

From preview of *Together We Make a Difference: An Inclusive Service Learning Curriculum for Elementary Learners With and Without Disabilities*, by Terri Vandercook and Jo Montie, published January 2010 by the National Inclusion Project in collaboration with the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota (<http://ici.umn.edu/products/curricula.html#isl>).



Lesson 4

Learning About Our Community and Picking a Service Learning Project

Lesson Preview

In Lesson 4, learners assess the strengths and needs of their school and/or community, and based on this information choose their first Service Learning project.

Learner Outcomes

1. Observe and identify positives and concerns about their school and/or community.
2. Listen to other perspectives about positives, concerns, and ideas on making a difference in their school and/or community.
3. Participate in a process that leads to identifying a focus for their Service Learning project.

National Standards Alignment

Standards for the English Language Arts

The following *Standards for the English Language Arts* from the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association are addressed in Lesson 4 (the full list of all 12 standards is available in Appendix C):

- Learners conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- Learners use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
- Learners participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- Learners use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Standards and Performance Expectations for Social Studies

The following standards and performance expectations for social studies from the National Council for the Social Studies (1994, p. 45) are addressed in Lesson 4 (the full list of all of the themes, standards, and performance expectations for “early grades” is available in Appendix C):

- **Civic Ideals and Practices**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide the study of the ideals, principles, and practice of citizenship in a democratic republic so that the learner can:

- (c) Locate, access, organize, and apply information about an issue of public concern from multiple points of view; and
- (d) Identify and practice selected forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.

The above section, “Standards and Performance Expectations for Social Studies,” is from: National Council for the Social Studies (1994). *Expectations of excellence: Curriculum standards for social studies*. Silver Spring, MD: Author. © National Council for the Social Studies. Reprinted by permission.

21st Century Skills

The following 21st century skills, as identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, are addressed in Lesson 4 (the full list of the 21st century learner outcomes is available in Appendix C):

- **Global Awareness Skills.** Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.
- **Creativity and Innovation Skills.** Developing, implementing and communicating new ideas to others effectively; and being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills.** Identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.
- **Communication and Collaboration Skills.** Demonstrating ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- **Information Literacy Skills.** Accessing information efficiently (time) and effectively (sources); evaluating information critically and competently; and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.

- **ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy Skills.** Using technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information; and applying a fundamental understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding the access and use of information technologies.
- **Initiative and Self-Direction Skills.** Going beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise.
- **Social and Cross-Cultural Skills.** Leveraging social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work.
- **Leadership and Responsibility Skills.** Using interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal; and acting responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind.

The above section, "21st Century Skills," is from: Partnership for 21st Century Skills [P21]. (2009). *P21 framework definitions document*. Retrieved July 9, 2009, from http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/p21_framework_definitions_052909.pdf.
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Activity 1:

Interview a Classmate

Time

40 minutes.

Instructor Preparation

1. Review the activity and prepare the materials.
2. Decide how you want to divide learners into pairs for interviewing each other. Assign pairs or let them choose their partners, using either counting-off or random assignment.
3. Clarify whether you are open to either in-school and/or out-of-school Service Learning for this first effort, or if you want to narrow the choices for this first Service Learning project. For example, are you willing and able to consider a Service Learning project that may reach out to the broader community, beyond the school and perhaps even beyond the nearby neighborhood? Or do you feel that an in-school project would be a more manageable first experience? *Note:* Remember that a Service Learning project that extends beyond the school can have a bigger impact and may open new partnerships and opportunities for working with the community.
4. Retrieve the four posters – titled “Likes”, “Concerns”, “Ideas on Making a Difference”, and “Who Else?” – that were created in Lesson 2, Activities 2, 3, and 4. These four posters should be hung up to record learner ideas that will be built on throughout this lesson.

Materials

- Four posters – “Likes”, “Concerns”, “Ideas on Making a Difference”, and “Who Else?” – that were created in Lesson 2. (An alternative would be to create electronic pages, such as Power Point slides, to view if you and your class have the technology and find it helpful for this type of group work.)

- Magic markers for recording ideas onto poster paper.
- Copies of *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1), one for each learner.
- Writing utensils for each learner or adaptations on how a learner would “record” the ideas from the person being interviewed.

Activity Steps

1. Tell learners that today they will begin to choose their first Service Learning project. Affirm the work they have already done with *Together We Make A Difference* activities and invite learners to name a few things they have learned. Refer back to earlier activities and themes, such as “Service Learning: Yes or No” from Lesson 1, Activity 3; the Service Learning display board from Lesson 1, Activity 2; and ways they already make a difference from Lesson 3, Activity 1. Explain that before picking their first project they will interview people to hear other people’s ideas on how things are going in their school and community so they choose a Service Learning project that helps with some community need or problem.
2. Hand out copies of the *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1) and read aloud the questions on the worksheet. Although the exact wording and number of questions can vary and you may decide to refine an interview sheet for your context, the overall idea is that the interviewer is seeking information on the following questions:
 - “What do you like the most about our school and our community?”
 - “What don’t you like about this school and /or community? What concerns or worries you? What is hard?”
 - “What do you wish was different? What would make our school and community a better place? What could you or we do to make a positive difference?”
 - “Who are people and other resources that may be able to help us make a difference?”

- a. Explain that they will interview a partner today and afterwards they will also get a chance to think of at least one other person outside the classroom to interview to hear their views on the school and community. Point out the four posters to learners and explain that after they interview one another, each person will have a chance to tell the whole class at least one idea to add to one of the posters.
3. Before learners interview their classmates, model an example by interviewing someone and having that person also interview you. You could invite an older learner in the school, a parent, or some other staff member. Before you begin your interview, invite learners to gather around so they can be silent observers; ask them to watch for examples of each person showing helpful listening behaviors. Tell them they will be asked to share comments and affirmations after observing the interview.
4. After you and your partner interview one another, ask for a few learners to volunteer their observations. Ask, “How did we show each other that we were listening? How did it look? Sound? Feel?”
5. Next, organize learners into pairs, with their writing utensils and *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1) forms. Explain that they will have 15 minutes to interview one another and to write down ideas to the questions on the *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1) forms.
 - a. Have learners interview one another. During the last two minutes of the *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1) activity, ask learners to give an affirmation to one another. It could be about a way that someone listened well, or how they helped the group get their activity done, how they didn’t interrupt others, or something else positive.
6. Call the learners back to the large group and invite each pair to share one idea from their *Interview Page (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1). This is a way to hear from everyone in the large group but not hear each person’s entire listing of ideas. Record responses (examples) onto the collective poster paper or electronic pages. As learners share ideas with the large group, record all new ideas. When learners repeat an idea, show how their idea links with another earlier shared

idea, or somehow validate their response. Collect their *Interview Pages (for school interviews)* (Handout 1-1) at the end of the session so you can read in full and ask if you can post their interviews so that classmates can also read and learn from the interviews of others.

7. Explain that the next time (tell them the day) they get together for *Together We Make A Difference*, the class will make a list of children and adults to interview about their school and community. They may already have ideas on the “Who Else?” poster. Encourage learners to think about how to get a diverse viewpoint of the school and community... “how to hear from a variety of people and not just someone who may think the same way as you.”
8. Review the “Activity Reflection” below and decide what to incorporate into the lesson.

Adaptation for Participation

- For some learners, the option of drawing pictures versus printing or writing words could be more appropriate.
- For learners who may need more time and support in responding to questions, give the questions to them ahead of time. In some cases it could be something a family does at home with a learner that helps the learner write down or record his/her idea and bring it back to school.
- Nonverbal learners may need extra assistance to put their ideas into a format for sharing (e.g., recording messages into a communication device).

Activity Reflection

1. Ask learners, “What was something new that you learned about your partner or your community?”
2. Ask, “In what ways did you show effective listening with your partner?”
3. Ask, “What was something that your partner did that helped you to share your ideas?”