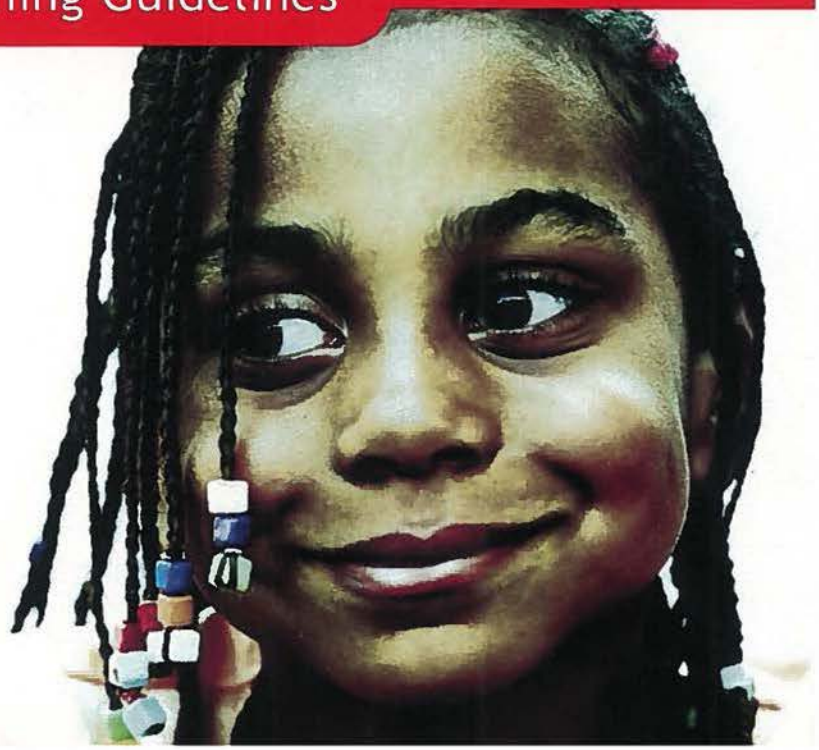
Maryland Student Service-Learning Guidelines



MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy
Youth Development Branch

LEARN AND SERVE

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Maryland Student Service-Learning Guidelines

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Erosion control problems prompted students in Baltimore County to create a rain garden on their school grounds.

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Photos of Maryland students engaged in service-learning provided by various Sherry Unger Service-Learning Award winners.

Table of Contents

Introduction *Page 3*

Quality Practices *Page 5*
- The Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning
- What Service-Learning Projects Should Do
- What Service-Learning Projects Should Not Do
- Assessment and Continuous Program Improvement

Policies and Reporting *Page 17*
- Service-Learning Graduation Requirement
- Minimum Level of Student Engagement
- Local Service-Learning Infrastructure
- Reporting Student Progress
- Notification of Student Engagement in Service-Learning Experiences
- Parental Involvement
- Independent Service-Learning Projects
- Transfer Policies

Accountability *Page 19*
- Local Accountability Procedures
- State Accountability Procedures
- Service-Learning Plan Revision Procedure

Resources *Page 20*

Warm, fleece hats were made with care by Wicomico County students for people in their community who are in need or homeless.

Introduction

Historically, Maryland public schools have engaged students in service and service-learning experiences. Educators, from the inception of public schools as noted by John Dewey, have sought to connect students to their local and global communities through service projects as a tool to promote engagement and achievement. In the 1980's, Maryland acknowledged this long-standing educational tradition and offered an elective credit option for students to engage in service through their schools. In July 1992, Maryland's State Board of Education became the first in the nation to mandate service-learning participation as a graduation requirement.

Although Maryland has been a national leader in service-learning, the need for unity and shared vision among service-learning practitioners was a catalyst for the formation of national service-learning organizations. Learning in Deed was a national initiative, supported by the National Service-Learning Partnership, which worked to make service-learning a part of every K-12 student's experience. Maryland embraces the Learning in Deed definition of service-learning:

> *Service-learning is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world; they then reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning.*

Beginning with the class of 1997, service-learning was identified as a requirement for graduation in Maryland. Each year, approximately 55,000 students graduate from Maryland public schools, and each graduating class represents approximately four million hours of service that have been provided to the community to address needs such as hunger, homelessness, pollution, and discrimination. By engaging in these experiences, students meet existing core curricular goals using a "hands-on" approach to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real community problems. Well-designed service-learning projects meet local, state and national education goals, including those outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015.

Although Maryland may have been the first state to pass a service-learning graduation requirement, the state is not alone in acknowledging the beneficial impact of service-learning on students' civic knowledge and engagement, academic success, character, and social development. Many private schools and public school districts across the nation have service or service-learning requirements, and other states have added or are in the process of adding service-learning to their state education plans. The Corporation for National and Community Service published a report entitled *Community Service and Service-Learning in American Schools,* 2008, illuminating the impact of service-learning in the nation. According to the report, 68 percent of K-12 public schools across the country engage students in community service, and 24 percent of schools engage students in service-learning. Nine out of ten principals in schools that offer service-learning report that it has a positive impact on civic engagement, personal and social development, and school-community partnerships, according to *Growing to Greatness 2004* by the National Youth Leadership Council.

Local School System Service-Learning Plans

Because all local school systems (LSSs) in Maryland have unique academic and community needs, service-learning programs are designed locally. Therefore, there are 24 different implementation models across the state. Some systems require students to complete at least a portion of their requirement by engaging in individual service-learning in the community. Most school systems use service-learning as a teaching strategy, and service-learning is infused into the existing curricula, which allows students to use their academic skills to solve real community problems. Using lessons learned during implementation, school systems are encouraged to review and revise their plans.

Since the 2004-05 school year, committees of stakeholders meet every four years to review all LSS service-learning plans. The committees are comprised of students, teachers, service-learning supervisors, and principals; representatives from community based organizations; and staff from the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism as well as the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Using overall report criteria, committees generate commendations and recommendations for each system.

Despite the variance among school system plans, all Maryland school systems infuse service-learning into existing courses as all or part of their service-learning implementation plans. By adding experiential, community-based service activities to existing curricula, teachers enhance their students' learning. In most cases, students complete the various components of service-learning as part of their regular school day. In some systems, students carry out one or more elements of service-learning as part of a class, and they perform the remaining piece(s) on their own. For example, they might study the effects of aging and the issues of isolation of the elderly as part of their science class and visit a nursing home and work with the residents after the school day ends or on weekends.

Some LSSs require that students conduct independent service-learning projects to fulfill part of the graduation requirement. In these systems, students are given guidelines indicating how much service is expected and which organizations are appropriate sites for service. Students perform service-learning projects in the community, independent of their school, and keep track of the hours of service in which they engage. They are required to document how they have prepared for their project and reflected on the experience. School staff members review these experiences with students.

Service-learning has been embraced in Maryland as an effective, experiential instructional strategy that allows students to apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world. It makes the curriculum relevant and accessible to students through hands-on activities that help students better understand how their communities work, how they can become actively involved in making community improvements, and how to tackle difficult community problems.

Quality Practices

The Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.

What makes a project meaningful and effective?

Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning describes high quality service-learning experiences.

Interview results from 70 Maryland teachers who facilitated effective service-learning projects with students served as the foundation for the identification of the common elements that made their programs strong. Maryland service-learning leaders incorporated these common elements into *Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning.* A national committee of service-learning experts met to review, edit, and endorse the publication. The guide was distributed in 1995 to all middle and high schools in Maryland, and *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* became the preferred measure for evaluating the quality of service-learning in the state. The guidebook, updated in 2004, also contains a self-assessment tool that teachers and students can use to evaluate their service-learning experiences. In 2002, the MSDE created a rubric based on *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* to assess classroom projects as part the state's Quality Review visits to LSSs. These assessments and resources are also available on the MSDE website as free downloads.

Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning

1. Meet a recognized need in the community.
2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning.
3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience.
4. Develop student responsibility.
5. Establish community partnerships.
6. Plan ahead for service-learning.
7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service.

All service-learning experiences should meet **all** of the *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* The descriptions of each best practice and following examples provide clear expectations for the creation of quality service-learning experiences. Each example listed is a former Maryland Sherry Unger Award winner and featured on the MSDE website. The examples do a particularly good job illustrating a specific best practice, but it should be noted that these examples meet all of the *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.*

1. Meet a recognized need in the community.

Students work to identify pressing community needs, devise a plan, and participate in projects that address those needs. The Corporation for National and Community Service categorizes community needs as those related to health, education, environment, or public safety. Maryland's service-learning requirement adheres to that categorization of community needs. Students may engage in direct, indirect, or advocacy projects:

Direct Service: Students have face-to-face contact with the service recipients. Examples include tutoring other students, serving meals at a soup kitchen, working with the elderly in a nursing home, etc.

Indirect Service: Students perform a service without having face-to-face contact with the recipient. Usually resources are channeled to help alleviate a problem. Examples include food and clothing drives, marathons or fundraisers, environmental projects, etc.

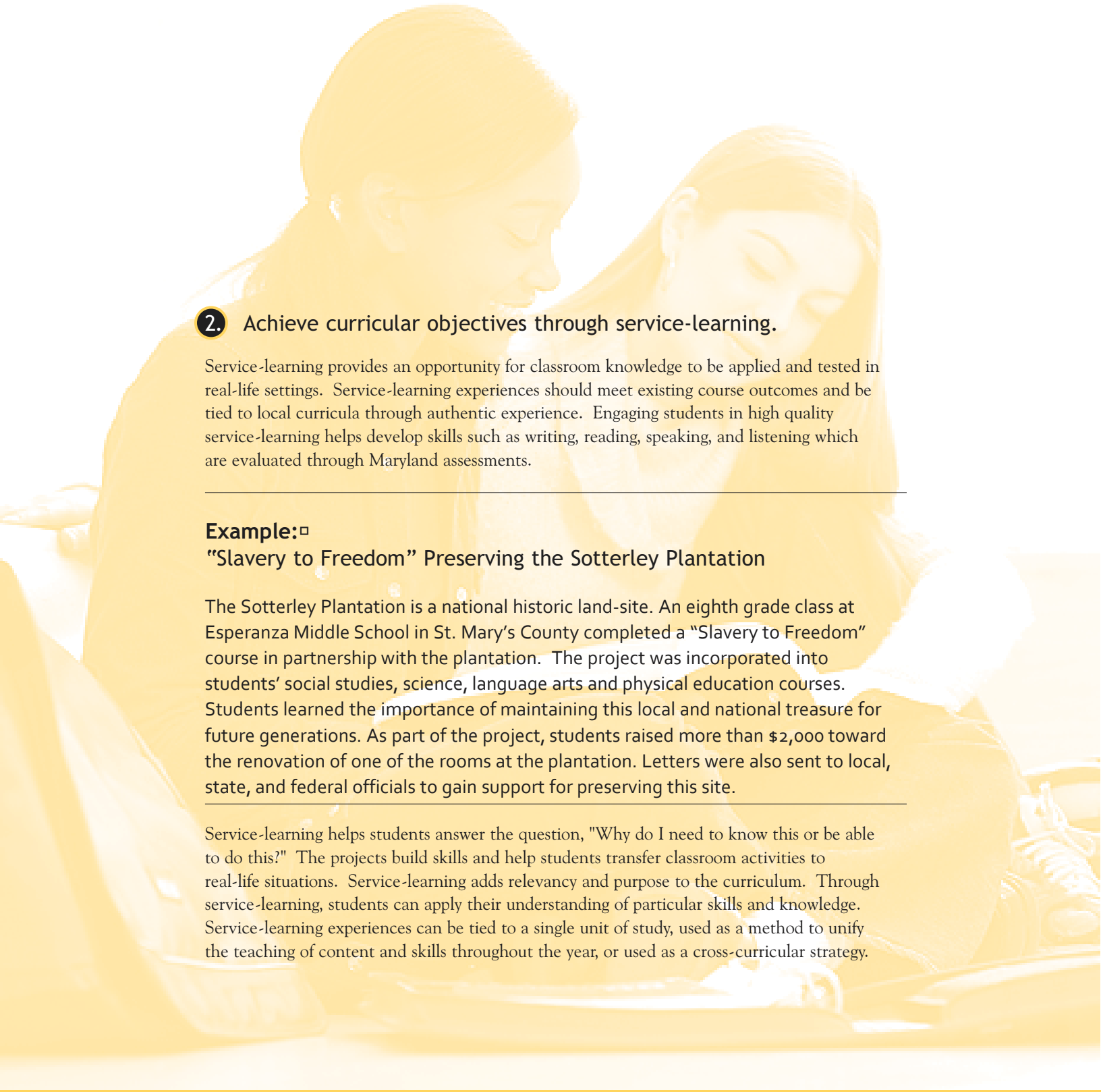
Advocacy: With the goal of eliminating the cause of a particular problem, students educate others about a particular issue. Examples include writing letters to legislators or editors, preparing and displaying posters to an identified audience, writing and performing informative plays or creating educational materials or social media campaigns for other target groups, etc.

Example:
Bringing Back the Eastern Oyster

"Bringing Back the Eastern Oyster" was a restoration effort to enhance the nearly decimated Chesapeake Bay oyster bars, with particular emphasis on the Patuxent River region. Students from several Calvert County schools assisted scientists in creating oyster habitat and in releasing healthy oyster larvae onto designated oyster bars in the Patuxent River. Participating students learned about the ecology and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay's oyster reefs. In addition, the aquatic environment of the Bay was directly improved through the students' oyster restoration actions.

The participating students gained a sense of personal responsibility for the health of the oysters and other animals in the Patuxent River. By taking an active role in this effort, the students learned the important issues that affect the Chesapeake Estuary as a whole. For example, riparian buffers and wetlands can reduce and slow nutrient and sediment run off, thus improving water quality. An improvement in water quality may lead to an improvement in the health of the oysters and Bay. The need for protection or reestablishment of effective natural buffers between land and water became evident to the students involved in this oyster restoration project. The involvement of hundreds of students and teachers in this restoration project has served as a model for family members and peers, thus encouraging others to lend a hand in the protection and restoration of precious estuarine resources.

Participating in a variety of types of service is beneficial for students' social and civic development. A significant portion of a student's service-learning experience should involve engagement in Best Practice 1, the action phase, meeting a recognized community need. While the preparation phase of a service-learning project is critical in establishing the need of the community and helps students understand the related issues, that phase should not dominate the total service-learning experience. **Students need to be engaged in meaningful action for a sustained amount of time so that their projects can have a positive impact on the community.** Additionally, students should have the opportunity to experience all three types of service throughout their school careers. LSSs should be cognizant that throughout the course of a service-learning program a variety of projects be offered that address various community needs by engaging students in a balance of direct, indirect, and advocacy service.



2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning.

Service-learning provides an opportunity for classroom knowledge to be applied and tested in real-life settings. Service-learning experiences should meet existing course outcomes and be tied to local curricula through authentic experience. Engaging students in high quality service-learning helps develop skills such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening which are evaluated through Maryland assessments.

Example:

"Slavery to Freedom" Preserving the Sotterley Plantation

The Sotterley Plantation is a national historic land-site. An eighth grade class at Esperanza Middle School in St. Mary's County completed a "Slavery to Freedom" course in partnership with the plantation. The project was incorporated into students' social studies, science, language arts and physical education courses. Students learned the importance of maintaining this local and national treasure for future generations. As part of the project, students raised more than $2,000 toward the renovation of one of the rooms at the plantation. Letters were also sent to local, state, and federal officials to gain support for preserving this site.

Service-learning helps students answer the question, "Why do I need to know this or be able to do this?" The projects build skills and help students transfer classroom activities to real-life situations. Service-learning adds relevancy and purpose to the curriculum. Through service-learning, students can apply their understanding of particular skills and knowledge. Service-learning experiences can be tied to a single unit of study, used as a method to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year, or used as a cross-curricular strategy.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience.

Through reflection activities in the form of discussions, journaling, performing, and writing, students come to more fully understand the connection between their schoolwork and the service work performed. Reflection helps students explore the following questions in the cycle of: What and Why? So What? Now What?

Example:
The Worry Dolls

The Worry Doll project served to introduce the theme of determination to 7th grade language arts students at Thurmont Middle School in Frederick County. After learning about Guatemalan culture, the determination of indigenous people, and the Mayan Worry Doll legend, students were invited to make a Worry Doll in the tradition of the Guatemalan people. The Worry Dolls were to be donated to children in the hospital. As part of reflection, students wrote poems explaining the worry dolls to their recipients. As the legend states, the hospitalized children might then be free of worries as they cast their worries onto their own special Worry Doll.

The reflection portion of the service-learning experience is much more than an opportunity for students to describe personal learning. Now that students have had hands-on experience with the problem, reflection provides a forum for exploring the complexity of community issues related to the project in more depth. Problem solving skills are tested and honed through the analysis of the effectiveness of projects and the development of solutions to roadblocks. Through reflection, students may discover other potential projects that could be carried out. Students grow intellectually, personally, and socially by engaging in meaningful reflection activities.

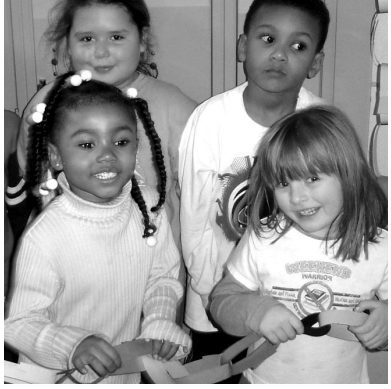
4. Develop student responsibility.

High quality service-learning allows students to take leadership and ownership of the projects performed. Students learn important school, work, and life skills such as working as a team, organizing and scheduling activities, and problem solving when given responsibility for the success of projects.

Example:
Montgomery Ultimate Story Exchange (MUSE)

MUSE was a mentoring program that allowed elementary students at Pine Crest Elementary School to send pieces of creative writing via email to their high school mentors at Montgomery Blair High School in Montgomery County. The mentors offered suggestions, critiques, and compliments. Three students in their sophomore year, as part of a Communication Arts Program assignment that required students to attempt to make a change in their community, formatted and implemented the original idea for the MUSE project. With little adult assistance in the planning and in the actual achievement of the program, the students created MUSE from scratch.

Often service-learning projects address student responsibility in a variety of ways. In the MUSE example, a small number of students were responsible for planning and creating a mentoring program. The mentors were responsible for keeping in contact with their mentees and forging a productive and helpful relationship. Future communication arts students were responsible for analyzing the success of the MUSE program and determining if the community need for the program still exists and/or refining the program to meet unfolding needs. In MUSE, as well as other projects, teachers need to be aware of their students developmental levels as they design and carry out projects. Students should be given increasing responsibility for designing and implementing projects as they mature.



5. Establish community partnerships.

Service-learning experiences provide opportunities for students to learn about their communities, explore career possibilities, and work with diverse groups of individuals. Quality service-learning involves community organizations as partners.

Example:
Connecting with the Community

Connections Volunteer Center is a student developed and run volunteer center based out of Stephen Decatur High School in Worcester County. The Center serves as a liaison between students and community organizations to regulate, organize, and increase the "supply and demand" of student volunteers. The Center has been developed in phases, and offers services to students as it continues to expand and fulfill its complete mission. The project has created more open communication between the school and the community.

The community partnerships developed through the service-learning projects benefit both schools and community based organizations. The community is enhanced by working with students cooperatively in a meaningful way to address community needs. Schools benefit by broadening the human and physical resources available to them through this new partnership. Schools seek increased community involvement, and service-learning provides a vehicle for making important and long-lasting connections between a variety of community organizations and schools. By working collaboratively with community organizations, students learn about career opportunities and gain an understanding of the world of work beyond the school walls. The community is also able to see students in a very positive way, engaging in activities designed to improve and strengthen communities, locally and globally.

6. Plan ahead for service-learning.

Like all effective instruction, an action plan that features specific objectives to be achieved through the activity must be created. Service-learning requires teachers, students, and community organizations to carefully plan projects and work collaboratively.

Example:
Inclusion Play Day

Inclusion Play Day was led by physical education staff at Pine Grove Middle School in Baltimore County with the goal of making students aware of diversity issues and more accepting of others. Seventh grade students, with the support of teachers, carefully planned and designed activities for Inclusion Play Day. All activities were designed so that physically challenged and able-bodied students could participate jointly. This enhanced the spirit of cooperation and promoted awareness and acceptance amongst the participants. During the planned events, students from Pine Grove Middle School acted as Station Leaders or Peer Helpers for students with special needs who participated in various play day events. The students with special needs participating in these events came from Pine Grove Middle School as well as other area schools.

Students can and should take an active role in planning service-learning activities. Even the youngest students are able to help contribute to project planning. Students should be involved in all steps of planning, from determining their community needs to designing an accomplishable project that meets those needs. Through planning, students develop and strengthen their organization skills and discover the steps necessary to successfully implement any action plan. Planning with others opens new doors for teacher collaboration and student learning. Well-planned projects are strongly linked to existing curricular goals and objectives and are designed so that students, their families, and the community are aware that students are engaging in service-learning.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service.

To effectively engage in a project, students must understand the issue they will be addressing. As part of preparing to engage in service-learning, students conduct research, read articles, and listen to guest speakers discuss the issue. Students also need to learn project specific skills as well as explore issues related to citizenship and civic engagement.

Example:
Trees for the Environment

The American Chestnut Society was looking for school sites that were willing to partner and grow trees. The trees to be planted were genetically engineered to produce blight resistant trees. Through Thorpewood Environmental Center, Carroll County students, including the Environmental Club and horticulture classes at North Carroll High School, worked with teachers to participate in Chestnut research and make a positive impact on the environment. The groves planted are used for various secondary projects such as reforestation, riparian stream banks, erosion control, and landscaping. To support the project, a Chestnut curriculum was developed and introduced into science classes.

This preparation phase includes research and exploration of the issue being addressed as well as the development of specific skills students will need to engage in the project. For instance, if a biology class plans to design a campaign warning of the dangers of lyme disease, part of preparation might include a presentation from a public relations professional concerning effective approaches used to change people's behavior. The preparation phase also includes opportunities for students to explore the topics of civic responsibility and engagement and to clearly understand that they are about to carry out a service-learning experience.

What Service-Learning Projects Should Do:

What should students and school systems "count" towards service-learning?

All service-learning experiences should meet *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* Listed below are additional guidelines that provide clarification on what LSSs should "count" toward meeting the service-learning requirement. Although all service-learning experiences should meet *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning,* **LSS discretion determines what activities are eligible for service-learning credit.**

- Service-learning activities with the purpose of directly addressing human needs in areas such as health, education, environment, or public safety, even if done in conjunction with a faith-based agency or institution, may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Service-learning activities with the purpose of collecting food, clothing, or other items necessary to benefit others and meet human needs, even if done in conjunction with a faith-based agency or institution, may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Service-learning activities with the purpose of extending the benefit of the service activity to individuals or families in need, other than the student's own family, may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement. Activities should serve the greater good instead of being self-serving to a particular person or group.

- Service-learning activities with the purposes of serving the school community must meet the service-learning quality practices articulated in *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* to be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement. These projects should be structured to meet greater needs in the areas of health, education, environment, or public safety identified within the school community.

- Service-learning activities with the purpose of increasing voter registration and participation and/or implement voter education activities on particular issues may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Service-learning activities must be inclusive and non-discriminatory. Activities that violate federal or state law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, sex, age, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability, may not be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Service-learning activities that are completed independently by students in the community must meet the service-learning quality practices articulated in *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* Designated school personnel or, in the absence of such designated personnel, the school principal, must verify the completion of the service-learning activity in order for students to receive credit toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Service-learning activities should allow students to spend a **significant portion** of their time engaged in meeting a recognized community need (action). The remainder of their experience may involve the other *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* For example, a student project might involve three hours spent on researching and discussing hunger and homeless and exploring civic education issues. Five hours of the project might be spent on preparing and serving food to people who are homeless. An additional two hours might engage students in an exploration and reflection on the effectiveness of their project and what they learned from the experience.

What Service-Learning Projects Should Not Do:

What should students and school systems "not count" towards service-learning?

Business Relationships

- Any service-learning activity with the chief purpose of increasing the amount of revenue for a private, for-profit business or to generate new revenue for that business may not be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Any service-learning activity that replaces a paid staff worker of the participating agency or institution with a student earning service-learning credit may not be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

- Any service-learning activity that compensates a student with money, goods, or services may not be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

Assessment and Continuous Program Improvement

A variety of resources and tools to help create, assess, and strengthen LSS service-learning programs have been provided by MSDE. Several of these resources include assessment tools.

Maryland's Best Practices

In 1995, LSSs received *Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning* (updated 2004). This guide contains information on creating and sustaining high quality service-learning experiences for students. The guide includes a self-assessment tool that teachers and students may use to evaluate the effectiveness of their projects.

Next Steps

In 1998, Maryland created and distributed *Next Steps: A School District's Guide to the Essential Elements of Service-Learning* to be used as a self-assessment tool for LSS service-learning programs. The guide helps school systems review service-learning infrastructure, provide instruction, monitor support and resources locally, and develop next steps for program improvement.

Quality Review Rubrics

In 2002, MSDE used the Service-Learning Evaluation Tool from *Maryland's Best Practices: An Improvement Guide for School-Based Service-Learning* to create a rubric for evaluating classroom-based service-learning entitled *Rubric for Assessing the Use of Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* Two additional rubrics were developed as resources for local school systems, the *Rubric for Assessing the Quality of LSS Service-Learning Leadership and the Rubric for Assessing the Quality of School Service-Learning Leadership.* ***School systems are encouraged to use all three MSDE service-learning Quality Review rubrics to conduct regular self-assessment or to develop their own mechanism/ tool to promote continuous program improvement efforts locally.***

Policies and Reporting

Service-Learning Graduation Requirement

The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the following regulation to enact the service-learning requirement, Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.03.02.05:

D. Student Service.
Students shall complete one of the following:
(1) Seventy-five hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or
(2) A locally-designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

Maryland's service-learning mandate took effect in the fall of 1993, impacting the graduating class of 1997. Every public school student in Maryland engages in service-learning as a condition of graduation. This includes all special education students, unless exceptions or modifications are specifically noted in their Individualized Education Program.

Minimum Level of Student Engagement

All school systems must design programs that require a minimum level of service-learning engagement of at least 75 hours from each student, or if the school system does not track hours, the equivalent of at least 75 hours. Only one hour of service-learning credit may be awarded for one hour of a student's engagement in service-learning activities.

Service-learning activities should allow students to spend a **significant portion** of their time engaged in meeting a recognized community need (action). The remainder of their experience may involve other *Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.* Students should be provided with opportunities to engage in a variety of types of service-learning: indirect, direct, and advocacy experiences (see page 7). Direct service-learning activities that allow students to interact with the people or institutions they are serving should be a part of service-learning experiences.

Local Service-Learning Infrastructure

LSSs must appoint a service-learning coordinator for their program. The name and contact information for each LSS coordinator must be submitted to MSDE by August 1st of each year. Service-learning coordinators serve as the liaison between the LSS and MSDE. MSDE strongly encourages each LSS to appoint a service-learning coordinator at the system level with the authority and resources to manage the program.

Service-learning coordinators should attend all MSDE service-learning administrator meetings and other MSDE service-learning events. MSDE also recommends that there be designated school building level service-learning coordinators and encourages LSSs to utilize their parents, Service-Learning Fellows, and develop the capacity of youth to serve as advisors for the service-learning program. Service-Learning Fellows are educators from LSSs who are nominated by the system and selected by MSDE to receive leadership training in service-learning and act as local support for service-learning. Fellows can help LSSs assess and refine their service-learning program, train and mentor other teachers, serve on or help run advisory boards, develop curriculum, and provide a variety of other supportive service-learning related functions.

Some LSSs have created very successful youth advisory boards for service-learning that create and sponsor system-wide service-learning experiences for students, provide training for teachers in service-learning, and offer advice to the LSS on the service-learning program's implementation.

Reporting Student Progress

School systems must report student progress toward fulfilling the service-learning graduation requirement. Systems must report this information in a clear and understandable format on the permanent Student Record 3 (SR3) card. MSDE encourages tracking service-learning hours on report cards so students and parents can easily monitor student progress. Systems are expected to maintain timely and accurate records on student progress toward this graduation requirement.

Notification of Student Engagement in Service-Learning Experiences

When service-learning is infused into the school day through classroom instruction, students and parents may not be aware that service-learning experiences are occurring. Service-learning projects should be clearly identified. Students should spend time exploring the concepts of civic responsibility and civic action and how their current service-learning experience relates to those concepts. Students and parents should be informed in writing when an activity is being carried out. This notification could be through the school newsletter **or website,** or other communication mechanism.

Parental Involvement

Parents are a tremendous resource and their involvement in service-learning experiences should be encouraged and facilitated. Parents can play numerous roles in the implementation of a LSS service-learning plan. First and foremost, parents should be aware of the specific service-learning experiences their students have had throughout the year. Additionally, parents should receive regular updates of their child's progress toward meeting the service-learning graduation requirement. Parents can also be an excellent resource in implementing service-learning projects at individual schools by volunteering to teach specific skills, chaperoning field experiences, and helping to identify existing community needs.

Independent Service-Learning Projects

LSSs should offer opportunities for students to pursue and engage in service-learning projects they select, design, and carry out independently, even if the LSS has a comprehensive infused service-learning program. For example, some LSSs that infuse service-learning into the school day also offer and acknowledge Meritorious Service-Learning opportunities for students. Many students far exceed their LSSs service-learning requirements. Recognizing these students for their outstanding community contributions helps to encourage other students to excel.

Transfer Policies

Transfers from a LSS to another LSS in Maryland:

Local school systems must offer a policy for service-learning that applies to transfer students. School systems must accept service-learning credit that has been completed in other school systems in Maryland.

For students transferring out of a LSS, the system must report service-learning credit on permanent records. If students are moving from a system that does not record hours to a system that does record hours, outgoing systems must provide an hour equivalency report on student progress.

Transfers from a Private School, Home Schooling, or from Out-Of-State to a Maryland Public School:

The local service-learning implementation plan may pro-rate the level of service-learning engagement expected for students transferring into school systems, but no student can be exempt from meeting the service-learning graduation requirement, including those who transfer second semester senior year.

Accountability

The Maryland State Departmend of Education (MSDE) must have an approved, comprehensive, and up-to-date service-learning plan from each local school system (LSS) on file. All LSSs must follow its MSDE approved local service-learning plans. All Service-Learning Implementation Plans must be posted on LSS websites so that they are accessible to the public. In addition, each LSS must submit an Annual Service-Learning Timeline to the MSDE each year which explains how the system plans to continue to support and enhance the quality of service-learning experiences for students.

If an LSS makes minor modifications (not major revisions as described below) to its plan during the course of the ensuing year, the LSS must submit the most up-to-date information to the MSDE and post the updated plan on the LSS website.

Local Accountability Procedures

A verification process must be in place locally to ensure infused and independent service-learning experiences are completed and accurate records are maintained regarding student participation in projects. School systems are encouraged to use all three MSDE service-learning Quality Review rubrics to conduct regular self-assessments or to develop their own mechanism/tool to promote continuous program improvement efforts locally.

State Accountability Procedures

A review of all LSS Service-Learning Implementation Plans is conducted by the MSDE every four years. Committees, comprised of stakeholder groups such as students, teachers, service-learning supervisors, principals, representatives from community based organizations, and staff from the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism, as well as the MSDE, will be formed to review LSS plans, provide feedback, and approve plans. These reviews serve as an opportunity to evaluate program effectiveness and develop program improvement strategies.

At the end of every school year, LSSs submit data related to student engagement with service-learning to the MSDE. This data includes which grade levels and courses infuse service-learning experiences, the percentage of direct, indirect, and advocacy projects completed in the LSS that year, and the total number of hours students engaged in service-learning experiences. As part of that report, LSSs also provide to the MSDE a recent example of an exemplary service-learning project completed by students in their system.

Service-Learning Plan Revision Procedure

Should a LSS want to make significant changes to its student service-learning plans based on the results of either a local or state evaluation of its existing plan, the system must submit its revised plan to the State Superintendent of Schools for approval before implementation begins.

Major revisions are classified as one or more of the following:

- A LSS changes the grade levels impacted by its service-learning implementation plan. (Example: An elementary, middle or high school component is added or deleted.)
- A LSS changes the primary delivery method/approach to service-learning implementation. (Example: Students earned most of their service-learning through one designated course, but now they earn it through a combination of interdisciplinary projects and some independent projects.)
- A LSS changes the amount of service-learning opportunities or hours required of students. (Example: Students were required to engage in three service-learning experiences in middle school only, but now they must complete three projects at the high school level as well.)

Resources

Information about service-learning in Maryland, links to local school system service-learning sites, available resources, project ideas, **publications, professional development tools,** and service-learning contacts around the state are available on the Maryland State Department of Education website at **www.mdservice-learning.org,** or **www.marylandpublicschools.org** under programs.

Maryland State Department of Education

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