

IN THIS ISSUE:

Engaging Youth Through Service Learning	2
Staff Spotlight	4
Service Learning In Action	5
Social Networking and the 21st century	5
Service Learning Crossword	6
YDN Toolbox	8
Upcoming YDN Events	9

The Power of Service Learning

By Adrian Ruiz

Last week I had the honor of seeing Gary Gordon, author of *Building Engaged Schools*, present at YDN's Speaker Series that featured the Gallup Organization. Gary sent a jolt through the room when he proclaimed to the audience that education in America is not suffering from an *achievement* problem but rather from an *engagement* problem. Think about that statement for a moment... could he possibly be right? Are many youth checking themselves out of the education process? Do they feel disconnected? Do they feel that what they are learning will not be applicable to them in this new millennium? And if so, how do we plug them back in? Is there a rigorous and relevant approach to working with our youth that connects learning to life? Allow me to (re)introduce the Service Learning approach. Service Learning is a proven, practical and productive way to engage youth in education, advocacy, and community building. It enhances the

learning that takes place via traditional textbooks and creates the opportunity for youth to apply their learning through a real community experience. Imagine that! Instead of just learning geometry in the classroom, youth can do a project to build homes for the elderly by working with Habitat for Humanity. Not only are they now applying what they learned in geometry class but they are also potentially learning more about the history of that community and writing about their experience in their English classes. Word spreads about the amazing work that youth and their mentors are doing and the project is featured in local newspapers and even makes it as a top story into the nightly TV news. As an added bonus, the school reports that their average GPA has increased and their attendance/behavior issues have significantly decreased. I know that this sounds like a made-for-TV movie but this really took place for a high school in Michigan that integrated the Service Learning ap-

proach. The bottom line is that Service Learning engages young people and when young people are *engaged* they *achieve* greatness.

What are the key components of Service Learning?

A solid Service Learning project works to develop the following core areas:

Skill Building: The project has a direct line to students' academic learning and youth gain critical soft skills in the process.

Community Need: Youth use relevant data to ensure that their project is meeting a real identified need in the community.

Strong Partnership: The project brings in multiple partners from the community to strengthen and leverage resources.

Youth Voice and Choice: Research in the Service Learning field clearly demonstrates that young people become more engaged when they can be part of a project from vision to completion. This means that young people have the opportunity to decide on what the project will be

Continue on page 3

Engaging Youth Through Service Learning

By Bina Lefkowitz

Despite the many challenges facing education in our state, school administrators continue to work tirelessly to improve academic achievement for all students. Increased test scores and schools exiting Program Improvement status are positive signs. Yet, we are disheartened to see rising numbers of students dropping out of school and not earning high school diplomas.

In California, approximately one-third of all ninth graders do not complete high school. These dropouts will spend more time unemployed, on government assistance, or cycling in and out of prison than high school graduates. They will contribute individually about \$60,000 less in taxes over a lifetime and, collectively, cost California about \$46 billion a year in costs associated with crime, incarceration, and government assistance.

There are a number of complex individual, family, school, and community factors that contribute to the dropout crisis. When students are specifically asked about their school experiences, they say the “number one reason” they drop out is because they feel that classroom learning is not engaging or relevant to their lives. They find school to be “boring” and lose motivation to persevere when learning is challenging and eventually they succumb to a number of “pull” factors that encourage them to simply give up and drop out. The 2007 and 2008 High School Survey of Student Engagement found that 80% of students felt school materials were not interesting and 40% felt they were not relevant. The Sacramento County Healthy Kids Survey (Resiliency Module) found that less than 20% of students report high levels of meaningful opportunities for responsibility, impact, or decision-making in school.

The National Dropout Prevention Center cites service-learning as one of the most effective school strategies for dropout prevention. Service Learning connects meaningful community service experiences with academic learning and student voice. This teaching/learning method promotes personal and social growth, career development, soft skill development, and civic responsibility and can be a powerful vehicle for effective school reform at all grade levels. Studies have shown that students who participate in Service Learning are more likely to do well in school on standardized tests, more likely to attend school, more likely to understand content, more likely to feel engaged in school and motivated to learn, more likely to be positively engaged with peers and other school adults and also more likely to be more civically engaged in their community (Summary of research compiled by Andrew Furco, UC Berkley).

1.What schools can do to lower the dropout rate:

- Have boards of education adopt Service Learning as a key teaching strategy to close the achievement gap
- Train teachers on Service Learning, youth engagement, and community partnerships
- Apply for Cal Serve and Federal Service Learning grants
- Pair Service Learning with work-based learning, career tech, career academies and small learning communities
- Create summer bridge programs to teach middle school students how to work in teams, project management, communication, problem solving skills, and presentation skills

2.What cities can do:

- Implement Service Learning in after school programs
- Partner with schools to link city services, as learning labs, to school Service Learning projects and to help link other community resources to schools
- Fund mini-grants for student Service Learning projects

3.What churches and CBOs can do:

- Employ Service Learning as part of the organization’s youth programming
- Partner with schools to use community-based agency causes as service projects
- Partner with schools to provide mentors and resources to students to help implement Service Learning projects

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 1

about and see it all the way through to the final evaluation of the project.

Civic Responsibility: Did the project show youth that they have power and that they can have a positive impact in the community?

Reflection: Youth have the opportunity to consistently reflect on the learning that is taking place throughout the duration of the project.

Evaluation: What did the project accomplish for the participants and for the community?

The beauty of the seven core elements of Service Learning is that they can be used to meet the countless needs of your community by activating one of the community's most precious resources: its youth. Youth can use the Service Learning approach to bring about positive change in areas such as social justice, homelessness, hunger, AIDS, safety, animal rights, equality, and the list goes on and on.

YDN believes that schools are not the only system that can practice service learning. We encourage all services and systems to consider embracing the service learning approach and thus creating another opportunity for youth to see themselves as resources not only of tomorrow but more importantly... right here, right now!

One more thing before you read the rest of this YDN Newsletter... Please don't see Service Learning as "the new flavor of the month." It has been around a long time and is seen by educators, faith-based leaders, non-profits, and after school programs as a proven strategy to *engage* youth inside of their communities and in the process create the next wave of those who generously give back to the roots that made them what they are today.

For service learning ideas and training please contact the YDN, your ally in Service Learning.

In Community,

Adrian Ruiz

Co-Executive Director of the Youth Development Network

YDN gets to have their cake and eat it, too

On the morning of February 25th, the YDN was honored to share a special celebration with local confectioner, Ettore Ravazzolo, who was celebrating the 25th anniversary of his bakery, Ettore's. Each year he shares his anniversary with a local nonprofit organization by throwing a large party and donating all of the proceeds. This year, to our great joy, Ettore chose YDN. The "Ettore's Coffee Break," a (fun)draiser, drew quite a crowd of local notables and friends, who enjoyed platters heaped with delicious pastry, music from a live band, and a cake-decorating contest. Mark S. Allen from Good Day Sacramento was on hand (with camera crew) to liven up the proceedings, as was local TV personality Kitty O'Neal who emceed the event. We also had the good fortune to have Kerry Callahan, Principal of Pioneer High School in Woodland, to provide a stirring testimonial about YDN's work and her school's efforts to create a more positive and empowering environment for youth.



Continued from page 2

Resources:

California Department of Education Cal-Serve K-12 Service-Learning Initiative

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/sl/>

Service Learning and Region 3 Service Learning Resources

<http://www.ydnetwork.org/Service%20Learning%20Resources%20and%20Events>. And <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning>

National Dropout Prevention Center and Service-Learning http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/service_learning/overview.htm

Region 3 Service Learning leads:

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



YDN Staff Spotlight—Summer Thommen



Summer is one of the newest members of the YDN team (though she just celebrated her one-year anniversary with us – Hooray!). She’s a Sacramento native who left home to jet across the globe—theatre classes in England, youth service work in San Francisco, training and mediation gigs in Boston--before coming back to Sactown. A true bohemian, Summer’s creative zen (exhibited by her knee-jerk gagging when she sights a Thomas Kinkade print – okay, maybe that’s not so zen), matched with

her inquisitive nature and commitment to social justice and equity, brings a richness, balance, and (much-needed) perspective to our team. Her conflict resolution and mediation experience as well as over a dozen years in the youth development field have already qualified her as a seasoned veteran on our team. She keeps us on our toes.

To find out more about Summer, visit us on our website at www.ydnetwork.org

Service Learning In Action: Yuba City

By Lacy McCauley

Service learning is going strong at King Avenue School's afterschool program, KABB! Afterschool students from

the Yuba City elementary school spent the months of December and January making more than twenty fleece tie blankets to

donate to a local organization that supports homeless individuals in the community. Students in the

"Blanket Club" learned about measurement and precision, while exercising teamwork and creativity.



The students were incredibly proud of their craftsmanship, displaying their blankets to school staff and fellow students. They were most proud, though, to personally deliver the

blankets to the staff at the shelter during an after-school field trip. KABB students are learning that



they can truly make a difference in the lives of others.

The "Blanket Club" service learning project was inspired by a YDI training attended by Lacy McCauley. KABB's coordinator took part in the YDI, and learned how to incorporate service learning into her after-school program. Thanks, YDN!

Social Networking & the 21st Century—Part two of a series



Can youth be persuaded to critically engage in news -- on Facebook?

Young people are clearly doing a lot of reading and writing online. Despite a decline in young people's *print-based* reading for pleasure, there has been a strong increase in out-of-school *online* reading and writing through online social network and fan fiction sites. However, a lot of this activity is clearly unrelated to what we think of as news, since (according to the Pew research institute) over one third of people under 25 get *no news* on a daily basis. Still, teens spend many hours a week online (a recent British study said 31 hours!), particularly on Facebook. (The most-trafficked social media site in the world, Facebook has more than 250 million active members). Could their interest in online communities be channeled towards real-life causes and issues and end up translating into real-world actions, or would their activism be purely virtual? And, for those involved in educating youth, if we understood how young people prefer to engage with information online, would that move us closer to understanding how to develop successful media-rich and educational environments? Answering such questions is critical if we hope to inform, educate and mobilize engaged youth (and then adults) for their full participation in a 21st century democracy. We need to take advantage of the ways we can make sharing news and experiences fit easily into teens' lives and then also be able to track and observe it to ensure success.



© Original Artist
Reproduction rights obtainable from
www.CartoonStock.com

Search ID: swm79

Continued on page 6

The study

In December 2008, a study was launched to investigate how online social network sites such as Facebook can engage youth in world events, build community, and generate real world impact (Study by NewsCloud and University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development researcher Dr. Christine Greenhow). As part of the study, a special news site called "Hot Dish" was launched inside of Facebook. "Hot Dish" was a Facebook application for sharing articles about the environment and climate change. It included an "Action Team" feature, which inspired 16- to 25-year-old users to take actions within the Hot Dish community in return for points redeemable for prizes. Below is a summary of the findings from the Hot Dish community and study.

Key findings from the study – what worked to engage youth

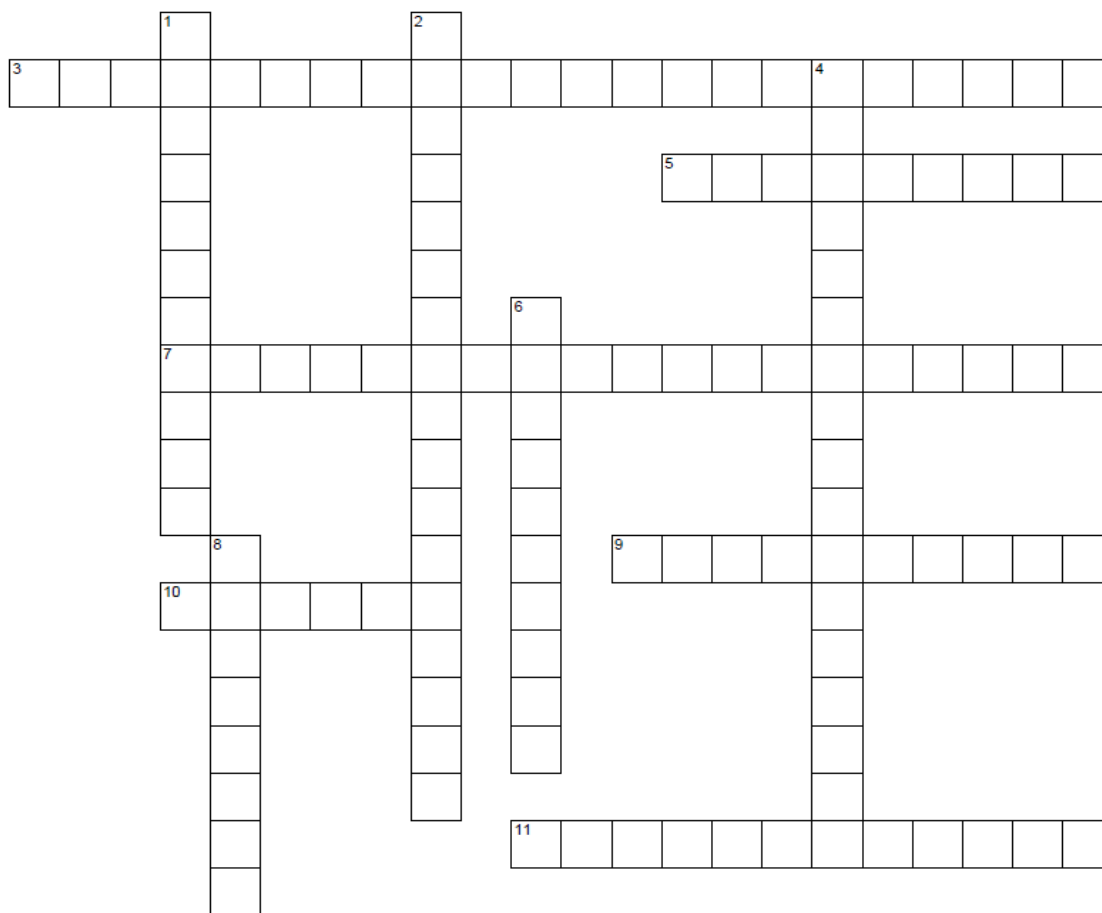
1. The *design* of the application was a key factor in strengthening news consumption and online interaction habits.
2. *Interest* in the topic of focus (environment and climate change) increased, especially among low users. Anecdotal evidence also suggested growth in environmental *knowledge*.
3. The *competition* aspect (using points and prizes) was extremely effective at creating a highly engaged group of active participants online and especially offline activism.
4. The design of the community provided many different ways to participate that allowed for various engagement levels for different groups of users.
5. The focus of the community on a current topic, and its emphasis on *connections* between people within a social network, motivated participants to express ideas and interact with others in ways different from traditional online news sites.
6. Embedding the social media site within Facebook provided the occasion and motivation for young people to engage in more reading and writing.



This study seems to suggest that youth are prepared and willing to get active in a cause or topic, if the medium is designed with their needs in mind, and if we work to provide opportunities within the existing frameworks and networks that they are already tapped into. The next time you are working with youth on an issue or cause, why not take a moment to think about the social networks or communities that your youth are already a part of (and if you're not sure, this seems like a good time to find out!). What ways can you work *within* these existing social (and technological) structures to meet them where they are at, build on what is already engaging them, and maximize your impact (and theirs)?

For a full download of the article and study findings, visit: http://blog.newscloud.com/research/Research_HotDish_Summary.pdf

Service Learning Terms



Created by the Youth Development Network

ACROSS

- 3 Emotionally engaged learning in which the learner experiences a visceral connection to the subject matter.
- 5 Often used to describe a geographic group whose members engage in some face-to-face interaction.
- 7 The commitment of a citizen to his/her community to take responsibility for the well-being of the community
- 9 The process of gathering information in order to make an evaluation.
- 10 In the context of community service, this term often refers to the relationship between an adult and a youth.
- 11 The performance of formal service to benefit others or one's community without receiving any external rewards.

DOWN

- 1 A central component of successful service-learning and community engagement that suggests that every individual, organization, and entity involved in service-learning functions as both a teacher and a learner.
- 2 The notion that students can make important contributions to their schools and communities.
- 4 Volunteerism that occurs in the community--Action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole.
- 6 The process of deriving meaning and knowledge from experience and occurs before, during and after a service learning project. This is a critical component of successful service-learning programs.
- 8 The study of the teaching and learning process; service-learning provides a method that informs and enhances the teaching/learning process.

WORD BANK: Assessment, civic-responsibility, community, community-service, experiential-education, mentor, pedagogy, reciprocity, reflection, student-ownership, volunteerism.

YDN Toolbox—Service Learning Resources

The Complete Guide to Service Learning

“So,” you’re thinking, “I love Service Learning. If only some well-meaning organization could provide me with a recommendation from among the many resources out there, I would be Service Learning dynamite!” Well, allow the YDN to help, friend.

We love *The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, and Social Action*, by Cathryn Berger Kaye. Ms. Kaye has a ton of experience with Service Learning in and out of the classroom, which informs the many, many practical strategies, resources, and ideas in the book, such as:

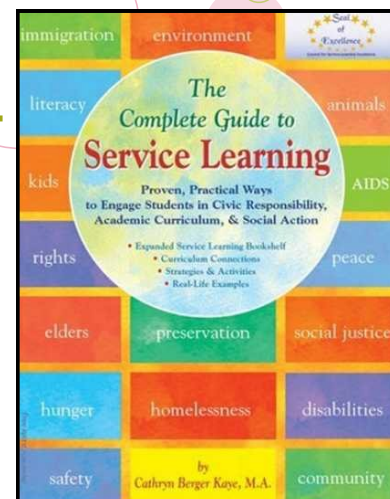
- An overview to Service Learning, including useful steps for breaking down a project into stages for the purposes of planning/design
- Handy worksheets that ensure you cover the critical areas when you are designing a project
- Many Service Learning ideas and strategies broken down by subject area. This section of the book is a treasure trove of plans and resources (Including what seems to really “wow” most people: her extensive list of recommended reading--fiction and non-fiction—sorted by topic, so that no matter what project you’re working on, you can find related reading to use with your youth.)

And much more (Much more! It’s a pretty thick book...)

So get your personal copy today (if you order through our website, YDN will get 5% of the proceeds <http://www.ydnetwork.org/Own%20It>), OR, register for YDN’s upcoming Service Learning 101 training on June 22nd, and you’ll get a copy as part of the \$50 registration fee. And you’ll see why we recommend this amazing resource for anyone who’s practicing Service Learning. You can register for this training at www.ydnetwork.org/registration today.

Links to Service Learning resources:

Youth Service California—www.yscal.org
 California Department of Education—www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/sl
 Governor’s Office/California Volunteers—www.californiavolunteers.org
 Learn and Serve America—www.learnandserve.org



Youth Development Network Community Happenings & Sponsorship Opportunities

Creating Life Changing Experiences for Youth

YDN
Happenings
Are:

- *Interactive
- *Rewarding
- *Informative
- *Can be applied immediately
- *Worth the investment!

"It's Not Just a Vote:"

Engaging Youth on Boards & Advisories

April 21-22, 2010

8:30-3:30

Registration & Breakfast 8:00-8:30am

Engaging Youth Voice as part of your
organizational culture!

Benefiting adults, board members and
youth who are in leadership roles!

\$150 for adults, \$100 for youth includes breakfast,
lunch and materials for both days
—Membership discounts available —



Service Learning 101

Creating Strategies to Engage Youth
in the Community

June 22, 2010 8:30-3:30

Registration & Breakfast 8:00-8:30am

Sacramento, CA

Each participant receives a copy of "The Complete
Guide to Service Learning" by Cathy Berger Kaye

Cost: \$50

Breakfast, lunch and materials provided



The Sacramento River Cats
host a special
SERVICE LEARNING NIGHT

Friday May 7, 2010

Gates open at 5:30pm

Raley Field

This event will recognize students for service learning, com-
munity service and volunteerism efforts.
Several partners supporting this event

Additional details and online registration
Available for all Events

www.ydnetwork.org/Registration

Or RSVP directly: at 916.228.2519 or
events@ydnetwork.org

Please visit www.ydnetwork.org for additional details.

Youth Development Network

Community Happenings & Sponsorship Opportunities

Creating Life Changing Experiences for Youth

Vantage Points

DIVERSITY AND AWARENESS FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

October 20-21, 2010

8:30-3:30

Registration & Breakfast 8:00-8:30am

Through research, multi-media, music, food, and conversation we will examine how our perceptions can color our interactions with youth, staff, and parents.

\$150 for adults, \$100 for youth includes breakfast, lunch and materials for both days
—Membership discounts available—

Sacramento Youth Leadership Camp

July 23-26, 2010

Grizzly Camp

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Sponsorships will help to leverage other community dollars in instilling leadership skills in a diverse group of 30-35 inner city, at-risk youth. This project has three main goals as follows:

- Instill leadership skills in youth from Sacramento, Yolo, Placer and El Dorado counties, so that they may use those skills in their organizations and communities.
- Through personal experience, educate 10-15 adult community leaders about the needs and capacity of today's youth.
- Continue to build a regional network and infrastructure of youth leadership in Sacramento.

Sponsorships available beginning at \$1,200

Youth Development Speaker Series Heart of Stone Movie Premier

St. HOPE Guild Theater
October 2010

Tentative Event

Stay Tuned for more information about this event!

"Passion for Impact"

World Café Networking Event

Continue the journey — laughing, loving and sharing the impact to and of the next generation of young people along the way.

November 17, 2010

8:30-11:30am

Sacramento, CA

Fun-filled event—hosting a "World Café" discussion forum and "speed networking" YDN style!

Cost: Free for YDN Members
\$10 for non-members

