Service-Learning Dipsticks

A Project Assessment Tool

Teachers who are developing or implementing a service-learning project often ask, “How do I know if this project is an effective one? What makes for high quality service projects?” In response to these questions, a group of experienced service learning practitioners helped the Service Learning 2000 Center staff develop the Service-Learning Dipsticks as a quick and easy way to assess service-learning project ideas and actual existing projects.

In their work with thousands of teachers over the years, the Service Learning 2000 Center staff has found that successful service-learning programs have seven elements in common: integrated learning, high quality service, effective collaboration, ongoing student voice, promotion of civic responsibility, multiple opportunities for reflection, and intentional evaluation. The dipsticks elaborate on each of these seven elements, and ask you to make judgments about your own service-learning project.

When you follow the dipstick process, you will end up with a visual picture of the strengths of your service-learning project and the areas that might benefit from more attention. The final picture is meant to be only a rough measure. If you choose to make changes in your project, go slowly. The best service-learning projects grow and develop over a number of years.

We hope you find this tool helpful in developing high quality service-learning. If you have suggestions for improving it, please let us know.
Components of Integrated Learning

Place check marks next to each of the components of Integrated Learning according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is strong in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is present but weak in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is missing in this service-learning project

____ The service-learning project has clearly articulated knowledge, skill or value goals.

____ The knowledge, skill or value goals arise from broader classroom and school goals.

____ The service informs the academic learning content.

____ The academic learning content informs the service.

____ Life skills learned outside the classroom are integrated back into classroom learning.

____ Total number of check marks.

Enter this number in the Integrated Learning box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of High Quality Service

Place check marks next to each of the components of High Quality Service according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is **strong** in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is **present but weak** in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is **missing** in this service-learning project

___ The service responds to an actual community need.

___ The need is recognized by the community impacted by the service.

___ The service is age-appropriate.

___ The service is well-organized.

___ The service is designed to achieve significant benefits for students and community.

___ **Total number of check marks.**

Enter this number in the **High Quality Service** box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of Collaboration

Place check marks next to each of the components of Collaboration according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is strong in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is present but weak in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is missing in this service-learning project

_____ The service-learning project is a collaboration among as many of these partners as is feasible: students, parents, community-based organizations, businesses, school administrators, teachers, and the people on whose behalf the service is done.

_____ All partners are involved in the planning of the service-learning project.

_____ All partners contribute to the service-learning project.

_____ All partners benefit from the service-learning project.

_____ Roles and expectations of each partner are clearly defined.

_____ Total number of check marks.

Enter this number in the Collaboration box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of Student Voice

Place check marks next to each of the components of Student Voice according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is **strong** in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is **present but weak** in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is **missing** in this service-learning project

___ Students engage in a process that leads them to define “community” and “need.”

___ Students are involved in choosing and planning the service project.

___ Students participate actively in the collaboration among the project’s partners.

___ Students are involved in planning the reflection sessions, evaluation, and celebration.

___ Student voice is age-appropriate.

___ Total number of check marks.

Enter this number in the **Youth Voice** box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of Civic Responsibility

Place check marks next to each of the components of Civic Responsibility according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is strong in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is present but weak in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is missing in this service-learning project

___ The service-learning project promotes young people’s responsibility to care for others and to contribute to the community.

___ The service-learning project helps students understand the historical and community context of their actions.

___ By participating in the service-learning project, students understand how they can impact their community.

___ Students use critical thinking skills to analyze their project and the related issues.

___ The service-learning project provides opportunities for students to connect with adult role models.

___ Total number of check marks.

Enter this number in the Civic Responsibility box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of Reflection

Place check marks next to each of the components of Reflection according to the following scale:

2 checks: the component is **strong** in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is **present but weak** in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is **missing** in this service-learning project

___ Reflection occurs before, during, and after the service-learning project.

___ Reflection activities utilize multiple techniques so all students can successfully reflect.

___ Reflection examines the results, processes and relationships in the service-learning project.

___ Reflective activities help participants consider the social and ethical dimensions of their experience.

___ Reflection establishes connections between students’ service experiences and the academic curriculum.

___ **Total number of check marks.**

Enter this number in the **Reflection** box at the bottom of the last page.
Components of Evaluation

Place check marks next to each of the components of the Evaluation according to following scale:

2 checks: the component is strong in this service-learning project
1 check: the component is present but weak in this service-learning project
0 checks: the component is missing in this service-learning project

_____ The evaluation has a clear purpose and target audience.

_____ All the partners, especially students, are involved in evaluating the service-learning project.

_____ The evaluation seeks to measure progress towards the learning and service goals of the service-learning project.

_____ The evaluation uses tools that respect the diversity of learning styles.

_____ The evaluation is planned before the project happens, rather than afterward.

_____ Total number of check marks.

Enter this number in the Evaluation box on the bottom of the last page.
Service-Learning Dipsticks

When you have transferred the numbers from the previous pages to the boxes below each dipstick, use a pencil, pen, or marker to fill in each dipstick up to the corresponding level. The result will give you a visual picture of the strengths of the service-learning project as well as the areas that might benefit from more attention.

Project Name: ____________________________________________
Your Name: ___________________________  Today’s Date: __________

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

Integrated Learning  High Quality Service  Collaboration  Student Voice  Civic Responsibility  Reflection  Evaluation