

2005

Excellence in Service-Learning Practice

National Service-Learning Partnership

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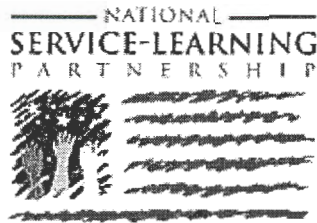
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National
Service-Learning
Clearinghouse



Excellence in Service-Learning Practice

**The Johnson Foundation
Wingspread Conference Center
September 29 – October 1, 2005**

**Report of a conference to improve and make consistent
high-quality service-learning practice
across all K-12 schools and youth organizations**

Prepared by National Service-Learning Partnership

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DECLARATION

Wingspread Conference on Excellence in Service-Learning Practice
The Johnson Foundation Wingspread Conference Center
September 29 – October 1, 2005

We call upon those dedicated to democracy and public education to embrace this declaration.

We are committed to ensuring nationwide use of high-quality service-learning practice. Our work on this goal, begun at Wingspread, reflects these convictions:

- **The democratic purposes of education must be restored.** The American republic's early leaders promoted taxpayer-supported education to prepare young people to participate in public life. Yet, today, schools are preoccupied by training youth for the workplace and for higher education. Americans must reaffirm the civic mission of public education.
- **Service-learning is an essential teaching methodology in a democratic society.** Service-learning equips young people for the demands of democratic life by involving them in local problem solving as part of their studies, thus providing them with civic apprenticeships that increase their academic engagement and mastery. Young people's need for this kind of teaching is greater than ever, given the cognitive and civic challenges of the 21st century.
- **Use of service-learning will spread only if it can be implemented effectively.** While wonderful examples of excellent service-learning exist, the practice is often too weak and too limited in duration to yield the kind of learning outcomes Americans want for school-age children. To improve the quality of service-learning practice in school and out-of-school settings, practitioners need training and supports for competent practice.
- **Expanding high-quality service-learning practice requires concerted action.** No one service-learning organization or cluster of organizations can ensure practice excellence. The entire service-learning community must focus on this goal.

To strengthen service-learning practice, we are launching a bold plan of action on three initial priorities:

1. Provide educators with practical information about the principles of effective service-learning practice and complementary teaching competencies.
2. Increase educators' access to high-quality professional education, both pre- and in-service, about service-learning practice.
3. Support reformers' use of service-learning in compatible education improvement efforts.

II. SPONSORS AND NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Sponsors

The Johnson Foundation, Racine Wisconsin

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

National Service-Learning Partnership

National Planning Committee

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III. SUMMARY

Well-implemented service-learning can boost students' engagement in their studies and positively affect many dimensions of their learning and development simultaneously. Yet, while wonderful examples of excellent service-learning exist, the practice is often too weak and too limited in duration to yield the kind of learning outcomes Americans want for school-age children. Fortunately, a strong body of education research and practice knowledge can now guide advocates improving service-learning practice in school and out-of-school settings.

To embark on a bold plan of action to strengthen service-learning practice across the nation and to jump-start work on such a plan, a national planning committee, chaired by Dr. Pamela Toole and supported by the National Service-Learning Partnership and National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, worked with The Johnson Foundation to organize a Wingspread Conference on Excellence in Service-Learning Practice, September 29--October 1, 2005, in Racine, Wisconsin.

The planning committee concentrated on three key obstacles to practice excellence that are interrelated and must be addressed together:

- Information about the core components and competencies required for high-quality service-learning practice is incomplete, dated, and hard to access.
- Opportunities are limited for service-learning professional education that reflects what research tells us is effective.
- Advocates have not capitalized on education reforms conducive to service-learning.

The planning committee, along with other service-learning leaders and education experts, agreed to tackle these obstacles by focusing on three priorities listed in *An Investment Prospectus: Strengthening Education and Democracy Through Service-Learning* (available from National Service-Learning Partnership):

1. Re-define the components and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use
2. Support more and better professional service-learning education opportunities
3. Advance efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms.

At Wingspread, participants worked on these priorities in three tracks, and this work, summarized next, formed the foundation for the Wingspread Declaration (page 3) and for an emerging plan of action which the National Service-Learning Partnership and the new Service-Learning Leaders Circle will shepherd.

Track One: Re-define the components and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use. Since knowledge about effective teaching and effective use of service-learning has increased, this track discussed the kind of information practitioners need about the practice and the proficiencies (knowledge and behavior) required to use it. This work aims to build on the service-learning community's previous descriptions of good practice (from which state versions were also developed):

1. *Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning* (1989 Wingspread Special Report)
2. *Standards of Quality for School-based and Community-Based Service-Learning*, Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, March 1995
3. *Essential Elements of Service-Learning*, National Youth Leadership Council, revised edition 1999.

Track participants agreed that advocates need to make it clear that while service-learning is a powerful and proven teaching methodology, it cannot boost young people's learning unless it is used effectively. A new description of service-learning practice should include information about the research that affirms the value of recommended practice features; be presented in an easy-to-grasp format; use the term "standards" cautiously given the pressures on teachers today; and affirm that sound service-learning practice requires proficiency in multiple aspects of teaching as outlined by Charlotte Danielson in her "framework for teaching" (available through Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). The following features of service-learning practice should inform those crafting an updated statement of practice principles:

- integrates service into core academic curricula or intentional learning objectives
- helps students master subject-specific knowledge through community and civic problem solving in real-world environments
- promotes facilitative teaching
- uses varied cognitively-challenging reflection practices for assessing student practice
- enacts democratic values and practices, emphasizing civil discourse and respect for diversity
- capitalizes on young people's strengths, increasing their experience of success, their resiliency, and their positive character development
- supports youth leadership in all aspects of service-learning experience
- ensures service of sufficient duration and intensity to produce desired outcomes
- forms inclusive, reciprocal, and interdependent relationships among young people, teachers, community partners, and service recipients
- assesses student learning using performance methods, including public demonstrations, impact assessments, and reviews of student work.

A track one follow-up meeting has been held to support the National Youth Leadership Council carrying out its lead coordination role for this work, which will be presented at the National Service-Learning Conference in March 2006.

Track Two: Support more and better professional education opportunities to ensure service-learning practice excellence. Participants agreed on five strategies to raise the level of service-learning professional development so that it consistently fosters exemplary service-learning practice.

Strategy #1: Professional education standards. To articulate a set of standards or guidelines for effective service-learning professional development. They should

encompass K-16 and community-based education, be concise and understandable, and reflect research knowledge about effective professional development.

Strategy #2: Supportive materials and models. To support practical use of these standards/guidelines by providing supportive materials covering the rationale (theory and research), real-life models/examples, discussion questions, action steps, and research references.

Strategy #3: Professional education assessment. To create assessment tools, focusing on the level, quality, and impact of professional education, that can be used routinely to improve this education, in contrast with the usual evaluations that focus on workshop quality only.

Strategy #4: Systems impact. To strategize how the professional education standards can be shaped, adopted, and utilized by key service-learning stakeholders/systems, such as the Corporation for National and Community Service, state departments of education, and school districts. For instance, Learn and Serve America applications might ask for information about how potential grantees propose to use the standards.

Strategy #5: Professional educator learning community. To create structures to support a learning community among those conducting service-learning professional development. These educators have limited opportunities to network with each other regionally and nationally. A “providers network” is needed and will be launched at the National Service-Learning Conference in March 2006.

Since Wingspread, track leaders have organized a workshop at the National Service-Learning Conference where professional educators will create the framework and lay the foundation for work over the next three years in a global applied learning community.

Track Three: Advance efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms.

Track participants revised the guiding question as follows: How can we help advance efforts to align service-learning with educational initiatives and places of stability and power that promote powerful teaching and learning? Track members recommended that this work be assigned to the emerging Service-Learning Leaders Circle, convened by the National Service-Learning Partnership, and that these leaders tackle next steps in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders. Criteria for selecting education reform initiatives or organizations with whom service-learning advocates might work productively include:

- Shared values which maintain the integrity of high quality service-learning
- Potential for deepening the quality of service-learning practices
- Power/clout
- Energy and momentum
- Resources
- Leadership
- Favorable cost-benefit assessments of potential partnerships
- Value-added for field-building.

Examples of educational initiatives, and the track participants who are connected to some of them, follow:

- Curriculum reforms
 - Literacy education: writing, buddy reading, balanced literacy (Cathy Berger Kaye)
 - Civic education (Don Hill, Fred Waldstein, Bernadette Chi)
 - Math/science education
 - Environmental education
- Restructuring Schools
 - High school reform--small schools, internships, culminating projects (Kate McPherson, Miki Evans)
 - Charter schools (Bernadette Chi, Carolyn Gramstorff)
 - Alternative education
 - Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound
- Pre-service/Teacher education
- Alternative/performance assessment
- Afterschool and civic engagement (Ainsley Wallace, Adrian Haugabrook, Gwenda Greene)
- Drop-out prevention
- Youth development/resiliency/social-emotional learning
- Healthy children/health education
- Rural schools and community trust
- Character education (Cathy Berger Kaye)
- Progressive education approaches (visual/performance arts, creative writing, physical education, health education, etc.), using the “Swimmy” strategy (reference to children’s book by this title).

Participants outlined a two-pronged strategy for responding to the No Child Left Behind law: (1) navigate within the current educational context by making it clear that service-learning is a powerful instructional strategy to support standards-based curriculum; provide data to support this assertion; let educators know, “You can meet the mandates of No Child Left Behind without using scripted programs to support high academic achievement;” and (2) support those working to revise this legislation.

Unanswered questions included: How do we mobilize the service-learning community to achieve economies of scale and critical mass in order to promote service-learning as an effective instructional methodology? How should the service-learning field work collaboratively with other groups to advance mutual agendas?

And finally recommendations included: (1) create a statement and plan that reflects this work, using an appropriate feedback process in conjunction with the Leaders Circle and include strategic directions and collaborations to guide the work (Gwenda Greene, Fred Waldstein, Don Hill); (2) identify a subgroup of people to lead this work with the Leaders Circle; and (3) develop a common communication platform for partnering with higher education institutions in supporting the depth and quality of K-12 service-learning practice.

IV. AGENDA

Excellence in Service-Learning Practice

DAY 1: Thursday September 29

3:00 pm **GREETING**

Hospitality time

3:30 pm **GATHERING**

(1) Welcome. Boyd Gibbons III, The Johnson Foundation, and Betsey McGee, National Service-Learning Partnership,

(2) Conference purpose, plan, and processes. Pamela and James Toole, for the Wingspread Planning Committee

Long-term purpose. To improve and make consistent high-quality service-learning practice across all K-12 schools and youth organizations.

Conference purpose. Service-learning is a powerful instructional strategy that requires professional teaching practice. This conference will concentrate on three priorities for increasing service-learning practice excellence:

1. Define the standards and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use
2. Support more and better professional service-learning education opportunities
3. Advance efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms.

Conference plan

Thursday: Lay the groundwork for a common understanding of this conference's focus and work

Friday: Work in three tracks, one for each priorities

Saturday: Coalesce around next steps and a report to our colleagues

Conference process. We will use a mix of participant groupings and work modes.

3:45 pm **CONNECTING**

Who's here? Participant introductions in a community-building activity: Pam and Jim Toole

4:30 pm

PREPARING

Review of the current state of knowledge about service-learning practice, professional education, implementation, and improvement efforts. Jim and Pam Toole presiding, with snapshots (of critical information and opinion) about the *what, why and how* of service-learning practice excellence provided by participants Don Hill, Jeffrey Anderson, Jessica Donner, Wokie Weah, and Nelda Brown. Their remarks will be interspersed with time for discussion in pre-assigned groups of three. This review will consider such questions as:

- What do we mean by service-learning practice excellence?
- What do we know about the impact of service-learning practice on student learning ? What does service-learning research tell us and what we can infer from other bodies of relevant research?
- What is the prevalence and quality of service-learning pre- and in-service professional education, including summer institutes and conferences?
- What professional education approaches foster service-learning practice excellence?
- What do we know about the prevalence and quality of current service-learning implementation?
- What service-learning practice improvement efforts are underway or projected in *Stronger Together: A Common Agenda to Advance Service-Learning*?

6:00 pm

CELEBRATING AND CLOSING

Participants Carole Klopp and Joe Follman introduce Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction, Elizabeth Burmaster, a distinguished state leader for service-learning, who will speak about what she is doing to strengthen the practice of service-learning and how service-learning practice experts can make her job easier. (Her speech will be available for distribution after the conference.) Pam and Jim close the evening

7:00pm

DINING, preceded by Hospitality

DAY 2: Friday September 30

8:30am

REVIEWING

Looking back, looking forward, connecting the first day's insights with the three-tracked work ahead and including a community-building activity: Pam and Jim

9:00am

FOCUSING

Essential question. What do we need to hold in mind so we use this conference well if our intention is to strengthen service-learning practice excellence by focusing on three priorities?

Fishbowl review.

Moderator: Jim Toole introduces field-building as an overarching framework for thinking about the many dimensions of improving practice excellence and presents each of the fishbowl participants who will speak from the perspective of their roles

Members: Marcia Applen and Kathy Lee (teachers), Elyse Eidman-Aadar (leader of a national professional education network), Kathy Thompson (professor), Jon Schmidt (district administrator), Joe Follman (state administrator)

10: 00am

RELAXING-break

11:00am

WORKING

Overarching focus. Working in three tracks to develop actionable next-steps as part of the practice action plan. Jim and Pam presiding. Each track begins with introductions and reflection on the morning “fishbowl.”

TRACK ONE—Defining the standards and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promoting their use

Pam Toole presiding, with Joe Follman and Marcia Applen facilitating the work process (which will be informed by Wokie Weah and Carole Klopp with regard to the draft of new service-learning practice standards).

Essential question. How do we define the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for excellent service-learning practice, and how can we offer such information in a comprehensive yet accessible way to educators?

Track task. This track will focus on two related issues:

1. Defining the standards of high-quality service-learning practice with school-age children. For this first part of our work, we will review and give feedback on a draft of revised service-learning standards developed by a national team working with the National Youth Leadership Council.
2. Outlining the competencies (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) educators will need to attain these standards. For this part, we will study Charlotte

Danielson’s framework for professional teaching practice, discuss the content knowledge and instructional competencies that service-learning practitioners must master, and examine how to offer such information in a comprehensive yet accessible way. This work will result in an initial set of recommendations for follow-up steps regarding:

Recorder. Carole Klopp

TRACK TWO—Supporting more and better professional service-learning education opportunities to ensure practice excellence

Jim Toole presiding, with Kim Huseman and Adrian Haugabrook facilitating.

Essential question. If existing professional education practices are to be strengthened so they adhere more closely to current standards for effective professional education and are thus more likely to produce widespread practice excellence, what standards for professional education are necessary to foster practice excellence? And what are the models of pre- and in-service professional education that adhere to these standards?

Track task. The track’s work will result in an initial set of recommendations, ideas, or templates for (1) a set of professional service-learning education standards and (2) new resources and opportunities that reflect and advance these standards. This second task might include focusing on:

- The development, publication, and dissemination of a new “textbook” positioned as a field “standard” on *how* to teach service-learning--nuts and bolts--for novice, intermediate, and advanced practice,
- New ways to support organizations that are working to increase and improve pre- and in-service education in service-learning practice.
- An in-depth assessment of existing public funding streams that can support in-service education in service-learning,

Recorder. Jonna Justiniano

TRACK THREE—Advancing efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms.

Don Hill presiding, with Kate MacPherson and Vince Meldrum facilitating the work process.

Essential question. How can service-learning help educators with their two most important challenges: student engagement and achievement? What are the contexts where service-learning looks like a strong part of the solution to the pressing problems that educators face? How can we take advantage of these reform niches? (From Don Hill and Carl Glickman)

Track task. Track three participants will examine the essential question and consider “reform niches” involving literacy education, high school reform, after school education, graduation and promotion requirements, and civic education. For instance, the organizations specialized in service-learning practice could meet virtually to plan a convening with a relevant set of national education reform organizations/groups to accelerate the integration of service-learning into mainstream education reformers’ work.

Projected sponsors. Youth Service California, Earth Force, National Service-Learning Partnership, RMC Research Corporation, and other organizations or institutions specialized in service-learning practice and research

Recorder. Bernadette Chi

12:00 pm **DINING**, starting with hospitality

1:15 pm **REFLECTING AND SYNERGIZING**

Pam and Jim introduce the cross-track sharing/feedback loop to be used in the afternoon and participants use it

1: 30pm **WORKING**

Track groups reconvene

3:00 pm **RELAXING (optional tour of Wingspread)**

4:00 pm **WORKING**

Track groups reconvene.

5:00pm **SYNERGIZING AND REFLECTING**

Cross-track sharing/feedback loop, followed by a reflection activity. Pam and Jim preside

6:00pm **CLOSING:** Andy Furco

6:30 pm **RELAXING: Hospitality**

7:00pm **DINING**

DAY 3: Saturday October 1

8:30am **REVIEWING**

Looking back, looking forward, including community-building activity: Pam and Jim

8:45am **WORKING**

Track groups reconvene. Next steps, including desired content for Wingspread report and communications through the Partnership and other organizations specialized in service-learning.

10:30am **RELAXING**

10:45am **SYNERGIZING**

Each track shares a summary of its work at the conference and proposed recommendations, followed by a whole- group dialogue led by Pam and Jim

12:00 noon **REFLECTING AND CLOSING**

Jim and Pam with Nelda Brown (representing the Partnership and Leaders Circle)

12:30pm **DINING**

1:30 pm **ENDING of conference**

V. PARTICIPANTS

TRACK PARTICIPATION

TRACK ONE. Marcia Applen, Jeffrey Anderson, Kathy Bartsias, Shelley Billig, Joe Follman, Andy Furco, Dan Hays, Carole Klopp, Kathleen Lee, Betsey McGee, Pam Toole, Wokie Weah

TRACK TWO. Cathy Berger Kaye, Nelda Brown, Jessica Donner, Marty Duckenfield, Elyse Eidman-Aadahl, Adrian Haugabrook, Barbara Holland, Kim Huseman, Jonna Justiniano, Justin Kornfein, David Makepeace, Jon Schmidt, Kathy Thompson, Jim Toole, Fred Waldstein

TRACK THREE. Bernadette Chi, Teri Dary, Micki Evans, Stacie Goffin, Carolyn Gramstorff, Gwenda R. Greene, Don Hill, Kate MacPherson, Vince Meldrum, Rob Schumer, Marilyn Smith Ainsley Wallace

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VI. BACKGROUND BRIEF

The challenge. Well-implemented service-learning can boost students' engagement in their studies and positively affect many dimensions of their learning and development simultaneously. Yet, while wonderful examples of excellent service-learning exist, the practice is often too weak and too limited in duration to yield the kind of learning outcomes Americans want for school-age children. Now we can draw upon a strong body of education research and practice knowledge to guide us in improving service-learning practice in school and out-of-school settings.

We have embarked on a bold plan of action to strengthen service-learning practice across the nation. We will tackle the following obstacles to practice growth and development because they are interrelated and must be addressed together.

- Information about the standards and competencies required for high-quality service-learning practice is incomplete, dated, and hard to access.
- Opportunities are limited for professional service-learning education that reflects what research tells us is effective.
- Advocates have not capitalized on education reforms conducive to service-learning.

Service-learning leaders have agreed to work on these obstacles by concentrating on three priorities:

- Define the standards and competencies for service-learning practice excellence and promote their use
- Support more and better professional service-learning education opportunities
- Advance efforts to integrate service-learning into related education reforms.

The opportunity. The Johnson Foundation, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, and National Service-Learning Partnership are sponsoring this Wingspread conference. The national planning committee for the conference, working with service-learning leaders across the nation, expects conference participants, a representative group of service-learning specialists and education experts, to use the conference to jump-start work on the three priorities. They will complete an initial round of work on each priority and lay the groundwork for continued work through inter-organizational collaboration on specific projects.

Follow-up work will be coordinated by the National Service-Learning Partnership working with other service-learning and education organizations. Most project work will be spearheaded by one of these organizations. However, all of these projects require additional financial resources.

Standing on the shoulders of others' work. We will draw upon a strong body of education research and practice knowledge to guide our efforts. Taken together, the following five findings can serve as a north star for our efforts. Additional information about these findings, including the reports/articles in which they are described, is footnoted for each.

1. Effective service-learning practice must be rooted in what we know works.ⁱ
2. Good-quality teaching is critical for student achievement.ⁱⁱ
3. Teacher learning is fundamental to improving instruction.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. Instructional innovations must be sufficiently described to inform educators' understanding and action.^{iv}
5. Scaling an instructional innovation successfully requires a multi-dimensional effort that attends to practice depth, spread, sustainability, and ownership.^v

Aiming for wise use of the conference. This conference will allow participants to apply state-of-the-art knowledge to strengthening service-learning practice. The work will support more intensive collaboration among service-learning advocates in order to ensure widespread use of professional service-learning practice. During the second day of the conference, participants will work in *one* of three tracks described in the agenda. Each participant must select his or her track by September 22.

ⁱ “Well-elaborated innovations thus are only a beginning to changing practice, and any attempt at elaboration entails trade-offs between designers’ view of what is essential, and limits on what can be spelled out.”

“For weak elaboration deprived enactors of guidance which might enable them to figure out whether their efforts to enact an innovation were on a reasonable track. That made it easy for enactors to interpret innovations in their inherited, mostly conventional, reference frames, and to hold very limited views of what enactment required of them. The result has been a culture of innovation in which very imperfect information has been self-sealing, protecting most participants from deep awareness of the skimpiness of what they do.”

Instructional Innovation: Reconsidering the Story
D.K. Cohen and Deborah Loewenberg Ball
The Study of Instructional Improvement Working Paper
University of Michigan, 2000

ⁱⁱ “Research shows that professional development leads to better instruction and improved student learning when it connects to the curriculum materials that teachers use, the district and state academic standards that guide their work, and the assessment and accountability measures that evaluate their success.”

“..professional development that is rooted in subject matter and focused on student learning can have a significant impact on student achievement.”

Teaching Teachers
Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement
Research Points, American Educational Research Association
Summer 2005, Volume 3, Issue 1

ⁱⁱⁱ “And the evidence is indisputable: you can’t improve student learning without improving instruction.”
A Delicate Balance
Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement
Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, 2005

iv “The problem of scale in educational innovation can be briefly stated as follows: innovations that require large changes in the core of educational practice seldom penetrate more than a small fraction of American schools and classrooms, and seldom last for very long when they do. By the ‘core’ of educational practice, I mean how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student’s role in learning, how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and classwork.”

Richard Elmore (page 12)
Expanding the Reach of Educational Reforms
Perspectives from Leaders in the Scale-Up of Educational Interventions
Thomas Glennon, Susan Bodily, Jolene Galegher, Kerri Kerr
Rand Education 2004

“...expanding a reform to multiple settings is a necessary, but insufficient condition for scale. That is, scaling up not only requires spread to additional sites, but also consequential change in classrooms, endurance over time, and a shift such that knowledge and authority for the reform is transferred from external organization to teachers, schools, and districts. Thus, I propose a conceptualization of scale comprising four interrelated dimensions: depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership.”

C. E. Coburn (page 29) of *Expanding the Reach of Educational Reforms*

v “at present, research findings indicate that four components of service-learning practice play an important role in students achieving significant and positive outcomes through their service-learning experiences:

- Direct contact between service-learning students and the community members in service-learning projects,
- High-quality student reflection on their work and learning
- A direct connection between students’ service-learning experiences, the academic curriculum students must master, and the standards they must meet; and
- An ‘intentional’ design and implementation, linking service-learning experiences with the student learning they are meant to foster.”

“Research Matters” *Talk It Up* (issue eight, 2004)
Shelley Billig, National Service-Learning Partnership

