

Project Service Leadership and culminating projects

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As director of Project Service Leadership, Kate McPherson has been assisting schools, students, teachers and districts to implement service-learning programs since 1988. Service-learning can provide a compelling reason to learn, teach the skills of civic participation and develop leaders ready to contribute to their communities. By solving real problems and addressing real needs, students learn to apply classroom learning to a real world context with today's focus on rigorous and relevant instruction, service-learning emerges as a promising catalyst for performance assessment, authentic learning, and school/community partnerships.

To assist school districts which choose to include service-learning or a civic component in the new culminating project (CP) requirement, Kate recently wrote *The District Planning Guide for Civically Rich Culminating Projects*, which is available at her Web site www.projectserviceleadership.org.

In partnership with culminating project practitioners, PSL has developed the following key questions for schools to use when planning for a comprehensive and meaningful framework for their CP.

Clear purpose

What is the district/school vision for culminating projects?

The Preamble of House Bill 1209 states: "The goal of the Basic Education Act for the schools of the state of Washington set forth in this chapter shall be to provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives." In what way does our district's culminating project serve as a demonstration of this or our district's mission?

Does this project enable students to synthesize their learning and articulate post high school plans for their role as a learner, worker and citizen?

1. Alignment

- How is the project aligned to HB 1209, including the state learning goals and the EALRs?
- In what way does the project serve as a culminating demonstration of the district's core student learning outcomes?

2. Established criteria

- What criteria are we going to use to determine success?

- Are the criteria consistent across the district or determined by each building?
- Do we have clear and rigorous criteria for all elements of the CP including the actual project?

3. Implementation plan

- What structures and components define CP? Are they consistent across the district or are they individual building decisions?
- How will we involve staff, students, parents and community in developing the project elements?
- How will you prepare students K-12 to be able to do this project successfully?
- How will the project be implemented?
- What staff development will be needed before, during and after the project begins?
- How will we prepare teachers, students, community organizations, mentors, and parents?
- What checkpoints and supports help increase the likelihood of success?

*Project Service Leadership and culminating projects, continued***Program structures**

- How is the project coordinated?
- What is the timeline and action plan?
- Is this embedded in a course or a stand-alone, an independent study or on-line course?
- Is credit involved? Will it be on the transcript before 2008?
- Can a project be completed by a group or team?
- What policy support needs to be provided?
- Are there modifications and accommodations for different populations, including special education, ESL, Running Start, early graduation and special circumstances?
- Will students be given multiple opportunities to meet the standard? How will feedback be provided?
- How will remediation be provided?
- What is the timeline for graduation decisions?
- Who determines graduation eligibility?

Student voice and ownership

- How will you ensure student choice and voice in the selection and implementation of the project?
- How will you help students see the range of possible projects?

Learning stretch

- What criteria have you included that will assess the degree of new learning?
- What criteria have you included that will assess the significance and amount of the learning?

Authenticity

- How will we provide opportunities for student projects to extend beyond the traditional classroom? What prior experiences and classroom instruction will enable students to work effectively with community organizations and members?
- How will the district provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning?
- How will feedback and data about the experience be gathered and used for improvement?

Civic skills

- How will we provide opportunities for students to enhance and demonstrate their civic skills through our CP? Will students have an opportunity to reflect and more fully understand their role as a citizen?
- Will we design the project and assessment so students simultaneously meet standards for Civics Classroom Based Assessment?

Career connections

- How will we include experiences and reflective activities which help students develop informed post high school plans that are shaped by their understanding of career options?

Support structures

- What resource support needs to be provided?
- What budget will be provided? Will this replace existing support or be new support?
- What staff will be needed? Will this replace existing positions or be new?
- How will the design or implementation of the project affect collective bargaining agreements?

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- What technology support will be needed?
- What materials need to be created for various audiences, including students, parents, staff and community?
- What guidelines need to be created to ensure student safety and risk management?
- What is the process for formative and summative program evaluation? How will all stakeholders be part of that process?

While service-learning is not a required component of the culminating project many districts include an option or requirement of service as part of that culminating project. To require service hours without adequate preparation and reflection may do a disservice to students and communities alike. *The District Planning Guide for Civically Rich Culminating Projects* provides examples from districts that have addressed many of the questions framed above. A workshop based on this guide and other resources will be provided at the OSPI's January 2006 Institute in Seattle.

Community involvement

- How will we communicate about culminating projects?
- How will the community be involved in planning, training, implementation, and evaluation?
- How will community members serve as mentors, panelists, advisors or resource people?
- What training will be provided?

Project Service Leadership is assisting a few districts that include service-learning in their Small Schools and Culminating Projects. The Evergreen Public Schools' rubric for assessing their Civic Action Project can be found on the following page.

Service-Learning Washington provides technical assistance to schools and districts throughout the state. You can learn more about Service-Learning Washington and the support they can provide at www.servicelearning.wsu.edu.

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Student _____ Evergreen Public Schools: Culminating Project Rubric for Assessing the Civic Action Project

Elements	4: Accomplished	3: Competent	2: Needs Improvement	1: Limited
<p>Demonstrates Civic Action Skills</p> <p>Civics EALRS 4.2.3a</p>	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluates the causes of a community need and articulates at least 3 different points of view related to the issue, then supports a choice of action with community members to develop and implement civic action documents leadership impact and service through interaction with the organization (profit, nonprofit and public) completes more than 15 hours of civic action 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies a community need and articulates at least 2 other points of view related to the issue, then supports a choice of action is assessed as working collaboratively with community members in the development and completion of the service (per community checklist) documents interaction with the organization (profit, nonprofit and public) and records effectiveness of the action completes a minimum of 15 hours of civic action 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies, deliberates and acts upon an identified community need, but considers only 1 other point of view to support a choice of action depends on help from community members to develop and complete the service provides incomplete documentation of the service and/or fails to show its effectiveness completes fewer than 15 hours of civic action 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to meet a community need, or does not consider perspectives other than his/her own is unable to work with community members to develop support or collaboration fails to document the service completes fewer than 15 hours of civic action
<p>Provides Meaningful Service</p>	<p>The project is ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed in consultation with members of a specific community to meet an important need provides tangible, valuable benefits to the community served, and documents this impact 	<p>The project is ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed in consultation with members of a specific community to meet an identified need for a specific community benefits the community in a specific, tangible manner 	<p>The project is ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed to benefit a particular community, but without interaction or involvement of community members has marginal impact on community benefits 	<p>The project is ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed with benefits to a general category of people, but little/no logic exists to show how potential benefits might be realized by the recipients makes no attempt to share the partially completed project with members of a specific community, and no benefits are realized
<p>Shows Reflection and Self-Evaluation</p> <p>Civics EALRS 4.1.3a</p>	<p>The student reflects and evaluates the learning from the civic action including ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an analysis of decisions and problem solving efforts with recommendations for service improvement application to future education, civic and career plans or personal interests how the project contributes to common good 	<p>The student reflects and evaluates the learning from the civic action including ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> descriptions of project problems and solutions application to future education, civic and career plans or personal interests how the project contributes to individual rights and common good presently and in the future 	<p>The student attempts to reflect and evaluate the learning from the civic action, but lacks details about ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> descriptions of project problems and solutions or, application to future education, civic and career plans or, how the project contributes to common good presently and in the future 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to reflect or evaluate the civic action learning experience or, makes little or no connection between the service and the learning
<p>Demonstrates CBA Content</p>	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines a civic issue and explains own position based on more than three reasons connects the civic issue to more than one democratic ideal or constitutional principle relates and explains how more than one court case or government policy affects individual rights associated with this issue 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines civic issue and explains own position based on three reasons connects the civic issue to at least one democratic ideal or constitutional principle relates and explains how at least one court case or government policy affects individual rights associated with this issue 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examines a civic issue and explains own position based on fewer than three reasons mentions, but fails to directly connect the civic issue to at least one democratic ideal or constitutional principle mentions, but fails to connect a court case or policy to individual rights 	<p>The student ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to examine a civic issue or explain own position does not mention or connect the issue does not include court cases or government policies related to individual rights

Approved: _____ Date: _____ Student must meet competent level in each element category.

(Certificated Staff or Teacher Signature)

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