Galion City Schools Community Service Program

Historically, public schools have engaged students in service and service-learning experiences. Educators, from the inception of public schools as noted by John Dewey, have sought to connect students to their local and global communities through service projects as a tool to promote engagement and achievement.

Galion City Schools wants to become a national leader in service-learning, therefore a need for unity and shared vision required research of service-learning practitioners. Learning in Deed is a national initiative, supported by the National Service Learning Partnership, which works to make service-learning a pan of every K-12 student's experience. Galion City Schools will embraces the Learning in Deed definition of service-learning:

*Service-learning is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to die real world; they then reflect on their experience to reinforce die link between their service and their learning.*

Beginning with the class of 2020, service-learning will be identified as a requirement for all students. Each year, students will be required to preform 15 hours of service yearly. The project provided to the community is to address needs such as hunger, homelessness, pollution, and discrimination or other ideas and needs based on our community. By engaging in these experiences, students meet existing core curricular goals using a "hands-on" approach to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real community problems. Well-designed service-learning projects meet local, state and national education goals, including those outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and ESSA of 2016.

Although Galion City Schools may be the first local district to have this requirement, the district is not alone in acknowledging the beneficial impact of service-learning on students' civic knowledge and engagement, academic success, character, and social development. Many private schools and public school districts across the nation have service or service-learning requirements, and other states have added or are in the process of adding service, learning to their state education plans. The National Youth Leadership Council published a report entitled Growing to Greatness 2004 illuminating the growing impact of service-learning in the nation. According to the report, 69 percent of K-12 public schools across the country engage students in community service, and 30 percent of schools engage students in service, Learning. Nine out of ten principals in schools chat offer service Learning report chat it has a positive impact on civic engagement, personal and social development, and school-community partnerships. According to Growing to Greatness 2004, approximately 4,500,000 K-12 students are involved in some form of curriculum-based service nationwide.

Because each student may have unique academic and community needs, service-learning programs are designed either individually, small group, or organization. Our district require students to complete at least a portion of their requirement by engaging in individual service-learning in the community. Nationally most school districts use service-learning as a teaching strategy, and service-learning is infused into the existing curricula, which allows students to use their academic skills to solve real community problems. Using lessons learned during implementation, school systems are encouraged to review and revise their plans. Using overall report criteria, committees generated commendations and recommendations for each system.

By adding experiential, community-based service activities to existing curricula, teachers enhance their students' learning. In most cases, students complete the various components of service-learning as part of their regular school day. In some cases, students carry out one or more elements of service-learning as part of a class, and they perform the remaining piece(s) on their own. For example, they might study the effects of aging and the issues of isolation of the elderly as part of their science class and visit a nursing home and work with the residents after the school day ends or on weekends.

Galion City Schools will require that students conduct independent service-learning projects to fulfill part of the graduation requirement. In our systems, students are given guidelines indicating how much service is expected and which organizations are appropriate sites for service. Students perform service-learning projects in the community, independent of their school and keep track of the hours of service in which they engage. They are required to document how they have prepared for their project and reflected on the experience. School staff members review these experiences with students.

Service-learning has been embraced nationally as an effective, experiential instructional strategy that allows students to apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world. It makes the curriculum relevant and accessible to students through hands-on activities that help students better understand how their communities work, how they can become actively involved in making community improvements, and how to tackle difficult community problems.

**QUALITY PRACTICES**

The Seven Best Practices of Service Learning.

What makes a project meaningful and effective?

Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning

1. Address a recognized need in the community.

2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience.

4. Develop student responsibility.

5. Establish community partnerships.

6. Plan ahead for service-learning.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for civic engagement.

All service, Learning experiences should meet ALL of the Seven Best Practices of Service Learning. The descriptions of each best practice and following examples provide clear expectations for the creation of quality service-learning experiences. The examples do a particularly good job illustrating a specific best practice, but it should be noted that these examples meet all of the Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning.

**1. Address a recognized need in the community.**

A community need is identified and participants engage in meaningful and personally relevant activities to address that community need. Project goals and community needs will dictate the project's duration and intensity. The Corporation for National and Community Service categorizes community needs as those related to health, education, environment, or public safety. Galion's service-learning requirement adheres to that categorization of community needs. Students may engage in direct, indirect, or advocacy projects:

Direct Service: Students have face-to-face contact with the service recipients. Examples include tutoring other students, serving meals at a homeless shelter, working with the elderly in a nursing home, etc.

Indirect Service: Students perform a service without having face-to-face contact with the recipient. Usually resources are channeled to help alleviate a problem. Examples include food and clothing drives, marathons or fundraisers, environmental projects, etc.

Advocacy: With the goal of eliminating the cause of a particular problem, students educate others about a particular issue. Examples include writing letters to legislators or editors, preparing and displaying posters to an identified audience, writing and performing informative plays or creating educational materials for other target group. etc.

Participating in a variety of types of service is beneficial for students' social and civic development. A significant portion of a student's service-learning experience should involve engagement in Best Practice 1, the action phase, meeting a recognized community need. While the preparation phase of a service-learning project is critical in establishing the need of the community and helps students understand the related issues, that phase should not dominate the total service Learning experience. Students need to be engaged in meaningful action for a sustained amount of time so that their projects can have a positive impact on the community. Additionally, students should have the opportunity to experience all three types of service throughout their school careers. LSSs should be cognizant that throughout the course of a service-learning program a variety of projects be offered that address various community needs by engaging students in a balance of direct, indirect, and advocacy service.

Furco (2002) found that the young people in his California study who had the strongest outcomes were those engaged in meaningful service activities that challenged them, or gave them the highest levels of responsibility.

**2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning**

Service-Learning is an intentional instructional strategy used to meet existing course outcomes by providing opportunities for classroom knowledge can be applied and tested in real-life settings. In addition, service-learning experiences should be tied to curricula through authentic experience. Engaging students in high quality service learning helps develop skills such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening which are area that are evaluated through Ohio State assessments.

Service-learning helps students answer the question, "Why do I need to know this or be able to do this?" The projects build skills and help students transfer classroom activities to real-Life situations. Service-learning adds relevancy and purpose to the curriculum. Through service-learning, students can apply their understanding of particular skills and knowledge. Service-learning experiences can be tied to a single unit of study, used as a method to unify the teaching of content and skills throughout the year, or used as a cross-curricular strategy.

Kirkham (2001) reported that nearly all of the teachers who connected service-learning to their curriculum reported that students who participated in service-learning mastered more knowledge and skills than they would have learned through regular instruction alone. Additionally, their grades improved and absenteeism decreased.

**3. Reflect throughout the service learning experience.**

Through a variety of challenging and on-going reflection activities, students engage in deep thinking and analysis about oneself, one's relationship to society, and how academic knowledge and skills can be applied to help the community. 􀁣flection activities, dispersed throughout the project in the form of discussions, journaling, performing, and writing, allows students to more fully understand the connection between their schoolwork and the service work performed. Culminating reflection activities help students see the expected and unexpected benefits of their project, as well as the short and long term benefits, and benefits to their community, school, and self. This also allows students to reflect on what worked and what could be done better, and allows the community and the students to celebrate their achievements and collaborate to make the project even more sustainable. Reflection helps students explore the following questions in the cycle of: What and Why? So What? Now What?

The reflection portion of the service-learning experience is much more than an opportunity for students to describe personal learning. Now that students have had hands-on experience with the problem, reflection provides a forum for exploring the complexity of community issues related to the project in more depth. Problem solving skills are tested and honed through the analysis of the effectiveness of projects and the development of solutions to roadblocks. Though reflection, students may discover other potential projects that could be carried out.

Students grow intellectually, personally, and socially by engaging in meaningful reflection activities. In a study of high school students, Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) reported that the more cognitive challenge within the reflection activities, the more likely students were to engage in and value school, feel more efficacious, and acquire more civic knowledge and more positive civic dispositions. Those youth who engaged in the greatest amount of reflection were the most engaged in school. Waterman (1993) reported that students

who engaged in more reflection had stronger self-confidence and social responsibility than those who did not.

**4. Develop student responsibility.**

Students take leadership and ownership in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with age, appropriate guidance. Students learn important school, work, and life skills such as working as a team, organizing and scheduling activities, and problem solving when given responsibility for the success of projects.

Often service-learning projects address student responsibility in a variety of ways. In the MUSE example, a small number of students were responsible for planning and creating a mentoring program. The mentors were responsible for keeping in contact with their mentees and forging a productive and helpful relationship. Future communication am students are responsible for analyzing the success of the MUSE program and determining if the community need for the program still exists and/or refining the program to meet unfolding needs. In MUSE, as well as other projects, teachers need to be aware of their students' developmental levels as they design and carry out projects. For example, elementary students might take responsibility by proposing ideas, doing research, writing letters, or making email contacts, etc.

Students should be given increasing responsibility for designing and implementing projects as they mature. Research demonstrates (i.e. Bradley, et al., 2007) that students who had more ownership over the development and presentation of their service-learning projects had higher increases in self-confidence, personal efficacy, interpersonal communication, and critical chinking skills.

**5. Establish community partnerships.**

Service-learning experiences provide opportunities for students to learn about their local or global communities, explore career possibilities, and work with diverse groups of individuals in a collaborative and mutually beneficial way. Quality service-learning involves collaboration with community organizations as partners.

The community partnerships developed through the service-learning projects benefit both schools and community based organizations. The community is enhanced by working with students cooperatively in a meaningful way to address community needs. Schools benefit by broadening the human and physical resources available to them through this new partnership. Schools seek increased community involvement, and service-learning provides a vehicle for making important and long-lasting connections between a variety of community organizations and schools. By working collaboratively with community organizations, students learn about career opportunities and gain an understanding of the world of work beyond the school walls. The community is also able to see students in a very positive way, engaging in activities designed to improve and strengthen communities, locally and globally.

Reciprocal partnerships were identified as critical success factors in institutionalizing service-learning practice by Ammon, Furco, Chi, and Middaugh (2002), Billig (2002b), and Bailis (2000). Bailis concluded that most benefit would be derived in a partnership that was long-term, well-designed, and mutually beneficial, characterized by collaborative communication and interaction between the stakeholders and using efficient leveraging of community assets.

**6. Plan ahead for service-learning.**

With community, student, and teacher input, create an action plan and continuously assess the progress toward specific objectives using results for improvement and sustainability of the project. The original intent behind planning ahead for service-learning was always to create a meaningful, well-designed project. All great projects use continuous assessments, formal or informal, to stay on track and achieve their objectives.

Students should be involved in all seeps of planning, from determining their community needs to designing an accomplishable project that meets those needs. Through planning and assessment, students develop and strengthen their organization skills and discover the steps necessary to successfully implement any action plan. Planning with others opens new doors for teacher collaboration and student learning. Well-planned projects are strongly linked to existing curricular goals and objectives and are designed so that students, their families, and the community are aware that students are engaging in service-teaming.

Shumer (1997) concluded that reflection and feedback were necessary for monitoring the flow and direction of practice to ensure that goals were met.

**7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for civic engagement.**

Mutual respect among all participants is established when students fully understand the complexities of the issue, acquire the project specific skills, and explore the importance of civic responsibility. By understanding the issues, culture, and people involved in the project, students can effectively engage in the project. They also adequately prepared to deal appropriately with situations they may encounter during their service-learning experience and to personally identify with all participants in the project. As part of preparing for civic engagement, students conduct research, read articles, and listen to guest speakers discuss the issue.

This preparation phase includes research and exploration of the issue being addressed as well as the development of specific skills students will need to engage in the project. For instance, if a biology class plans to design a campaign warning of the dangers of lyme disease, part of preparation might include a presentation from a public relations professional concerning effective approaches used to change people's behavior. The preparation phase also includes opportunities for students to explore the topics o( civic responsibility and engagement and to clearly understand that they are about to carry out a service-learning experience.

Some service-learning practices can lead to reinforcing stereotypes and promoting the imbalance of power in the relationship between social groups. Simmons and Toole noted that a missionary ideology is less likely when service planning is based on an assets model, when participants directly address the issue of culture, and when reflection activities ask participants to think about the larger context of societal needs and cultural traditions of those being served and those providing the service.

**What Service-Learning Projects Should Do:**

What should students and school systems "count" towards service-learning?

All service-learning experiences should meet the Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning- Listed below are additional guidelines that provide clarification on what should "count" toward meeting the service-learning requirement. Although all service-learning experiences should meet Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning, Galion City Schools discretion determines what activities are eligible for service-learning credit.

* Service-learning activities whose purposes are to directly address human needs in areas such as health, education, environment, or public safety, even if done in conjunction with a faith-based agency or institution, may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.
* Service-learning activities whose purposes are to collect food, clothing, or other items necessary to benefit others and meet human needs, even if done in conjunction with a faith-based agency or institution, may be counted coward the service-learning graduation requirement.
* Service-learning activities whose purposes are to extend the benefit of the service activity to individuals or families in need, other than the student's own family, may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement. Activities should serve the greater good instead of being self-serving to a particular person or group.
* Service-learning activities whose purposes are to serve the school community must meet the service-learning quality practices articulated in Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning to be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement. These projects should be structured to meet greater needs in the areas of health, education, environment, or public safety identified within the school community.
* Service-learning activities whose purposes are to increase voter registration and participation and/or implement voter education activities on particular issues may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.
* Service-learning activities must be inclusive and non-discriminatory. Activities chat violate federal or state law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, sex, age, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability, may not be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement.
* Service-learning activities that are completed independently by students in the community must meet the service-learning quality practices articulated in Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. Designated school personnel or, in the absence of such designated personnel, the school principal, must verify the completion of the service-learning activity in order for students to receive credit toward the service-learning graduation requirement.
* Service-learning activities should allow students to spend a **significant portion** of their time engaged in meeting a recognized community need (action). The remainder of their experience may involve the other Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. For example, a student project might involve three hours spent on researching and discussing hunger and homeless and exploring civic education issues. Five hours of the project might be spent on preparing and serving food to the homeless. An additional two hours might engage students in an exploration and reflection on the effectiveness of their project and what they learned from the experience.

**What Service-Learning Projects Should Not Do**:

What should students and school systems "not count" towards service-learning?

**Business Relationships**

* Any service-Learning activity whose chief purpose is to increase the amount of revenue for a private, for-profit business or to generate new revenue for that business may nor be counted toward the service-Learning requirement.
* Any service-learning activity that replaces a paid staff worker of the participating agency or institution with a student earning service-Learning credit may not be counted toward the service-learning requirement.
* Any service-learning activity that compensates a student with money, goods, or services may not be counted toward the service-learning requirement.

**Religious Practice**

* Any service-learning activity whose chief purpose is to convert others to a particular religious or spiritual view and/or which denigrates the religious or spiritual views of others may not be counted toward the service-Learning requirement.
* Any service-learning activity whose chief purpose is to help prepare and/or participate in the performance of a religious service or religious education activity may not be counted toward the service-learning requirement.

**Policies and Reporting**

**Service-Learning Requirement**

D. Student Service

Students must complete the following:

1. Sixty hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the school system, may begin during the middle grades; or

Galion City Schools service-learning mandate will take effect in the fall of 2016, impacting the graduating class of 2020. Every public school student in Galion High school will engages in service-learning as a condition of graduation. This includes all special education students, unless exceptions or modifications are specifically noted in their Individualized Education Program.

**Minimum Level of Student Engagement**

Student, with help/guidance from the school must design programs that require a minimum level of service-learning engagement of at least 15 hours from each student per year, totaling the equivalent of at least 60 hours during their high school career. Only one hour of service-learning credit may be awarded for one hour of a student's engagement in service-Learning activities.

Service-learning activities should allow students to spend a ***significant portion*** of their time engaged in meeting a recognized community need (action). The remainder of their experience may involve other Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning. Students should be provided with opportunities to engage in a variety of types of service-learning: indirect, direct, and advocacy experiences. Direct service-learning activities that allow students to interact with the people or institutions they are serving should be a part of service-learning experiences.

**Reporting Student Progress**

The coordinator must report student progress toward fulfilling the service-teaming graduation requirement. Systems must report this information in a clear and understandable format on the permanent Student Record and grade card so students and parents can easily monitor student progress.

The coordinator is expected to maintain timely and accurate records on student progress toward this graduation requirement.

**Notification of Student Engagement in Service-Learning Experiences**

When service-learning is infused into the school day through classroom instruction, students and parents may not be aware that service-learning experiences are occurring. Service-learning projects should be clearly identified. Students should spend time exploring the concepts of civic responsibility and civic action and how their current service-teaming experience relates to those concepts. Students and parents should be informed in writing when an activity is being carried out. This notification could be through the school newsletter or other communication mechanism.

**Parental Involvement**

Parents are a tremendous resource, and their involvement in service-learning experiences should be encouraged and facilitated. Parents can play numerous roles in the implementation of service-learning plan. First and foremost, parents should be aware of the specific service-learning experiences their students have had throughout the year.

Additionally, parents should receive regular updates of their child's progress toward meeting the service-learning graduation requirement. Parents can also be an excellent resource in implementing service-learning projects at individual schools by volunteering to teach specific skills, chaperoning field experiences, and helping to identify existing community needs.

**Independent Service-Learning Projects**

Galion City Schools will offer opportunities for students to pursue and engage in service-learning projects they select, design, and carry out independently. For example, some groups/classes that infuse service-learning into the school day also offer and acknowledge Meritorious Service-Learning opportunities for students. Many students far exceed their groups service-learning requirements. Recognizing these students for their outstanding community contributions helps to encourage other students to excel.

**Transfer Policies**

Transfers from a Private School, Home Schooling, or from Other Public Schools to Galion City Schools:

The local service-learning implementation plan will pro-rate the level of service-learning engagement expected for students transferring into school systems, but no student can be exempted from meeting the service-learning graduation requirement, except those who transfer in second semester of their senior year.