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# Service Learning Standards: Draft Interim Content and Performance Standards

California Department of Education

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# SERVICE LEARNING STANDARDS

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DRAFT INTERIM  
CONTENT AND  
PERFORMANCE  
STANDARDS

SUPERINTENDENT'S CHALLENGE INITIATIVE  
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## THE CHALLENGE INITIATIVE

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### INTRODUCTION

The Challenge School District Reform Initiative calls on California's educators and parents to embrace a simple but powerful concept: school districts must set high content and performance standards for student achievement—stating clearly and publicly what each student should know and be able to do at the end of each year in each subject area. Schools are challenged to hold themselves accountable for results, reporting precisely how well their students are achieving and how many students are meeting the school district standards.

To further the Challenge Initiative, the following Draft Interim Content and Performance Standards, "Challenging Standards for Student Success," have been developed in language arts, mathematics, history-social science, science, health education, physical education, visual and performing arts, foreign language, applied learning, service learning, and career preparation. Each set of standards includes an introduction, standards by grade level, examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standards, and samples of specific activities or tasks that give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the standards. Some sets of standards also include samples of student work that meet the standards, and a few have short commentaries on these samples.

The draft Challenge Standards are a product of collaboration among representatives of school districts interested in the Challenge Initiative, curriculum specialists, teachers, and California Department of Education staff. Small working groups began the initial development of the standards in October 1995 and work on them continues, using as a basis the national standards including those from the New Standards Project; school district standards; California curriculum frameworks; and *Every Child a Reader* and *Improving Mathematics Achievement for All California Students*, the Superintendent of Public Instruction's 1995 task force reports on reading and mathematics. In December 1995 the working groups submitted their drafts to the California Department of Education. The complete set of draft Challenge Standards was distributed to representatives of the school districts interested in the Challenge Initiative at a meeting in Sacramento on December 14, 1995.

Several national and state reform efforts promote the development of standards. The New Standards Project, for example, builds on content standards developed by national professional organizations to design an assessment system based on world-class standards of student performance. Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) requires school districts to measure student progress toward achieving rigorous state content and performance standards. California Assembly Bill 265, enacted in 1995, also requires the California State Board of Education to adopt academically rigorous statewide content and performance standards.

As part of the Challenge Initiative, participating school districts will now begin to (1) determine how the draft Challenge Standards relate to local standards, (2) gather samples of student work related to each standard, and (3) examine the student work to determine whether or not students are able to meet each standard.

When completed, the content and performance standards will establish a clear set of expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level. These standards are in draft form and continue to be refined. Therefore, any comments are appreciated. General comments and questions about the draft Challenge Standards may be directed to the Assessment Office at (916) 657-3011. Specific comments and questions may be directed to the individuals listed below.

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## SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS

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### INTRODUCTION

A consistent theme in the California frameworks and the grade span taskforce reports has been a call for creating a “thinking-meaning centered curriculum.” This curriculum is based upon the content detailed in the frameworks and delivered in a way that provides for a powerful teaching and learning experience for all students and teachers. This focus has opened the door for all stakeholders to experiment with new instructional methodologies that will satisfy these content and delivery expectations. A teaching methodology known as “service-learning” is gaining popularity as a method to improve student performance in achieving content and curricular goals.

Service-learning, as defined by the *National and Community Service Trust Act (1993)* and adapted for this report, is “an innovative instructional strategy that actively involves youth in the curriculum through service to their community.” Service learning differs from traditional community service activities in that it intentionally integrates the experience with the curriculum. Service-learning requires student participation in organized service that is coordinated with an elementary, middle, or high school and the community. In addition to fostering civic responsibility and individual development, service-learning allows the student to make meaning of the curriculum through participation in the design and implementation of a service-learning project and by taking time to reflect on the experience.

Service-learning can be incorporated into all disciplines and provides a strategy to integrate curriculum across the content areas. The following five standards provide what students should know and be able to do as a result of their participation in a service-learning activity or project. The examples accompanying each standard may relate only to that standard. All five standards should be addressed in every service-learning activity, so the reader must keep in mind that the five standards work in concert to create a powerful teaching and learning experience. The section entitled “Samples of specific activities or tasks that give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the standard” provides complete examples of specific service-learning assignments that incorporate all five standards.

# SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS

## GRADES K-5

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### STANDARD 1:

Students will understand how the needs of the community are identified or, when appropriate, will identify the needs of the community. Based on demonstrated understanding of these needs, students will actively participate in thoughtfully organized service that addresses the needs of the community as identified by the assessment. (Note: The school may be defined as the community.)

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#### **Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- School personnel determine that a school beautification project is needed to build a sense of community pride and improve the physical surroundings of the neighborhood. A third grade class distributes a written opinion survey to their peers and teachers and are responsible for tabulating the results; based on a written opinion survey information, the class designs, plans, creates and maintains a garden behind the school.
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### STANDARD 2:

Students will develop, acquire, and demonstrate curricular knowledge and skills through participation in an integrated service-learning experience.

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#### **Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students utilize skills and knowledge acquired in their mathematics curriculum to assist other students in a peer tutoring or cross-age learning service-learning experience. Students expand and enhance communication skills by using oral and written communication when providing assistance to people in a nursing home.
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### STANDARD 3:

Students will understand the relationship between school and community and the value of school-community partnerships. Students and teachers will collaborate with individuals and organizations in the community, when appropriate, to develop and implement meaningful service-learning experiences that reflect their understanding of school and community resources.

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#### **Example of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Fourth grade students are paired with "buddies" who live in a convalescent wing of a veterans' hospital. Students read to patients and transcribe letters to family members for those that need assistance; teachers and hospital staff cooperatively design curriculum for students on important lessons on topics such as local and national history, aging, nutrition, and technology.
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**STANDARD 4:**

Students will understand and demonstrate civic responsibility through participation in a service-learning activity which improves the quality of life in the community.

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**Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- As a lesson in weights and measurements, first grade students sort large quantities of rice and dry beans into smaller portion-size bags for a local food bank; as a field trip, the students visit the food bank and help to distribute the bags of food they sorted.
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**STANDARD 5:**

Students will understand and reflect upon the significance of their service-learning experience, and how applying these skills and knowledge affects them as individuals, their own learning, and the community.

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**Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students respond to assigned questions and topics about the significance of their activities to themselves and others.

**Samples of specific activities or tasks that give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the standard:**

As part of their restructuring efforts, an elementary school's needs assessment reflects that second grade students are performing below grade level in mathematics. In response to the needs reflected by the assessment, fifth grade math students provide tutoring services for second grade students in need of assistance. The fifth grade students collaborate with their teacher, the second grade teachers, and college students enrolled in a teacher education program to design and organize the service-learning experience. In addition, the fifth graders work with campus personnel, community members, and high school students exploring a teacher preparation career pathway to staff the school's after-school care program for latch-key students. The fifth grade students use their understanding of mathematical skills and concepts to assist younger students on math activities in the computer lab. The tutors maintain a detailed journal that reflects the changes experienced by the second grade students they tutor. In class, the fifth grade students role play situations and discuss mathematical concepts they did not know how to handle. As a class, they brainstorm alternative solutions that will enable them to become better tutors in the future.

In response to a need expressed by community members, an elementary school weaves an ongoing service project with the elderly at a nearby senior care facility into the science and social studies curriculum of a fourth grade class. In science, the students study human anatomy and the aging process; in social studies, the students organize a "fashion show" for their elderly friends using Native American apparel and jewelry which they study as part of California history curriculum. Activities such as reading to their senior friends and transcribing letters to family members for those that need assistance reinforce the reading and writing skills and abilities of the fourth grade students. The students create a video scrapbook that reflects what they experience and accomplish through their service-learning activities.

# SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS

## GRADES 6–8

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### STANDARD 1:

Students will understand how the needs of the community are identified or, when appropriate, will identify the needs of the community. Based on demonstrated understanding of these needs, students will actively participate in thoughtfully organized service that addresses the needs of the community as identified by the assessment. (Note: The school may be defined as the community.)

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#### **Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students analyze a current school restructuring local needs assessment of incoming sixth graders that shows sixth grade students are performing below grade level in reading. Based on the needs assessment, eighth grade language arts students provide cross-age tutoring services in reading for the younger students in need of assistance.
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### STANDARD 2:

Students will develop, acquire and demonstrate curricular knowledge and skills through participation in an integrated service-learning experience.

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#### **Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Seventh and eighth grade band students provide instrumental music tutorial support to fourth and fifth graders from a school that has had to cut back on its music program.
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### STANDARD 3:

Students will understand the relationship between school and community and the importance of school-community partnerships. Students and teachers will work in collaboration with individuals and organizations in the community, when appropriate, to develop and implement meaningful service-learning experiences that reflect their understanding of school and community resources.

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#### **Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Science students plan and implement an on-going school-based recycling program. The students recruit representatives from the local recycling center as mentors as they develop and maintain their own recycling program. The recycling center assists by providing some supplies, and educational materials. Students work with teachers to create valuable lessons in environmental science and ecology.
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**STANDARD 4:**

Students will understand and demonstrate civic responsibility through participation in a service-learning activity which improves the quality of life in the community.

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**Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students in a social studies class locate a local food bank that serves needs to the home bound.
  - Students assist in preparing and packaging the meals including those for the recipients that have special dietary requirements. Students "in pairs" assist in the delivery of the meals and include a special item of interest in the meal packages, e.g., artwork, news magazine, personal note, photos.
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**STANDARD 5:**

Students will demonstrate understanding of and reflect upon the significance of their service-learning experience, and how applying these skills and knowledge affects them as individuals, their own learning, and the community.

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**Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students will create and perform a skit or presentation about what happened at the service site, including how and what they contributed to the community through their service-learning experience.
- In small groups, students will discuss meaningful questions and issues based upon their experiences doing service work.

**Samples of specific activities or tasks that give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the standard:**

Middle school students survey their school community to determine the needs associated with a school beautification project. They hope to build a sense of community pride and improve the physical surroundings of the school and neighborhood. A seventh grade science class works with their teachers and staff members from local conservation organizations to design, create, and maintain a garden located in a deserted lot in the back of the school. This becomes an on-campus community garden that consists of native California plants and ecosystems and is used as a focal point for the study of geology, ecology, and agriculture. Staff members from the conservation agency assist the class by providing supplies and educational materials. Based upon their service experience, students learn valuable lessons in local environmental science, geology, agriculture, and ecology and participate in small group discussions about other environmental issues that affect them.

In conjunction with the middle school's project-based curriculum, students participate in a six-week project on city planning. Students survey neighborhood needs, visit utility sites around the city, and invite city officials to speak in their classes. As a service project, the students decide to improve services and safety in their school community by designing wheelchair accessible ramps. While enhancing written and oral communication skills, students learn geometry through the process as they design the ramps with the assistance of parents, community members, and professional architects and city planners. Students write essays that reflect their service-learning experience and the issues of accessibility in their own school and community.

# SERVICE-LEARNING STANDARDS

## GRADES 9–12

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### STANDARD 1:

Students will understand how the needs of the community are identified or, when appropriate, will identify the needs of the community. Based on demonstrated understanding of these needs, students will actively participate in thoughtfully organized service that addresses the needs of the community as identified by the assessment. (Note: The school may be defined as the community.)

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#### **Example of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- A class studying construction technology conducts a community needs assessment; as a result of their survey, students design and implement a building restoration project to benefit a local park; students use resources both within the school and community, such as the office of parks and recreation, to assist in their efforts.
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### STANDARD 2:

Students will develop, acquire, and demonstrate curricular knowledge and skills through participation in an integrated service-learning experience.

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#### **Example of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students in an advanced Spanish course practice second-language acquisition, writing, and speaking skills while volunteering at local health care facilities and human service agencies that primarily serve Spanish-speaking clients; students serve as translators and assist clients by helping to complete registration forms and by providing instructions and information related to their care and treatment.
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### STANDARD 3:

Students will understand the relationship between school and community and the value of school-community partnerships. Students and teachers will work in collaboration with individuals and organizations in the community to develop and implement meaningful service-learning experiences that reflect their understanding of school and community resources.

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#### **Example of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- As part of a health careers pathway, students volunteer at a local senior center by organizing a flu shot clinic for senior citizens; under the direction of their teacher, students identify local physicians and collaborate with representatives from the health department to organize the clinic, and monitor the registration process; students provide follow-up instructions and information regarding possible client reactions.
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**STANDARD 4:**

Students will understand and demonstrate civic responsibility through participation in a service-learning activity which improves the quality of life in the community.

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**Example of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- U.S. government students expand their understanding of the various aspects of American democracy and the importance of citizenship. Students distribute voter registration materials and organize a public information campaign on the importance of "The Vote."
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**STANDARD 5:**

Students will demonstrate understanding of and reflect upon the significance of their service-learning experience, and how applying these skills and knowledge affects them as individuals, their own learning, and the community.

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**Examples of the types of work students should be able to do to meet the standard:**

- Students maintain on-going journals reflecting on their service-learning experiences.
- Students construct a detailed timeline of the service-learning experience which reflects the changes experienced over time.
- Students role play a situation that occurred at their volunteer placement site that they did not know how to handle, and present alternative ways they could have handled the same situation.

**Samples of specific activities or tasks that give students the opportunity to demonstrate that they can meet the standard:**

In an urban high school, science classes for limited-English proficient students study geology, including lessons on earthquakes and plate tectonic theory. The classes visit an office for emergency disaster management to understand the scale of natural disasters. In world history, students study curriculum which chronicles the societal effects and impact of earthquakes and other natural disasters over time. While the students work with agency staff to raise awareness in a community that has not historically been prepared for natural disaster, they reinforce their literacy in English-language arts, science, history, and business technology. Students use this information to gather materials for earthquake preparedness kits in the languages reflected in their community. In English-language arts class, the students work with their teacher and community members to compile and develop information and instructions in both English and Spanish. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to utilize computer knowledge and publication production skills. The students travel in teams with representatives from the natural disaster relief office to distribute kits to residents in their neighborhoods. Students create and perform presentations to the faculty, school board, and local civic organizations that reflect their knowledge about earthquakes, the importance of preparedness, and how their experience benefits the community.

A high school American Democracy class selects an overriding theme of poverty for the semester-long course. After brainstorming issues related to the theme, students select independent agencies at which they will volunteer throughout the semester as part of the classroom learning experience. The teacher and staff from the local volunteer center help students to identify service-learning placements that match course standards and community needs with the students' interest. Students volunteer in small groups at after-school tutoring programs, child-care centers, soup kitchens, and food banks in nearby low-income neighborhoods. Throughout the semester, the teacher assigns readings related to the theme. Each student writes a term paper and maintains a journal on her/his volunteer experience and how it relates to the course standards and theme. Each small group of students works with agency staff members to plan, organize, and facilitate a presentation and discussion on their service-learning experience in the context of poverty and American democracy.