

1999

Service Learning as a Teaching Strategy

Vermont Community Works

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5-12-99 DRAFT 4/99

Service Learning as a Teaching Strategy

* RESOURCES * MODELS * REFLECTIONS *



from The Guilford School

a Demonstration Site for Service Learning and Professional Development

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~ Teachers as Change Agents ~

...If identity and integrity are more fundamental to good teaching than technique --- and if we want to grow as teachers--- we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives---risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract.”

From Parker Palmer's, The Courage to Teach

In his book, *Educating For Character*, Thomas Lickona writes that an important element for a positive moral culture in the school is, “A moral atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, fairness and cooperation that pervades all relationships--those among the adults in the school as well as those between adults and students.”

“Communities are not built of friends, or of groups of people with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other. They are built of people who feel they are a part of something that is bigger than themselves.”

Suzanne Goldsmith, Teaching Tolerance Institute

“...‘If you do not act you will be acted upon.’ I don't know who said it, but they were right. If you're not moving, not active, uninvolved, how do you really know you're still breathing? How do you know you're still alive? The power of self reliance, independence and self respect that the teachers and staff plant in the children will stay with them forever”

Becca Tustin, Guilford School Class of '94

Included in this Resource Packet

An Overview of Vermont Community Works

- VCW Mission and Statement of Beliefs
- VCW Sponsored Activities and Programs

Articulating Social Education at Guilford School

- Mission and Values (for Guilford Central School)
- Definitions and Elements (for Social Education and Service Learning)
- What Service Learning Accomplishes

Reflections on Community Building in the Classroom

- Talking About What Matters
- Community Building Through Collaborative Projects
- A Reflection on Learning

Professional Development

Reflections From Guilford's Summer Institute 1995-98

- A Gathering of Purpose
- The Stone Wall Project

Reflections on Service Learning

- The Guilford Gazette: an overview
- Uncovering History at Carpenter Hill Cemetery
- Reflections on Guilford's Service Day
- One Room School Houses -a Unit of Study
- How and Why We Do Community Service

Guilford Central School is a K-8 public school with about 270 students. GCS is located in Guilford, Vermont (-pop. 1,950) in the southeastern corner of Vermont, southwest of Brattleboro and just north of Massachusetts. The school's K-8 curriculum emphasizes Social Education as an integrated part of its standards based program. Service Learning and Experiential Education are important teaching strategies in use at GCS. Specific examples include: school gardens; a nature trail; a student published newspaper *The Guilford Gazette*; and regular use of local historic resources -including a unit on Guilford's One Room Schools. GCS is a Vermont Demonstration Site for Service Learning and Professional Development.

About Vermont Community Works

Vermont Community Works serves as a regional educational resource. Participants in the Project include educators, community members and students. In partnership with Vermont's Department of Education, Norwich University and the Vermont's Institute for Science, Math and Technology (VISMT), VCW shares innovative professional development models that emphasize Social Education, Service Learning and Experiential Education strategies and curriculum. VCW also publishes *Community Works Journal* three times per year. Our goal is to showcase hands-on learning projects across the region that contribute to community building and inspire by example. VCW, based on site at Guilford Central School is dedicated to promoting educational innovation Vermont.

**An Overview
of
Vermont
Community
Works**

a non-profit educational resource organization

Vermont Community Works

OUR MISSION is to promote exemplary teaching practices, programs and models that help students becoming caring, responsible and active members of their communities.

TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION

Vermont Community Works will arrange for, or directly provide, **RESOURCES, SUPPORT** and **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** to Vermont educators.

VCW's STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

- * We believe that service learning and experiential education opportunities based in the local community, are critical to promoting a connected, purposeful and positive school experience.
- * We believe that service learning experiences contribute directly to the development of young people as healthy, caring, active and informed citizens.
- * We believe that sustaining educational innovation and good teaching practice requires that an opportunity be provided for reflection, documentation and the sharing of work.
- * We see the necessity of developing a comprehensive and articulated curriculum that holistically integrates social and academic standards .

A collaborative relationship exists
between Vermont Community Works and Guilford Central School
with GCS serving as a developing model and inspiration for public school reform.

VCW PARTNERS

Vermont Department of Education
Guilford Central School
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union
Norwich University of Vermont
Vermont's Rural Partnership
Alliance for Lifelong Learning

VCW ACTIVITIES and PROGRAMS 1998

VCW is a non-profit educational resource organization

☆ **Technical Assistance, Presentations and Workshops to Vermont Schools**

Experienced consulting teachers working through VCW, are available to provide consultation, technical assistance and feedback. Mini Grants for Curriculum Development are available to teachers to support the design and implementation of service learning based curriculum.

VCW offers workshops and trainings for teachers that include: Reflection and Documentation, Service Learning and School and Community Partnerships. Guilford School and VCW participants have presented workshops and program sharing nationally, regionally and on a regular basis in the State of Vermont since 1994.

☆ **Publication of Teaching Resources and Exemplars**

A significant collection of teaching and planning tools, exemplary program models and curriculum resources related to service learning is being prepared for print and on line publication.

☆ **Publication of *Community Works Journal***

The Journal is published 3 times per year (Fall, Winter and Summer) as a resource to teachers. CWJ actively encourages and supports reflection and sharing from the field with the hope making the work of like minded educators available in a shared public forum. CWJ is mailed to every school in Vermont as well as additional networks of regional educators.

☆ **Vermont Community Works WEB Site** [www.state.vt.us/schools/gcs/cwrks]

VCW's WEB site features the voices of Vermont teachers and students involved in service learning projects in their local communities. It also makes available teaching tools and curriculum resources and exemplary program models.

☆ **Guilford Summer Institute for Social Education and Service Learning**

This annual professional development experience for K-12 teachers and community partners, now in its 5th year, focuses upon the articulation and holistic integration of the social and academic aspects of a school's curriculum. Use of NSLC's Essential Elements for Service Learning creates a common rubric for measuring growth. The Institute is open to Vermont teaching teams with limited scholarship support available.

☆ **CLASS Focus Group: *Connecting Learning and Service to Standards***

This site based group consists of a principal, specialists, special education and classroom teachers. CLASS's purpose is to develop practical and accessible tools that enhance and integrate service learning into the school curricula.

☆ **Inquiry Course *Inquiry and Assessment: an Examination of Teaching Practice***

The Inquiry graduate course is run in partnership with Norwich University. As a model now in its 3rd year, the course offers teacher participants the opportunity to self structure a research project based on their own teaching needs. VCW provides for the sharing of this work.

☆ **Mentoring Agreements for Vermont Rural Partnership Schools**

VCW, in partnership with Guilford School, coordinates supporting agreements for VRP schools. (VRP is a network of 21 Vermont schools) These sites have committed to service learning as a core part of their curriculum. Mentoring Agreement support includes site visits, consultation, resource sharing and sponsored attendance at Guilford Summer Institute.

**An Overview
of Social Education
at Guilford Central School**

Mission and Values of Guilford Central School



The following mission statement has been revisited and revised on a regular basis by Guilford teachers, community members and students over the last nine years. (1991-99) We have also worked through a series of reflective group activities spanning several years to define our core values as a learning community.

MISSION The central role of the school community is to help each person become a compassionate, independent and contributing member of an ever changing world.

Our Core Values

- Respect** The willingness to show consideration or appreciation; to feel or show deferential regard for self or others
- Responsibility** To make moral or rational decisions on one's own and be answerable for one's behavior
- Tolerance** The practice of recognizing and respecting the beliefs, differences and/or practices of others
- Compassion** Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it
- Trust** Firm reliance on the integrity, ability or character of a person or thing
- Honesty** Truthfulness, sincerity
- Courtesy** Polite behavior
- Equal Opportunity** Each person gets what he or she needs for success

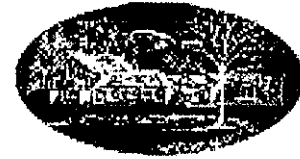
Statement of Our Beliefs

The Guilford Central School community, including students, educators, families and community members is committed to developing instructional programs and practices which support the following beliefs:

- ❖ The education of the whole person, intellectual, social, emotional and physical is a shared responsibility.
- ❖ Individuals will develop responsibility for their learning and conduct.
- ❖ The school community will recognize and respect the uniqueness of each individual.
- ❖ Learning thrives in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and trust.
- ❖ Learning is a lifelong process that knows no boundaries.
- ❖ Learning happens everywhere.
- ❖ Learning can be a messy process which involves trying new things, taking qualified risks, and challenging preconceived notions and limitations.

Social Education

at Guilford Central School



OUR CORE VALUES

Respect Responsibility Tolerance
Compassion Trust Honesty
Courtesy Equal Opportunity

Working Definitions

- ❖ **Social Education:** The building and sustaining of a caring community through a learning process which is intentional and integrated.
- ❖ **Service Learning:** An academic and social educational method that meets genuine student, school or community needs and requires the application of knowledge, skills and a systematic reflection on the experience.
- ❖ **Community Service:** A voluntary act that benefits others.

Essential Elements for Service Learning *

The Activity or Project:

1. Strengthens the connection between academic learning and service
2. Provides opportunities to learn new skills, think critically, and test new roles
3. Involves both preparation and reflection
4. Efforts recognized by peers and community served
5. Involves Youth in the planning
6. Makes a meaningful contribution to the community
7. Includes systematic assessment procedure
8. Connects school and community in new and positive ways
9. Is understood, valued and supported as an integral element of the school
10. Provides skilled adult guidance and supervision
11. Staff are given tools, training and assistance necessary to make this a meaningful service learning experience.

** adapted by participants at Guilford's Summer Institute '98, from ASLER Standards and The National Service Learning Cooperative's (NSLC) Essential Elements of Service Learning*

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WHAT Community Service Learning ACCOMPLISHES

Service Learning* provides a method for **teaching citizenship, academic subject areas and life skills in an integrated way.

Service Learning* uses active or applied learning to **reinforce content and skill areas,

Service Learning* involves Students and community members as partners in making **visible contributions to the community.

**Service Learning* enables students to draw lessons from real experiences

Service Learning* uses **Reflection as the crucial component for understanding the effects of one's actions

Service Learning* requires **skills building in communication, social skills, reasoning and problem solving.

Service Learning* activities often provide a reason for **expanding learning environments and opportunities in Science and Technology, The Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Math.

Service Learning* is an excellent **Prevention strategy since it results in students who are invested in their own learning and in their relationship to their community.

*adapted by The Service Learning & Resource Project at Guilford
from *Core Elements of Successful National Service Programs 1994*

**Reflections on
Community Building
in
The Classroom**

Talking About What Matters

by Margaret Dale Barrand -1st grade teacher

Spring 1998

[This paper was shared in a seminar with other teachers, one of whom was Maggie Cassidy, who teaches at Brattleboro Union High School]

It was very helpful and liberating reading Maggie's paper. I had become so wrapped up and worried about how to write and express myself clearly, and what would be the best way to say everything, and how was it possible to say everything that I lost track of purpose and audience-my colleagues, and the incredible support I feel in this class. Maggie's paper helped me get back to reality. So, here is to talking about what matters- and very timely. I am about to make a big change at school, moving from a 4/5 grade to first grade in September. The anticipation of this change and the inevitable looking back on what I will be leaving have created an intriguing frame for asking the questions that Carol posed to us in the last seminar. I am thinking about why have I considered moving to primary for several years and why I have wanted to leave the age group I am currently teaching. (Even though the voice of inadequacy suggests I am just not good at this, I know this is not the reason). I love working with nine- to eleven-year-olds, and I know there are ways in which I am very good at it, but it has become too hard.

What are the constants for me in my work with children? What would be the same in first, fourth, fifth, or any grade? In my classroom I can close the door and create a world in which everyone is smart and no-one is dumb even when they are struggling to understand and yet don't. Like Maggie, I can arrange the furniture the way I want to and create a community that is safe and trusting. We sing with each other, share stories, and laugh together. I can insist on kind behavior and show no tolerance for anything less. I can help children see that they can succeed, be productive, trust themselves, and revel in their work. We go on a journey together and share our learning. We become a community that nurtures its individuals. But outside the four walls of my room is a different world. One hears teachers talk about what kids can't do, how they don't measure up, how they have a bad attitude. When children are looked at and treated this way, they become angry, sullen, and withdrawn. They lose confidence in themselves. I can't bear to see this happen. It breaks my heart. Why does our profession often forget to look at strengths as a way to help children deal with and support their weaknesses?

I have a student who lives on a farm. He has talked about three trees he loves to climb and how each of them is special and different. He has been present at the birth of many calves, and has described them in his writing. He has shared photographs of a recent birth. He is a very good thinker and has a lot of common sense. He struggles with reading and writing. New material and experiences are frightening and he often deals with this by behaving badly. It is almost impossible for him to be flexible, and because of this he suffers. We help keep him learning and above water with support, love, and constant acknowledgment of his gifts. What will become of him if teachers only look at what he can't do? I often feel surrounded by pressure calling for "academic rigor" to pull everyone in line, or the implication that I did not have high enough expectations for students when they were in my class. Many assaults, such as the "Standards", the state testing, the constant barrage from the administration to align our teaching with the standards, and the math pilot, rarely refer to children, and if they do, the children are faceless. I don't understand the people who support these. I

don't speak the same language. I don't know how to communicate with them. My perception that I teach very differently from my colleagues on either side of my grade leads me to be in a position of constant self-questioning. I begin to think I am not "rigorous" enough, that I truly don't have high expectations, and my trust in myself begins to fail. It is hard to thrive in this context.

We have just finished a unit of study on volcanoes. As part of the closure on this work, I asked my students to answer three questions in essay form:

- 1) What did you do during the study?
- 2) What did you learn?
- 3) What suggestions would you make for changes if you were going to do this study again?

The children had been very involved and engaged during this study, so I thought they would have a lot to say. They wailed and said, "We can't do it!!" They were afraid to do it alone. So we backed up and began in groups. First we generated a list of words that had to do with our volcano study. Then we generated a list of all things we did in our study. Finally we created a list of what we had learned. They were very motivated to generate these lists in small groups, knowing it would become part of a master list (which we created after the group work). Now, with these lists in hand they are working diligently and independently on their essays. (The questions were revised so that each student chose a specific number of items to write about.) Their group recollection and reiteration of the activities and experiences helped place themselves in its context and write from their own experiences. I had neglected the fact that they needed to reflect and think in community before they could articulate as individuals. Their connectedness was a very important part of this experience for them. As I look at their reflections, I think, "This is a rigorous assignment-and these are high expectations".

It is not, however, all "gloom and doom." There are wonderful, caring people here who take kids where they are and do their best to help them grow and learn. Our librarian is one of those, and our teachers in the Resource Room. We work closely together-rather we meet on the run and share common concerns and plans. From 4th grade on, the pressure for teachers to have their kids "meet the standards" are tremendous. It is easier for teachers in the primary grades to be more ready to accept kids where they are, and trust each other. I don't know if this is true anywhere else, but it is true in my school. I look forward to being part of this community.

My earliest work with children was with four-year-olds in NYC daycare centers and three- to five-year-olds in a psychiatric hospital. I loved this work and all that followed it. I have tried to capture in words what it means to me to work with young children, and what feels so different from my work with older children. It has not been easy to identify; the nature of the work is not easier or less complicated. Likewise, it does not have to do with enjoyment; my pleasure with children is there at any age. It has something to do with some piece of me that is awakened and alive and moves effortlessly into their world. I become one of them in a way that requires no cognitive effort. And yet I retain my adult self with the perspective and distance that brings understanding and wisdom to my work with them.

I know I will miss many things about working with these middle years children-the power of my relationship with them and the community we establish, the shared excitement over mastery of skills or grasping a new concept. These will be there in first grade, and in any other group of chil-

dren I have the privilege to work with. What will not be there when I leave this level has to do with the special nature of middle-years children. They display the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of young children, and are at the same time moving rapidly into their future. They are competent and capable in many areas; they are beginning to enjoy some form of abstract thinking and they are capable of great industry. This is a delightful mix.

Community Building Through Collaborative Projects

by *Martina Dancing* -Art Instructor, GCS May 1998

In January, leading my 3rd Grade art class in a mural making project, I was impressed with the students' ability to work co-operatively together and on their informal, self-initiated, self-directed reflection discussions.

My observations with this group inspired my research project question, "How does working in groups on projects affect students' experience of community?" This year's school theme, "Community," ties in nicely with my interest in collaborative art projects. Although I began with the belief that there is great value in doing group projects, I wanted to further examine this theme, to better understand group process, and identify specific educational value for my students.

To inform my study project, I've examined data I've collected on two classes that I've led in large group projects this year: 3rd Grade's mural making and 5th Grade's class play. Through my observations, I've become more aware of the various phases of a project, and of students' behavior shifts depending on the phase we're in. For example, a 3rd Grader reports, "At first I thought it was going to be boring, but then it was fun." A 5th Grader reports, "Well, at first when Jen was writing the play I did not want to do it. When we started practicing it was boring and when we did the exercises that was most boring. When we performed the first time it was funner than practicing, but when we did the play the second time that was the funnest time." Another student reports, "Well, at first when Jen was writing the play I did not want to do it. When we started practicing it was boring and when we did the exercises that was most boring. When we performed the first time it was funner than practicing, but when we did the play the second time that was the funnest time."

Personality differences is also evident as an important variable in tracking what goes on. Some students are naturally more inclined to work with others, are adept at it, and enjoy that way most of all. This revealing and insightful quote is from a 5th Grader, "I like working with a group better than by myself. Everyone worked well together on the play Everyone was supportive to everyone else. I think the boys liked it a lot more than they put out." For other students, who most enjoy working alone, a group project can be very frustrating. Besides personality preferences, there's the element of timing. Even someone who usually enjoys group work, may have recently been involved in lots of it, and have the need for alone time. As a teacher, I've learned the value of trying to pick up on varying needs of individuals, and to support them accordingly.

Through this study I've become more aware of students' differing levels of investment in a project. This seems most affected by two factors, personal taste or distaste for a particular medium/project/activity, and also the size or type of role a student is given in the project. This second item, the role or level of responsibility in the project, directly related to many students' performance. In the play project, I noticed that students who could manage big acting roles and who got them, worked especially hard to do their very best work. Some students who were given smaller roles, with fewer lines to memorize and less time on stage, seemed to not take the

project as seriously and slack off, just putting a lot less energy and focus into the play than the others. One student reports that in the future, "I would like a bigger part. I would practice more." Making a good match in size of job, with student's ability level is often difficult, but always worth some consideration.

I refer to Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities to help define specific educational points that relate to group project making. Under "Worth and Competence" is Respect, #3.3 Students demonstrate respect for themselves and others. Under "Relationships" are 3 especially germane areas: 1)Teamwork, #3.10 Students perform effectively on teams that set and achieve goals, conduct investigations, solve problems, and create solutions (e.g., by consensus-building and cooperation to work toward group decisions) 2)Interactions, #3.11 Students interact respectfully with others, including those with whom they have differences. 3)Conflict Resolution, #3.12 Students use systematic and collaborative problem-solving processes, including mediation, to negotiate and resolve conflicts. I refer to my students' quotes about what they say they've learned in the process of working together on the projects. "Cooperation"; "How to compromise"; "You can get what you want without whining"; "I don't always get my own way. I have to listen to other people's ideas other than mine."; "I learned that working with 20 other people is not exactly easy."; "... it was hard to learn my lines."; "To be successful, we had to work together."

The following are my students' responses to how their feelings about their community (their class) may have changed in the process of working together. "I think the play brought us all a little close together We were also really happy and proud of each other after the performance... learning a little about how everyone felt about acting really helped me understand the emotional side of my classmates." "...I think the play did help us build on our community because people everybody respects everybody now... now everyone has had a chance to work with the whole class at once." "...After the play I thought we worked as a community because we cooperated with each other and we worked as a team. "I think a play is a wonderful way to help people work together. A play is a group thing; everyone has to try their best or it won't work." "...at the end we did great. We learned how to work as a class." "Before the performance I didn't think the community could or would pull it off, and I felt really hesitant about the whole thing. But in the process it became more and more confident about me and the community. And after the performance I was feeling 3 different ways: Relieved, Surprised, and Proud of the community."

These testimonies are powerful evidence of some of the lessons learned in group project work. Collaborative, group art projects can be highly effective personal development learning opportunities, as well as technical skill building times. Personal development education, as well as arts education. The evidence of powerful learning experiences is a directive for including these types of lesson plans in the curriculum, even though they are almost always more difficult to lead and manage from the teacher's standpoint. It's harder, but worth the effort...just as many students reported was their experience in participating in the group projects.

A Reflection on Learning

by Lynn Tobey -Paraprofessional GCS

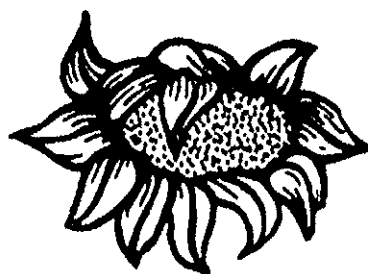
He's quiet. When asked a question he will answer it with two or three words. More often his response will be "I don't know" or "maybe". I hear a different answer when a written task is given. The question is, "Do you know what we want you to do?" "Do You understand the directions?" A very quiet, soft "yes" is spoken. I'm looking at him feeling confused about the task myself. I don't think he understands. or does he? I decide to ask for help. Hoping the regiven directions will overflow and fall upon attentive ears. There's a shuffling of feet, the paper, the more he tries to concentrate the harder it is.

His paper is still blank after 25 minutes. He's cautiously looking around the room. Is he pleading for help with those shy eyes? Does he want someone to model for him? Sometimes the voice runs and hides. You search desperately for it, but you can't find it! Afraid! Overwhelming! Afraid of what I wonder? Maybe a person passing by and noticing my blank paper. Noticing that I really don't know what I'm supposed to do. Did I just switch from him to me? Have I slipped back into my own uncomfortable years in school? Feeling unsure and awkward I bring myself back to the present.

The unsureness doesn't go away, but I'm not afraid. It's ok to ask and ask again if you don't understand or are in need of some sort of support. It's ok to offer an example or do some modeling. Why do we let him sit there struggling with this great feeling of frustration? Is it just taking an extra long time to think about what he's supposed to be doing? Is it just taking an extra long time to get the hand and mind working together.

Give him a shovel, he carries it with dignity. A wheel barrow he can maneuver in, out, and around the most delicate of flowers. Bouncing along confidently over the humps and bumps. Having incredible foresight. The strength and stamina to go on when the rest of us are tired.

-from The Guilford Summer Institute 1997



Planning and Collaborating

**REFLECTIONS
from
Guilford's Summer Institute
1995-1998**

a professional development opportunity
offered by The Service Learning & Resource Project at GCS
in partnership with Norwich University

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A Gathering of Purpose: Guilford's Summer Institute

~Engaging with our community to create new opportunities to learn

by Joe Brooks -SchoolCommunity Coordinator Spring 1998



As a K-8 elementary school, Guilford's staff have worked diligently since 1993 to integrate service learning in a meaningful way within the academic program we offer our students. The task has proven at times to be surprisingly easy, and at others amazingly vexing. The successes we had seen in our students participating in service learning type activities prompted us several years ago to consider ways to amplify the effect across grade levels. Our search has often focused upon finding ways to provide meaningful continuity of activities, related to curriculum content and promoting student investment. This search paralleled needs faced by curriculum initiatives underway in Vermont and within our own district. Most recently in 1997-98 we have focused more closely on developing a comprehensive Social Education curriculum that includes Service Learning as a key component.



As we approached our fourth Institute in 1998, we had also held onto and in fact sharpened our belief in using local history projects to develop a sense of place and belonging for our students. We are now analyzing existing projects that range from school gardens to local history projects in terms of Essential Elements of Service Learning -that is attempting to move various aspects meaningful to us as teachers forward. Student ownership and initiative is one such example. We have also begun a Kids Mini Institute for K-8 students, as we work on planning aspects with our older students in grades 8-12. All in all it has been an amazing, and yes!, often quite challenging journey.

A BRIEF HISTORY In 1994 we became convinced that conducting a summer institute on-site would give us the time and opportunity to begin that work at a "whole staff" level. We saw an institute as a key opportunity to move forward and to expand on our commitment to developing programs that break down the barriers between school and community. In planning the first of what was to become an annual institute we began a journey of unexpected rewards and insights. It has proven to be a classic case of process complimenting product rather than opposing it. We have created questions that, in some cases, we have yet to adequately answer. But we feel very good about what we have accomplished knowing we have done so as a group.

Local partners in developing various phases of the Institute included our school staff, The Guilford Historical Society, the Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) Program and the local Grange. Staff and community members have worked together to plan the Institute for a number of years now. The first Guilford Summer Institute in 1995 (and designed as a graduate course through our partnership with Norwich University and titled: Service Learning as a Teaching and Learning Strategy) brought together nearly ninety percent of our school staff, both certified and classified. The Institute included community members and parents as full participants and partners.

Initial planning began in mid 1994. This was, for us, an unprecedented undertaking. The results have gone well beyond a written document's ability to convey. We discovered much about ourselves as a school and community. We uncovered and shared many local resources. We exponentially increased both our enthusiasm and our workload. We designed usable curriculum. We grew as a school and community.

Participants at the Institute were asked to develop concrete ways to engage Guilford students with community members and groups through school activities that served real and actual needs. Activities included a participant tour of local sites that lend themselves to inquiry projects. We looked for direct connections to real life applications of school-taught skills. Teams of participants worked to connect school gardens and a nature trail to the curriculum. We worked to expand use of the Guilford Gazette as a tool for both learning and local communication. We shared community and school need survey results from the last several years. We heard from a panel of adults for whom school had been a less-than-joyous experience. We worked hard, we laughed a lot and we learned a lot about each other. We also broiled during the hottest week on record in our part of Vermont.



A bit more background seems in order. In October 1994 a core group came together to discuss ways in which the curriculum at Guilford could more closely reflect our belief in the value of community service learning. We had already determined that the shortest route to achieving our goals would be to hold a summer institute in an effort to bring everyone on board. At that October meeting, we developed a mission statement that guided our subsequent thinking: We desire to create a curriculum which uses the he community of Guilford as a resource, develops an ethic of caring, a sense of place, and an understanding of history and of our future. Thus, the school grounds, the community and its history have become the focus of our efforts.

Over the past few years, the staff of Guilford Central school has been working to develop a curriculum that is more closely coordinated throughout grades K-8. This effort has been part of a district-wide curriculum improvement initiative. At Guilford we have identified "Big Ideas" in each of the subject areas that have helped us organize our curriculum. The Institute allowed teachers and community members to work together on curriculum that had a service learning component as well as broad and deep connections to the Vital Results of Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities.

The planning group continued to meet at frequent intervals, expanding and contracting in numbers. We hoped that by expanding those involved in planning, both the staff's and the community members' stake in the process would increase. We were initially far from certain that all staff would be willing to commit a week of their summer to attend the summer institute. The planning committee struggled with finding ways to increase the level of ownership felt by the staff. We returned key goals to the larger staff for consensus and insured that there would be something of importance for everyone. (It should be noted that service learning, while valued, at that point was not a widespread priority of our staff.)

Common criteria were mandated for all "strand areas" The criteria range included service learning, K-8 collaboration and a clear plan to address equity issues. Prior to the Institute, the planning group reviewed the VT Content and Performance Standards for usability during the Institute. We developed a one page summary of the Standards when it became clear one was needed. With assistance from VISMT, we developed a planning template to help participants focus the activities being designed around our criteria. The criteria were important because they ensured participants would use common language and share a priority system. The common purpose would be community engagement through service learning.

Over the course of planning for the Institute, the planning committee kept the faculty informed of its progress and conducted brainstorming sessions about local resources. We also organized a staff tour of the school grounds to refamiliarize ourselves and to generate ideas. Students in the middle school built several raised garden beds during a unit on agriculture.

At the Institute, participants used our planning document to develop activities. They reported that the process of filling in the template often caused them to rethink and refine the proposed activity as each of the components (service learning, k-8 teaming, equity, standards) was addressed. We observed that as thought was given to each component and how it would be applied or gained, the activity itself began to change. In some cases the change was wholesale. Once participants became enthusiastic about a component such as serving community needs, that component could essentially "rewrite" the activity. Strand participants were also informed by the success of others in meeting criteria in unique ways, creating a healthy climate of idea exchange.

Institute participants developed ready to use lesson plans, short unit plans, single day activities, and longer term plans requiring significant development work over the next several years. The challenges taken on were large and met with varying degrees of success during the year. In the depths of winter it was hard to retain a sense of enthusiasm and commitment to gardens or a nature trail, for example. Sometimes there was a sense that we had tried to do too much and "failed."

But when it came time to plan or discard the idea of a second Summer Institute, the energy was summoned and the yes was nearly unanimous. The dedication of the the staff once plans were underway for a second institute was phenomenal. By the spring of 1996, Guilford School was surrounded by beautiful gardens, and enough progress had been made on clarifying property issues related to the nature trail so that serious work on it could begin during the summer. Planning for a second Summer Institute resulted in another successful venture in July 1996. Getting there was no easy task but the rewards seemed to most to far outweigh the burden of planning. Interestingly the second institute was deemed more successful than the first. That result was not taken for granted.



As we near 1999, our staff has made a long term commitment to the notion of the summer institute as an annual event and in fact sees the Institute itself as a critical part of maintaining a healthy work place for adults and learning environment for students.

THE STONE WALL PROJECT

Martina Dancing, Art Teacher

As teachers we may come to realize that our interests and values, our PASSIONS become a critical part of our ability to function as good teachers, parents and community members. My experience in planning and guiding a hands on learning experience for classroom teachers at The Guilford Summer Institute suggests how this fits for me.

The Stone Wall Project was a hands-on learning experience designed to model service learning for educators. More than 40 people (including teachers, administrators, students, and community members) took part in the building of a New England style, dry stone wall. The participants were challenged to work together to move large, heavy stones into place. In the process of creating this large work of art, using "simple machines," we brought to life the practical application of the laws of physics, as outlined in the VT Framework for Science, Mathematics, and Technology.

The Stone Wall Project and walls in general, served as a theme for writing workshops held during the Institute. Many inspired poems and stories were written by participants. The project was also successful in the realm of community building, as people worked side by side with others whom they might never have had the opportunity to spend time with.

I really wanted to learn to work with stone and to learn how to build a stone wall. I love the look of stone walls and the strong presence they have. I love how the stone is so OLD. Certainly older than any other building material on earth. I love how stone and rock and walls can be so symbolic, of weight, of stability, of groundedness, of history, of energy. I think stone walls are amazing works of art, like earth sculpture.

In listening to and watching our expert resource volunteers Dan Snow and Smokey Fuller, (the dry stone wallers), and in working side by side on our wall with Smokey, I learned new skills, like using chisel and hammer to cut rocks, and I learned the basics of stone wall building. I loved the physical challenge of moving the big stones around. It was totally engaging and energizing for me.

All along I'd felt some mystery about "why do I care so much about this?" I found myself wondering more and more and it became a personal process for me, to try to find out. On Wednesday night, in the middle of the Institute, I talked for an hour, long distance, with my father who lives in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He's built with stone for around 40 years now. He wanted to know how the stone wall project at school was going. He'd been thinking about it, and about me, and would have loved to have been able to free up the time to come up and join in and help us with it. He told me he had prayed a little prayer for us, that things would go well for us this week. He asked me about how much stone we had to work with and I couldn't guess the weight, but when I described the size of the initial pile, he thought it sounded like maybe about 11 ton. I checked the next day with John Moore, the stone quarry guy, and he said that was a pretty close guess....well, now I think I have a clue, at least, about guesstimating the weight of various loads of stone. I like that. I told my Dad how lots of people (40 of us - all kinds and combinations of people collaborating and solving problems together) were working on



Students work with Martina to leverage a stone to its place in the wall.

the wall in small groups, for short periods of time and he said that sounded ideal, since walls look best if they have a random pattern throughout - that you wouldn't want the work and style of one group to stick out too much and distract from the whole. This project brought me closer to my Dad, thereby contributing to my family happiness quotient.

I was also inspired to look through some old photo albums, and I found pictures of myself and others in my family, from the '50's up to now, enjoying stones and rocks in different settings. I found it funny to realize that, growing up, my schools were named, "Sol Feinstone Elementary School" and "Council Rock High School." The wall project helped me to make connections with my past in a new way, and to discover new things about myself. This feeds into my interest in personal growth and development. A lot went into our wall and a lot came out of it.

We have a short video that shows how this type of "hands-on", outdoors art activity meets Vermont Standards. For example, in the Science Standards, listed under Space, Time, and Matter; Matter, Motion, Forces, and Energy, "*Students will understand forces and motion, the properties and composition of matter, and energy sources and transformations.* This is evident when students: a. *Sort objects and materials according to observations of similarities and differences of properties (e.g., size, weight, color, shape, temperature).* "

We definitely had to sort shapes and sizes of stones to be able to fit them into our puzzle-like wall. Also, under that same Vermont Standards area, there's a section that states students will be able to, "*apply forces to objects -e.g. inertia, gravity, friction, push and pull, and observe the objects in motion.*" I wonder how anyone could accomplish this point as well in a classroom.

In order to document the success of the Stone Wall Project, I spent time last year reviewing:

- My notes for planning the project
- My notes of conversations with participants about the project
- Reflection writing of participants during the Institute
- Participants' responses to survey questions posed, 10 months after the Institute
- Visitors' comments and responses to the work

Art & Aesthetics While I consider the process of the project, the lessons and inspirations connected with the building of the wall, to be of paramount importance, the resulting product, being the new stone wall out in front of our school, has also become an important element. It is a new place to be... to sit, to have gatherings or class meetings. It redefines and calls attention to a part of the school grounds which previously did not stand out. It creates an environment, and for some, a kind of sacred space. The stone wall is visually lovely, and helps to bring art and aesthetic concerns into our awareness. It is important to realize that we can make a positive impact on the aesthetic quality of our surroundings. A recent visitor to the school related to the stone wall project as an example of people changing the architecture (in this case, landscape architecture) of their workplace and commented on the empowering effect that can have on us. Indeed, there has been plenty of testimony to the feelings of empowerment and pride that the project has inspired.

Community Relations & A Sense of Place We were able to enlist the help of a local naturalist / builder / artist for the project. This man worked with participants as a coach, demonstrating the use of tools and guiding the work towards successful completion. He proved to be a valuable resource for our hands-on experience. The stone wall is a reminder to us of all our Institute work, and stands as a symbol, or in monument to the ideal of our school and community's cooperative spirit. One participant calls it, "*a very concrete symbol for cooperative effort.*" Another testifies that, "*It made a positive impact on the Institute and by*

having a positive influence on staff and community relations has made a difference on school community relations.” The wall also serves to help us link up to a greater sense of place and time, of being part of rural New England where stone walls have been important for hundreds of years. The Stone Wall Project was planned to expose participants to old stone walls in the community through a field trip and stories and picture books. We also hosted a lecture and slide show of the work of a highly talented and inspired dry stone waller / artist, who also showed examples of stone walls he had photographed in other countries. Stone wall appreciation is what we were after, and many participants say that now they notice stone walls everywhere they go. I believe that this setting the stage for the project helped to propel our group toward the enriching experience that participants reported.

Impact on Teaching Strategies As anticipated, those participants who were most actively involved with building the stone wall became most invested in and connected with the project. However, even those with a more limited, observation type involvement reported lessons learned and inspiration gleaned through the project. For example, one teacher notes, *“I look at the observers and children who hold back, in a different way - I no longer assume they are not engaged when I see the observing behavior.”* Another notes an *“awareness that even those students who appear less involved may indeed be making connections all their own - we just need to ask them.”*

Some of the ways teachers report the project’s influence on their own teaching include, as follows:

- *“It confirmed my belief in hands-on projects, whether they be with students or adults. What I witnessed with adults participating tells me this sort of experience is very powerful both as learning and as team building - much better than the “parlor game” approach to team building.”*
- *“having students take ownership in their learning - do they become more involved? Definitely!”*
- *“Inspiration to take on big projects involving many facets.”*
- *“Outside is classroom, too - always believed that but it legitimizes it as an extension of classroom learning.”*
- *“The importance of hands-on learning. I loved learning physics this way! It was great to use native resources for a school artistic project.”*
- *“I’ve become aware, again, of what it is like to be a beginner at a task. I’ve been more aware, patient with my students as they learn new skills.”*
- *“I am more tuned in to the importance of our aesthetic surroundings and I am reminded of the powerful, inspirational effect that a visually pleasing environment can have.”*

Compiling and reflecting on this information about the Stone Wall Project has been interesting. I realize that the project has been successful and important for a variety of reasons. It has:

- Modeled a hands-on service learning activity for educators and had a positive influence on teaching strategies
- Improved the physical beauty of our school grounds
- Provided participants a vehicle for personal reflection
- Improved our school community relations.

In addition, the wall itself has taken on a life of its own: a simple meeting place, a curiosity, a symbol, a landmark.

Reflections on Service Learning

from Guilford School

Guilford, Vermont



Reflection: Reflection: to bend, curve inward, to plant, to interlace

... is a **MEANING MAKING** process that makes continuity of learning possible

... is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined **WAY of THINKING** with roots in scientific inquiry

... happens in **COMMUNITY**

... requires **ATTITUDES** that value the personal growth of self and others

~**WHOLEHEARTEDNESS**

~**DIRECTNESS**

~**OPENMINDEDNESS**

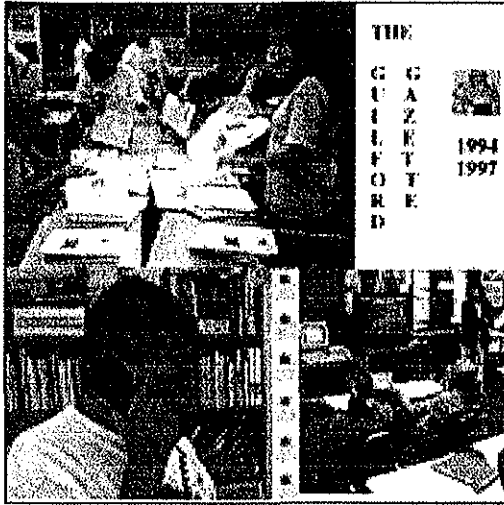
~**RESPONSIBILITY**

~**DESIRE FOR GROWTH**

~**READINESS**

"Reflection empowers and leads to positive change"

Margaret Dale Barrand



The Guilford Gazette

~a student run community newspaper~

The Guilford Gazette came into being, publishing its first issue in February 1995, after 7/8 students surveyed more than 300 community members and found communication to be a major need. The newspaper serves a population of more than 1,900 people in rural Guilford Vermont.

The paper now in its fifth year as a student run operation from newgathering to production to its business and advertising departments. Adult advisers include a diverse team of teachers and community members.

The following comments were made by 7/8 students during a telephone interview given to *The Constitutional Rights Foundation Magazine* Los Angeles, CA March 5, 1998, with additional comments drawn from a *Gazette* staff meeting.

Do you think *The Gazette* matters to the community of Guilford?

- We get letters like the one from Virginia Fitch. She's lived here for 58 years. She thanked us for article on her husband Bill when he died. By reading the paper she found out about someone she'd never met or known about, Ernest Parmenter.
- Community news is most important, that's what the community wants to hear about.
- We get good feedback from the community.
- Community members contribute articles.
- We interview residents and find out about them.

What do you get out of *The Gazette*?

- The Gazette* is hard work, it's fun and it's social. •Confidence is important.
- Teamwork, we would not have *The Gazette* without teamwork. (Maeve)
- You have to put yourself into it. If this doesn't get done then we might not have a *Gazette*.
- You have to know what you're getting yourself into.
- You talk to people you wouldn't otherwise meet.
- It helps you become a news reporter.
- It brings people together.
- Kids look forward to *Gazette* day each week.
- The writing helps you learn to write better.
- You develop editing skills, computer and typing skills.
- You learn responsibility, teamwork and organization skills.
- You have to be responsible and work together with other people.
- You have to know what you're doing.
- We learn how to use computers.
- You learn how to deal with deadlines.
- A lot of people in the school help to put the paper together.

Working on the Guilford Gazette

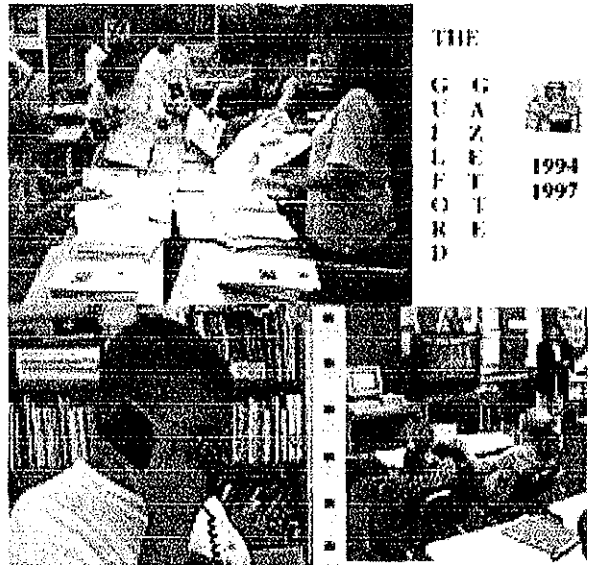
by Sarah Pratt, Business Manager May 1997

My name is Sarah Pratt and I am the Business manager for the Guilford Gazette. It is really hard work being the business manager. Here are some of the things that we do for the paper. The paper is paid for by advertisements that are gathered by our advertising department. Usually the advertising department also has to gather the money also along with me.

The checks are delivered to the town clerk who puts them in a special account. I deliver the checks and I record who has paid and who hasn't. The people who haven't paid are called and asked to pay us as soon as they can. It is now seven months after advertisements were purchased on the first issue and we still have people who haven't paid. This is a strain on us because we don't have the money to pay our printing and mailing services. Once I get all the money from the last Gazette, when ever that may be, we will pay for the printing and the mailing. On top of my business requirements I have to write at least one article and usually write a lot more.

The Gazette staff this year has become much more organized. The business department is one of the biggest improvements. I have heard that previous issues have never been completely paid for. This year the first issue is almost completely paid for with the exception of a few people's checks which we have not received yet.

Being the business manager is a great job and we are looking for someone soon to be the eighth grader that will be willing to take over my job next year because I will be graduating this year. Who ever the person may be they will need to be trained by me this year. The Gazette has to work very hard to put this newspaper out for you and if you are not already, you should be very grateful to us. Thanks for listening.



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Working for The Gazette

By Jonas Crofter, Production Manager May 1996

I am the layout editor for the Guilford Gazette. My job is to put the paper together. All of this is done on a computer. I am in eighth grade and almost all of the layout is done by me. Putting together the paper is a long hard task. The first thing that happens is the whole Gazette staff decides on a theme for issue of the paper. Then everybody gets to work on collecting articles. Most of the articles are written by middle schoolers during the news paper class period that we have once a week.

Sometimes the articles from community members are interviews. Usually two students go to a community members house and interview them. When the get back to school they write up the interview. After an article is written it goes to an editor(all of the editors are middle schoolers, not adults). The editor then reads it and decide if it should go into the paper. If the article is going to go into the Gazette then that editor gets the article typed up(everybody types the articles). After an article is typed it is given to me on a disk. Then I put it onto the computer and put it were it goes in the paper.

Another key part to the printing of the paper is the selling of the add's. Without the advertisers we would not have a paper. A middle schooler calls up business in Guilford and asks them if they want to buy an add. If they say yes then the middle schooler writes down what they want the add to say. Then he collects the money and keeps close track of how much money the Gazette has. After the add is typed up on a computer it is given to me and I put it in it's place in the paper.

There is only so much time during the two months of putting the paper together for production. This means that I and a couple of others middle school students have to come to school on the weekends and finish the paper. Somedays we spend up to ten! hours here putting it together.

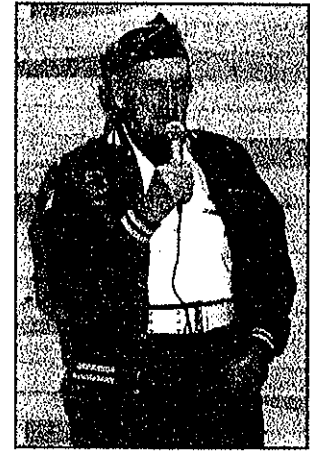
Overall I have enjoyed working on the Gazette, even if it means giving up my weekends so the community has something they came be proud of.

Uncovering History at Carpenter Hill Cemetery

a Reflection on Guilford's Service Day

by Susan Hessey, GCS Library/Media Specialist

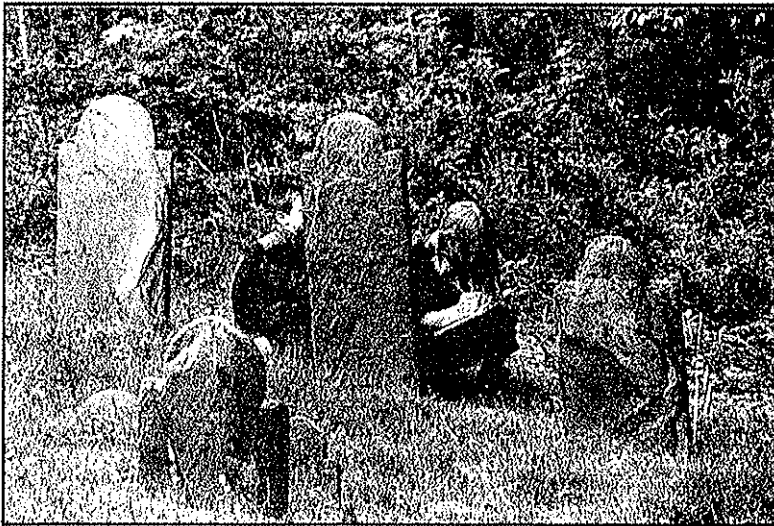
The preparations for the Memorial Day Service activities are a blur; most of us on the teaching staff were buried in the early stages of final student assessments, schedules disrupted by such end-of-the-year activities as Field Day, individual class field trips, and sticky, humid weather. Somehow the planning group managed to organize activities, groups, adult facilitators which were needed to make the day work and get them distributed on time. The day before our big day I had an on-the-fly consultation with Eric Morse in which we further developed a data collection form for the Carpenter Cemetery group, and I crammed to prepare the story that was to be part of the Service Day All School Meeting.



Bob Gaines

I had been told that Guilford resident Bob Gaines planned to speak about Flanders Fields as a way of explaining the significance of Memorial Day poppies to our student community. I searched high and low for a story about poppies to compliment his remarks, and finally remembered a favorite from my childhood from a book called *Poppy Seed Cakes* by Margery Clark. My copy of the book, a recent gift from fellow librarians who knew of its importance to me and had discarded it from their collection, is a well-loved first edition which features original woodcuts on each page and is printed on the glorious thick paper of the forties which grows soft and furry after countless readings.

I remember reading another copy of *The Poppy Seed Cakes* from my home-town public library as a child, and spent many hours in reverie with the book on my lap. I remembered people long gone, looked in photograph albums at pictures of relatives and friends of the family who fought in World Wars One and Two, and thought about how lucky I was to spend most of my young years in one home. Though that home is now gone, those years left me with a strong sense of place. I think this is something that Guilford's children feel, too.



students gather cemetery data from headstones on Service Day

After the meeting, the townspeople, parents, staff, students and teachers who had gathered for Service Day separated into small groups. I boarded a bus with many students and a handful of adults. We went up to Carpenter Hill Cemetery where pairs of students - olders partnered with younger - went about the business of choosing a gravestone and taking the information which appeared there down onto a form. They were encouraged to transcribe all they could, from written information to drawings of the layout, shape and decorative elements of the stones. They were immediately absorbed. It was one of those magical situations where conflict was absent: each pair moved around the graveyard and seemed drawn to a stone or stones. They shared the tasks of transcription, reading aloud, writing and pointing out subtleties to one another.

One pair, a sixth grade boy paired with a second grade boy, found a very old stone. As they looked at the words carved on the grave's marker, they realized that the information was obscured by lichen, discoloration, and a too-healthy thatch of grass which had grown up over the bottom line or two. The older boy, who has been known to push limits in a classroom setting, dropped to his knees and gently began to pry the triangle of grass at the base away in an effort to reveal the hidden words. Even when he moved the grass away, taking care not to uproot it, the words were too difficult to read. He and his partner called



students and teachers pore over the detail of 18th century stone

over to me, asking whether any water was available. It was a hot day, threatening showers, and I assumed they wanted drinks. But this was not the case. He had realized that wetting the stone would make the color more uniform and perhaps enable them to clear enough debris from the stone's surface to make it legible.

I brought over a sport bottle full of water from the school bus and he and his partner slowly dribbled it over the inscription on the stone. They rubbed the lichen away with gentle fingertips, and "read" the stone with both eyes and hands, from the top to the very bottom in the



*high school student Emily Crofter
and GCS students working on a gravestone*

little crevice they had made between stone and grass. They were able to transcribe the whole thing. When they finished, the older boy carefully pressed the grass back into place. I'm sure he was unaware that anyone was watching. Somehow the need for respecting this resting place was very clear.

Elsewhere in the cemetery other teams learned about "their" people - a former governor of Vermont, children younger than themselves who had died too young and women identified only as someone's wife. They carefully wrote down the bits of information on the stones. Up on the top of the rise a new stone marked the grave of a second grade student from our school who died only a year before. Some of the students found her grave, some didn't. No one made a big deal about it, but somehow Becky's presence seemed to color the hour and a half we spent there. It was safe, quiet, intriguing, real, and sad.

We left, swatting black flies and chatting about our discoveries. When we returned to school, bus load after bus load went right back to their rooms to write reflections of their experience. The school was full of people, some back from cemeteries, some from gardening, some from making art at various locations in town. The air surrounded us, filled with the same purposeful quiet we had experienced at Carpenter Hill. We sat at desks, curled on the floor, wherever we were comfortable and scrawled away on our papers. Everyone had things to write about, and these things spilled out of our hands almost of their own volition. We were there in the day, in our town, learning and all together.

GUILFORD CEMETARY PRESERVATION FORM

Student Names _____ and _____

May 29, 1997

STONE NUMBER _____ Name on stone _____

Who is the person related to?	How are they related?
Is the person a veteran? Yes _____ No _____ Can't tell _____	

Date of Birth:	Month _____	Day _____	Year _____
Date of Death:	Month _____	Day _____	Year _____
Age at death:	Months _____	Days _____	Years _____

Is there an epitaph? If there is, copy it exactly here (continue on the back if you need to).

Sketch your stone here. Include as many details as possible! What is it made of? What kind of condition is it in? If there is a picture, copy it onto your sketch.

A REFLECTION on GUILFORD SCHOOL'S 1997 SERVICE DAY

by Mike Friel, GCS Principal

July 20, 1997

This past spring's Service Day was one of the most exciting days I have experienced in my twenty-three years as an educator. As the principal and one of the planners of this day, I approached the event with a tremendous level of anxiety. What if it rained? Would the groupings work out well? Would there be enough for students and volunteers to do? Would kids behave themselves? How would the parents and community volunteers react if things did not work out well? Of course, by the end of the day each and every one of these concerns was more than put to rest. The great success we experienced eliminated my anxiety and raised my level of pride and sense of accomplishment for the school to new heights.

Several times this year Joe and I discussed just how much kids understood the service in service learning. We had a sense that kids, even those involved in activities such as *The Gazette*, have not always been aware of how much service they have been providing to the school and community. One of the hidden successes of this spring's service day was that it put the idea of

service in the forefront of everyone's minds. I hope we can find a way to build upon this activity and help kids deal with service learning on a metacognitive level.

In terms of a snapshot that symbolizes the day's success, I recall seeing a group of three or four boys during the middle of the activity period. These were boys who one might say have the inclination to "goof off" when given the opportunity. By chance they had been assigned to the yard clean up crew; one of the more loosely structured activities. I recall seeing them, rakes in hand, intently finishing one job and talking about what task they were going to tackle next. They needed no direction from adults, were cooperating fully with each other and were completely task oriented.

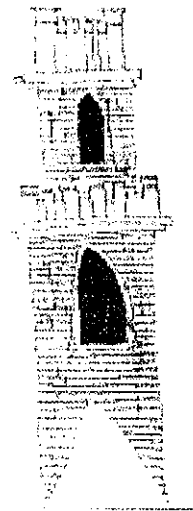


preserving history at a local cemetery

From this point on I knew the day would be a success. It also told me that taking risks such as this day are worth it, given the possible rewards. The day emphasized the importance of careful, detailed planning coupled with a willingness to have faith in our staff, parents and kids and not think that every final detail always needs to be worked out. It said to put kids of mixed age together more than we already do. It said make work meaningful. It said that we need a School and Community Coordinator to make this type of event possible.



students, teachers and parents work on the garden beds at Guilford School on Service Day



Guilford's Service Day

by Judy Hawkins, GCS Special Education

Service Day was great! I was involved in garden strand activities which included planting the front garden and planting broccoli and marigolds in the gift garden. I was a little concerned that the activity would be disorganized; I was unsure of how multi-age groups would work together. What would happen with those children who needed intense supervision? Would we "pull it off?"



students transplant perennials in front of the school

Well we did indeed "pull it off." Older students from the high school worked side by side with younger children. Manure got hauled by wheelbarrow loads, by bucket loads and by trowel fulls, each student and adult hauling what they could, however they could. The smell was intense and nobody complained. Everyone worked with a sense of purpose.

During this activity I had an opportunity to meet and work with several parents and community members I had only known by sight. This was very special. I had a chance to work with a number of students that I hardly knew and I found that everyone looked out for those children who needed supervision.

One nice thing about this gardening activity was seeing the transformation from no garden to a completely planted garden in about an hour. It was very fulfilling. It must be very satisfying for students to come back to school after the summer and see cleome that are five feet tall, and flowers for bouquets all over school. This was possible through collective effort.

After the activity period was over the entire school was asked to do reflective writing. I was surprised by the response from all students, staff and community members. Everyone wrote and drew pictures. Throughout the school everyone remained focused on reflection.

This service day event confirmed for me the power of people working together for the good of all. The activities involved physical activity; everyone was involved with their bodies and their minds. The enormous energy was contagious. I was also reminded about how responsible students can be and how they can and do help others.

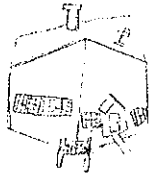


I was very glad that students didn't just see me as the Special Ed. Teacher. It is very helpful for students to have a realistic view of teachers and to see that adults have many different things to contribute. This activity helped to connect me to more students and adults.

How Guilford School's "Service Day" Affected Me

by Michael Schwartz

*Michael is currently engaged in a elementary teaching practicum at Guilford School.
This reflection writing piece was done at The Guilford Summer Institute July 21, 1997.*



*student sketch of
Free Library
from Service Day
art group*

May 30, 1997 was my first experience of a possibility which until this day had existed exclusively in my imagination and longing, which came into actual being temporarily but tangibly as an experimental one-day reality for the Guilford School Community. This possibility was of taking part in a social experience involving children that supported their autonomy and dignity which involved learning but did not rely on coercion or on managing their behavior through the use of punishments and rewards.

There was a kind of spontaneous appropriateness to all behaviors I observed during Service Day. The larger contexts of botany, plant husbandry, rituals of community, place and history, and intergenerational and mutual community and peer responsibility imparted a sense of purpose to direction to the activities of the morning. Learning was a natural byproduct of socially meaningful work, children's involvement did not depend on constant adult guidance and threat of punishment. Children's own interest in being helpful to others, in demonstrating their capabilities to themselves and others, and in experiencing a delicate physical relationship to living things (e.g. treating the roots of seedlings tenderly so the plants could survive transplanting) guided their work on the garden in front of the school.

The success of the day was also the result of a respect which adults showed for the history of the town, of the U.S., and for the school as a community, and for children as members of that community, a respect which children reciprocated by listening courteously to a community member (Bob Gaines) who talked about Memorial Day, and its connection to the sacrifices of U.S. soldiers. For kids this had to have been abstract and difficult information to understand, but they showed patience and faith in their teachers, their school and their elders, seemingly because an atmosphere of mutual and respectful regard had been established beforehand.



*Guilford senior Bob Gaines
speaks of service, to students*

Although I was a visitor for the day who did not take part in the preparation, I could see how much behind the scenes work went into this seemingly effortless miracle. It wasn't just a matter of putting kids together with practical tasks and dropping the usual school structures and watching the magic happen. There were extra adults on hand as volunteers to help children feel supported in their tasks. The various activities were carefully coordinated so that groups could accomplish meaningful tasks in a short work period. Teachers offered guided opportunities for meaning to be constructed, before and after the work. Community members were involved, events were documented, tasks were previewed in discussion beforehand and reviewed afterward in the group. Despite this, teachers were by no means sure that the outcome of the day would be successful. It was new territory. Multi-age groups of this size on a school-wide basis had never been tried before. There might have been any number of unforeseen complications. Afterwards, there was not only relief, but

amazement with how the day had gone. Speaking for myself, I saw for one morning, brought into being, the possibility of a beautiful world, something fully as inspiring and thrilling as falling in love, becoming a parent, or creating art or music.



students work with 5th grade teacher Dave Maz to build the trail head shelter on Service Day

Notes jotted down at the time: The all-school assembly started with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. There was reference to Memorial Day. Mike (GCS's Principal) said, "It's sad that we have a Memorial Day." He asked kids to consider what makes people sacrifice their lives for a cause. He made reference to the Civil War and to opposition to the German and Japanese empires in WWII. (This is a remarkably substantive and historical question for young kids, esp. 7 year-olds to consider.) He connected the service of soldiers to country to the efforts of children and adults in the school to do work that benefits the local community. He reminded everyone that we were about to have a busy day, but that we were taking a minute to look at what it means.

There was a slide show about the building of the stone wall, a song about gardening, and a story told by librarian Susan Hessey. Then, everyone went out to meet in their groups and to preview their service activity before embarking on their hour or so of work and the reflective writing piece that followed.

Most remarkable things seen during the work time: That kids of different ages worked together effortlessly, the older kids helping the younger ones along. That an older boy, now in h.s., who was otherwise not an academically involved student had become an expert about plants as a result of his involvement in the gift garden in previous years, and was now working in a greenhouse in town and was a legitimate authority on plant care who could confidently give of his knowledge and enthusiasm (and guidance). He commented to me, "I could do this all day." That students, new to reporting, from the school/community newspaper, the Gazette, came over to ask questions and interview students who were planting.

In the course of doing this, I saw kids discovering their authority as they began to (at first tentatively, then with quickly growing confidence) assume their roles as writers and gardeners. The writers asked questions and recorded the answers carefully, the gardening students answered the questions and actually seemed proud of what they had done, even though they'd only been doing it for twenty minutes at the time.

There wasn't an adult directly involved in any of this. At the end of the work session, on the return to the classroom, hosted by Mrs. Morse (Dale Morse), a 2nd grade teacher, a room of kids ranging from kindergartners to teenagers sat in chairs (wearing name tags) and applied themselves equally and fully to the task of writing or drawing reflectively for 10 minutes about the meaning of what Mr. Gaines had said during the all-school assembly. Remarkably, this was done with great focus, and the room had a sense of being a multi-aged family. It seemed as if the school world had relaxed itself into the sanity of natural appropriateness that would be possible

if bureaucratic objectives and structures such as student segregation by age, course coverage, enforced restriction of movement, and alienation of information from a living social context did not continually dominate the learning situation.

The day ended with an all-school picnic. Even this had a different character than it would during a conventional day. It was not necessary to divide the school by ages to ensure that older children did not monopolize the playground or bully younger children. Everyone ate and played together. Older kids played basketball, younger kids climbed on the climbing structures while lunch-eaters sat with their friends on the grass. When the principal stood in the middle of the playground and called for their attention, and addressed them to congratulate them on a special day of accomplishment, they instantly dropped their boisterous activity and aligned themselves with respectful collective quiet like iron filings placed under a magnet. What the principal had to say mattered and they were interested in listening. Each person, each child, each student, knew that they had in fact been part of something significant, a cemetery had been mapped, trails had been worked on, flowers planted, notes taken, and each person in the school had worked as a family to accomplish tasks for the town and the school at large.

They had been members of a community, not only the community of their school, but of Guilford, of historic Guilford going back to the childhood of Bob Gaines and others, of their country which included soldiers dying for belief in a constructive purpose larger than their immediate self-interest. I saw the principal in his jeans, hands in his pocket, commanding the attention of everyone in the playground--the whole the Guilford Center School Universe--by holding his ground and raising his voice.

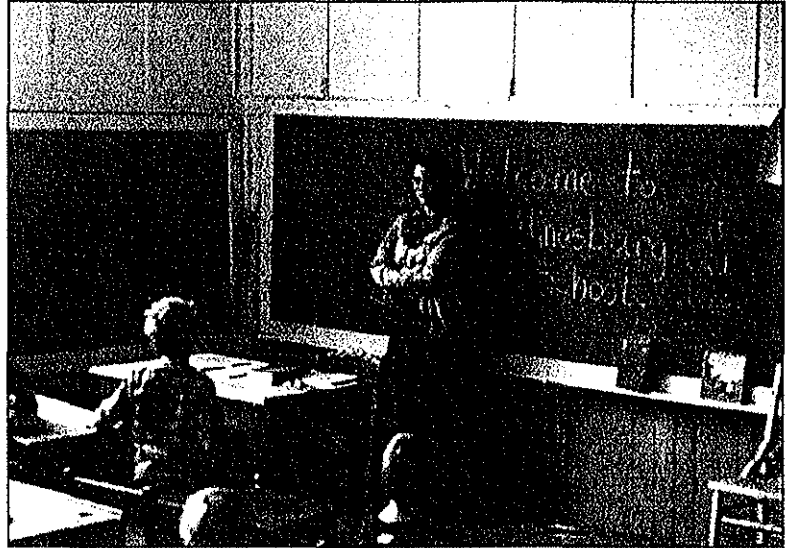
When I was a kid, I never fully trusted or respected adults making firm announcements. I always suspected that bold assertions of authority were pathetic bluffs that insecure people used to control the powerless (like us kids). But watching Mike be a strong principal I had an insight: Adults can be strong and hold genuine authority, but not because they hold the power to punish, rather because they are always one step ahead of their audience in some way the audience considers worth knowing--the way a good comedian or magician is. This is especially true of adults whose motives are clearly trustworthy--coming from some inner generosity and accepting kindness, combined with a recognizable relish for the work of helping pass on the tools of coherence and knowledge. As a child, one can be respectfully grateful for the help of such adults, especially if they are willing to let learners direct the learning in a joint adventure.

ONE-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSES

by Dale Morse and Kathy Lapan

-Kathy and Dale are members of the primary teaching team at The Guilford School. Kathy teaches 2nd grade, and Dale a 1st-2nd combination. Dale began planning a study of Guilford's one-room schoolhouses at Guilford's Institute last summer. Kathy worked during the summer with a group planning garden projects at the school. Near the beginning of the school year they made the decision to work together with their students on the one-room school unit.

The beginnings of our study of one-room schoolhouses went back to Guilford's 1995 Summer Institute. During the summer we had worked at the Institute with a team of community members and school staff to develop projects that would bring together the twin strategies of service learning and community inquiry. We were also seeking to use our local resources to bring the school and community closer together. We saw the study of one-room schools as a way to do this, while honoring our senior population, most of



Dale Morse and students reenacting Guilford's District #1 One Room School in 1997

whom attended one-room schools. For those who did, it was a formative experience, significantly different from today's more centralized school system.

On the first day of a series of field trips, we visited the Little Brick School House, built around 1790 and remaining in use until the 1920's. We were led by Mr. Fred Humphrey, the president of our local Historical Society, and a former one-room school student, himself. Our students interviewed Mrs. Helen Dix and Mrs. Eva Harris (the grandmother of one of our students), two sisters who attended a local one room school during the 1930's. These women shared many memories with the children, answered questions, and compared their school experiences with those of today's youth. Artifacts were loaned to the classes, including two slates used by the 90-some-year-old great-grandmother of one student.

Mrs. Harris's and Mrs. Dix's family relationships with several of the children in the group provided another wonderful connection for us all. They were able to arrange for our classes to actually "attend school" at the old West Guilford schoolhouse. Eva Harris opened the school for us. She had attended this school for grades 1-8. The first and second graders found that it was still set up as a school. It was used until 1957, when the Guilford Central school was opened. We pretended that we were attending school long ago, when students only spoke up when called upon and discipline was much stricter.



2nd graders record information from headstone in West Guilford during One Room Unit in 1997

We teachers dressed as school marms. We were able to use the (still remaining!) original furnishings and textbooks. Later in the day our real life principal Michael Friel appeared dressed as the visiting superintendent of long ago. He came along as the visiting superintendent would have,

regularly dropping in to check on students' progress and behavior. Our young "scholars" were drilled on their reading and arithmetic skills, with the demand that they answer in a prescribed manner. He called on students to check their progress in spelling and arithmetic. He also inquired about any possible discipline problems. The students read aloud from the original books left in the schoolhouse. They wrote math problems on their chalkboards. We recited the alphabet, counted and sang songs together.

At recess the children all played on the old teeter totter. We also toured the West Guilford Baptist Church next door, and Eva Harris taught us the history of the building. She opened these buildings to us and shared her memories of school holiday performances, which took place in the church before family audiences. Mrs. Harris attended this church as a child and could remember her experiences of Sunday services and Sunday school. She led us in singing "Amazing Grace." Seated in the pews we sang from the hymnals before moving outside to sketch the church and cemetery. Our school cook, Shirley Squires, met us later and told us about her years attending the North school. She showed us a picture of her class from her old one-room schoolhouse.

We used a number of methods to document our research. The interviews with Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Dix were taped by our Librarian/Media Specialist, with assistance from a



Guilford 2nd graders Emma Majonen and Tiffany LaFlam in 1997

middle-school student. The children used drawing paper and clipboards on field trips to record first-hand visual impressions of the schools and church we visited. Drawings were also made of some of the ideas the children gleaned from interviews.

Our students created drawings that were accompanied by written descriptions of the subject matter. Stories were composed by each child around the one room schoolhouse theme. Some children pictured themselves in that setting; some related more factual data to their own experiences today; and others fantasized about how things might have been long ago. Children learned how to fold paper into a cup for drinking water. This activity was based on an excerpted story in children's magazine *Cobblestone*.

As we came to the close of this study, we prepared a final dramatic event that would allow the children to dress in period clothing and be taught in the manner of a one-room school class as well as to learn traditional American children's games. We invited our senior partners to this performance, and they seemed to enjoy it immensely. We were a success!! The children, so happy and pleased with themselves, danced and sang holiday songs as our guests were served refreshments.

The one-room school study has been presented at a number of school functions, and many people seem genuinely interested in this fast vanishing living history. For our seniors, this project gives importance to their experience by placing a focus on one room schools. For teachers and students, this study has been an exciting way to learn about the past from relatives, our staff and community members, and is a wonderful teaching experience.

How and Why Do We DO Community Service?

Reflections by Guilford 2nd Graders -February 1998

~When we went on the Nature Trail and we cleaned up the garbage and the things that were left on the ground, like cans and bottles and things like that, we were helping the trees and the things that live on the ground. Now we can walk and look on the Nature Trail. *Roger*



~Community Service makes our world a better place for us, (like the Food Drive.)
Paxton

~ I am doing the trail... I like working in the Bird Room, It makes a better place for the birds. *Tiffany*

~When I work in the gardens I am doing community service. I like to plant some carrots and corn. My mom (also) makes a little flower bed. *Jackie*

~When we pick up trash it helps our planet! If I had a recycling bin I would be recycling stuff. *Dillon*

~Community service makes our community better. I would like to make our school and town a better place to be and live. It would make life nicer and better for us to pick up trash and help Mother Earth and other people. *Mary*

~I am going to help Mother Earth picking trash up. *Tiffany*

~I would like to go on the Nature Trail again. I would like to bring up rocks like I did last year. It was fun bringing up rocks. I would like to have a better trail for our school. *Ryan*

~I would help Guilford with the trash. I helped the gardening. It makes the school look nicer. *Justin*

~Community service is helping your town. Like where you live, your school your neighborhood. Community service is The Christmas Stocking and The Food Drive. Community service is to make your school and town a better place to be. *Tif F-H*

~I cleaned up the gym. It was fun. This helps our school by helping to keep it clean.
Ethan