



K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

“In 2008, the service-learning field released evidence-based standards and accompanying indicators that K-12 practitioners can use to ensure high-quality service-learning practice. For decades, those involved in service-learning have known that quality matters if service-learning is to live up to its promise of helping young people grow in academics and civic engagement. Now educators have a set of standards and indicators to guide them in improving their practices.” (www.nylc.org/standards)

America SCORES is pleased to demonstrate how our *Writing for the Community* curriculum aligns with these eight standards for quality.

1. Meaningful Service. *Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.*

- *Writing for the Community* offers age-appropriate activities and engaging learning experiences for 3rd-6th graders. This curriculum helps young children understand how they are a member of their community, and how they can work together to affect positive change.
- Through journal writing and class discussions, students have the opportunity to address issues in their community that have personal relevance to them.
- This program encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed. Students interact with community members who are involved in solutions and also those who are impacted by the issue, so that students can see how their project fits into the larger picture.
- *Writing for the Community* projects are student-led; teachers and coaches help students to make connections, but the projects are driven by student engagement.

2. Link to Curriculum. *Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.*

- The learning goals for *Writing for the Community* are clearly defined on page 4 of the curriculum and at the end of this document. Furthermore, each lesson contains a measurable learning objective that directly contributes to one or more of the four overall goals of the curriculum.
- Literacy enrichment, stemming from the *Power of Poetry* curriculum, is a substantial portion of the program as demonstrated by the Literary Moments, journaling and writing prompts, and oral sharing activities.
- *Writing for the Community* meets many of the 12 National Standards for English Language Arts as well as the 10 Standards for Social Studies Education.

3. Reflection. *Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.*

- *Writing for the Community* provides multiple opportunities for reflection in every single lesson through journaling, discussion, and creative or expository writing.
- Reflection activities seek to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
- Reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
- Reflection activities encourage participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
- Reflection activities encourage participants to examine multiple perspectives with an appreciation for diversity of culture and ideas.

4. Diversity. *Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.*

- *Writing for the Community* builds an appreciation for diversity through the many teambuilding and community-building activities which teach conflict resolution, appreciation, and respect for people from different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Students read authentic texts written by people of diverse cultures, languages, genders, ages, and communities. They engage in discussions that reinforce respect and understanding.
- Students interact with guest speakers and classroom visitors as well as community members as they learn about and implement their service-learning project.

5. Youth Voice. *Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.*

- The students lead the decision-making process by identifying the issues that impact them and their personal vision of the community's needs.
- Each student is an active member of the team, playing an integral role throughout every stage of the project.
- By emphasizing the SCORES core values of teamwork, leadership, and commitment, students and coaches create a supportive environment that is built on trust, respect and community.

6. Partnerships. *Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.*

- Teams are encouraged to involve a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses as they work through their service-learning projects.

- Students use the expertise of their partners in order to better understand the issue that is facing their community. Students learn how they can work in tandem with other groups that share a common vision to complete their project.
- SCORES teams are seen as valuable partners in the community through their outreach and service-learning projects.

7. Progress Monitoring. *Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.*

- Students monitor and receive feedback about the progress of their project and its specific goals through ongoing oversight by their coach, check-ins with community members and partners, and through individual and team reflection activities.
- If necessary, students use the feedback about their progress in order to redirect their project or refocus their attention.
- By engaging in the final lessons in the curriculum, students are able to reflect on the project as a whole and determine their impact.
- Teams share their completed projects with the community-at-large through displays, reenactments, newsletters, speaking engagements, or other creative methods.

8. Duration and Intensity. *Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.*

- The *Writing for the Community* curriculum is implemented over a period of approximately ten weeks, and the teams meet on average two times per week for 90 minutes.
- Throughout this time, teams are guided by a writing coach so they can successfully move through all four stages of the project including preparation, research, action, and demonstration.

Writing for the Community learning goals:

1. Students define their communities through observation, writing, research, and service-oriented action backed by learning and reflection.
2. Students gain a broad perspective on their selected topic by considering it from various angles through research, activities, discussions, and guest speakers who share their expertise
3. Students work together as a team to reach consensus and undertake a service-learning project related to an issue of their choosing.
4. Students use writing to establish and explore connections between their background knowledge, lessons from this curriculum, and their service experience.