

APPENDIX H

HISTORY
SOCIAL SCIENCE
FRAMEWORK

FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

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APPENDIX H

Practicing Civic Engagement: Service-Learning in the History–Social Science Framework

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead

Service-Learning and Community Service

Service-learning is an instructional strategy that engages students in real-world problem solving. Students work on community issues/problems that matter to them, applying critical thinking skills as they analyze causes and effects, discuss possible ways to address the issue/problem, and plan and execute service activities. To implement service-learning effectively, there must be an intentional link between academic content and skills and the students’ service activities, which can provide opportunities to make what is learned in class even more relevant to students.

Service-learning is applicable for all of the core disciplines (science, mathematics, English language arts), but for social studies, service-learning has particular significance as one of the six Civic Mission of Schools proven practices:¹

Service learning is far more than community service alone; high-quality service learning experiences incorporate intentional opportunities for students to analyze and solve community problems through the application of knowledge and skills.

Service-learning helps to make education real, connecting academic skills and knowledge to issues that matter to young people. When students have opportunities to use the knowledge and skills they are acquiring in school to address meaningful issues in their community, the content of their learning becomes more relevant to their lives, and they better understand the importance of civic participation.

According to the *Guardian of Democracy* report, service-learning programs that best develop engaged citizens are linked to the curriculum in the following ways:

1. They have sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.
2. They are used intentionally as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.
3. They incorporate multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
4. They actively engage participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.
5. They promote understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.
6. They are collaborative and mutually beneficial and address community needs.

1. Carnegie Corporation and Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011), 29.

7. They engage participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals and use the results for improvement and sustainability.
8. They provide youths with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.

Examples of Service-Learning Projects

Service-learning is appropriate for all ages and has been successfully implemented in the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. For example, a first-grade classroom conducted a study on acceptable hallway behavior. As part of their history–social science curriculum, the first-grade students learned about rules and, in the process, decided to help increase student compliance with the rule of no running in the hallway. The students collected data about when and how many students ran; they discussed and instituted solutions; and then they investigated to determine how their “interventions” worked, thus bringing their understanding of the rules to life.

Upper elementary students may be interested in issues related to conflict management, school beautification, or safety. Students concerned about a dangerous crosswalk may conduct an investigation to find out if others see a problem and then make an appointment with school administrators, a school resource officer, or other appropriate adult to discuss their findings. Students may propose adding a crossing guard to that intersection, creating a poster campaign to warn students to be extra careful crossing that street, or start a safety patrol. Through the process, those students will have applied critical thinking/problem-solving skills, communication, presentation, collaboration, and organizational skills, and gained knowledge about how to address public problems.

Middle school students may be interested in issues related to the environment, health and nutrition, homelessness, or bullying. Using bullying as an example, their investigation may start with a question like “What causes people to become bullies?” or “What is the difference between ‘bullying’ and ‘teasing’?” or “What can be done to reduce bullying in our schools?” When students start with a question, the service-learning experience can become a high-quality inquiry. On their path to finding answers and solutions, they will likely encounter multiple perspectives,

look at a variety of sources (interviews, articles, data), and ideally deal with public policy (even at the school-site level) along the way.

High school students may be interested in issues related to global studies, substance abuse, domestic violence, the environment, or public transportation. One group of students was concerned about overcrowded public transportation. The buses were dangerously overcrowded with adults, middle school, and high school students during the before- and after-school hours. The students documented the overcrowding: children in the aisles nearly falling down from the swaying of the bus and people sitting on each others' laps. Next, students made an appointment with the local transit authority and learned about the cost of adding an additional bus, which was not in the current city budget. They did a close analysis of a variety of documents containing data on bus ridership, routes, and pickup times and also delved into the city's transportation budget. The students prepared an organized and data-driven presentation and returned to the transit authority. They were then invited to make the same presentation at a city council meeting and they impressed all when they pointed out that instead of adding a new bus, the overcrowding problem could be easily remedied by changing the schedule and route of an underused bus at the peak before- and after-school times. The bus schedule was subsequently changed, and everyone is more comfortable and safe going to and from school.

Why Service-Learning?

According to the National Service Learning Partnership, research shows that well-executed service-learning has many benefits.

- **Academic and intellectual benefits.** Service-learning supports young people in mastering curriculum by helping them make meaningful connections between what they are studying in the classroom and its many applications beyond school, in the community.
- **Civic and ethical benefits.** Service-learning allows young people to explore and develop skills, including community stewardship, civic action, and sympathy and empathy. When focused on civic outcomes, service-learning is one of the six most promising research-based practices in civic education identified in *The Civic Mission of Schools* report, by the Carnegie

Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).²

- **Social and personal benefits.** Service learning offers young people a holistic learning experience that can increase their hands-on engagement in learning, provide them access to adult mentors, bolster their connection to the community, and enhance their preparation for the world of work.

The National Dropout Prevention Center recommends service-learning as a core strategy for increasing graduation rates, along with mentoring/tutoring, alternative schooling, and after-school opportunities. Research shows that service-learning addresses students' need for classes to be more interesting, learning to be more meaningful, and academics to be connected to the real world.³

Web Sites

- California Department of Education/CalServe: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/sl/>
[Note: The preceding link is no longer available]
- Constitutional Rights Foundation: <http://www.crf-usa.org>
- County Offices of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/co/index.asp>
- National Dropout Prevention Center: <http://www.dropoutprevention.org>
- National Service Learning Clearinghouse: <http://www.servicelearning.org>
[Note: The preceding link is no longer available]
- National Youth Leadership Council: <http://www.nylc.org>

2. Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, *The Civic Mission of Schools* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003), 3.

3. John M. Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio, Jr., and Karen Burke Morison, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* (Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2006).