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Needs Assessment for the Learn and Serve America Program

L. Richard Bradley

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Needs Assessment
for the
Learn and Serve America
Program

Prepared for
The State of Ohio,
Department of Education

by

L. Richard Bradley, Ph.D.,
1994

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BACKGROUND:

In almost every community there are a wide range of agencies which seek to address what are commonly understand to be *"the needs of the community."* Activities range from caring for the environment to ongoing assistance to those with various disabilities to the more temporary needs for food, shelter, and housing for those whose lives may be in transition due to job loss or change or change in marital status. Yet in spite of the commitment of the dedicated people associated with these agencies, most agency directors and community leaders agree that the needs usually outstrip available resources.

To fill this gap two things will need to happen. First of all, community needs must be more accurately identified so that the most pressing needs are adequately addressed. Having done this, agencies will then need to find more effective ways to recruit and utilize volunteers to assist in meeting these and other needs.

Currently the majority of volunteers come from *community service* programs linked to churches, synagogues, and service groups such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, 4-H, the Lions Club and so on. Programs initiated by these groups have generally had a positive impact on <u>both</u> those who provide the service and those who receive it (Benson, 1991).

Because of the impact these programs have had, particularly on youth, there is a growing effort to link *community-service* opportunities to what happens in schools. This approach, known as *service-learning*, differs from *community-service*, which strictly defined, refers to volunteering done in the community. While the service may be done in a

school setting (i.e, peer tutoring, assisting new students), the term *community service* implies an emphasis on service, and <u>not</u> on any formal, structured learning component.

Service-learning, however, emphasizes a blending of service and learning goals in order that both occur and are enriched by the other. Because the approach of community-based *service-learning* is basic to the program initiatives of **"Learn and Serve America,"** it is of critical importance that schools and communities seek to develop the kinds of collaborative partnerships that will enable them to find new ways to work together. New tools for assessing school and community needs will be necessary in order to find answers to questions such as:

(1) What are the <u>real</u> needs of the community?

(2) What are the existing resources for identifying and
     meeting these needs?

(3) What gaps exist? What <u>could</u> young people do to help?

Equally as important is the identification and clarification of the needs of the schools which are to be involved. This will mean asking questions such as:

(1) What partnerships make sense in view of the school's
     educational mission?

(2) What resources can the school contribute and what
     resources will the school need from the agency?

Finally, it is important to look at possible *service-learning* activities in view of the needs of the students who will be asked to participate. This will mean seeking answers to questions such as:

(1) Who are the students?

(2) What new knowledge and skills do they need to learn?
     Why is it important that they learn these things?

(3) What new behaviors will they need to learn?

(4) What attitudes need to be addressed?

(5) What kinds of service opportunities make sense in light of these considerations?

The relationship between these differing needs can be illustrated as follows:

NEEDS OF

THE SCHOOL

NEEDS OF

THE STUDENT

NEEDS OF THE

COMMUNITY
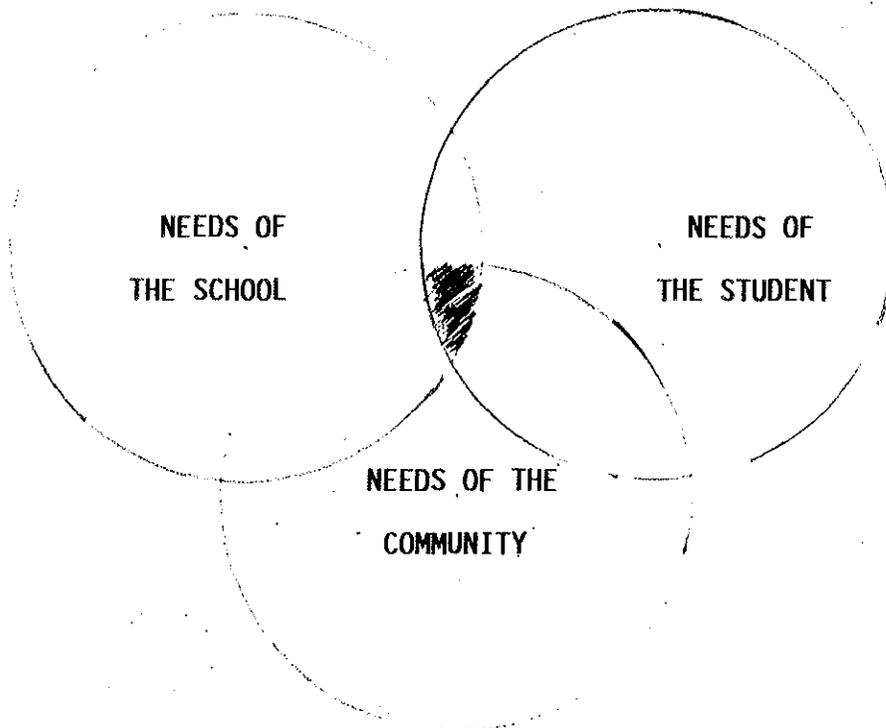
The most effective programs will be those designed around the needs of <u>all three</u> constituencies.

What Is Meant By "Service-Learning?"

Service-learning is an educational strategy whereby young people gain new knowledge and develop new skills through active participation in <u>thoughtfully organized</u> service experiences. These experiences are designed to

* meet <u>actual</u> community needs;

* are <u>coordinated</u> in collaboration with the school and the community;

* are <u>integrated</u> into the student's academic curriculum;

* provide <u>structured time</u> for the student to think, talk, or write about what she/he did and saw during the actual service activity;

* provide students with <u>opportunities</u> to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real-life settings in their own community;

* <u>enhance</u> what is taught in the classroom by extending the learning beyond the classroom into the community; and

* <u>foster</u> the development of a sense of caring for others.

Many of these points are further reinforced by two of the **"Ten Principles for Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning"** (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989).

<u>Principle One</u> states that an effective and sustained program is one which *"engages young people in responsible and challenging action for the common good."* Achieving this educational goal requires students to reach beyond the range of their previous knowledge and experience. This points to the integral relationship between knowledge/skills and service activities. This principle also suggests that, through their service experiences, students will experience the consequences of what they do (or do not do). As a result, they are likely to become more responsible

citizens.

Principle Four states that an effective and sustained program is one which *"allows for those with needs to define those needs."* This principle articulates the importance of timely information about community needs when exploring possible service opportunities. This principle also emphasizes the importance of allowing the other two partners involved in *service-learning* - the school and the students - to help define and shape the final *service-learning* experience so that it meets actual community needs and is meaningful for all those involved.

What Is Meant By "Needs Assessment"?

Needs assessment is usually defined as a strategy or process *"for identifying gaps in results and arranging them in priority for resolution"* (Archer, Cripe, and McCaslin, 1992). These gaps represent disparities between what was planned (what "should" be) and what actually happened. For example, agency XYZ may have, as its stated goal, *"to provide shelter for all homeless individuals desiring it on any given night."* However, a closer review of agency XYZ's records reveals that it routinely has to turn people away for lack of space. Thus, there is a gap between what agency XYZ says it wants to do and what it is actually able to do.

How Can Needs Assessment Be Used?

Needs assessment can be used in several ways (Archer, Cripe, and McCaslin, 1992). First of all, the discrepancy between "what is" and "what was intended" can help to establish objectives for new programs. In the example above, this could lead to programs designed to identify and utilize other emergency housing facilities in the community. Or it might lead to a plan to expand the current facility.

Needs assessment can also be used to select a program strategy. Suppose you are concerned with intergenerational stereotypes. There are a number of possibilities. One strategy would be to have youth visit older adults at a senior center on a regular basis and to involve them in a project of mutual interest (such as beautifying the grounds). Another strategy would be to add a unit on aging to the existing curriculum,

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perhaps complementing textbook material with a visit from a few seniors.

Needs assessment information can also be used to design or modify an existing instructional program. This may be particularly relevant for *service-learning* activities where the goal is to enrich and enhance existing classroom activities by means of a carefully designed service component.

Finally, *needs assessment* can be used to measure progress. To return to the example of agency XYZ, follow-up assessments could be done on an annual basis to see if the steps taken to fill in the gaps were sufficient.

What Are the Advantages of Using Needs Assessment?

Needs Assessment is particularly important for those projects which will involve collaborative planning and action. A major advantage of using this strategy is the generation of new ideas and alternatives for dealing with community needs (Archer, Cripe, and McCaslin, 1992).

Likewise, when resources are scarce, as they often are in community service agencies and schools, beginning the planning process with a *needs assessment* helps to ensure that available personnel, facilities, equipment and funds are utilized in ways that meet real community needs and provide participants with meaningful service opportunities.

Assessing the Needs of the School

In order to find the gaps or discrepancies in a school's current educational program that <u>might be filled in</u> through carefully designed *community-based* youth *service-learning* opportunities, it is important to look carefully at:

* the student population;

* current involvement of students (and teachers) in *community-service* and/or *service-learning*;

* the academic emphasis of the school;

* identified areas of academic need, if any, and desired outcomes;

* resources the school can provide; and

* resources the school will need from the cooperating agency.

It is also important to have a basic idea of <u>how</u> *service-learning* activities will be integrated into the existing curriculum and when students will be expected to perform their service.

As the table entitled **"Youth Service Program Models"** (on the next page) indicates, there are a variety of ways to integrate *service-learning* into the curriculum. The two strategies likely to have the greatest impact on students are

* Instructional Activities in Existing Courses (for example, adding the component of structured interviews with those who lived through World War I to a History class); and

* a Team or School-Wide Theme (for example, having the whole school work on developing a "wetlands" nearby).

It is important to note that projects such as these may initially require considerable planning and effort to implement. An effective alternative if you are just beginning may be to collaborate service opportunities

with the programs of existing community organizations whose needs may parallel those of the school.

What is most important, however, is identifying which model is likely to work best in your school setting, based on a realistic assessment of your school's needs. If, for example, your school (or school district) has recently adopted a mandatory service requirement (for example, 50 hours per student prior to graduation), it may be easier to begin with a community service class and independent credit rather than trying to integrate *service-learning* into the existing curriculum first. Or, if your school has a policy which makes it difficult for students to be "away" from school during school time, then you may have to opt for a co-curricular approach initially.

The questionnaire on pages 12-14 represents one example of how to go about gathering the necessary information about your school. A second example, entitled **"Evaluating Your School's Assets/Needs...,"** found on page 15, represents a different approach (Falk, Fiacco, Genovese, Pomata, Hirsch, Laglenne, Lehr and Vaz, 1994). These could be used individually or together, depending upon the scope of the information needed for planning your *service-learning* program. However, the richer the information available for planning and design, the more likely it is that the final design will fulfill the requirements of meeting <u>actual</u> community needs and providing participants with <u>meaningful</u> service opportunities.

Youth Service Program Models
Alternative Ways to Fit Service-Learning Into the School Organization

Curricular　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Co-Curricular**

Low Infusion → High Infusion (left axis)

No Infusion Into the Curriculum (right axis)

Least Resource Intensive

Independent Credit
Many schools offer students credit for approved independent study. Schools may chose to recognize (and even encourage) students to initiate and pursue community service activities as an independent study class. Some schools have adopted a mandatory independent service requirement (e.g. 50 hours) for graduation, where credit (in some cases) is offered.

Extra Credit
Teachers of regular academic courses often give extra credit assignments. It is entirely appropriate (and possible) to offer service-learning activities for any subject area. Think of ways in which students can apply or practice classroom skills to help others (e.g. P.E. students could help with the Special Olympics; math students could act as peer or cross-age tutors); and biology students could volunteer at a local nature center.

Community Service Class
A Community Service class is sometimes the quickest way to integrate service-learning activities into a secondary school. Students typically spend three to four days of class each week performing service in their school or community (which makes double-period blocks preferable), then meet on the remaining day(s) for ongoing training, supervision, reflection, and reinforcement.

Team or School Wide Theme
An interdisciplinary teaching team, a school, or a whole district can adopt a central service theme (e.g. senior citizens, the homeless, the environment). In such instances, service activities which relate to this chosen theme can be explored across disciplines and/or across grade levels throughout the year.

Instructional Activities in Existing Courses
Service is most strongly infused when it is blended into the regular academic program, as a methodology whereby the instructional goals in the class (e.g. content, critical thinking skills) are realized. One of the most famous examples is the Foxfire program, in which state educational objectives for high school English were met through producing a magazine which documented and preserved the knowledge and culture of traditional, rural Georgians.

Existing Club Activity
The simplest co-curricular approach to service-learning is for students to join existing after-school clubs or co-curricular activities which already perform service work. Some common examples are the Key Club or a National Honor Society peer tutoring program.. Some schools have mandated that all clubs must sponsor two service projects a year.

New Club Activity
Another co-curricular option is to form a new club specifically to meet some service objective. Examples include an Environmental Club, an intergenerational club (one school called this club "Bridge the Gap"), or a Special Friendship Club (to socially integrate students with developmental disabilities).

Volunteer Clearinghouse/ Network
It is also possible to facilitate student participation in service by establishing a school volunteer center or clearinghouse where students can be informed about potential placements. At its most sophisticated level, a volunteer center may have a computer which lists and describes service opportunities, as well as a part-time volunteer coordinator who is informed about possible service placement sites.

Multi-Project After School Program
Schools can run formal co-curricular service programs during out-of-school hours where students can engage in many different types of helping activities. Just like people sign up for athletics, students can participate in a co-curricular youth service program. Training can take place during the summer, at weekend retreats, or after school. Some communities have formed programs which include youth from different schools and neighborhoods working together, and they have made a visible impact on their community.

Involving Community Organizations
Schools share their youth development mission with 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouting, YMCA, and a wide variety of other organizations already located in the community. Schools therefore can collaborate with such community-based organizations (CBO's) to jointly offer a service club.. Programs housed in CBO's may more easily reach youth in some neighborhoods and can offer easy access to community projects.

Most Resource Intensive

SCHOOL PROFILE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

[To be used to identify the school's mission in relation to service-learning].

School Name _____

Address (Street, Zip) _____ Phone _____

Principal (or other service-learning contact person) _____

Best day(s), time(s) to reach _____

A. GENERAL SCHOOL DATA
    1. Grade levels _____ Enrollment _____ Total Staff _____

    2. Classroom teachers _____

    3. Number of classrooms per grade level (elementary only)
        ___ K ___ 1st ___ 2nd ___ 3rd ___ 4th ___ 5th
        ___ SBH ___ DH ___ HI ___ OH ___ LD

    4. Number of students per grade level (middle and high school only)
        ___ 6th ___ 7th ___ 8th ___ 9th ___ 10th ___ 11th ___ 12th

    5. Existing community-service projects, if any, in your school:
        Project   Contact Person

    6. Existing service-learning projects, if any, in your school:
        Project   Contact Person

    7. Parent-Teacher Association (circle one)
        very active   active   inactive

B. ACADEMIC INFORMATION
    1. Describe any special academic emphases that exist in the school.

    2. How does the school's "mission statement" relate to service-learning?

    3. Does the administration of the school district support efforts to introduce service-learning into the school.

C. AREAS OF NEED
    1. To enrich the curriculum. How will service-learning activities being integrated into the curriculum?
        (refer to the "Youth Service Program Models" for ideas)

    2. To reduce at-risk behaviors and disciplinary referrals. How will service-learning help in achieving this goal?

    3. To enhance the image of the school in the community. How will service-learning helping in achieving this goal?

    4. To help students fulfill a mandatory service requirement. In what ways will the school assist students in finding service placements?

D. RESOURCES THE SCHOOL CAN PROVIDE (check all that apply)
    ___ classroom space   ___ teacher training
    ___ drug education   ___ copier
    ___ entertainment   ___ FAX
    ___ computer lab   ___ telephone
    ___ mini-grants
    ___ release time for service activities
        If "yes," when: _____
        If "no," when will students be expected to perform their
                service: _____
    ___ transportation to and from service site
    ___ other: _____

E. RESOURCES THE SCHOOL WILL NEED FROM THE COMMUNITY PARTNER

EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL'S ASSETS/NEEDS TO DETERMINE
HOW NETWORKING CAN ASSIST IN MEETING YOUR SERVICE LEARNING GOALS

Networking involves making connections with other schools and community groups and can lead to:

- sharing of ideas, problems, and solutions
- expanding service opportunities
- establishing relationships between students and teachers, their counterparts in the same or other localities, and community resources locally, regionally, and nationally

As a first step toward determining your networking goals, use the chart below to evaluate the assets/needs of your program or situation.

NETWORKING RESOURCES	ASSETS	NEEDS	HOW NETWORKING CAN HELP	NETWORKING ACTIVITIES
Geographic Location				
Environment				
Transportation				
Money				
Institutional Support				
Institutional Flexibility				
University Linkages				
Cultural/Ethnic Diversity				
Inter-School Linkages				
Intra-School Linkages				
Community Linkages				
Knowledge of Community and Agency Resources				
Knowledge of Community and Agency Perspectives				
Student Volunteer Resources				
School Faculty and Staff				
Your Position				
Time/Scheduling				

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Assessing the Needs of the Students

Although the schools, the communities, and the state gain a great deal from youth community service, it is the young people themselves who gain the greatest benefit. And it is "youth-at-risk" of dropping of school who stand to reap the greatest benefit of all.

In light of this, and in light of the requirement that the service performed be engaging, challenging, and meaningful - not just from the agencies point of view - but also from the student's point of view, it is, therefore, important to consider the needs of the students who will be involved. The assessment of their needs comes from two sources: the first is an assessment of their needs from the perspective of the school, and second an assessment of their needs from their own perspective.

Assessing Student Needs - the School's Perspective

School Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Name of Person Filling Out This Form _____

Best day(s)/time(s) to reach _____

1. What are the ages and grade levels of the students who will be involved?

2. Are the students who will be participating
    ___ "At-risk?" ___ SBH? ___ LD? ___ MH?
    ___ Learning Impaired? ___ physically challenged?
    ___ gifted? ___ regular students?

3. What special needs of the students, if any, will need to be taken into account in planning so that all students will be able to participate meaningfully in the proposed service-learning activity?

4. What special training, if any, will students need so that they can participate meaningfully in the proposed service-learning activity?

5. What gaps in the current academic experience could be filled by offering students the opportunity to participate in service-learning activities?

    a. Gaps in student knowledge and skills:

        * acquisition of factual knowledge (i.e., knowledge
          about the causes of global warming)

        * acquisition of new knowledge (i.e., knowledge about
          the causes of homelessness as part of a unit on
          the Great Depression)

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* application of knowledge (i.e., students using computer, language arts, and interviewing skills to collect and edit stories about life in America in the 1920's)

* acquisition of new skills (i.e., learning how to write lesson plans for younger students)

* application of new skills (i.e., learning how to use those lesson plans in a cross-age tutoring program)

b. Gaps in student attitudes:

* attitudes about themselves, about learning, and about their school and community (i.e., research suggests that participation in service-learning activities generally results in students developing more positive attitudes in each of these areas).

* stereotypes and prejudice about those who are different (i.e., research suggests that participation in cross-cultural and intergenerational service-learning activities generally results in more positive attitudes towards those who are different culturally, racially, ethically, economically, or in age.

* attitudes about the subject itself (i.e., research suggests that participation in service-learning activities usually results in more positive attitudes about the value of the subject to which the service activity is related (i.e., "Life Skills & Home Economics" when skills are tied to projects which help others - such as planning, preparing and serving meals at a local homeless shelter).

c. Gaps in student behaviors

* increased attendance (data from the SEARCH INSTITUTE suggests that students who engage in service to others engage in fewer behaviors that keep them out of school).

* decrease in disciplinary referrals

* decrease in student drop-out rates

[based on criteria set forth by Ralph and Dwyer, 1988]

6. How will student get to and from the service site?
___ school vans or buses   ___ parent volunteers
___ drive themselves   ___ public transportation
___ walk

Assessing Student Needs - the Student's Perspective

Name _____ Age _____

School _____ Grade _____

1. Things I do well and would be willing to share with others (i.e., speak in another language, play a musical instrument, listen, etc.)...

2. How I work best (i.e., alone vs. in groups, managing the details vs. seeing the "big-picture", etc.)...

3. Things I want to work on (i.e., listening skills, writing skills, working with those who are different, etc.)...

4. Things that might limit my effectiveness in serving others (i.e., being shy, very talkative, etc.)...

5. When I grow up I want to be ...

6. My favorite thing to do is ...

7. My least favorite thing to do is ...

8. Issues about which I am concerned in my school or community are...

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Assessing the Needs of the Community

Since one of the goals of *service-learning* is to engage students in service opportunities that meet actual community needs, the needs of the community must be carefully assessed and evaluated before any service activity can be designed. There are basically two ways to assess the needs of your community.

Relying on Others for the Information You Need

The first method involves contacting local service agencies, such as the United Way, and requesting their assessment of community needs (Carmean and Connolly, 1993). A second variation of this method would be having students contact various governmental agencies to see what information they have about needs in your community. For example, the EPA could be contacted to help identify local environmental issues. Similarly, the Department of Natural Resources would be able to help identify issues related to conservation. A third variation would be using a telephone book or a listing provided by the local Chamber of Commerce to identify the agencies which might make suitable partners for the service-learning activities you have in mind.

By contacting these agencies and requesting information on their mission, services they provide, and possible service opportunities, you could determine whether or not there might be a "fit" with your project needs. The benefits of this method are that:

(1) Assessments provided by agencies such as the United Way are updated frequently.

(2) Community needs are typically prioritized by agencies.

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(3)   You can usually find out who is actively working with
       needs related to your proposed project.

(4)   It helps you to locate possible agency partners quickly.

The drawbacks of this method are that:

(1)   There is little or no student involvement in gathering
       and analyzing the information. This eliminates what
       could be a powerful learning experience for the students.

(2)   Certain issues which may be important to life of the
       community (i.e., those related to the environment and
       conservation) may get overlooked.

(3)   It will not typically give you information about issues
       that go beyond the boundaries of your community.

Collecting Your Own Information

The second method involves conducting your own community needs
assessment. This can be done as part of the planning process for your
service-learning project or it can be made an integral part of the
project by having students do the assessment themselves. While there are
a variety of methods for conducting a community needs assessment, the
following models are examples of some of the more commonly used
strategies.

A.   Interviews of local leaders, using questions such as

(1)   The three most pressing issues/problems facing our community
       today are ....

(2)   What do you think can be realistically done to address these
       issues/problems?

(3)   Who do you feel should be responsible for dealing with
       these issues/problems? (Carmean and Connolly, 1993)

(4)   What role, if any, do you think students could play in
       helping to address these issues/problems?

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B.   Community Focus Groups, made up of community leaders from business, human services, government, the elderly, youth, and representatives of any groups which are being considered for potential service projects (Carmean and Connolly, 1993).   These people are brought together in the presence of an impartial facilitator and invited to brainstorm responses to questions such as 1-4 above.

C. <u>60-Minute Community Search</u> (Follman, Watkins, & Wilkes, 1994)

A community search is an excellent way to empower students by having them identify service needs and opportunities near the school. This exercise has the added benefit of identifying sites that, because of their proximity to the school, do not require additional funds or special arrangements for transportation.

<u>STEP ONE: PREPARATION</u>
To prepare you need the following:
*   enthusiastic student volunteers
*   maps of school area - one per group
*   pens
*   *Service Opportunity Profile Worksheets* (see next page)

<u>STEP TWO (30 minutes)</u>:
*   Obtain an up-to-date street map of your school community (from home, a gas station, AAA, the library, etc.).
*   Locate your school on the map and draw a one-mile radius around the campus. Divide the area around the school into "pie" pieces to match the number of areas you will search or the number of groups of students to be sent out.
*   Divide participants into small groups (3-5) - one group for each pie piece.
*   Give each group a copy of the map and ten *Service Opportunity Profile Worksheets.*

<u>STEP THREE: SEARCH (60 minutes)</u>:
*   Each group has an hour to search the community on foot. Look for schools (including your own), retirement homes/senior centers, libraries, hospitals, parks that need work, walls covered with graffiti, businesses that might sponsor group efforts, and any other opportunity that interests participants.
*   Each time you spot a prospect, mark the name and address on a *Service Opportunity Profile Worksheet* and the location on the map.
*   If possible, go inside and tell them about your group. Find out the organization's phone number, a contact person, and other useful information. Record this on a *Service Opportunity Profile Worksheet.*

<u>STEP FOUR: DEBRIEF (15 minutes)</u>:
*   Meet back at the school to debrief. Share your findings with other groups.
*   Use the findings to generate a list of project ideas. Highlight people you met who would be good to speak about their needs.

Service Opportunity Profile Worksheet

Name of agency/business:

Contact person:

Address:

Phone:

Distance from school:

Services provided by agency/business:

Population served:

Languages spoken:

Geographic service area:

Services that are needed/could be done:

Information submitted by:

Date:

Source: Constitutional Rights Foundation, 1992.

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D.   60-Minute Community Mural (Lions-Quest *Skills for Action*, 1994)

This differs from the "60-Minute Community Search" in two ways. First of all, students are kept in the classroom.   Secondly, rather than restrict the search an area within a 1-mile radius of the school, the entire community becomes the focus of the search as students work in small groups to draw a community mural that then serves as a map of the people, organizations, and agencies which deal with various issues in the community.

STEP ONE: PREPARATION
* Brainstorm with students to identify key community issues to be researched
* Maps of community - one per group
* Markers and newsprint

STEP TWO: ORGANIZING GROUPS (30 minutes)
* Obtain an up-to-date make of your community (from home, AAA, local government, library, etc.).
* Locate your school on the map and mark the geographical boundaries of your community.
* Divide the map into four roughly equal quadrants, marking the divisions clearly.
* Divide your class into four groups and explain that each group will be responsible for one of the quadrants on the map.
* Show each group how to utilize phone books, community service directories, and other resources which are available to them to determine the names, locations, and telephone numbers of the service agencies included in their quadrant of the final mural.

STEP THREE: SEARCH (60 minutes)
* Tape the community map - divided into four quadrants - to the wall.
* Using the resources available to them, ask each group to research and then place appropriately colored markers on the site of each agency within its quadrant of the mural.
* Marker should include agency name, location, and phone number.
* Ask groups to use the following color code to identify the mission of agencies:
        - red for those relating to aging and the elderly;
        - blue for those relating to poverty and homelessness;

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- <u>green</u> for those relating to the environment and
conservation; and
- <u>yellow</u> for those relating to those with special needs.

STEP FOUR: DEBRIEFING (15 minutes)
*   Look at the mural as a whole and ask questions like:
    - What issues are well-addressed in the community?
    - Are there any issues needing closer attention?
    - In what ways could we help to address these issues in
    our community?
    - What partnerships seem most logical at first glance
    (location, their mission, what we are studying in
    school, etc.)

E. 60-MINUTE NEWSPAPER SEARCH

Another way to involve your students in identifying local, state, national and/or international needs without taking them out of the classroom is by having them search through newspapers for items of interest to them. This is ideal for a setting where interdisciplinary teaming is already in place or in a setting where teachers would like introduce an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

STEP ONE: PREPARATION
* Obtain enough copies of your local newspaper or USA Today so
  that each student has his/her own copy. In many cases these
  be obtained free of charge, provided that you contact the
  paper's circulation manager ahead of time.
* Markers and newsprint
* Copies of the "Service-Learning Interdisciplinary
  Planning Form" (one per group), (NYLC, 1992)

STEP TWO: ORGANIZING GROUPS (5 minutes)
* Divide class into groups of 5-7 students per group
* Give each group newspaper, newsprint and markers
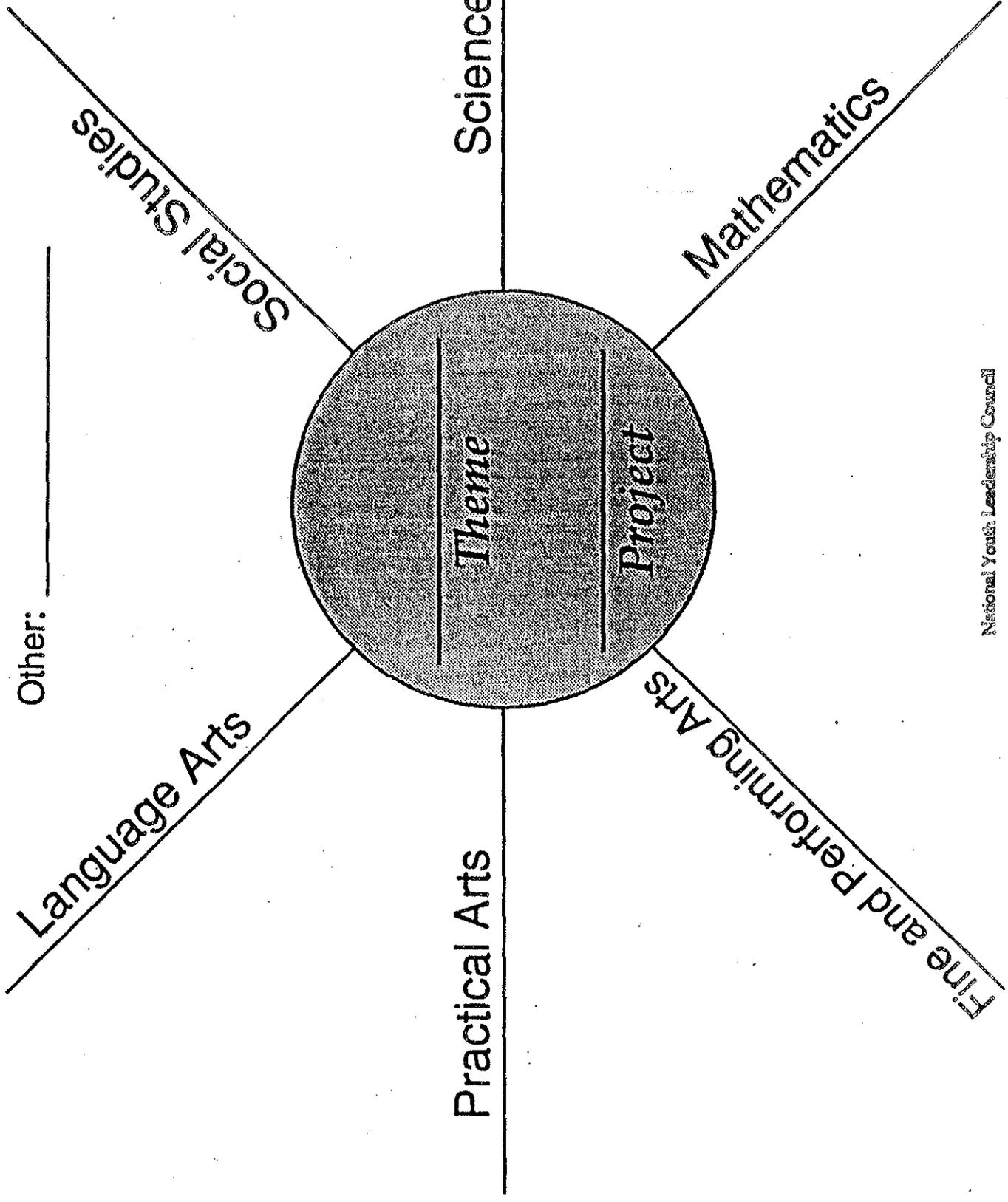
STEP THREE: SEARCH (30 minutes)
* Within their groups each student is instructed to read and
  select 3 articles highlighting issues he/she is
  interested in or concerned about. (Issues do not have
  to be directly related to classroom subjects at this time).
* After each student has completed this, go around the group,
  having one student act as "scribe" and record, without
  comment all issues.
* Go around a second time, seeking consensus on the top
  three issues for each group.
* Each group then shares its list with the entire class and
  posts its list.
* Seek consensus on one issue of interest to the whole
  class.
* Record this issues on the "Service-Learning Interdisciplinary
  Planning Form" under THEME.

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STEP FOUR: DEBRIEFING   (25 minutes)

*   In the large group, brainstorm ways to connect this theme with each of the curriculum areas noted on the *"Service-Learning Interdisciplinary Planning Form."*
*   From the list of possibilities, select a possible project, noting the ways in which it could be connected to the existing curriculum.
*   Working with the teaching team, begin to identify the next steps needed to turn the idea into an actual service activity.

Service-Learning Interdisciplinary Planning Form

Other: _____

Social Studies

Language Arts

Science

Mathematics

Practical Arts

Fine and performing Arts

Theme

Project

National Youth Leadership Council

F. INDIVIDUALIZED STUDENT RESEARCH

This approach could be utilized to take the next steps in analyzing the data gathered in either the "60-Minutes Community Search" or the "60-Minute Community Mural." It would also be suitable for a specific class (for example, Social Studies) in which planning for possible service activities is an integral part of the activity. Based on guidelines provided by the teacher, students are asked to do the research necessary to complete the *"Research Summary and Conclusions Student Handout."* (Lions-Quest, *Skills for Action*, 1994).

Research Summary and Conclusions
Student Handout

1. Name: Class:

2. Research Question/Issue:

3. Answer:

4. I have consulted these sources (For printed sources, include author(s), name(s), title, page numbers, publisher, and date of publication):

5. Other people and/or groups currently addressing this issue:

6. I learned that these needs have not been met:

7. The following service-learning activities might address these unmet needs:

8. For a service-learning project I recommend:
    Remember: our service-learning experience must:
    * address a real local, statewide, national or worldwide need.
    * not duplicate the efforts of another group.
    * interest class members.
    * require little or no money.
    * be achievable within the time available.

9. The advantages of this service-learning experience are:

10. The disadvantages of this service-learning experience are:

Conclusions

For the purposes of planning __meaningful__ *service-learning* activities which meet __actual__ community needs, inter-relationships between the needs of the school, the student, and the community can be represented by the matrix shown below.
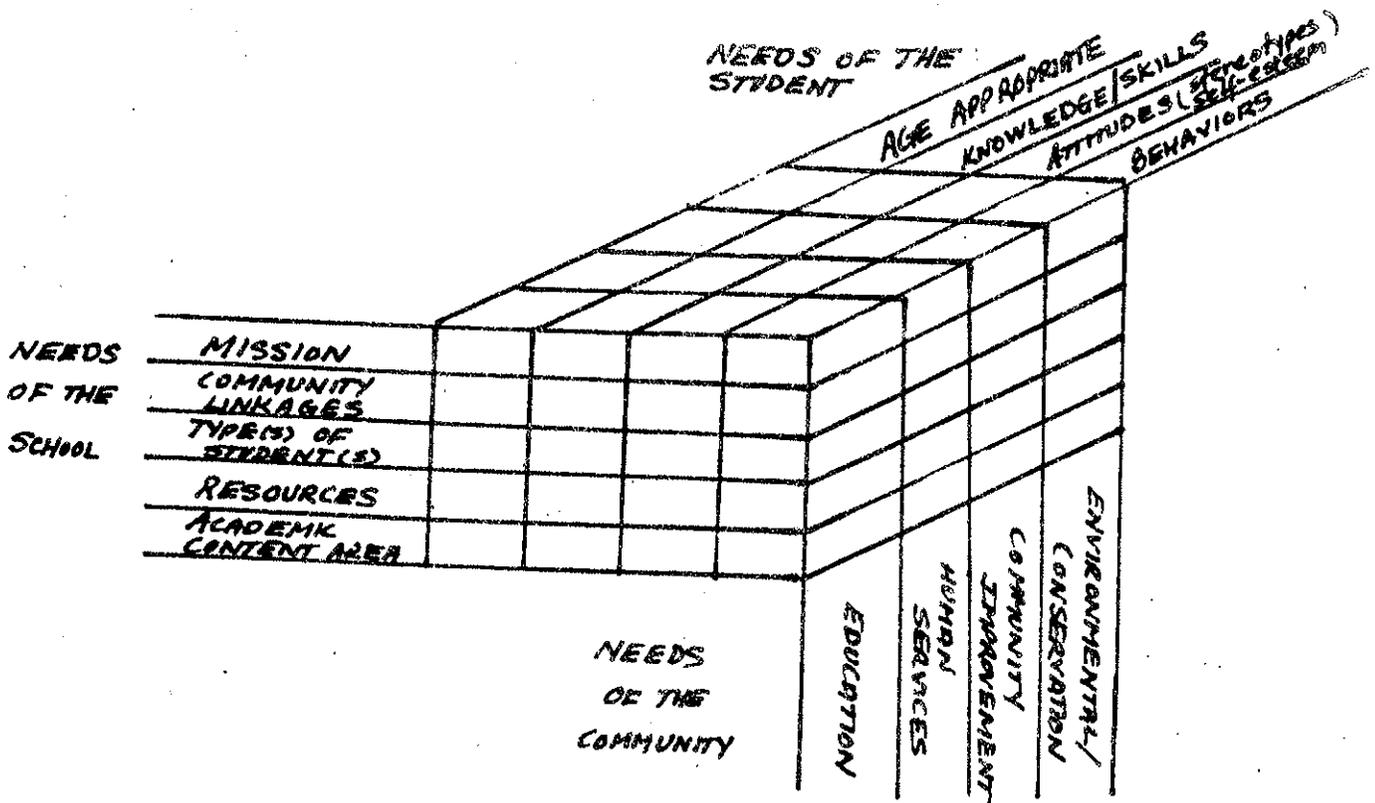
Service-Learning Planning Matrix

How could this matrix help you in your planning and design? The examples on the following pages will help to bring the matrix to life.

Example One

Needs of the School:
* 7th grade Social Studies class studying the causes of the Great Depression

Needs of the Student:
* Age appropriate activities for 7th graders
    - **high structure**
    - **experiential**
* Knowledge and Skills
    - Causes of the Great Depression
    - Causes and Effects of Poverty
    - Causes and Effects of Homelessness
    - Application of "Home Ec/Life Skills" in a real world setting
* Attitudes
    - Reducing stereotypes regarding poverty and homelessness
* Behaviors
    - value of helping others
    - working with others to address a community need
    - caring

Needs of the Community: *Human Services*
* Shortage of volunteer help at a local shelter for homeless men.

Combining these needs resulted in the "Jones Open Shelter Project."

Key components of the program include:

* A pre-test on "Attitudes Toward the Homeless" given in December before the project begins
* Following this, the Director of the Shelter visits the school to talk with classes about poverty and homelessness
* Next is a video on homelessness (all of this happens in December)
* During the months of January and February, teams of students visit the Open Shelter once a week for four weeks. Students ride public transportation to and from the Shelter.
* Activities at the Shelter include cleaning, sorting clothes, talking with the men, painting and planning and preparing a number of hot lunches.
* Upon completion of the program students retake the "Attitudes Toward the Homeless" inventory.
* Students are also expected to complete a final project on what they learned. This can take a variety of forms. These have included presentations to other students, presentations in a public setting, advocacy on behalf of the homeless, and photo displays.

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Example Two

Needs of the School:
* Elementary school with an interdisciplinary emphasis, including science, math, and language arts.
* Developing a "wetlands" adjacent to the school as an ongoing/ hands-on science lab for all the students at the school.

Needs of the Student:
* Age appropriate activities for students in grades 1-5
  - **high structure**
  - **experiential**
* knowledge and skills
  - What is a "wetland?"
  - What plants and animals live in a wetland?
  - How can we turn the land adjacent to our school into a wetland?
  - Involves application of science, math and writing skills in a real world setting
* Attitudes
  - Developing an appreciation of nature
  - Understanding our place in the environment
* Behaviors
  - Learning how to work with younger and older people
  - Learning how to work as teams
  - Learning responsibility

Needs of the Community: *Environmental/Conservation*
* To redevelop a vacant lot adjacent to the school

Combining these needs resulted in a school-wide program which also involved significant assistance from college students and older adults, as well as substantial contributions from area businesses. Key components of the project included:

* surveying the land and developing a cite plan (done with the assistance of landscape architect students from OSU)
* studying the characteristics of a wetland (science)
* growing some plants from seed in order to study the process
* contacting local nurseries and others for donations (writing)
* planting/watering and ongoing care of plantings (science/math/ writing)
* writing "thank you" note to everyone - parents, college students, other adults, and businesses - who helped out

Dream a little, plan a lot, find the right community connections and you, too, can have a project that looks every bit as good as this one.

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RESOURCES

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