



April 8, 2010

Dear Educational and Community Leader,

As educators we are preparing students to take on adult roles in our society as workers and citizens. To this end we need to look at the skills and abilities needed in the workplace. In an increasingly technological and global economy, employers need workers who have not only mastered core subject areas, but who also have developed skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, innovation and communication. As educators we worry about preparing our students with these skills while attempting to make learning relevant and engaging for students. Service-learning is a proven teaching strategy that can bridge the classroom learning with meaningful service projects benefiting the community and promoting the acquisition of these needed skills.

Service-learning projects are as varied as the subject areas and grade levels represented thus offering students an enormous variety of real-world applications from which to learn new skills. Through the service-learning process, students learn about real community needs and network with a wide variety of adults in businesses, non-profit agencies and government entities. Many of these adults become project mentors and/or community partners who then introduce students to their own occupations and skill sets. Students learn to work cooperatively with these adults as well as their own team members to effectively achieve project outcomes. Through these essential partnerships, students learn to creatively apply their energy and ideas to finding innovative solutions for project beneficiaries. Students are exposed to the needs of the community around them and learn to see themselves as integral to these solutions. During the service-learning project process students also learn about themselves as they reflect upon the community needs, their plans, decisions and actions, and their roles as actively engaged participants in their community. Project work, skills learned and outcomes achieved combine to build the 21st Century skills needed by employers today.

As your Regional Leads, we have many resources to help you investigate, plan and implement service-learning in your schools. Below are a few service-learning resources available for you on the world-wide web:

www.nylc.org

www.service-learningpartnership.org

www.servicelearning.org

www.p21.org

We are ready to help you to effectively implement service-learning programs.

Sincerely,

Deborah Bruns, Yolo COE, bruns@ycoe.org, 530-668-3781

Adrian Ruiz, Youth Development Network (YDN), adrian@ydnetwork.org, 916- 308-7082

John Durand, Galt School District, jdurand@galt.k12.ca.us, 916- 683-1703