus, students can eliminate issues that do not meet the proposed criteria

- Do we have evidence that this is a meaningful need in our community?

- Does this issue require us to apply the skills we are accountable for?
- Is this an issue that we will be able to have a measurable impact on?
- Does everyone in our class agree that this issue is meaningful?

After students have reached consensus on a community need to address, guide them in creating a vision statement for their work.

## Research the issue and explore alternative solutions

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Next, guide students in researching the identified issue and exploring alternative solutions. In this process, it is important that they understand the issue from multiple perspectives by gathering information on the issue's history and attempts to resolve it, and exploring root causes of the problem. Students also need to collect evidence on the effectiveness of previous solutions and how this issue is affected by and impacts other aspects of the community. The questions below may help students research the identified issue. You may elect to assign specific questions to small groups as a collaborative research project, with small groups sharing results with the whole group as the class works to develop a list of alternative solutions to explore. It will be important to feed this process with Internet access and other resources to inform your students' information gathering.

Use this framework to guide your students in researching the issue they identify:

- What are the underlying causes of the issue in the community?
- How do various stakeholders in the community view the problem?
- What other perspectives might help provide insight into the issue?
- How does this issue affect other aspects of the community?
- How does it impact other issues or how might it affect things that are working well?
- What is happening in the community as a result of these issues?
- Who has tried to address this issue in the past?
- What solutions have they tried?
- What worked? What did not work?

## Establish a baseline

List the baseline information to document the current status of the problem or issue to be addressed. The baseline information should be quantifiable so you can revisit and see your impact at the end of the project.

### Examples

- Our school has 50 pounds of trash every day and no recycling
- The incidence of children at the homeless shelter with a Vitamin D deficiency is 50%
- 90% of students at our school think that bullying is a big problem
- Two senior citizens in the local independent living center know how to use e-mail

Once students fully understand the issue and implications of any actions they decide to take, have them identify three possible solutions to the problem. Using the decision-making criteria outlined in the Student Worksheet, ask students to assess each of the proposed solutions. Guide students in discussing how they ranked each solution. Build consensus around the solution the whole class is most comfortable with. For older students, you may want to have small groups develop a proposal to present to the rest of the class in making the case their solution best meets the identified need.

Younger students can evaluate the top three solutions as a whole class, using consensus building to determine the solution the class will pursue. The decision-making process outlined in the Investigation Worksheet will help develop consensus on the most viable solution to pursue in this service-learning experience. Enter one alternative solution in each row. Assess each solution using the criteria below. Include comments that justify the ratings for each solution. Add the numbers for each solution to rank the three alternatives according to how viable each alternative is for this project.

## Weave in reflection

---

All phases of service-learning should have a reflection component. You may weave reflection in during investigation activities or while assessing progress at the end of the phase. Examples of reflection activities can be found on the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse website ([www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)). Sample activities from the publication *Connecting Thinking and Action Ideas for Service-Learning Reflection*, found on the Clearinghouse website, include

### If I Had a Million Dollars

This is a fun way for students to think about community problems that are important to them by using a pie chart and dividing up their funds for philanthropic purposes.

### What Worked and How Did I Do?

In this activity, participants examine their own behaviors in helping the group come to consensus, and investigate ways to persuade others.

### Assess the progress

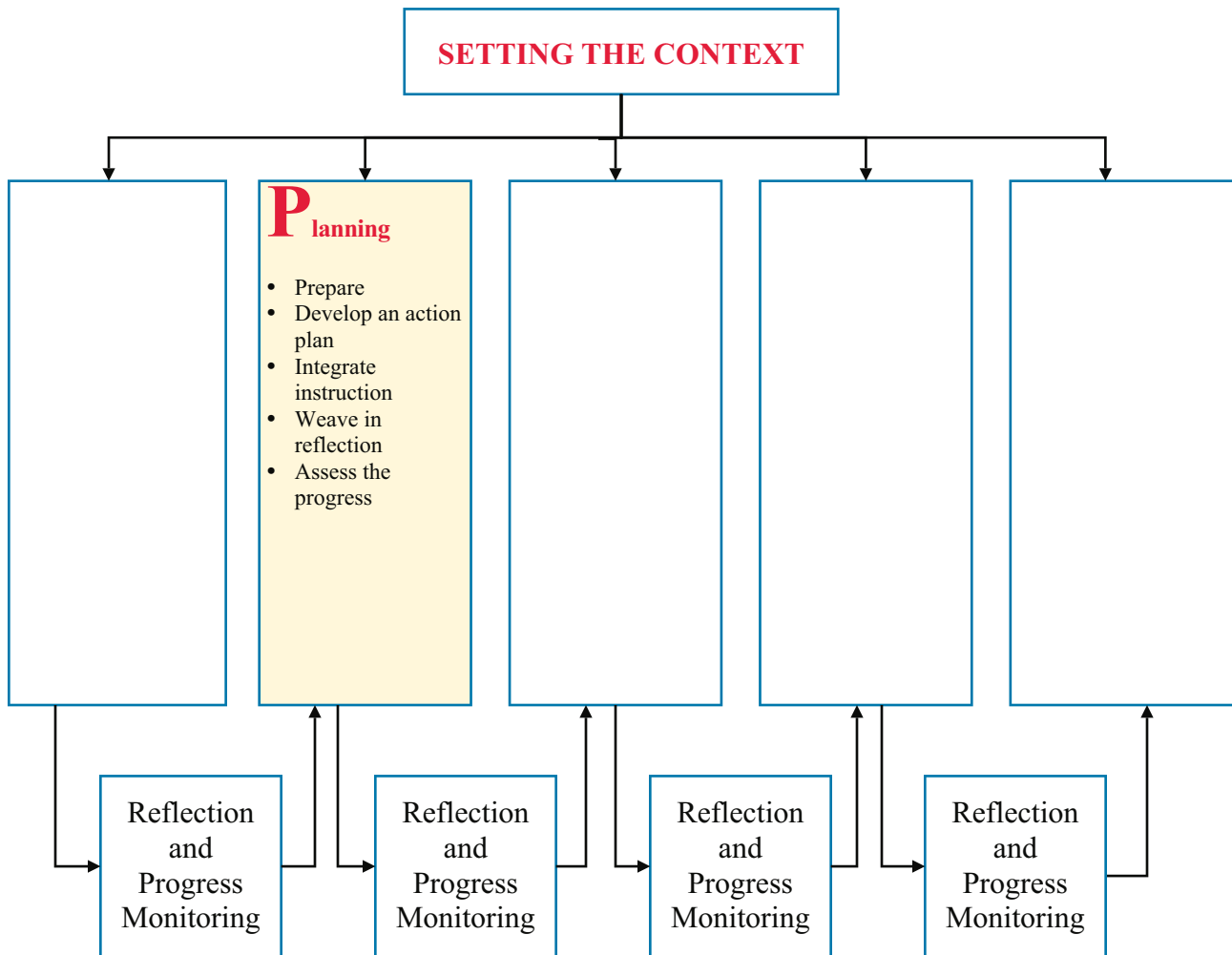
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How will you know you were successful in the investigation phase? What assessment tools will you use? You might consider using assessments such as a checklist of research skills acquired, a rubric to assess collaboration and group problem-solving skills, having students write an essay on steps for effective decision-making, or an assessment of interview skills.





## Planning



In the second phase of a service-learning experience, students work with community partners as they design and implement their service project. In this phase, you and your students will determine the nature of the specific service to be provided, develop an action plan to integrate academic skills with the service project, reflect, and conduct progress monitoring.

### Prepare

As you prepare students for a successful service-learning experience, always be watchful for opportunities to let students lead. Nurture youth voice throughout the experience, offering significant

opportunities for students to make decisions about their project from start to finish. Your role as a teacher, and that of other community partners, is to guide effective decisions, offer resources and support to inform those decisions along the way.

## Develop an action plan

---

Once students have fully explored the issue they want to address, they will begin to shape their project. This strategic planning process guides students in planning and implementing a service project within the instructional setting. Notice that the plan asks students to also consider the skills they will learn and apply throughout this project, encouraging their active participation in improving and evaluating their academic performance. Transparency in the learning process will help increase student ownership in their learning, deepen understanding of the skills they are developing, and increase transfer of learning as students use these skills in new situations. This document will be a work-in-progress throughout the project, with additions and revisions to be made as students reflect upon and adapt their work to the realities of project implementation.

### Measure progress

Before a project begins, it is a good idea to think about any obstacles that might be encountered. Small details like getting permissions, arranging for buses, or encountering resistance to change may cause difficulties along the way. Thinking about each specific task in your list of steps and planning for solutions to obstacles before they occur can make your efforts more proactive.

### Reflect on process

It is important to reflect not only on the progress you are making toward meeting the identified outcomes, but also to look at how you are getting there.

- How has your understanding of the knowledge and skills being taught in this unit deepened?
- What are some ways to show you are learning the skills identified?
- How are the skills you are learning connected to your service project?
- How are you collaborating with your community partner?
- What are some ways you might communicate more effectively with your community partner and the community?
- How might your class work more effectively together?
- How can you increase your leadership and the leadership of others in your class?
- How are your views about your community changing?
- How can we take our work to the next level?
- What other changes might help solve this issue?
- Who else might we be able to get involved in our efforts?

## Integrate instruction

---

As preparation and planning proceed, design the instruction that supports the project and moves students toward mastery of the identified standards. The instructional strategies that will support skill development are woven into student exploration of the topic. As students develop skills, they will identify, plan, and implement their service-learning project. This project may continue beyond the current unit of study, incorporating new skills acquired in subsequent units. Your role is to implement instruction that strengthens and facilitates students' work while allowing them to construct meaning and build their own skills. Always be on the lookout for opportunities to step back and let students take leadership roles. Youth ownership propels the project forward and develops students' leadership skills while engaging students in a rigorous, relevant learning process.

### Next Steps

What topics of study might you want to address next to build upon skills developed during this unit? Use the "Next Steps" planning worksheet provided in the *Resources and References* section as a guide to plan instruction that will support your students' project and meet your instructional goals as they carry out their Action Plan. You can add columns, such as a "Completed" or an "Assignments" column, so you can denote when instruction has been completed.

### Challenges

What are the different instructional challenges that might arise mid-project? It is always a good idea to think about these things in advance. Are there community groups or resources you may want to bring in at key points? Permissions that must be obtained? Scheduling concerns or other logistics you will need to deal with in the course of the project? Managing a project that encompasses such a spectrum of skills and disciplines will be a challenge. Students will need strong organization and project management skills.

## Weave in reflection

---

Remember that all phases of service-learning should have a reflection component. You can weave your reflection in as part of the planning activities or you can reflect on progress at the end of the phase. Examples of reflection activities can be found on the National service-learning Clearinghouse website. Following are some sample activities:

### Paseo wheel

Form inner and outer circles to reflect on the preparation and planning phase. First ask the inner circle to respond to the questions, “What went well?” and “What would I improve to make the planning phase better?” The outer circle listens, and then summarizes what was said. The outer circle then responds to the question, “What would we tell people to do differently next time?” while the inner circle listens. The inner circle then summarizes what was said. The group comes to consensus on the lessons learned they want to convey to next year’s class.

### Transferring learning

Remind the students of the process they used to plan their service-learning project. Then ask them to list the steps they would take to plan a vacation, buy a car, or plan a party, using the same approach they used to plan the service project. Look for ways to parallel the steps, engage in the same type of consensus building, and use the same sorts of assessments (how will you know you were successful?).

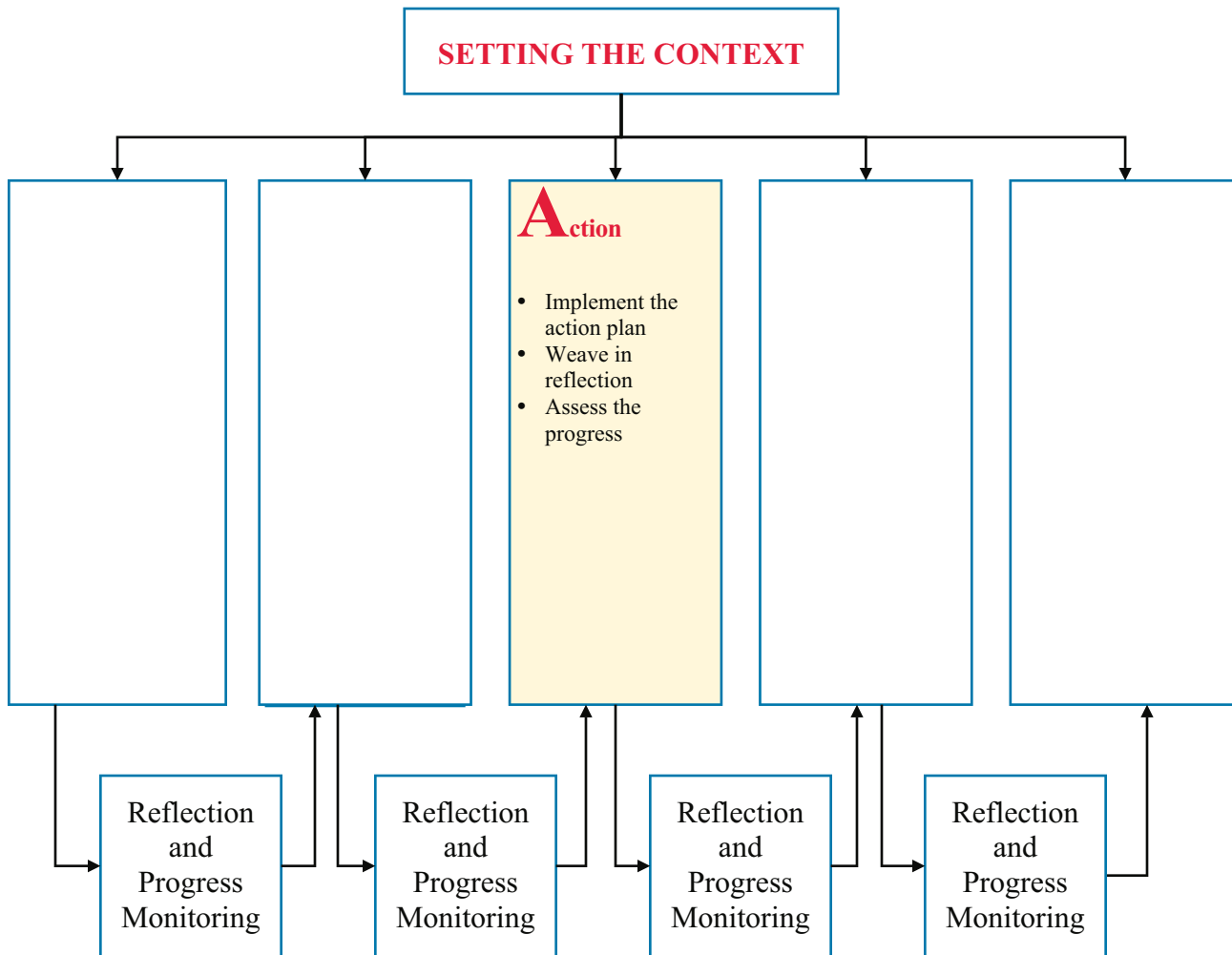
### Assess the progress

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How will you know you were successful in the Planning phase? What assessment tools will you use? You might consider using assessments such as a rubric to assess collaboration and group problem-solving skills, a peer or self-assessment of their group’s action planning process, a checklist of steps completed, or asking students to write an essay about their plans for conducting a service project.



## Action



This phase is the culmination of all that students have learned through their service-learning experience thus far. This phase will typically intertwine with the Planning phase as students take steps to complete their project while continuing to monitor progress and make necessary revisions to their plans. It is important to guide students in completing tasks, collecting evidence, analyzing progress, and making adjustments so students develop critical skills in problem-solving and decision-making.

## Implement the action plan

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Using the action plan developed by the group, students work together to revise, add details, and carry out identified tasks. Students will benefit from opportunities to make meaningful decisions throughout this process, and from ongoing reflection about their progress to develop and implement this plan.

## Weave in reflection

---

Remember that all phases of service-learning should have a reflection component. During the Action phase, students should have many opportunities to vary the types of activities that engage in reflection. While writing in a journal is one favorite approach used by many teachers, be sure to give students other ways to reflect through deliberative dialogue, artistic means, or any of a multitude of different means. Examples of reflection activities can be found on the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse website ([www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)). Here are some sample reflection activities:

### Create a storyboard

A storyboard is the device cartoonists, advertisers, and some novelists use to capture phases or tell the story that is unfolding. Students can storyboard their service-learning experience, reflecting on the planning, preparation, and specific action steps.

### Have students represent their thinking metaphorically

Students are often asked to represent their thinking in different ways on tests. This reflection activity can be simple, such as asking, “What type of traffic sign does this experience bring to mind?” which may stimulate such answers as “Yield,” “Slow down,” or even “Caution, children at play.”

### Complete a Plus/Minus/Delta Chart

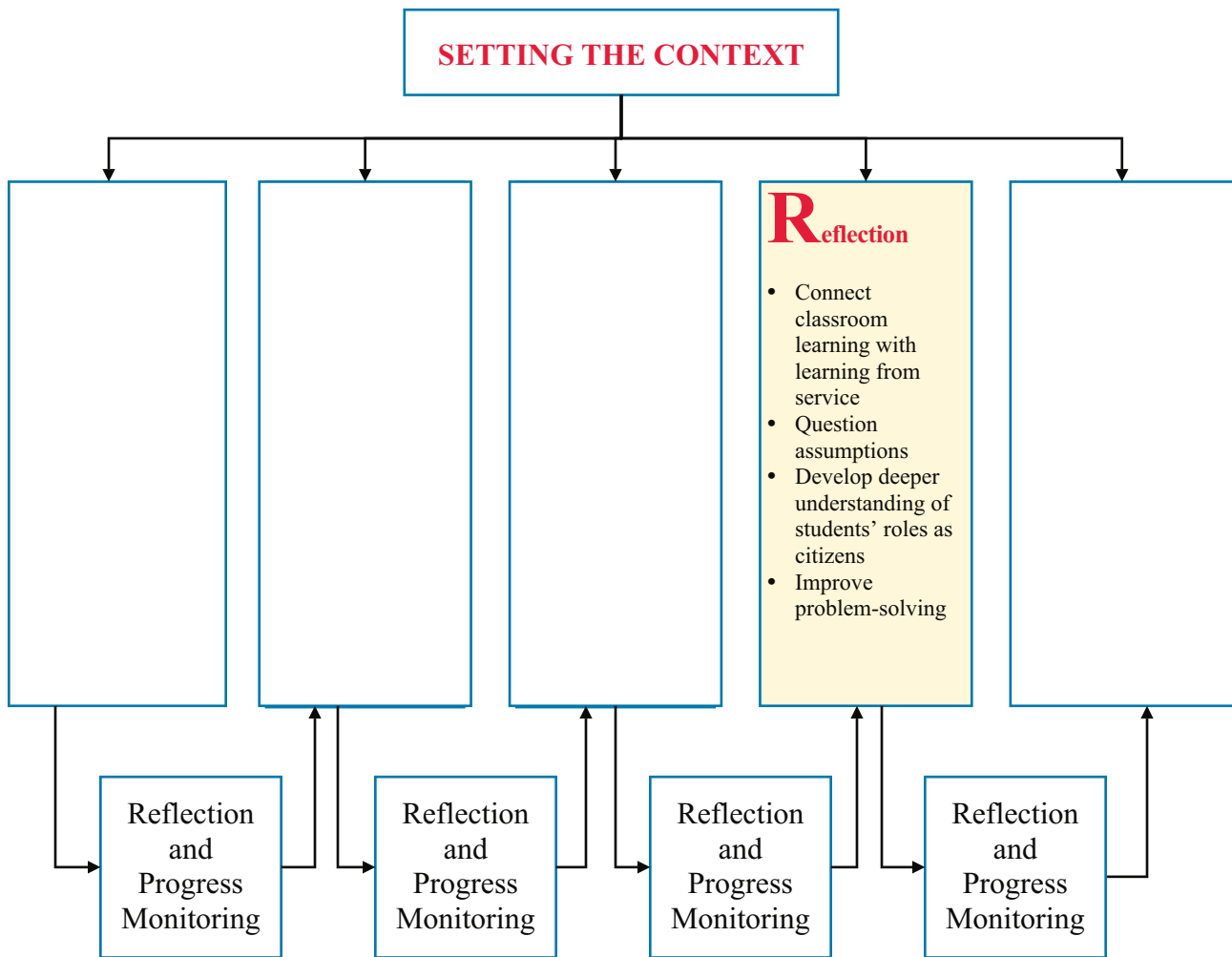
This helps students identify what they liked, did not like, and what they would change about their service-learning experience as a whole or by specific tasks. Use results to revise the next set of activities.

## Assess the progress

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How will you know you were successful in the action phase? What assessment tools will you use? You might consider using assessments, such as a checklist of steps students took to complete a task; peer, self, or community partner assessments; rubrics to assess students’ effectiveness in carrying out tasks collaboratively; or, documenting progress in a service-learning portfolio.

## Reflection



As previously discussed, reflection should be woven through each of the phases. In the reflection phase that occurs after the service, your goal is to name and solidify the learning. During this phase, reflecting on the service-learning experience should encourage your students to

- Connect classroom learning with learning from service, giving both greater meaning;
- Question their assumptions both about the causes and solutions of social problems and about those different from themselves;
- Improve their problem-solving skills;

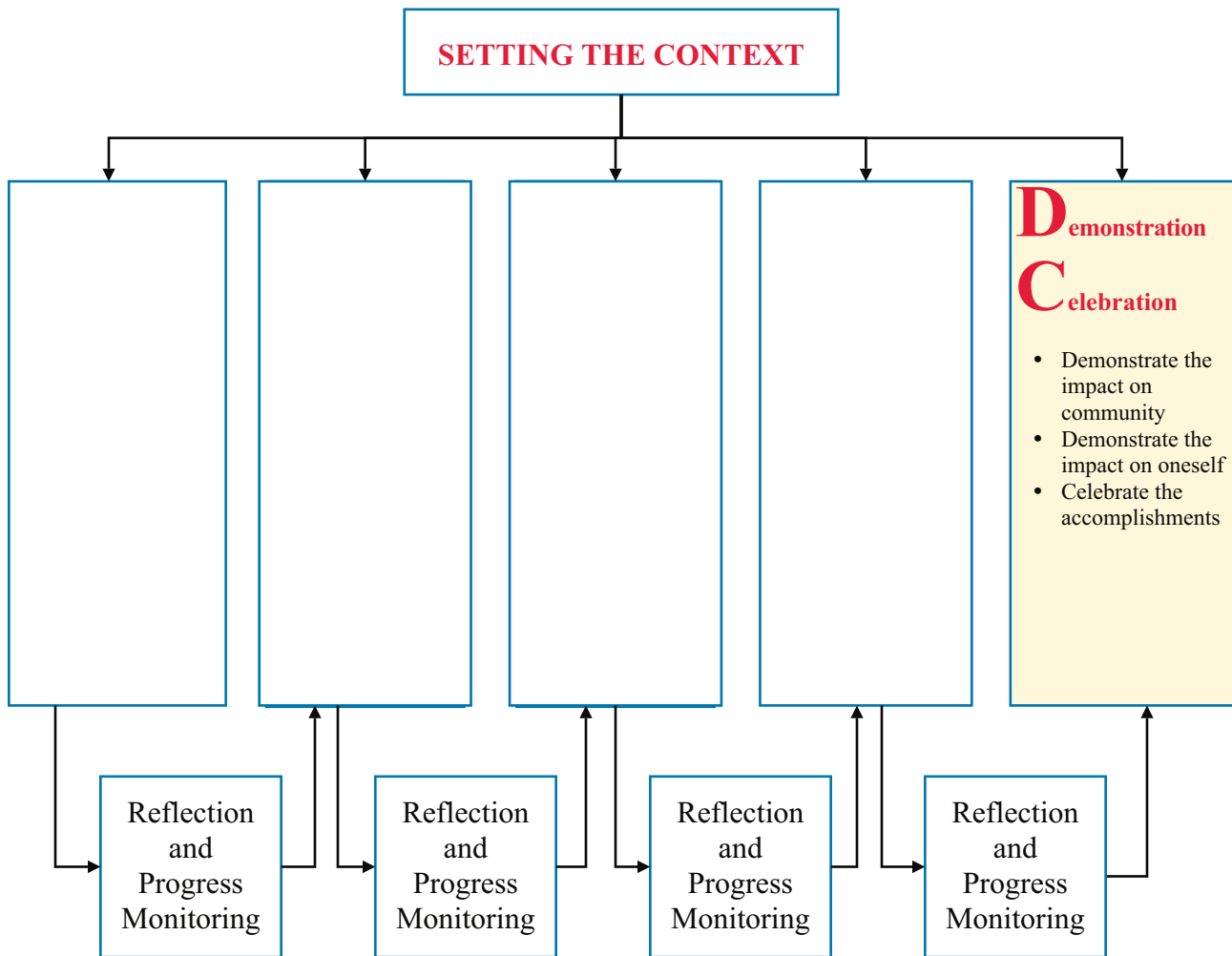
- Develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society.

Multiple methods of reflection that challenge students to deepen their understandings are critical throughout the service-learning experience. Reflection should serve as a method for students to gather evidence about their progress toward identified goals as well as the process they are using to get there. A variety of activities should be used regularly, incorporating multiple intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist) and using verbal, written, and nonverbal methods. Through reflection, students should be challenged to think deeply about their participation, their understanding of themselves and others, and analyze their relationship to society.





## Demonstrating Outcomes and Celebration



Take time to showcase your students' work through a school and community-wide event. The recognition will reinforce the skills students learned and celebrate their success. Consider hosting an assembly highlighting community-building work, a community fair showcasing projects, a pictorial essay in the newspaper, or a display in a public area such as a mall or public library.

Critical to the success of this step is asking students to reflect on how they can demonstrate the impact they had on themselves and their community. Demonstration and celebration of learning and impact are important parts of your service project that can provide you, your students, and your community partners with a meaningful conclusion to the project and an opportunity to think

ahead to the future. In an effective demonstration and celebration, students show influential people how they impacted the community and how they themselves have changed as a result of their service-learning experience. A high-quality demonstration and celebration event recognizes and rewards students' sense of efficacy and motivation to serve, and reinforces community members' commitment to your work. It provides a public forum for students to display their knowledge, which encourages them to synthesize what they have learned through service, provides an authentic context for assessment, and builds community members' expertise with respect to the community issue. Finally, a high-quality demonstration and celebration event engages participants in analyzing and developing potential future solutions to the new set of social issues signaled by the end of the service project, further enhancing their problem-solving skills and dedication to service.

In preparing for the demonstration and celebration event, it is important to engage students in analyzing and preparing products that communicate the impact of their work on the community, as well as on themselves. Using the baseline data obtained during the investigation phase, work with students to collect evidence of impact on themselves and their community. Then, determine which type of event will be most effective to share these outcomes with the broader community.

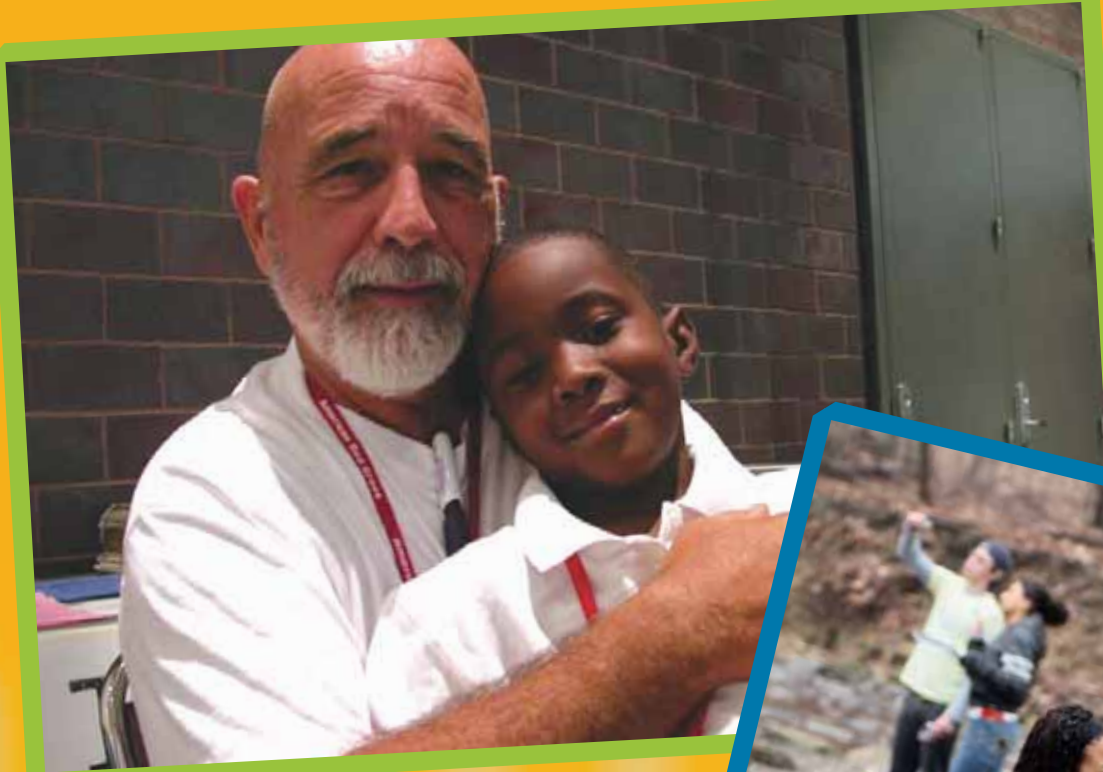
Teachers have several options for demonstration and celebration event. Here are some ideas:

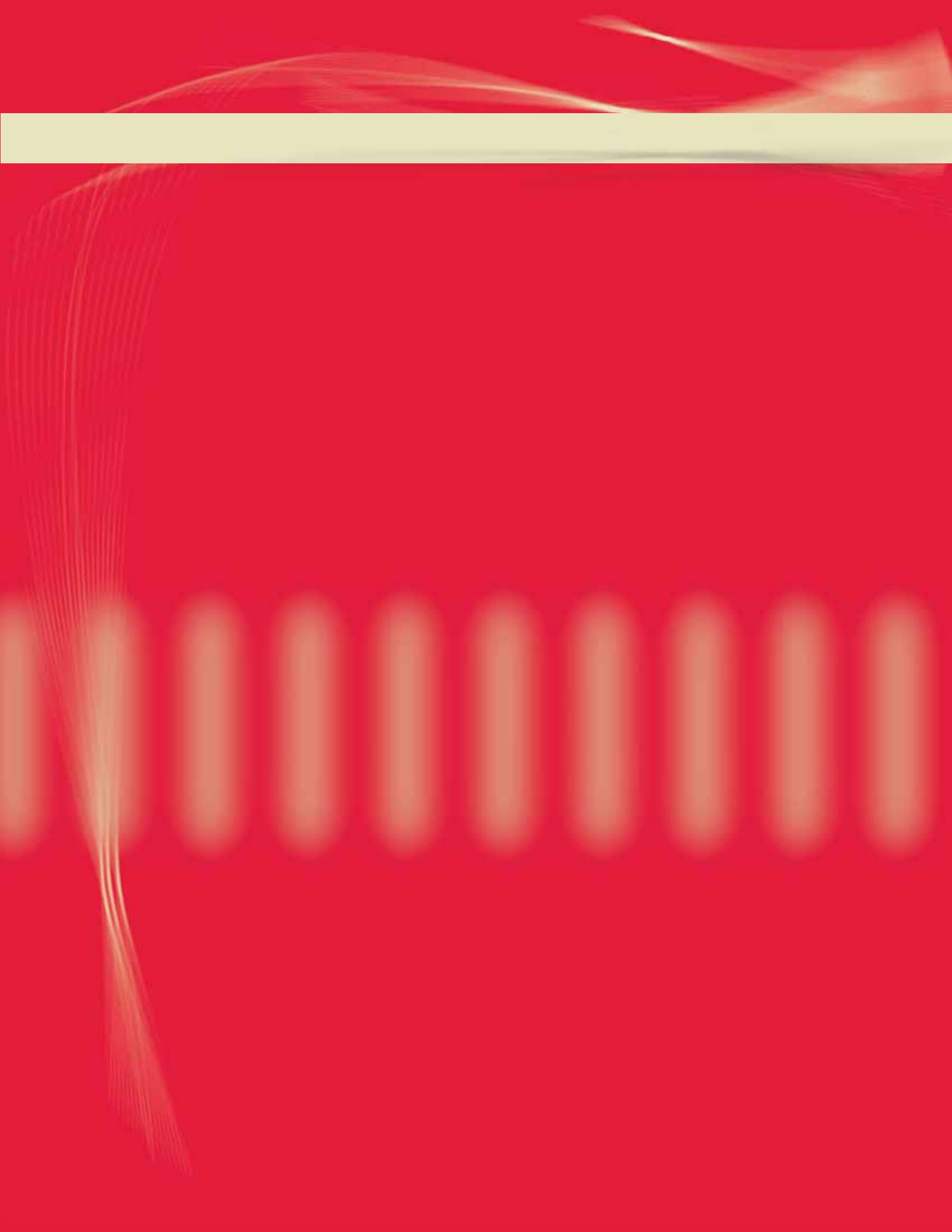
### **Demonstrating the impact on the community**

- Neighborhood-quality index
- Poster exhibition
- Showcase
- Portfolio fair
- Development of products, such as a PowerPoint presentation, oral presentation, website, video, booklet, or before/after pictures of the community
- Testimonials by service recipients

### **Demonstrating the impact on oneself**

- Self-portrait
- Autobiography
- Storyboard
- Measure of knowledge, skills, and behaviors before and after the event
- Evaluation of student work by experts, community partners, service recipients, or panels of judges
- Issue forum





# References and Resources

*Complete Student and  
Teacher Worksheets*



# Setting the Context

Number	Standard	
<b>Related Performance Standards from other subject areas</b>		
Subject	Number	Standard
<b>Civic Goals</b>		
Civic Knowledge		
Civic Skills		
Civic Attitudes and Values		
<b>Character and Social Skills</b>		
<b>Career Skills</b>		

# Setting the Context

List the essential and unit questions to be addressed in this unit.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Skills to be Mastered	Balanced Assessment Process <i>(List the tools you will use to collect data on student progress to ensure continuous improvement, such as observation, written test, written report, oral presentation, etc.)</i>		
	Formative	Benchmark	Summative

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# Investigation

After students have reached consensus on a community need to address, guide them in creating a vision statement for their work.

## **Envision Change**

*We will help make our community of \_\_\_\_\_ become a place where*

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*This civic outcome is important to us because it will \_\_\_\_\_*

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# Investigation

Criteria to use in evaluating the viability of each alternative solution

**Saleable** *Can you convince others this is a good idea?*

**Affordable** *Is the cost reasonable? Will you be able to get the necessary funding?*

**Workable** *Is it an appropriate solution and are we able to do it?*

**Effective** *Will it be likely to meet our identified need?*

Rating system 3 = Good or high 2= Okay 1= Low or poor						
Alternative Solution	Saleable	Affordable	Workable	Effective	Total	Justification

*The solution we think will best address this issue and help us achieve our vision is*

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# Investigation

Our baseline statement	Sources of Evidence

**Identify three alternative solutions to consider in addressing this need.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# Investigation

Your Investigation assessment plan	
Skills to be assessed	Assessment method

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# Planning

## Student Action Plan

*Remember, this is a work in progress. Make additions and changes as you implement the project.*

### Develop and Apply Skills

We will learn and be evaluated on these skills acquired during this service-learning experience

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Some of the products I will collect to document my learning are

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection journal               | <input type="checkbox"/> Letters         | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper articles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection essays                | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Videos             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer assessment                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo journal   | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent feedback    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback from community contacts | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____     |   |

# Planning

## Challenges

*Before a project begins, it is a good idea to think about any obstacles that might be encountered. Small details like getting permissions, arranging for buses, or encountering resistance to change may cause difficulties along the way. Thinking about each specific task in your list of steps and planning for solutions to obstacles before they occur can make your efforts more proactive.*

Action step/task	Possible obstacles	Potential solutions

## Evaluation

*How will we measure the success of our project? How will we know that our project met our goal? Using the baseline we documented, what measurable change will we be able to observe?*

By \_\_\_\_\_ (date), our project will result in the following change

# Planning

## Student Action Plan

*Remember, this is a work in progress. Make additions and changes as you implement the project.*

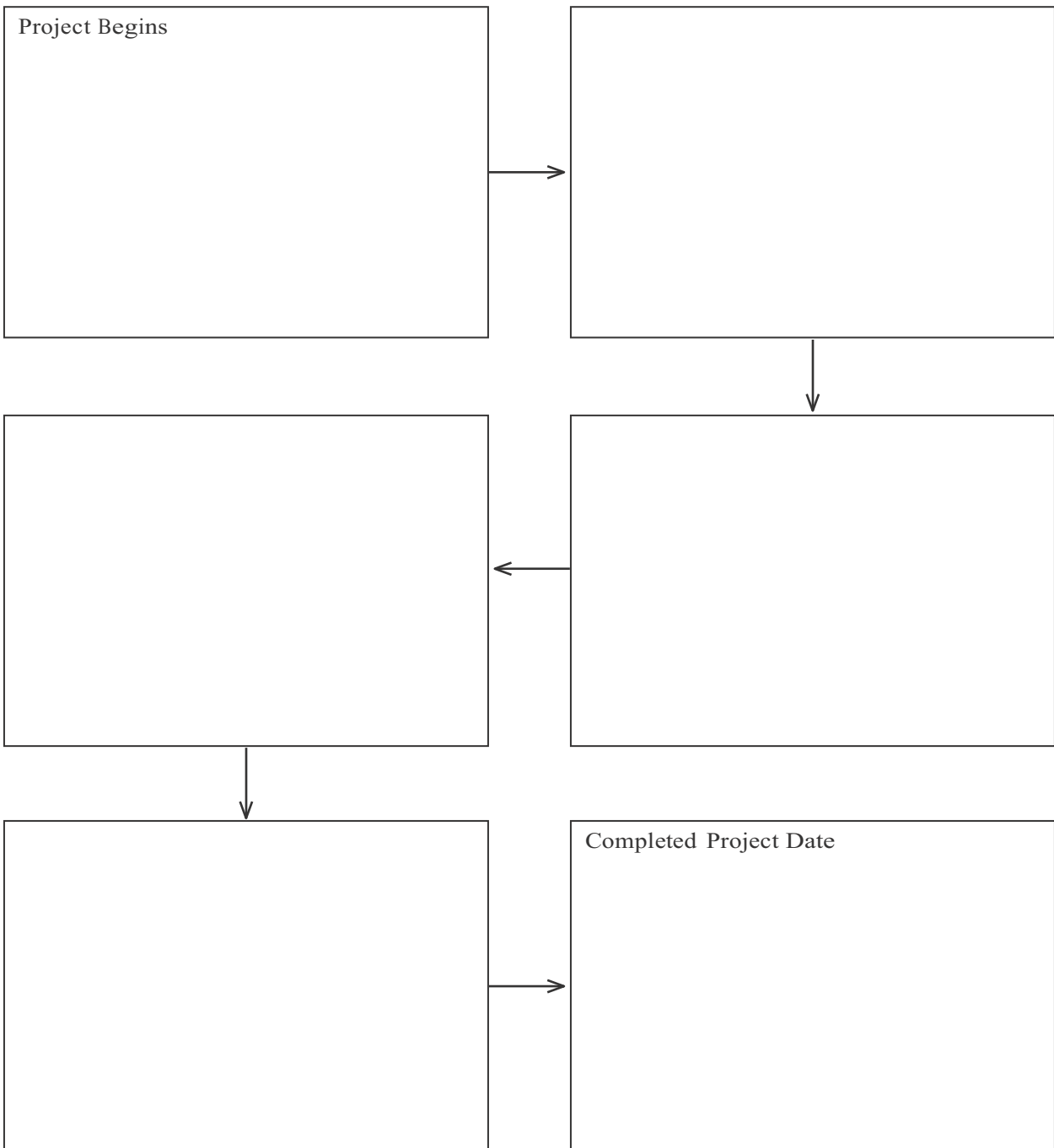
Major tasks	When will this task be completed?	Who will oversee this task?	What resources do we need?	Who can help?
1. a. b. c. d.				
2. a. b. c. d.				
3. a. b. c. d.				
4. a. b. c. d.				
5. a. b. c. d.				

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# Planning

## Action Plan Flowchart

*For younger students, the following flowchart may be used as an alternative to the above chart in planning major project steps as a large group. Younger students may find it easier to start at the end with a completion date and then work their way back through the steps to get them there. Posting the steps on large sheets of paper is a great way to track progress and make adjustments as the work continues.*



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# Planning

## **Integrate Instruction**

*You may find it helpful to create a concept map outlining any connections that exist between the concepts that will be covered in the unit, skills to be addressed, and the identified service project.*



# Planning

## Next Steps

*What topics of study might you want to address next to build upon skills developed during this unit?*

Project-related skills	Instructional resources

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# Planning

## Challenges

*What instructional challenges might arise during this project? it is always a good idea to think about these things in advance. Are there community groups or resources that you may want to bring in at key points? Permissions that must be obtained? Scheduling concerns or other logistics you will need to deal with in the course of the project? Managing a project that encompasses such a spectrum of skills and disciplines will be a challenge.*

Gaining administrator permission and support			
Gaining parent permission and support			
Making logistical arrangements (e.g., scheduling, transportation, chaperones)			
Materials and equipment needs			
Other challenges			

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# Planning

Your Planning Phase assessment plan	
Skills to be assessed	Assessment method

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# Action

## Checklist for Implementing the Action Plan

- Students know what is expected of them and possess the necessary skills.
- All students have meaningful roles to play.
- Students know how to perform tasks well collaboratively.
- The community partner is on board with all activities.
- Students have engaged in troubleshooting conversations (what to do if...)
- Transportation has been arranged as needed.
- All safety and other risk protections are in place.
- Any necessary parent permission forms have been collected.
- Permission for pictures and publications have been obtained.
- The media have been informed and invited as appropriate.
- Reflection activities to take place during service have been planned.
- Intentional links to curriculum have been made.
- Administrators are aware of and support the Action Plan.

# Action

Your assessment plan for the Action phase	
Skills to be assessed	Assessment method

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# Reflection

Your plan for reflection assignments you will use before, during, and at the conclusion of the service-learning experience

	Investigation	Planning and Preparation	During the Service Activity	During the Culminating Event
Reflection Assignment				
Prompts				
Mode of Responding				
Length				
Authors				
Audiences				
What goals will each reflection activity allow you to meet?				

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<http://servicelearning.org/library/resource/8542>

# Demonstrate Outcomes and Celebrate

Your plan for Demonstration/Celebration

Title of the event	
Date and time	
Location	
Participants and their roles	1.  2.  3.  4.  5.
How will you invite participants to the event?	
What are your specific activities for demonstration of outcomes and celebration?	
Agenda	
How will you evaluate success?	
How will you engage your students and others in reflection about the demonstration/celebration?	

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<http://servicelearning.org/library/resource/8542>

# Teacher Reflections

*Reflecting on the service-learning experiences you provide for your students is an important step in continuing to grow and deepen your practice. In addition to being more satisfying professionally, becoming a more effective practitioner will result in increased academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes for your students. Use the pages that follow and the Rubric for Continuous Improvement of the Service-Learning Experience to reflect on your practice.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Issue Addressed \_\_\_\_\_

Subject and Unit Content \_\_\_\_\_

What strategies did I use that were most effective in the IPARDC process?

Which of the National Standards for Quality Service-Learning Practice did I incorporate into this experience the best?

Which standards do I still need to improve?

What would I do differently if I were to implement this same experience over again?

What am I most proud of about this service-learning experience?



# Teacher Reflections

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Issue Addressed \_\_\_\_\_

Subject and Unit Content \_\_\_\_\_

What strategies did I use that were most effective in the IPARDC process?

Which of the National Standards for Quality Service-Learning Practice did I incorporate into this experience the best?

Which standards do I still need to improve?

What would I do differently if I were to implement this same experience over again?

What am I most proud of about this service-learning experience?







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The Maine Commission for Community Service builds capacity and sustainability in Maine's volunteer and service communities by funding programs, developing managers of volunteers and service-learning practitioners, raising awareness of sector issues, and promoting service as a strategy.

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