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Principles of Good Practice for Service-Learning in Preservice Teacher Education

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PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR SERVICE-LEARNING IN PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

by

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This document is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National Service. Opinions and points of view expressed here are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation for National Service.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide principles to guide the integration of service-learning into the preservice teacher education curriculum. The ten principles included here were developed by a group of over 80 teacher educators and service-learning practitioners from all regions of the U.S. who contributed their ideas and feedback in order to achieve consensus. (Contributors are listed in Appendix B). These principles of good practice can be used by teacher educators to design and assess their service-learning activities, and by policy makers to guide decisions regarding resource allocation and program development.

What is service-learning?

Service-learning involves the combination of service and learning in a way that both occur and are enriched by each other. The National and Community Service Act of 1993 defines service-learning as an educational method that:

a. helps students or participants learn and develop by participating in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
b. is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, or institution of higher education or community service program, and with the community;
c. helps to foster civic responsibility.
d. is integrated into and enhances students' academic curriculum or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and
e. provides structured time for students or other participants to reflect on their service experience.

It is important to distinguish service-learning from community service and other forms of experiential learning, such as internships, in order to achieve the full benefits of service-learning. Community service is service designed to address a community need. The primary focus of community service is on serving, and the primary beneficiaries are the service recipients. An example of community service is a food drive, in which students bring canned foods to a school where they are collected, and are later picked up by a truck from a food bank.

Internships and other types of field education focus primarily on the learning to be gained by the students involved. The primary beneficiary is the student. An example is

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a traditional student teaching experience in which a teacher candidate learns how to teach by gaining the necessary skills under the guidance of an experienced practitioner.

Service-learning is a combination of these two activities; the focus is on both the service provided and the learning that occurs. The primary beneficiaries of service-learning are the students who learn and the communities they serve. An example of service-learning is high school government class students tutoring new immigrants in order to assist them in passing citizenship tests. The students strengthen their knowledge of U.S. government and history while simultaneously helping the immigrants achieve their goal of becoming citizens. It is important to note that service-learning can address a need or problem that exists either at the school or in the broader community.

Philosophy and issues

Service-learning has much in common with other approaches to education, especially other forms of experiential, or applied education. However, service-learning has, as its essence, a focus on contributing to the common good. This emphasis on addressing genuine community needs, to help others and/or the community by making a positive difference, is a large component of what makes service-learning effective.

The use of service-learning as a teaching method also includes a distinct view of the role of P-12 schools and higher education in our society. Educational institutions are seen not just as places where students go to learn, but as resources for community development. Educational institutions can use service-learning to both meet their obligation to teach their students and help address real community needs.

Service-learning also includes a vision of the role of young people in our society. Rather than being seen as problems, or as resources for the future, students are recognized as a current resource. They can be productive citizens now by applying their abilities and efforts to address community needs while developing the skills and dispositions necessary for future success.

Student teaching and service-learning

In teacher education confusion arises regarding whether a typical student teaching placement is a form of service-learning. Traditional student teaching experiences are most often not service-learning experiences for two main reasons. First, in student teaching, the primary focus is on the student's professional development. The P-12 students, teachers or schools may benefit from the efforts of the student teacher, but that is not the main purpose of the field placement. In fact, the experienced teachers involved may see the benefit as less than the cost they pay in terms of the time and effort they expend to get the student teacher "up to speed." Second, successful service-learning involves an emphasis on civic responsibility whereas most student teaching placements focus on the learning benefits received by the preservice teacher.

Some educators believe a clear distinction between service-learning and student teaching needs to be maintained to achieve the maximum benefit from either. Others say the two can be blended successfully when a context is created in which the goals of the teacher education program and the needs of the P-12 school are both emphasized. In this case it is essential that the focus is on the creation of an ethic of service by emphasizing

the preservice teachers and the P-12 schools as both service providers and service recipients.

Rationales for service-learning in preservice teacher education

Service-learning in preservice teacher education programs can help to accomplish a variety of goals. In order to achieve the desired outcomes it is important for individual teacher educators and the teacher education program as a whole to be clear regarding what they intend to accomplish by engaging teacher candidates in service-learning. The following rationales have been provided for including service-learning in preservice teacher education:

1. Preparation to use service-learning as a pedagogy
   Preservice teachers can learn to successfully use service-learning as a pedagogy with their future K-12 students. This preparation will facilitate many more children and youth engaging in service-learning to benefit their communities and themselves.

2. Achievement of teacher education standards
   Participation in service-learning experiences can help teacher candidates meet a variety of state and national standards. For example, service-learning activities can be closely connected to the following INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards:
   a. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
   b. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.
   c. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
   d. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
   e. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

3. Develop habits of critical inquiry and reflection
   Teacher educators can use preservice teachers' service-learning experiences to explore ethical dilemmas inherent in teaching and social reconstruction.

4. Gain familiarity and skill with educational reform initiatives
   Service-learning helps prospective teachers grasp the importance of performance-based assessment, the use of themes for teaching integrated units, problem-solving, cooperation, and critical thinking skills. Service-learning also assists in developing a democratic classroom in which the teacher serves as a coach or facilitator and engages students in shared decision making.

5. Personal and social development
   Involving teacher candidates in real world settings where they deal with challenging situations while working for the common good can be an effective means of promoting personal growth. Self-esteem, moral and ego development, and social responsibility can be enhanced through participation in service-learning.

6. Social justice and appreciation of human diversity
   Preservice teachers can engage in service for the common good by addressing social, political, economic, and cultural injustices through direct service and advocacy projects. In this process they can also gain increased respect for human differences and commonalities, and learn how to prepare their students to do the same.

7. Democratic citizenship
   Service-learning can effectively address the goals of citizenship education and preparation for active participation in a democracy. Beginning teachers need to be living examples of active, democratic citizens in order to most effectively prepare their students for informed, active participation in our democratic society.

How to use these principles

These principles include important considerations that have been found to contribute to successful service-learning outcomes. Teacher educators and others interested in developing strong service-learning experiences can benefit greatly from the collected wisdom represented in these principles. However, these principles are not absolutes to be applied rigidly, nor are they a knowledge base supported by a body of empirical research. The principles raise issues that should be discussed thoroughly by those engaged in the design and implementation of service-learning in preservice teacher education

Few, if any, teacher education programs presently have a service-learning component that integrates all ten of these principles. The principles present ideals that are worth striving for, even if it not possible to integrate all ten. The successful integration of any one of these principles can strengthen service-learning activities and therefore they are beneficial for those new to service-learning as well as for experienced practitioners.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR SERVICE-LEARNING IN PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

1. Preservice teachers should prepare to use service-learning as a pedagogy by participating in service-learning experiences as a student and a teacher, as well as in-class study of principles of good service-learning practice.

2. Teacher education faculty involved with service-learning should have a clear understanding of service-learning theory and principles of good practice and model these principles in their use of service-learning as a teaching method.

3. Teacher education courses that include service-learning should be grounded in theories and practices of teaching and learning which are congruent with service-learning.

4. The design, implementation, and evaluation of service-learning projects should reflect all stakeholders' needs and interests, including those of preservice teachers, P-12 students, and community members.

5. Reciprocity and mutual respect should characterize the collaboration among teacher education programs, P-12 schools, and the community.

6. Preservice teachers should participate in multiple and varied service-learning experiences that involve working with diverse community members.

7. Preservice teachers should participate in a variety of frequent and structured reflection activities and be prepared to facilitate reflection with their future students.

8. Preservice teachers should learn how to use formative and summative assessment to enhance student learning and measure service-learning outcomes.

9. Teacher educators should align service-learning outcomes with programs goals and state and national standards for teacher certification and program accreditation.

10. The teacher education program, institution, and the community should support service-learning by providing the resources and structural elements necessary for continued success.

PRINCIPLE 1: Preservice teachers should prepare to use service-learning as a pedagogy by participating in service-learning experiences as a student and as a teacher, as well as in-class study of principles of good service-learning practice.

Beginning teachers are unlikely to use service-learning in their classrooms unless they receive explicit instruction in its use as a pedagogy. This instruction increases the chance that beginning teachers will engage their students in service-learning experiences and thereby expand benefits to both learners and the community.

Instruction in the use of service-learning as a pedagogy should consist of two primary components. First, preservice teachers should participate in classroom instruction regarding the use of service-learning as a pedagogy and as a philosophy of education. This instruction should include the following: placing service-learning within a broader theoretical framework, such as experiential education and child/adolescent development, rationales for the use of service-learning, theories and research explaining the dynamics and benefits of service-learning, study of principles of good service-learning practice, examples of successful service-learning projects, and creation of a written service-learning lesson plan or unit of instruction.

Secondly, preservice teachers should participate in two types of service-learning experiences. In the initial stages of their preparation they should engage in service themselves, and participate in reflection activities that intentionally link service experiences to academic learning outcomes. After receiving classroom instruction in the use of service-learning preservice teachers should have direct experience with service-learning as a pedagogy. This involves preservice teachers working with P-12 teachers and students, and community partners to design and implement service-learning projects that integrate principles of good service-learning practice.

Principle 2: Teacher education faculty involved with service-learning should have a clear understanding of service-learning theory and principles of good practice and model these principles in their use of service-learning as a teaching method.

The "do as I say, not as I do" approach that has been common at all levels of education for many years is clearly unsuccessful when employed with service-learning. The messages in the hidden curriculum of teacher education, whether encountered in university settings, school settings, or the larger community may effectively contradict the explicit curriculum. Therefore, it is incumbent upon teacher educators involved with service-learning to learn all they can about successful service-learning practice, and use what they have learned in their own teaching.

Teacher educators should participate in workshops and other preparation experiences that focus on service-learning applications at both the P-12 and higher education levels. This dual responsibility is necessary because teacher educators need to employ service-learning effectively as college or university faculty members, and also prepare preservice teachers to successfully integrate service-learning into the P-12 curriculum. (See Appendix A for Standards of Quality for School-Based and Community-Based Service-Learning.) It is especially helpful for teacher educators experienced with service-learning to participate in advanced, in-depth service-learning

activities designed to prepare them to provide mentoring and technical assistance to teacher educators new to service-learning.

Service-learning faculty should engage in service-learning research and program evaluation with their students and community partners. This practice will allow them to both model the evaluation and collaboration components of service-learning for their students and also obtain data for program improvement and publication.

PRINCIPLE 3: Teacher education courses that include service-learning should be grounded in theories and practices of teaching and learning which are congruent with service-learning.

Teacher educators who use in-class approaches to teaching and learning that actively involve preservice teachers in the construction of their own knowledge provide these students with an environment that is more conducive to successful service-learning than those who rely primarily on an information dissemination approach to instruction. Teacher educators who act as facilitators of preservice teachers' learning are able to help reduce the distinction between students assuming the role of passive-follower in the classroom and active-leader in the community. These conflicting role expectations for preservice teachers can produce confusion and result in decreased learning and limited service success. Teacher educators should also model for their students how to learn from service experiences, and how to combine this form of experiential learning with academic learning.

PRINCIPLE 4: The design, implementation, and evaluation of service-learning projects should reflect all stakeholders' needs and interests, including those of preservice teachers, P-12 students, and other community members.

Tapping the collaborative energy and creativity of preservice teachers, community members, teacher educators, and P-12 students and teachers, produces synergy that leads to the most successful teacher education based service-learning projects. Achieving this synergetic power requires all these stakeholders to play a collaborative role in all facets of service-learning.

Service-learning should address real, recognized community needs. Teacher educators and preservice teachers should work with community agencies and other community members to conduct a needs and assets assessment in the beginning stage of each service-learning project. It is especially important to avoid an approach to service-learning in which the university is perceived as coming in to "fix" a community problem.

Preservice teachers gain the most from service-learning participation when they play an authentic leadership role in the planning and conduct of service-learning activities. This necessitates real input and decision-making authority regarding important issues in the project. When teacher candidates are trusted by faculty to provide important services to the community, they are more likely to do their best work, and this positive modeling increases the chance that these teacher candidates will provide their future K-12 students with the same opportunities for active voice in service-learning.

PRINCIPLE 5: Reciprocity and mutual respect should characterize the collaboration among teacher education programs, P-12 schools, and the community.

When collaboration, mutual respect, and reciprocity are present in all phases of service-learning the benefits for all parties can be maximized. This requires regular, on-going communication regarding community needs and assets, and development and implementation of a service-learning plan that includes reflection and evaluation processes. In addition, the service-learning partners need to develop clear roles and responsibilities, especially as they pertain to the supervision and evaluation of preservice teachers and P-12 students.

A third essential collaborative activity is the creation of shared outcomes. As collaborative partnerships deepen over time all parties should be involved in connecting service-learning opportunities to teacher education and P-12 service-learning goals.

This collaboration can be very time consuming for all parties. Teacher educators can seek help from like-minded individuals in P-12 schools and the community, or obtain assistance from the campus service-learning coordinator, AmeriCorp members, or graduate assistants. However, faculty members active engagement in collaboration is important to support curriculum integration and the creation of a shared culture of service.

PRINCIPLE 6: Preservice teachers should participate in multiple and varied service-learning experiences that involve working with diverse community members.

Service-learning experiences for preservice teachers should occur in more than one course in their preparation program. The service-learning projects should involve work with both P-12 schools and other community organizations. Each added service-learning experience increases preservice teachers' understanding of the variety of possible goals of service-learning involvement, the numerous possible connections to the academic curriculum, and the different ways in which reflection, assessment, and preparation can be done.

Preservice teachers need to experience and understand the benefits and limitations of different types of service-learning (direct, indirect, and advocacy), short-term vs. on-going service-learning, and service with different populations and community organizations (intergenerational, animals, poverty, environmental, service-learning on the school grounds, etc.). These understandings can be enhanced by participation in a variety of service-learning experiences, and by having preservice teachers who have participated in different types of activities come together to share their experiences and critically analyze the strengths and limitations of each project.

Participation in these diverse service-learning experiences should also include a focus on deeper individual, social, political, cultural, and economic issues that underlie each project, and give rise to the initial need for service. Preservice teachers' appreciation for the potential transformative power of service-learning will grow as they examine issues of social justice, and the relationship between individualism and commitment to the common good.

A focus on serving with diverse community groups refers not only to racial, cultural, gender, and age differences but also social and economic levels, physical and mental abilities, and other factors that make up personal identity. In addition, a commitment to diversity includes respect for culturally different ways in which people identify and express needs, assets, goals, training, reflection, support, recognition, and evaluation.

PRINCIPLE 7: Preservice teachers should participate in a variety of frequent and structured reflection activities and prepare to facilitate reflection with their future students.

Reflection refers to the framework in which students process and synthesize information and ideas they have gained through their entire service experience and in the classroom. Participation in reflection activities is the key to helping students integrate service experiences with core learning goals. During reflection, preservice teachers and other service-learning participants not only examine what happened in their service project and how they feel about it, but also analyze and make sense of their service experiences. In this way they can learn from their service and apply this knowledge to their own lives, the broader community, and future service-learning projects. The most effective reflection also extends to critical examination of deeper issues of citizenship, public policy, and the relationship between individual learning and development and service addressing community needs.

Reflection activities should support pre-planned service-learning curricular objectives, and be open to including unanticipated service and learning outcomes. Reflection activities should be closely linked to the institutions' primary rationale for involvement in service-learning, and the service and learning goals for a particular course. This type of reflection will help students place their service experience in the context that is driving the use of service-learning as a teaching method in that course or school. All parties participating in service-learning can and should engage in reflection together; the insights and experiences shared by P-12 students and teachers, preservice teachers, university faculty, parents, administrators, and other community members can heighten the learning of all involved.

Reflection should occur before, during, and after service-learning activities. Reflection prior to service can be an effective form of preparation for service, to help insure that students have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be successful in the coming service-learning project. Reflection during service can be an important form of problem-solving; reflection after service activities can be used to help students assess their progress and growth, and prepare for more effective subsequent service. Faculty can use these reflections to assist them in assessing the knowledge and skills students have gained through the service experience.

Reflection should involve multiple methods. The use of visual, oral, written, and artistic reflection activities conducted in large group, small group, and individual settings can help insure that all students gain the benefits of reflection.

PRINCIPLE 8: Preservice teachers should learn how to use formative and summative assessment to enhance student learning and measure service-learning outcomes.

Effective assessment of service-learning is both necessary and challenging. Preservice teachers need theoretical and practical grounding in applying formative and summative assessment if they are to meet this challenge. Teacher educators should place particularly strong emphasis on assessment of service-learning to counteract the tendency of beginning teachers to overlook or engage in superficial assessment of their service-learning activities. Preparation in assessment methods for use with service-learning can be tied to assessment instruction for other instructional methods. Preservice teachers should develop a basic understanding of how to link assessment to predetermined, measurable goals for service-learning experiences. In addition, they need to be prepared to encourage, assess, and communicate the frequent unplanned outcomes of service-learning.

Preservice teachers should learn to use a variety of forms of authentic assessment to assess oral presentations, artistic forms of expression, and the degree to which community needs were met by the service activities. In addition, traditional measures such as essay and objective tests, and written papers can be used to measure student learning.

Assessment should serve as an instructional tool to enhance student learning as well as to measure the degree to which students have achieved instructional goals, and the program has addressed community needs. To the extent feasible, community members should also participate in the design and use of the assessment tools. Both P-12 and teacher education students need to participate in designing and implementing the assessment of their service-learning experiences. Teacher educators should model helping students develop assessment tools they can use to measure and communicate their service-learning accomplishments.

PRINCIPLE 9: Teacher educators should align service-learning outcomes with program goals and state and national standards for teacher certification and program accreditation.

Teacher educators are currently restructuring their programs around national standards for novice teachers (INTASC- Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium), national program accreditation standards (NCATE- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education), state standards, and discipline-based standards for P-12 student learning such as those put forth by NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics). In this era of standards-driven teacher and teacher education accountability systems, it makes practical sense for service-learning instruction and activities to directly address these standards. In many programs there is no room for curriculum or instruction that does not clearly relate to a standard. For others, linking service-learning to a standard helps to insure that it will remain in the teacher education program when there are changes in faculty and/or administration. Examples of standards that can be achieved through preservice teachers' participation in service-learning are included in the introduction to this document.

Service-learning can be used to reinforce and support standards; however, standards should not be used to arbitrarily limit the types of service-learning performed.

Teacher educators should use their professional judgment when deciding to approve student or community initiated service-learning projects that, at first glance, don't clearly align with program goals or standards. Other factors to be considered include student interest, community needs, the university mission, and personal educational philosophies. Learning opportunities that arise spontaneously often result in the most powerful service-learning outcomes. It is important that teacher educators assist students in designing service-learning activities that achieve standards while remaining open to unplanned educational experiences they can use to expand preservice teachers' learning beyond that which is mandated.

Principle 10: The teacher education program, institution, and the community should support service-learning by providing the resources and structural elements necessary for continued success.

A successful teacher education service-learning program provides clear benefits for its higher education institution as well as its P-12 and other community partners. Therefore, it is reasonable and necessary that all of these groups provide the support essential for service-learning to succeed. However, the primary responsibility for these resources falls on the college or university. The teacher education program and institution should provide support in the following areas:

1. Faculty roles and rewards, including work load, tenure and promotion policies, should recognize the time and effort required to engage successfully in service-learning.
2. The institution should make a long-term commitment to build and maintain a solid service-learning program base.
3. Policies and procedures should create an environment supportive of service-learning.
4. Deans, department chairs, and other administrators should publicly sanction service-learning initiatives, and promote service-learning within the teacher education program and the institution.
5. Service-learning should be funded through regular teacher education and institutional budgets and not be dependent on outside sources for regular operations.
6. An institution-wide or college/school/department of education specific service-learning coordinator should work with faculty to arrange service-learning placements, establish and maintain collaborative partnerships, engage in supervision and coordination, and provide professional development, training and technical assistance to faculty, P-12 schools, and other community members.
7. Budgets should provide sufficient funds for the transportation, supplies, and instructional materials needed for effective service-learning.
8. The teacher education course schedule should provide preservice teachers and faculty with sufficient time to engage in service-learning.
9. The teacher education program and/or the institution should have a comprehensive risk management plan that includes preparation regarding safety issues and liability insurance that fully covers preservice teachers and faculty engaged in service-learning.

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APPENDIX A

Standards of Quality for School-Based and Community-Based Service-Learning

<u>Source:</u> Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (ASLER), March, 1995

I. Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.

II. Model service-learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk taking and rewards competence.

III. Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service-learning.

IV. Youths' efforts are recognized by those served, including their peers, the school, and the community.

V. Youth are involved in the planning.

VI. The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

VII. Effective service-learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

VII. Service-learning connects the school or sponsoring organization and its community in new and positive ways.

VIII. Service-learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school or sponsoring organization and its community.

IX. Skilled adult guidance and supervision are essential to the success of service-learning.

X. Preservice training, orientation, and staff development that include the philosophy and methodology of service-learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.

APPENDIX B

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