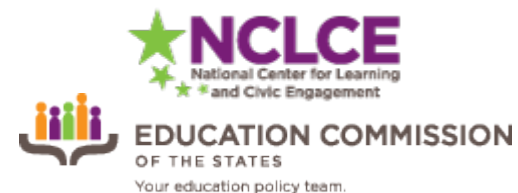


# Districts in Action:

## Service-Learning as a Strategy to Meet District Goals

UMN Check & Connect  
Student Engagement Conference: Connection to School, Motivation to Learn

Elizabeth Koenig  
Professional Development  
Director



- 
- How districts are implementing and sustaining service-learning
  - Explore results of initial evaluations
  - Apply approaches and learnings to your own work

# National Youth Leadership Council



Developing  
Young Leaders



Supporting  
Educators



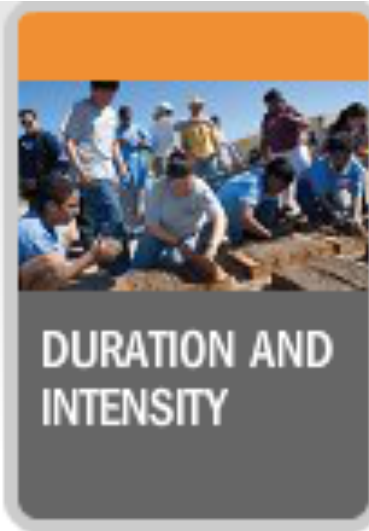
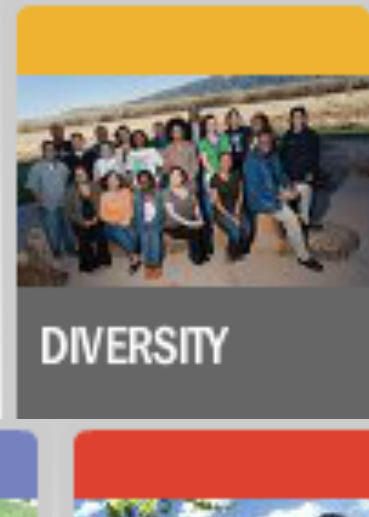
Advancing the  
Field

# Service-Learning

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Service-learning is an approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.

# K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice



# FOUR STAGES OF SERVICE-LEARNING

## STAGE ONE IDENTIFYING DESIRED RESULTS

### Standards

- Academic content
- Common Core
- Literacy
- Civic, character, leadership

### Big Ideas

Statements that serve as the focal point of what is being learned, based on the standards identified above.

### Essential Questions

Open-ended, thought-provoking questions that require higher-order thinking and supporting evidence to answer.

### Other Desired Results

What are the pre-requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes you will need to ensure students have?

- Vocabulary
- Skills
- Knowledge

## STAGE TWO DETERMINING ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

What evidence will be acceptable to show that students have met the desired results that you chose in Stage One?

How will students show they:

- have mastered the standards?
- have acquired the skills and knowledge outlined previously?
- are able to answer Essential Questions thoughtfully and with evidence?

What checkpoints might we build into the learning process to ensure that students are on the right track toward mastery by the end of the unit/project?

What assessment format would best allow for students to prove or showcase their learning?

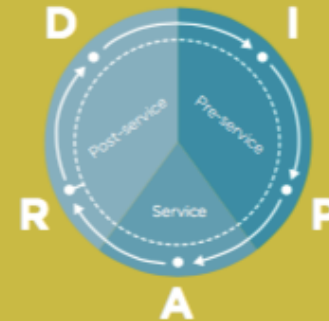
## STAGE THREE IPARD STUDENT EXPERIENCES CYCLE

During the IPARD process, learning is centered on student inquiry through these steps:

Investigation  
Planning & Preparation  
Action

- Direct
- Indirect
- Advocacy

Reflection  
Demonstration



## STAGE FOUR SELF- ASSESSMENT

### Reflection

What are your takeaways from this whole process?

### Evaluation

Did we meet the learning outcomes?  
How do we know?

### Documentation

If another group were to do a similar project, what resources would they need?

### Next Steps

Now that we know what we know...

- What work still needs to be done with/for this community?
- With/for other communities?
- What additional service-learning projects could we plan next?

# Districts in Action

## Anticipated Outcomes

- Improved student academic performance
- Expanded acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and development of career pathways for youth
- Enhanced pedagogical competencies in educators
- Increased student civic learning and engagement

# Districts in Action

- Policy, practice and leadership
- Service-learning: high-quality, sustainable
- Best practices



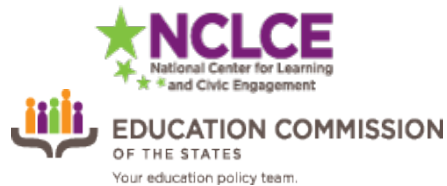
# Districts in Action

- Face-to-face, professional learning opportunities
- Embedded coaching and feedback
- Customized toolkits

# Partnership

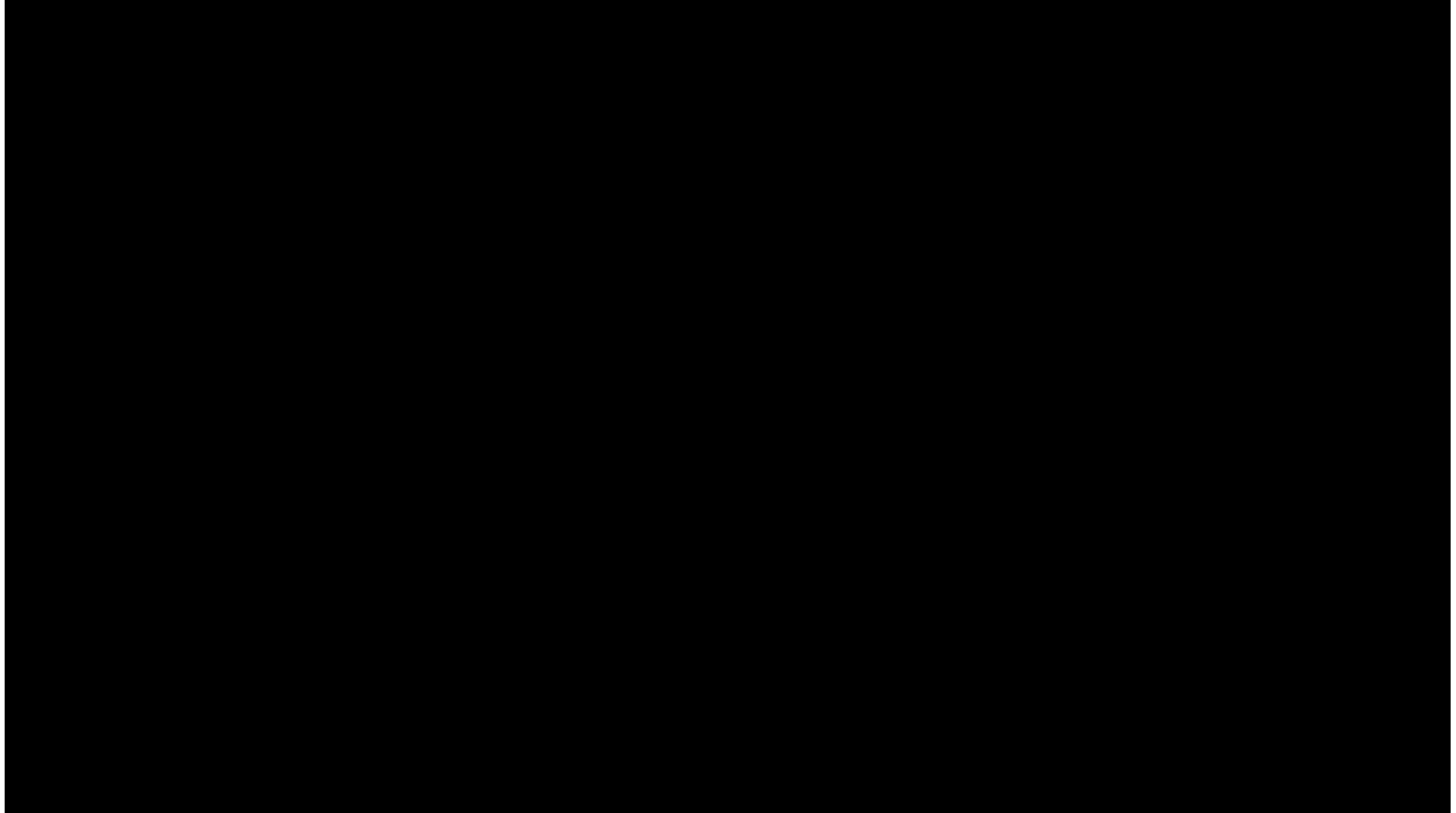


Educator development  
Youth leadership and development  
Using research & evaluation to improve practice



Policy analysis and development  
Relationships with policymakers across all states  
Using research & evaluation to improve policy

# Henry County Schools



# Exploring Districts in Action

**EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES** **NCLCE** **nyc**  
National Youth Leadership Council

## What is Districts in Action?

**Theory of Action:**

Districts in Action sets out to demonstrate the promise of high-quality, community-focused service-learning for improving student academic and civic learning outcomes. Building upon several decades of research, our hypothesis is that schools that participate in Districts in Action will exhibit growth in academic and civic-learning outcomes that exceed those of comparison schools who do not participate in the project.

With regards to academic outcomes, research clearly suggests that the community-focused service-learning pedagogical strategy at the core of Districts in Action enhances content understanding and builds cognitive critical thinking and career readiness skills. Such outcomes are necessary precursors for improved academic achievement, graduation rates, and post-secondary aspirations.

With regards to civic outcomes, high-quality service-learning as incorporated into Districts in Action is student-led and community-focused. Opportunities for students to use their "voice" to inform the direction of their education increases motivation for academic success and helps students build their sense of agency. By working collaboratively with community partners and service providers as a team, students build communication, collaboration, career-related learning and civic engagement skills.

**Project Sustainability:**

Supporting the instructional changes at the classroom level, Districts in Action includes components to ensure that the project induces sustainable change at the district and school level. This change will be comprehensive. Districts in Action will engage teachers and students in the development of improved classroom practices, while simultaneously working with district administrators and policy leaders to ensure and embed administrative and policy support for these practices over time. Districts in Action will also work with the district to enhance outreach to community partners for their collaboration in service-learning activities, thereby raising awareness in the community of the benefits of student civic engagement and the positive impact of service-learning in preparing students for college, career and civic life.

The text on the next page includes a description of the characteristics of districts that participate in Districts in Action, a high-level description of the scale and scope of the interventions included in the project, an overview of the commitments that districts will need to provide in support of the project, and a brief explanation of the evaluation that will measure the success of the project.

\*Andrew Feiock, "A Research Agenda for K-12 School-Based Service-Learning: Academic Achievement and School Success," International Journal of Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Spring 2011).

2011 Breakout, San Juan, Puerto Rico. ©2011 NYLC. All rights reserved. For more information, please visit [www.nyc.org](http://www.nyc.org) | 888-666-6666

**DISTRICTS IN ACTION DEMONSTRATION** **nyc** **NCLCE**  
National Youth Leadership Council Education Commission of the States

Below are 2016-17 academic year highlights for Districts in Action participants in Henry County Schools, GA. Districts in Action supports and enhances district-determined strategic priorities, creating whole district transformation to ensure the sustainability of service-learning — an instructional practice that achieves measurable academic and civic outcomes through the development of cognitive critical thinking skills necessary for college, career, and civic life. Henry County Schools serve 42,000 students across 50 schools.

**Locust Grove High School**  
 Agriculture Science students in Ms. Brown's class investigated hunger in the community. Students partnered with Two Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council to get a new High Tunnel greenhouse, learn techniques to cultivate different types of lettuce through hands-on experience in the High Tunnel, and teach community members how to harvest lettuce. The lettuce was donated to members of the school community and to a local food bank.

**3D Academy for Advanced Studies**  
 A team of eight students in Ms. Sumner's Solid Modeling Pathway designed eight different developmentally appropriate sensory therapy toys to aid children with sensory processing disorders. They partnered with a local organization, SensaKinetix, to investigate sensory disorders and will donate their toys to the organization once they are printed with the school's 3D printer.

**Students in the Electronics Pathway** with Dr. Webb investigated the energy used when students plug their cell phone chargers into school building outlets. They partnered with Georgia Power to conduct an energy audit and learn more about how much energy and money it costs to charge cell phones. Students presented a representative from Georgia Power with a gift at their project demonstration.

**Henry County Middle School**  
 Band students in Ms. Burgess' class investigated how music can be used to help people through music therapy. Although they were not able to visit a nursing home like they had planned, the students explained about music therapy, how it would benefit a nursing home community, and how they plan to visit a nursing home next year.

**Bethlehem Elementary**  
 First grade students in Ms. Smith and Ms. Johnson's classes learned about how animals and plants have similar needs. Students partnered with Noah's Ark, a local animal sanctuary, researched the animals that are served there, and chose different animals to help. One student said, "We realized we could serve by helping animals." Students advertised for and collected donations to bring to Noah's Ark. When asked about how they felt about helping the animals, one student said, "I felt happy. I liked feeding them and having fun with them. They [Noah's Ark] help animals with injuries or else they [the injured animals] would end up in a pound and that's not good." Another student said, "I like how the animals have space to do what they want [at Noah's Ark]."

**EXCEL Academy**  
 The 6th grade students at EXCEL Academy worked with Ms. Johnson (Science), Mr. Denson (social studies), and Ms. Halby (the school's social worker) to investigate issues of hunger and poor nutrition in their school community by writing and distributing a survey to students in the EXCEL Academy community and analyzing the results. Students learned about life cycles of plants, chose vegetables to cultivate, and analyzed the vegetables from seeds, and transferred the seedlings outside to the school garden — all before the end of the school year. They plan to continue growing the vegetables they planted in their school garden and want the garden to be an ongoing service-learning project in future years.

Districts in Action is a partnership between the National Youth Leadership Council, the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement at the Education Commission of the States, and school districts across the country.

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**nyc** **national youth leadership council**

## Research Report Findings: Johns Hopkins University

Overall in the past year, we trained and supported **70 Teachers, 41 Administrators, 65 Youth Ambassadors, and 2,175 students** directly, and impacted over **9,000 students** indirectly through our district-wide work.

**"Service-learning helped me realize how much I could really do for my community and how there are different types of jobs and careers that you can do to not only educate yourself but to help others."**

In all our districts, we seek to meet four goals:

1. Create career pathways for youth.
2. Increase student engagement and civic involvement.
3. Increase student core curricular performance.
4. Increase pedagogical knowledge and effectiveness of educators in service-learning.

7

**nyc** 30 Years of Service-Learning **www.nyc.org**

## the generator

Service-Learning Research and Practice Vol. 33 | No. 3 | Winter 2015

### Service-Learning Instruction and the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework

By Dr. Sue Raab, NCLCE Senior Academic Fellow

An informed, involved citizenry is key to the vitality of democratic societies.

**Introduction**

Democracies depend on citizens with civic knowledge, such as knowledge of history and government, and skills, such as the ability to investigate, analyze, and deliberate about public issues as well as the ability to work with other citizens to address them. Democracies rely as well on citizens with democratic virtues, such as a commitment to equality, tolerance, and the value of the common good.

"Schools, along with their teachers and curricula, have long been identified as the critical link between education and citizenship, the locus from which democratic citizens emerge." (Naisi & Jantzi, 1996, p. 3). Yet, the evidence suggests that schools are falling short of successfully fulfilling this role. For example, only 59% of voting-age Americans turned out for the recent 2016 Presidential election, while the voting rate for young citizens was even lower (50%) (McDonald, 2016; CIRCE, 2016). Although historically, Americans have volunteered at higher rates than other nations' citizens, volunteering in the U.S. has declined. In 2013, only 25% of Americans participated in volunteerism, such as fundraising for a social cause or collecting and distributing food, and the rate of volunteering among those ages 16-24 was lower than for any other age group except those 65 and older (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015). Finally, other forms of civic involvement among Americans have dropped to historic lows. Adolescents' involvement in both conventional and alternative forms of civic participation (volunteering to public officials, boycotting) has declined over a 30-year period (Sweeren, Flanagan, West-Lake, Ogwood & Briddell (2011). In 2013, only 15% of Americans were members of a social or community service organization, while a mere 5% belonged to a civic, political, professional, or international organization and among young people, the rates of membership in these two types of organization were lower (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015).

**In 2015...**

- 25% of Americans participated in volunteerism
- 15% of Americans were members of a social or community service organization
- 5% of Americans belonged to a civic, political, professional, or international organization

In the face of declining civic engagement and numerous challenges to the health of U.S. democracy, such as income and education inequality, low voter turnout, and shrinking

**DEAR READERS**

Understanding the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen do not come at the age of 18 but need to be introduced and fostered throughout adolescence. In this issue of the Generator we take a closer look at how service-learning supports the implementation of civic learning for our youngest citizens by looking their communities and civic thinking skills and by engaging them in making meaningful change now. As former Senator Dan Claitor said, "By no means, civic responsibility means taking a healthy role in the life of one's community that means that classroom lessons should be complemented by work outside the classroom. Service-learning does just that, bringing community service to academic learning." We couldn't agree more.

**Dr. Sue Raab**  
 NCLCE Senior Academic Fellow

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# Exploring Districts in Action

- Choose article to investigate
- Read article to investigate – pick out something to share (7 minutes)
- Match with people who read same article and share feedback, ideas that will help them teach others (5 minutes)
- Gather in heterogeneous groups and teach others about your article (7 minutes)
- Large Group Reflection (7 minutes)

# Lessons Learned

- Supporting teachers in letting go of control
- Customization to District practices
- Value of one-on-one coaching
- Engaging administration
- Building a mass of teachers

# Free Write

- What are your district's goals? What strategies are you using to meet those goals?
- What does student engagement look like in your school?
- What components of service-learning already exist in your school?
- How does your school support teachers with student engagement?

# More?

**Minnesota Educator Academy**

Thursday, October 19

**Introduction to High Quality Service-Learning Instruction**

November 9, 4:00-6:00pm

**Climbing the Ladder to Meaningful Youth-Adult Partnerships in the Classroom**

December 7, 4:00-6:00pm

**National Service-Learning Conference**

March 11-13, 2018

Elizabeth Koenig

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[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)