

TEACHER 'S GUIDE

ETHICS & SERVICE: A VALUES -BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SERVICE -LEARNING

WHY ETHICS & SERVICE?

In 1994, W. K. Kellogg Foundation program officer Christine Kwak suggested that the Institute for Global Ethics might consider exploring linkages between character education and service-learning. *If* ethical-decision-making training were built into classroom-based service-learning programs, would the result be a strengthened service-learning experience for students?

Several years later, we know, based on research, that the answer is a resounding “yes!” On the quantitative side—using control groups and substantial numbers of pre- and post-tests—we have learned that such an initiative, properly implemented, results in students who exhibit greater ethical awareness, social responsibility, and capacity to make moral decisions than students who experience service-learning alone or who experience neither approach.

Qualitatively, high-school teachers participating in the research project enthusiastically affirm the value of mixing ethics and service:

- “I have seen quite a bit of improvement in analysis. They write more and think a little longer. . . . They’re more considerate and deliberate when they answer questions.”
- “The curriculum has helped to provide a framework from which we can study values and ethics as they relate to what we’re being barraged with in terms of incidents [in our community].”
- “I think the most important thing is that . . . they have been able to . . . vocalize their feelings about issues.”
- “I love the whole program because it’s really concise, it makes sense, and it’s not too overwhelming.”

Why the interest and enthusiasm? Because ethics and service-learning are complementary. They really are opposite sides of the same coin, for while service-learning is about

learning through experience, character education is about utilizing the collective understanding of a community to guide one's actions during the experience.

HOW SERVICE-LEARNING AND CHARACTER EDUCATION ARE THE SAME

- Both approaches center on the role of community and the importance of developing student-community relationships.
- Both encourage reflection, personal responsibility, and the ability to work cooperatively.
- Both are aimed at reducing “at risk” behaviors.

In a sense, both service-learning and character education seek to take students outside of themselves, to take their natural sense of caring, courage, and commitment and turn those into a real benefit on behalf of others. In other words, character education and service-learning both are about sociocentrism, as opposed to egocentrism, or self-centeredness.

HOW SERVICE-LEARNING AND CHARACTER EDUCATION ARE DIFFERENT

As suggested above, service-learning is primarily constructivist in its approach—learners draw meaning directly from their experiences—whereas character education sees much of its value as lying in the clear ethical message a community sends directly to its students.

Service-learning is, by definition, very active. It is all about addressing real community problems. It is about physically moving out into the community to develop one-on-one relationships with other children and adults.

Service-learning also is a process of teaching and learning. It seeks to advance academic objectives as well as service objectives. Service-learning involves a cycle of learning that is its hallmark: preparation for the service experience, the experience, reflection on what was learned, and engagement in further action. It is a model of teaching that is “a powerful means to make skills and academic content compellingly relevant to learners.”
(*Learning by Giving*, National Youth Leadership Council, 1993)

Character education seeks to help students uncover and explore the core ethical values that undergird our democratic society. It is about the development of good character and the creation of civil and caring school communities. Character educators believe that good character is not formed automatically; rather, it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning, and practice.

The core ethical values espoused by a community form the moral environment within which the service-learning experience needs to operate. In other words, shared values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion should govern the way in which a service-learning project is accomplished. The active side of character education involves a concept we call *moral courage*. Moral courage is about choosing to stick to one's values in the face of opposition and the risk of personal sacrifice. Even in student service-learning projects, moral courage is sometimes necessary.

THE ETHICS & SERVICE CURRICULUM: A PROGRESSION OF IDEAS LINKING CHARACTER EDUCATION AND SERVICE-LEARNING

The purpose of this new approach is to make your job, and student learning, both easier and more meaningful—easier because we provide a step-by-step process for incorporating the ethics and service messages, and more meaningful because you will be able to use two very powerful sets of teaching tools concurrently.

To visualize, consider first, separately, each process cycle:

SERVICE-LEARNING

- Explore the community
- Identify community needs
- Brainstorm solutions to problems
- Select a doable issue
- Tie to academic objectives
- Prepare for the experience
- Do it
- Reflect on experiences

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

- Apply the lens of ethics
- Define the community's values
- Operationalize those values
- Discuss right-versus-wrong
- Analyze right-versus-right dilemmas
- Resolve right-versus-right dilemmas
- Practice Ethical Fitness™ and moral courage

Now, see how we propose to integrate them:

Lesson 1:	Introduction to service-learning
Lesson 2:	Explore the community
Lesson 3:	Apply the lens of ethics
Lesson 4:	Identify community needs Brainstorm solutions to problems Select a doable issue Tie to academic objectives
Lesson 5:	Define the community's values
Lesson 6:	Operationalize those values
Lesson 7:	Prepare for the experience Do it

- Lesson 8: Discuss right-versus-wrong
- Lesson 9: Analyze right-versus-right dilemmas
- Lesson 10: Resolve right-versus-right dilemmas
- Lesson 11: Practice Ethical Fitness and moral courage
- Lesson 12: Reflect on experiences

Note how the concepts build on one another. To understand this a bit better, here is a brief synopsis of each lesson:

LESSON 1: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the meaning of *service-learning*. Students will learn that service-learning involves selecting a meaningful project, preparing for the project, dealing with challenges, and reflecting on outcomes.

LESSON 2: MY COMMUNITY

What does it look like? Before embarking on a service-learning project, students will need to develop a better understanding of their community. What does the community look like physically? How well do people get along? What important problems need to be addressed?

LESSON 3: ETHICS IN MY COMMUNITY: NOW AND IN THE 21ST CENTURY

What is our community's "ethical barometer" doing—is it rising or falling? That is, ethically speaking, are things getting better or are they getting worse, and why? What do we—as citizens—need to do about it?

LESSON 4: SELECTING A SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

Using ideas generated in the previous lesson, students will apply a series of questions to determine which community problem to address and how to address it.

LESSON 5: MY COMMUNITY: WHAT ARE ITS VALUES?

Before embarking on a community project, students will explore the nature of ethical values and will work to create their own list of agreed-to values.

LESSON 6: APPLYING OUR CODE

In this step, students will operationalize the list of values agreed to in the previous lesson. Their purpose is to create behavioral standards to be followed during implementation of their projects.

LESSON 7: PREPARING FOR CHALLENGES

Preparation for service is one very important part of the service-learning cycle, so students will want to practice responding to various challenges that may arise during their community work. Numerous examples are included.

LESSON 8: RIGHT VERSUS WRONG: KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE

By now, student projects should be well underway. As their projects are developing, this lesson and the next several lessons will provide students with additional tools to reflect on and respond to situations that may arise. In this lesson, we suggest four tests to distinguish right from wrong.

LESSON 9: ANALYZING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

The most difficult ethical dilemmas occur when two of our core ethical values come into conflict. We call these right-versus-right ethical dilemmas. This lesson offers a step-by-step process for approaching these dilemmas, along with four paradigms for analyzing them. Numerous service-learning examples are included.

LESSON 10: RESOLVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Resolution is the second step in dealing with dilemmas. Here, three decision principles are explained.

LESSON 11: MORAL COURAGE

Values without the possibility of action are meaningless, and sometimes personal courage is required in order to do what we know is right. In this lesson, students explore the concept of *moral courage*.

LESSON 12: FINAL REFLECTIONS

Reflection is core to both service-learning and ethical decision making. In this lesson, students create a final plan for reflection to summarize and consolidate their learning.

THE ROLE OF REFLECTION

Reflection is an essential element of the service-learning process. “Student reflection takes place before, during, and after service; uses multiple methods that encourage critical thinking; and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.” (*Essential Elements of Service-Learning*, National Youth Leadership Council, 1998)

Fortunately, character education can enhance the service-learning reflection process at just about every step along the way. For example, reflecting on ethical issues in the community can lead to selecting a meaningful service-learning project. Identifying shared community values can form the basis for determining how those values should be applied when service-learning projects are underway. Understanding a process for making good ethical decisions can help students deal with challenges that may arise during their projects. Likewise, participating in service-learning projects can help students to see how ethical values and decision-making are relevant. A number of specific tools for reflection are included in the final lesson of this curriculum. Many of them will be useful at other points along the way, as well.

ASSESSMENT

The reflection activities included with this curriculum provide one form of assessment—self-assessment, in which students will try to gain meaning and understanding from their experiences for application to future ventures. But we also have tried to devise a number of teacher-directed assessment activities to get at the content and quality of student learning. Please let us know if you find these tools useful.

EXTENDING THE CURRICULUM

This curriculum comprises 12 separate lessons. Many of these lessons are designed to provide several periods of classroom activity, and activities not core to the basic process have been labeled “supplemental.” You may or may not want to include them. The success of the curriculum relies heavily on each teacher’s ability to adapt the materials to his or her specific group of students.

Actual implementation time for student service-learning projects is not estimated here, nor will you find logistical instructions for how to operate a service-learning program. Service-learning projects may begin any time following the completion of Lesson 4. For more information on planning and implementing service-learning in your school, contact the National Youth Leadership Council at 1910 West County Road B, Roseville, MN 55113, or email them at nylcusa@aol.com.

GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

GOALS OF ETHICS & SERVICE

- To involve students in the identification and solution of community problems
- To cultivate awareness that sound ethics is essential
- To provide a language for talking about ethics, service, and community
- To provide practical experience in negotiating a set of values that reflects a group's common ground
- To promote Ethical Fitness™ by providing practical tools to use in dealing with difficult choices
- To help students reflect upon classroom- and community-based activities so as to gain meaning and understanding from their experiences

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this program, students should be able to:

- Identify and assess community needs and determine the feasibility of addressing those needs through student action
- Describe how their project did (or did not) make a real difference to their community
- Understand the role of ethics in the community and in society at large
- Use ethics terminology in a clear and consistent manner
- Explain how the ethical values they selected were put into action during their service-learning experience
- Identify right from wrong in at least four different ways and give examples of each
- Analyze right-versus-right dilemmas using four paradigms and resolve them using three decision principles
- Define *moral courage* and identify how moral courage might play a part in their work in the community
- Apply a number of reflection methodologies to gain meaning and understanding from their experiences