Building and strengthening ties in the community through service-learning opportunities

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Building and Strengthening Ties in the Community through Service-Learning Opportunities

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Abstract

In the two years since the Service Learning Club was formed at the independent school where I teach, the community connections have grown tremendously. The students in grades three through five volunteered to go into the community to interact with two preschools, two senior residences and a soup kitchen. From those relationships, the opportunities to deepen them have benefited the entire school and those with whom we interact. I will give an overview of the club activities, the expansion of the service learning into the curriculum and the efforts to integrate the community into the events at the school. The students’ reflections, parent and faculty interviews and feedback from the community organizations will document the transformation in attitudes and thinking through this Service Learning Initiative at the Lower School where I teach art and advise the Service Learning Club. The evolution in my thinking from community service advocate to service-learning facilitator and club advisor has been part of my education in connecting the community with the students as reciprocal partners with substantial benefits for all. As the service-learning component continues to expand, how can we measure the efficacy of the program and the benefits for the school and the community as a whole? And even use it as a model to develop other global relationships? And how can the students take control of their club to plan, act and reflect on their mission?
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Dedication

I dedicate this project and my service learning work to my parents, Barbara and Louis Auletta, who taught me the importance of respecting elders and learning from the wisdom of experience. They modeled strong community involvement, family ties, and empathy, which I hope to impart to my own daughter, Chloe, and to the students with whom I interact each day.
**Introduction: Rationale and Theoretical Influences**

**Personal History**

As a child, I got off the school bus, got on my bike and went around the block to attend a tea party many days after school. My great grandmother, great aunts, grandmother and aunt were together for their daily Hungarian family gathering. When they saw my brothers, my sister and me come in, they were thrilled each time and offered food, tea, card games and inquiries about our day. We felt special and so did they. This intergenerational exchange had a profound influence on my life, which I have always appreciated and have wanted to somehow replicate for my students who might not get this meaningful interaction with seniors. Through the Service Learning Club and curriculum-related projects, we are getting to know our community and building ties that will strengthen all of us as partners in our society. The students have the benefit of learning from the seniors as they interact, share activities, converse, and eventually make friends. I see the same look of admiration and wonder in the residents who we visit through the Service Learning Club as I did with my own family visits. Maybe the students will not even realize the full value of their experience until years past, as do I with my reflections.

**Theoretical Influences: Evolution in Thinking About Service-Learning as a Teacher and Advisor**

What does the service-learning look like and how is the learning demonstrated? The reflections and observations, which document the impact of this approach to education, have been instrumental in realizing its success and monitoring its progress. In the twenty years that I have been taking students into the community to perform acts of
service, the learning has been evident in their articulation of their feelings and reactions to their work. The informal discussions in advisory groups and pieces of student reflections in the school newspaper have been the instruments of reflection in my previous programs. The students were active participants and occasionally planned the activities but intended goals for the program were not specifically discussed. In my own evolution in providing a more direct explanation of the goals and proposed results, the students must be part of the process of understanding their learning component and articulating it along the way.

In addition to the dimensions that created the differences between teachers in the quality of the service-learning goals and related implementation activities, there also appeared to be changes with teachers across time and experience in their vision of service-learning. (Ammon, 2002, p. 46)

As I move forward in implementing and leading service-learning programs, my thinking has continued to evolve regarding what components constitute a high quality service-learning experience. The original goal of doing kind deeds has expanded to a more varied and deeper experience for all of the participants in which the learning is as important as the service. Service learning is typified by a series of actions and reflections. In the service learning setting, students work with others through a process of practice and reflection to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. These reflection activities are viewed as basic to the service learning process because they provide students with opportunities to think, write, and talk about their experiences. Student facilitation and leadership is another facet of the service-learning experience that gives it credibility. In the next year of the program design, the student voice will be a central focus of all aspects of the activities from the actions to the reflections. Involving the students in all stages of the project gives them a vested interest
in the work, makes them aware of the goals, motivates them to research the issue, and
gives them opportunities to reflect and comment on their learning process.

This idea of a democratic education is demonstrated in the philosophy of the
Reggio Emilia approach in which the teachers and students have reciprocity in teaching
and learning from each other. After World War II, Loris Malaguzzi devised this
philosophy in the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy, in which the child is treated with respect
as a capable individual who is involved in shaping their own educational experience. The
students’ interests dictate the content and the direction of the curriculum. Malaguzzi
believed that students should be actively involved in the planning and direction that their
education takes.

Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch
the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down
the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen
learning how to learn. (Malaguzzi as cited in Edwards, Gandini, & Forman,
1993, p. 58)

The Reggio Emilia approach to education is characterized by three features that
relate to service-learning: the emergent curriculum, experiential learning, and community
participation in the educational experience. Experiential learning is a feature of this
philosophy in which the children are given opportunities to explore the world with access
to natural materials and real-life experiences. The students have the opportunity to create
situations of actual events instead of those fabricated and to mimic or dilute adult
situations. The Reggio Emilia approach also gives the community a collective
responsibility of educating young children. This model of involving the elders with the
preschool children has been inspiring and relevant because of my own upbringing and the
communal effort in sharing such an important task. It also serves as a method to build
community and communication between the members of a shared space and concern.
The infant-toddler centers and preschools are places of living together between generations. They are public common spaces where the multitudes aim to become a community of people growing together with a strong sense of the future, a strong sense of participation, of living together, of taking care, one for others…Taking care of the other people and of the common space is an expression of a sense of affiliation to a community. (Delrio, 2012, p. 84)

Through our engagement with the community, we can discover who are neighbors are. By bringing them into the school, they have started to discover more about us. This reciprocated involvement begins to dissolve the divide of being part of a physical space without any social connections. Not only do we have a responsibility to our community, we have shared interests and experiences, which are only discovered as we get to know each other.

The goal of incorporating service-learning projects into the studio art curriculum has become more familiar and automatic in my teaching process. Student participation in the process is vital to our investment. I have been increasingly fascinated with the divergent directions in which they are inspired to go with their assignments and more receptive to letting them follow their paths of interest. In thinking about the goals for the work, I have begun to reconsider the book, *Understanding by Design* (2005). In this method of program planning designed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, the concept of goal setting as the starting point and “backward design” with the activity planning to follow. As the students identify goals and design their service-learning projects, they can control over the path that it takes and begin to plan the “action”. This fits well into the democratic education that Dewey (1938) and Malaguzzi espouse. Beginning with clear goals and anticipated outcomes that are designed and articulated by the group can set
more effective expectations. The backward planning begins with the proposed route or action that the piece will take and has regular periods of reflection to gauge its success.

I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends. I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. (Dewey 1897)

Students may be able to identify their strengths and contribute to the group process after they recognize their talents and interests. The writing and reflection component is an essential skill that helps an individual to become more aware of their own ideas and reactions that might not be exposed otherwise. The students’ collaborative efforts in constructing their service-learning projects will give them the opportunity to interact with each other, sharing ideas and making actual compromises and contributions to the group cause. Dewey also speaks to the group experience in his *My Pedagogic Creed* in which he states:

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unit, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. (Dewey, 1897)

Through collaboration with each other and in the wider community, the children are given a voice, which can develop into a powerful tool for social justice. By being part of a bigger system, the students will develop the confidence to work with others to bring about change.

**Social Emotional Readiness for Service-learning**
The consideration of age appropriateness in service-learning activities can be looked at in their social and emotional learning markers.

Regardless of conflicting views about the appropriate place, if any, of "values education" in the schools, people are generally able to agree that developing this capacity to understand, appreciate, and communicate meaningfully with others is an important and desirable goal.” (Cotton 1995)

Research shows that elementary age children can begin to consider fairness when they get to age six to eight years old. “By eight, they are better able to emphasize with other people and accept the idea of giving special consideration to those in greater need.” (Bredekamp and Copple p153) Even though babies feel empathy from a short time after birth, the degree of empathetic sensitivity depends on the factors of the child’s social interactions from birth and discipline techniques in early childhood. “Even a few months after birth, infants react to a disturbance in those around them as though it were their own, crying when they see another child’s tears.” (Goleman p.98) By the first year, empathy forms in another manner where the child copies the pain of someone else by copying the reaction of the injured person, given a term called “motor mimicry”. (Goleman p 98) This act of attempting to feel what another person is feeling is the foundation of empathetic ability. Children also develop their empathetic skills in the way that they are disciplined. For example, if a parent or teacher calls attention to the hurtful act they have done instead of calling them bad, they can better form the connection between their feelings and those of others.

Older youth are better able to recognize emotive states in other people, more capable of relating to and sharing others' feelings, able to feel empathy for more diverse kinds of people, and more willing to express their empathetic response in generosity toward others. The developmental level of very young children, by contrast, is characterized by greater self-involvement, frequent objectification of others, and a tendency to
experience and act on empathetic feelings only toward people very much like themselves in age, ethnicity, and gender. (Cotton 1995)

Students have shown to respond to empathy training through several practices that are in line with their actions in the SLC. The students’ feelings are exposed to stimuli of the plight of the disadvantaged, the issues of getting old and the challenges of immigrant’s children learning a new language. It has also been demonstrated that students can learn to empathize from adult modeling. When the parents and faculty go to the sites, they fully participate and set the example for the interactions. Another technique to develop empathy is praise and positive reinforcement of the caring acts that the children and doing and the attention to the feelings of the other person that they are affecting. (Cotton 1995)

**Literature Review: What is Service-Learning?**

“Most trace the roots to the writings of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, and some even go back as far as Alexis de Tocqueville. These philosophers believed that learning occurs best when students are actively involved in their own learning and when the learning has a distinct purpose.” (Billig, 2000b) In the proposal that I wrote to get permission to start the club, I called it the Community Service Club, which was changed by the Dean to the Service Learning Club. This is where my education began on the definition and differentiation of service learning from other service endeavors, such as community service and volunteerism. The term, service-learning, is now commonly hyphenated in current use to emphasize the reciprocity in the experience, which is one of the main components of the approach in education. Reciprocity distinguishes service-learning from volunteerism and community service. As Andrew Furco explains in his definition by Robert Sigmon, “He suggested that because learning flows from service
activities, both those who receive it ‘learn’ from the experience. In Sigmon’s view, service-learning occurs only when both providers and recipients of service benefits from the activities.” (Furco, 1996)

These other service experiences focus on charity work or philanthropy without a component of learning from the experience that relates to the curriculum or the topic that is being pursued. “As the service activities become more integrated with the academic course work of the students and as the students begin to engage in formal discourse around the various issues relevant to the cause, the community service program moves closer to the center of the continuum to become more like service-learning. While all of the service programs are experiential, the reflection piece of service-learning also provides for more of an understanding of what has been learned from the activities.

The keystone of service-learning pedagogy is reflection. Reflection may involve such activities as discussion, writing, exhibition, games and/or critique. Continual, meaningful, and reflective exchange between all parties involved in the service-learning project is important for mutual respect of everyone’s values, needs, and expectations. (Taylor & Ballengee-Morris, 2004)

Reflection gives the students the practice in recounting their experiences and making associations to their everyday life. It also gives them the chance to think about their feelings and the reactions of other participants. Reflections are meant to happen through each stage of the project to document the ideas generated, the feelings and observations throughout and a summary of the outcome.

“Service-learning has been found to increase students’ feelings of both civic and social responsibility. Several studies demonstrated that political efficacy or a feeling that ‘they can make a difference’ emerged out of participation in service –learning programs.” (Billig, 2000a) It is the hope that this civic action of service-learning projects become a
steady part of their lives as they mature and become leaders in the community and the world. Increased participation in decision making for the community will make the concerns more relevant for the students as adults. This habit of getting involved with fellow citizens can affect their future roles in society. “Results showed that service-learning and exposure to effective strategies for civic education were the strongest predictors of commitment to civic participation, having markedly stronger effects than school, neighborhood, or family factors.” (Furco, 2010)

The History of Service-Learning at the Ring School

The Ring School has three divisions with six hundred students ranging from Pre Kindergarten to grade twelve. Our student population is from the city as well surrounding suburban communities and has twenty four percent of students classified as students of color. The student body gender ratio is fifty six percent boys to forty four percent girls. Thirteen percent of the students at the school receive financial aid for the tuition of an average cost of $31,000. The Ring School is a traditional, private, co-educational school in a city with a diverse population of 122,000 residents.

Poverty in this city is often overlooked because the city is surrounded by a number of affluent towns. The Metropolitan area has one of the lowest poverty rates in the country, 9.4 percent, because wealthy suburbs offset the poverty in the cities. (Census) This could lead to the area being overlooked as a region where community programs are needed. There are, however, cities like it where the poverty rate is higher than the surrounding suburbs, particularly for children. The city’s rate of residents who are considered “poor” by the 2010 American Community Survey (published in the CT Poverty Report) is 11.1 percent and the rate considered to be “very poor” is 13.3 percent.
According to the Census, the number of children under eighteen living in poverty is 13.1 percent. Overall, the city’s level of poverty is apparent and this can also be seen in their higher-than-average unemployment rate, at 9.7 percent. (Census)

The school has traditionally been involved in community service and volunteerism at various times in the year, especially around the holidays with food drives and visits to the local nursing homes. The three divisions have initiated charitable events through clubs and special projects of individual interests. The promotion of service activities has been through assemblies and posters to describe the goals and provide information. Three years ago, the Ring school developed the Service Learning Initiative, which is described in its mission statement:

Service Learning at Ring is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection, enriching the learning experience, promoting civic responsibility, and strengthening community. At Ring, we cultivate reciprocal service and a learning partnership among our students' families, Faculty, Staff, and the surrounding community. A commitment to excellence invigorates a comprehensive program that affirms the belief that all students can learn and become responsible, productive members of the Ring community.

The school appointed a Dean of Community Affairs, who oversees the Service Learning Program. Since the concept of service learning was new to much of the school community, the Dean devoted a professional development day to the topic with Cathryn Berger Kaye as the speaker and facilitator. Her manual, Guide to Service Learning, was given to every faculty member and was offered as a resource in developing our own service learning projects in the curriculum. The Service Learning Committee was formed and met in the fall to brainstorm activities for the year and to answer questions for the Accreditation Self Study for National Association of Independent Schools. There were several subsequent meetings for the committee and divisional liaisons were assigned to
promote and monitor service-learning projects in each division. The introduction of the
Service Learning Initiative sparked activity in my own curriculum and reinforced the
work that I had begun a year earlier with the formation of the Service Learning Club in
the Lower School.

Service Learning Club

Goals of the Ring Service Learning Club

The Service Learning Club seeks to develop character, build self-confidence and
instill a sense of respect for others by establishing relationships with our neighbors in the
Stamford community. As the progressive education that we promote as a school is
defined as experiential, the students are learning first-hand about the issues of the elderly,
the economically disadvantaged, and inner city children. The SLC exposes the students to
a diverse range of age groups and socioeconomic statuses. The members of the club will
become aware of the needs of the community members and issues that concern different
sectors of the city in which they go to school and live through their direct interaction. The
students engage in projects, games, and dialogue at the sites we visit each week and they
build strong connections with the participants. After the orientation stage, they appear to
grow into comfortable and confident visitors who partake in meaningful interactions at
the sites. As they are more aware of the dynamics of the world around them, they will
likely become more informed participants and voters on current and future issues facing
all members of their community and society. It is the hope that the students will be more
inclined to make social justice and activism part of their place in the world and have an
impact in shaping collective concern for our future.

The Ring Service Learning Club has the following goals:
• Engage students in social and civic responsibility through community outreach and service to others

• Participation of the school community in the program:
  students/faculty/staff/parents

• Creating awareness and education on nationally important topics: Aging, Poverty, Sustainability, Recycling, Diversity, etc.

• Further establish a presence of Ring in Stamford as active members of the school and wider community

• Maintain a board/webpage with opportunities, calendar of events, and documentation from the SLC activities.

While currently the SLC focuses on meaningful work in the community, going forward, we will be supported by more educational research and structured reflection. In each division, students could be asked to question and explore community needs and problems. They will then be challenged to work to address those needs as they build relationships with the wider community. It is the hope that they will connect local concerns with global issues and gain an awareness of humanitarian concerns.

Participation in the Service Learning Club will serve them now in their development as a contributing member of society. The benefits of being involved in the club are subtle and exposed with inquiry and personal anecdotes, which the parents share on occasion. After an initial awkward stage, they grow into comfortable and proud visitors who partake in meaningful interactions at the sites. Their interpersonal skills are developed as they open conversations with new acquaintances and others with whom they are working side by side. It also gives the students a different perspective on their classmates, with whom they
previously may not had much in common. The service-learning club gives students in the upper elementary grades the opportunity to interact with each other and bonding as a team. Students have found new opportunities to be leaders in these situations where they feel experienced and empowered. As they take on different roles and activities in the club, they discover new skills and interests. “Students also tend to develop strong relationships with their peers who are engaged in the service with them and with adults other than their teachers and parents.” (Thomsen, 2006) The SLC exposes students to the needs of the community. As they are more aware of the dynamics of their world, they will become more informed participants and voters on the current and future issues. “Eyes become more accustomed to looking for needs in the community and recognizing opportunities for change.” (Kaye, 2004) The students will be more inclined to make social justice and activism part of their place in the world and have an impact in shaping collective concern for our future.

The club focuses on meaningful work in the community, which going forward can be supported by education and structured reflection. In each division, students could be asked to question and explore community needs and problems. They will then be challenged to work to address those needs as they build relationships with the wider community. They connect local concerns with global issues and gain an awareness of others. Participation in the Service Learning Club will serve them now and years later as they transition out of school and into the adult world. An original goal for the Service Learning Club was to expand throughout the school with cross-divisional activities to strengthen and reinforce our commitment to serving the community and engaging with our neighbors in meaningful activities. Through the Service Learning Club, it is the hope
that the school can continue to establish a greater presence in Stamford, as a school that supports and relates to the issues, needs and members of the community and prepares students for a lifelong commitment to service.

Previous community service programs validated the notion of service as an immediate source of satisfaction for the students in which they take action as part of their education and might think more about social issues through those experiences. After forming two other community service programs in other private schools, I felt that I had the experience to begin an after-school Community Service Club at the Ring School, where I currently teach. The idea was enthusiastically received by the administration, which gave me the authorization to begin planning. Also, the Service Learning Initiative was in the planning phase for the entire Ring school, which made the timing ideal. The format of the club was based on the models that I had used in the past of direct service in the immediate community.

**Initial Design Considerations**

The Service Learning Club in the Ring Lower School has grown beyond my initial expectations in the first two years. It has been expanding through the visibility that was achieved in the communication of the activities: photo displays in the hallways, parent meetings and through friends inviting friends to join them. In the enthusiasm exhibited by the members, other students are inspired to try out the experience. The number of sites that we visit has increased by one since the beginning of the program and the group size is at maximum capacity. The Lower School Service Learning Club is slowly becoming part of the fabric of our community, as we interact with our neighbors. We have formed extended families, especially for those who do not have nearby or close
relationships with their own families, and we have demonstrated how relatively easy it is to form bonds through our shared activities and events as we partake in weekly excursions. The Service Learning Club has also made the agencies and individuals of our community more familiar to the entire Lower School as they see and hear account of the activities. The faculty has designed projects in their curriculum to benefit the sites that we visit and have used these connections to make their own initiation into service-learning easier.

In designing the club, I relied on my experience from previous models, from which I have continuously modified. I wanted the students to have choices of which agencies they chose to serve and a long enough time to get involved in the visits each week. In forming relationships, it was also important to have regular visits to each site. I decided to go to two preschools, two senior homes and a soup kitchen. Other considerations were: the schedule, communication, transportation, parent consent, the budget, activities, reflections, documentation, and faculty and parent volunteers.

**Description of the Club**

**Who** The SLC visits is open primarily to students in grade three through five, parents and faculty. As the students passed from grade five in the Lower School to the Middle School, they have remained part of the club and join us when their schedule allows. In the two years that the Service Learning Club had been in place at the school, we had had fifty-two out of 110 Lower School students in grades three through five, eight Middle School students, five Upper School students, Lower School Children’s Orchestra, twelve faculty members, two administrators, and thirteen parents participate in the club. There have also been Upper School students who join their siblings on trips to the soup
kitchen. The offerings and schedule are posted through the after school programs and listed on their webpage. The parents have access to it and enroll their children for the activities by email.

**Where and When** The five sites that we visit were chosen to give the students a variety of ages and activities to try out to find their optimal place. The location was important to minimize the travel time and maximizing the amount of time devoted to the visits. Once a week, for an hour on Wednesdays, the SLC visits the residents at the Johnson House* and Sunset Assisted Living*. The students make art projects, sing, and play games, visit, and share candy or refreshments for the residents. The intergenerational activities create empathy, understanding and appreciation of diversity and the aging process in our students. We are both the givers and the recipients of many benefits from the residents. The activities are designed so that students and the residents both benefit and learn from each other. The students become more aware of the needs of the elderly and develop a better understanding of their habits. The seniors marvel at the energy of the children and engage in activities and conversation to tap into their youth and reconnect with the community.

The dynamics of the group are constantly changing as members join and the residents decide to engage from week to week. It can be a challenge for some children who have the patience and the empathy to interact with the elderly, while others have an authentically caring response. The act of making conversation with relative strangers can be difficult for anyone, therefore moving the students into a comfortable place and getting them situated has been a constant need at the beginning of each visit. The students
who have been going for several years have acted as ambassadors and to model behavior to their peers during the visits.

On Mondays, a group of students brings books to read to the toddlers at the Daywood Center*. Their forty-five minute visits serve the essential needs of the children in the daycare to learn to learn English, as their primary language in the home is Spanish. The young children, ages two through five, are apprehensive at the beginning of the school year when we make our first appearances. By the middle of the school year, they eagerly await our arrival and greet us with enthusiastic smiles when we arrive. The SLC students read books, which we bring and donate to their classroom. There is a range of reading abilities in the students from grade three through five, which could be the focus of a planning session in the upcoming year. The students can practice reading aloud strategies and choose books at their level. At the end of every visit, playtime is popular for everyone and gives the students more of an opportunity to bond with individuals. The students have become aware of the challenges faced by the school systems in giving all children an equal chance to learn and succeed in school.

Once a month, another group visits the New House*, a soup kitchen that serves one hundred and fifty meals twice a day to local guests. In the hour before we leave, the students bake cookies in the Lower school kitchen to serve for dessert. When we serve at the New House Soup Kitchen, the students are exposed to a community with which they ordinarily do not have contact. After several visits, the students seem more comfortable interacting with the guests and are curious to know their stories. Even though they have not had extended conversations with the men and women who frequent the soup kitchen, they are curious to know why they are in a situation where they cannot provide meals for
themselves and their families. Initially, the students and faculty focused on their task of meeting the physical need of hunger for the clients. As they became more comfortable with the setting, they felt united with the team effort to feed the hungry and felt pride in their own involvement. The students learn firsthand about poverty in their own community as they perform physical tasks, such as baking and serving, to contribute to the care of those in need. The guests report that they are impressed with the students’ confidence and kindness in passing around a tray of cookies that they bake at school that day.

**Communication** Communication is one of the most time-consuming aspects of the club. I initially made contact with the recreational or volunteer coordinators at each site. The volunteer coordinators at the agencies seemed receptive to the idea and had previous experience with school groups. We discussed the logistics of our visits and met for brief orientations before our initial trip with the students. At their first visit, the students also had an orientation and tour of the facilities. The communication to the students and parents to introduce and sign up for the club was done next through the school website’s after school activities. The students could join through an email from their parents. The parents had many additional questions about the structure, schedule and activities of the newly formed club in their initial contact. As the groups formed, the emails were done from a master list to address many of the scheduling and information questions. The last part of the communication is with the faculty and administration. In planning each activity involving any funding, I emailed the Dean of Community Affairs and the Head of Lower School, who share the expenses of the club.
**Transportation** Securing transportation was difficult and remains so today. In making direct contact with the members of our community, we need steady, reliable transportation. The school vans are used primarily by the athletic department and scheduled by their director, who will only schedule the vans for two-week increments at a time because of his need to have them available for rescheduled games. Therefore, we are left to scramble to rent a van if one is not available. Last year, we requested our own van for community events, but it was not approved in the budget. This year, we have put in a request for a Community vehicle that could be shared by all members. If a school van is not available on a particular day, I was left with the option of renting from Hertz in downtown Stamford for $200 a day. This was large expense and a time consuming activity, which occurred ten to fifteen times a year out of fifty times. The other main transportation issue is the van license. I am currently the only faculty member in the club who has a license to drive a school van, which makes it essential for me to go on every trip and to cancel SLC trips if I am away. If the club is to function as a sustainable activity, it needs to have more fully invested faculty members to share in the many functions that make it possible. Driving a school van is intimidating for most of the Lower School faculty because they have not had the experience. I am constantly thinking about incentives to get more teachers to consider getting a van license.

**Assessment** In the first year, the SLC group met at lunch for the first reflection and writing session to gauge the impact of the activities. The food was a distraction to the writing process, which was not taken seriously by some of the members, who felt awkward thinking and writing about their experiences. In the second year of the club, I gave out reflection sheets before the food and some prompts to make it more comfortable
and to make the primary focus on the writing. The reflection process is constantly being revised and reconsidered to get more thoughtful responses. Though the parent interviews for the data collection, I discovered much more about the student reactions and feelings from their membership in the club. It is then the goal to have the students write about the ideas that they discuss with their parents. The students can eventually be involved in the design and decision-making on the reflection process as they became more involved with the planning activities.

**Bringing the Community to the School: Two Projects for Seniors**

**Cecily Christian Art Exhibit** Cecily Christian arrived at the Ring Performing Arts Center, on September 27, in an elegant blue gown, eager to greet friends and art lovers at her one-woman show. Cecily was surrounded by admiring students and parents who came after school to see and congratulate her on the exhibit. The Middle and Lower School members of the Service Learning Club served as hosts to Cecily's friends from the Johnson House and Stamford community. The students escorted the residents to the lobby, where they were served hors d'oeuvres and cookies as they viewed the artwork. Cecily was familiar with many of the students, as well as their parents, through their visits to the Johnson House with the SLC. During their projects together, they came to appreciate Cecily's flamboyant personality and her talent as an artist. Her tiny room that also serves as her studio always fascinates the students.

To prepare Cecily’s show, the art teachers from two divisions collected over fifty pieces of artwork from her room at the Johnson House Skilled Nursing Facility, to be in the exhibit. Her works are often still lifes and landscapes painted or drawn from observation, and animated by her expressive lines and bold colors. At the reception,
Cecily sold many of her pieces created in her compact studio at Johnson House. The SLC student members were especially drawn to a pastel drawing of two bluebirds, which they will now have in the Lower School as a permanent work of art in the Ring collection. Cecily's talent, lifelong active dedication to art, and her natural humor and effervescence has made her a favorite resident to visit with during the outings to the Smith House. Her biography was displayed with her work to give the school community an insight to the life of the artist and her influences as an artist. Today in the Johnson House, where she resides, Cecily continues to paint her favorite and frequently revisited subjects. Her work ranges from depictions of wiry, dynamic landscapes and plants to sweet introspective portraits and dreamlike landscapes.

The reception for Cecily brought the residents of the Johnson House to our school, which gave the students the opportunity to be the hosts. They were gracious in helping the seniors out of the van and escorting them into the gallery. The children served their guests refreshments and made them feel welcome to the school. Cecily was able to sell many of her pieces and had money to spend a laptop, which was her first computer. Having the entire art department involved in the process of curating the exhibit, promoting the opening and the exhibit and celebrating the event publicly on the website, made the service-learning experience collaboratively span three divisions and set the tone for future cross-divisional projects.

**Spring Tea Party for Senior Residents** The Service Learning Club sponsored a Spring Tea for area seniors, complete with cookies, finger sandwiches, and entertainment. The tea party was a huge success thanks to all who performed, served snacks, and conversed with the guests. It was wonderful to have the residents from three senior
residences visit us and see what fantastic hosts and hostesses the students are. It was a true collaborative effort with the parents setting up and baking heart-shaped cookies. The music teacher coordinated the entertainment and kept the acts organized. An activity on Service-Learning Day provided us with hand-painted vases that the students filled with flowers from their garden and sent home with each guest. In their roles as servers and hosts, the students needed a few prompts on attending to their guests needs before their own and making sure that everyone felt included.

**Implications for Leadership**

As my role as an advisor to the SLC and a member of the Lower School Community who incorporates service-learning routinely in my teaching, I have been collaborating with parents, faculty, and the administration to bring my evolution in thinking about the educational approach to a wider group. Because the concept of service-learning is very new to the school, it is still in the developmental stage and not used as an approach to teaching by many of the current faculty. In the Service-Learning Day at school this year, we began in the relatively benign fashion as we did in previous years with well-intended service projects. There were three events planned for the students in grade Pre-K through five, in which they made sandwiches, decorated vases and designed placemats with inspirational quotes. These items would be delivered by the SLC to the soup kitchen and used for the Tea Party at the school for the seniors who we visited weekly. The students also each made a sandwich for the soup kitchen. As I started to consider the “learning” aspect of the day, I recognized the need to extend guides to the classroom teachers on preparatory materials to involve the students and the faculty in the goals of their activities (see Appendix A for classroom guides). In getting them to think
about where the pieces were going, the teachers were provided with a list of books to read relating to poverty and the elderly. They also had questions for discussion about giving gifts, receiving gifts, poverty and hunger. It was not enough to just act in the name of service but to get the students and the faculty to think about what the activities’ outcomes would be and how their service activities would teach them more about the recipients of their actions. In opening up a discussion and reflection on the recipients, the students could consider their own impact and learning on the topics.

The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences. We must widen the range of topics and goals, the types of situations we offer and their degree of structure, the kinds and combinations of resources and materials, and the possible interactions with things, peers, and adults. (Malaguzzi as quoted in Gandini, 2012, p. 54)

The students need to relate their activities to a particular aim or goal and recognize the purpose of their actions. In getting the students to think about what they were doing on Service Learning Day and the impact of their projects on strangers who were the recipients, they can begin to make the learning connections that are so vital in the cycle of service-learning.

Looking for Service Learning Connections in the Curriculum through Collaboration

The Grade 5 students visited the New House soup kitchen on Thursday to spread holiday cheer with their artwork, music, cookies, and food for the pantry. The guests of the soup kitchen were thrilled and participated in the songs and rhythm of the music with their clapping and singing. The students presented their art project of inspirational quote banners. The banners are part of an all school Art Department project to bring student work into the community. Members of the Lower School Choir and Ring Children's
Orchestra provided the music and the cookies were baked by the members of the LS Service Learning Club the night before. The Lower School Faculty and staff had their own food drive to fill the shelves of the New House with much needed supplies. Grade five students have been reading "Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen" by DyAnne DiSalvo, followed by discussions on poverty in our own community. These activities and events support Ring's 2012-2013 Service Learning Theme: "Turning the Page on Poverty" and come on the heels of speaker Liz Murray's (Ring Performing Arts Center, October 2012) advice to students to "pay it forward".

The Ring Lower and Middle School students, parents and faculty serve dinner once a month at the New House soup kitchen, and Grade 5 students will be bringing more lively entertainment in the next year. When we went to the soup kitchen to present the inspirational quote banners that were painted for them, I invited Emma, the librarian, who read to the fifth grade students about the soup kitchen. She was part of the collaboration that occurred between the art and library department. In developing activities in the classroom for service learning, I found it easy to be a leader through collaboration. The subject matter is reinforced through the various disciplines and we all have our part in getting the message to the students. I would hope to replicate this exchange and camaraderie in the SLC with other faculty participants. As collaborators and designers of the banners, the fifth grade students were enthusiastically engaged in the project and felt ownership and pride when they delivered them.

Moving into the Global Community

Road to Recovery The service-learning theme for 2011 was the Haitian relief effort to benefit the survivors of the 2010 earthquake. The students in all three divisions
were involved in raising money for the victims in Haiti who were rebuilding their lives. The music teacher designed a service-learning project to have the students in the Lower School write songs and record them to sell as a fundraiser for the “Road to Recovery Project.” In collaboration with her project, the art students made drawings to represent the ideas form the lyrics, which were presented in a collaged piece on the cover of every CD. The students learned about the geography and culture of Haiti through discussions and children’s fiction and non-fiction books about it. The earthquake and the predicament of the Haitians were in the news and a current topic that the children could relate to from the perspective of their own security. The culture and arts of Haiti were revisited this year with the theme of Haitian week as a Global Studies initiative. In the Lower School art and music curricula, the arts of Haiti were reinforced with visiting musicians and artists, who gave the children more connections with the culture. The Haitian artist talked about reusing materials in his project of painting Haitian beach scenes on 55-gallon oil drums, which would be reappointed as recycling containers. The students learned how the Haitians reuse and recycle materials for utilitarian and artistic purposes. They painted the tropical scenes after a demonstration and lecture on the arts of Haiti.

**The One Million Bones Project** Although our primary focus is on building and maintaining our relationships with the local community, it is important for the students to connect to world around them. The global issues that face us can be relevant to curriculum and the service learning projects that we choose for the students can expose them to the needs of the global community. One Million Bones was a perfect project in which the entire school from Pre-K through Twelve could participate. After learning about the ongoing, two-year project at the National Association of Art Educators, I
proposed the project to potentially interested faculty and enlisted the participation of all
three divisions of art teachers and the Lower School science teacher. In the Science lab,
the students had recently studied the human skeleton, making the project complimentary
learning and tactile experience. The idea of creating a work of art that could benefit
others in Africa was appealing to the students in all grades. The term of “art activism”
was introduced and students identified the sub-Saharan countries on the map who were
the recipients of their aid. The Bezos Foundation offered to donate one dollar for every
bone made up to a half million dollars.

The students were thrilled to learn that they could generate one dollar for each
bone that we made and the money would go directly to young students in two African
countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia for vocational training. It was
a good lesson in Geography to locate the countries on the map and to talk about some of
their recent hardships. In interviews that News Channel 12 conducted with the students,
they made the contrast between their good fortune and the plight of those who were
thrown into difficult lives as a matter of chance. As we become more aware of the
opportunities to get involved in global projects, it will strengthen our awareness through
the lens of many disciplines. The interdisciplinary projects will be easier to facilitate
through the common concern to build relationships with our global community.
**Documents for the SLC**

The clarity of the documents was important in keeping the club running smoothly and keeping the communication accessible to the community. With the large volume of after school activities, the calendar and emails provided a clear list of dates and activities for the club members to refer to. (See Appendix H for a sample calendar) The faculty was asked for tentative commitments in a questionnaire distributed in faculty meetings. The students and parents were given information on the school website on the after school activities page. Frequently, special postings were put on grade level pages for grades three through five when a special event was happening or the new trimester of activities was starting. In the Appendix, I have included these forms, which document the forms of communication to the community.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

**Methodology and Findings**

As the act of reflection is vital in articulating and assessing the learning that has happened through service-learning activities, the students have been engaged in writing and discussing their experiences. I have used these reflections as data to document the potential growth and impact on the students. Through interviews with three of the agencies’ volunteer coordinators, four faculty and four parents done over the course of two months in the spring of 2013; I have also collected impressions on the impact of the Service Learning Club and the service-learning projects in the curriculum. In the reflections from thirty-two SLC members in grades three through five and twenty-seven fifth grade students, I used a questionnaire to record their reactions and responses to the activities in the club and in their field trip. My own observations as a participant observer
at the sites, when I was able to coordinate and supervise the activities are also part of the research. In the situations where I was directly partaking in the activity, I was not as observant of the interactions of the other participants. The additional faculty member on each trip with the SLC also gave me valuable insight into the dynamics after the events. In our final meeting of the year with the faculty and parent members, we discussed methods that we will use next year to better facilitate the reflection process in a pre-visit speculation, during the action and an assessment of the activities. (See Appendix F for the notes from the meeting)

Survey Data

In the studio project of the New House soup kitchen banners, the fifth grade students were asked to respond to questions ranging from their knowledge of a soup kitchen’s function to their own feelings about going there and making art for the facility (see Appendix B for survey questions and findings). The fifth grade students were also asked if they knew what service learning is and how they would feel about returning to the soup kitchen. In this reflection, which took the form of a survey, the majority of the twenty-six students answered that service-learning was helping someone. Eight answered that it was learning about or from something as you helped someone or satisfied a need and four did not know what it is. Although they had been doing a service-learning activity, they did not necessarily equate the learning experience with the service activity. In asking about the students’ feelings about going to the soup kitchen, the outcome varied with a majority reporting that they felt negative but empathetic feelings. Twelve out of the fifteen students who had not been to a soup kitchen before reported feeling “sad”, 
“sorry”, “bad” or “nervous.” None of the students who had been there before reported feeling nervous. With the class split into half for two different trips, twice as many of the students who went on the second trip were scared or nervous. The second trip participants must have had a different first impression of the soup kitchen. The bus was late in picking us up to go there and we entered to a full room of strangers. More of the students on the second trip reported feeling nervous or scared. The timing of their entry into the soup kitchen dining room may have accounted for their reaction. The students may also have felt anxiety about the large space with simple, bland décor. On the first trip, the students were there setting up as the guests came in slowly. Seventeen out of the twenty-six students said that they would like to return to the soup kitchen in the future. Many of the students said that experienced both happy and sad feelings from going to the soup kitchen to serve and sing. The majority of the students said that they felt proud to deliver the banners or see their banners hung up in the dining room. Although there were preparations in advance about what to expect in the function of the soup kitchen, we can prepare the students for the experience of entering a new space by discussing the reasons that a person might go there and consider how we think about differences.80

Reflections by the members of the SLC made during the course year, through the writing and interviews of the members and their parents, has shown that our service learning activities can have a profound effect on student growth as well.

Among the strongest findings was that students who engaged in service learning were more sensitive and showed more acceptance of cultural diversity. The results were even stronger when the relationship involved reciprocity such that the students and community members helped each other and or engaged in joint productive activity. (Billig, 2000a)
Through my own research, I have witnessed a growth in empathy and understanding of the members with the interactions they had had through their involvement with the club. In the studio-based projects, where the activities have been shorter and less involved with the community sites, the level of acceptance and understanding of others seemed less pronounced.

The SLC has given the students frequent occasions to reflect about the work that they are doing and how their perceptions have changed. When we had our mid-year luncheon, the students wrote about their feelings and the change that had occurred in their thinking since the first visits. They referred to the children and seniors at the sites by name and related specific stories that illustrated their thoughts about a site. At the Johnson House and Sunset Assisted Living, each student had formed a bond with one or several residents that they teamed up with in their weekly activities. On Service Learning Day at the school, the students proudly came to the podium to share stories about their experiences, but more specifically about a specific person who they looked forward to seeing each week. In the video that I made for the event, they also shared in their enthusiasm for the program and the bonds they have formed in the greater community.

**Interviews and Observation**

Interview question procedures: I requested permission from my Division Head to interview students, faculty and parents in the SLC, which was originally denied based on the assumption that they did not allow it as a school. After speaking to a music teacher who had just finished her dissertation based on her experiment with her students at the school, I concluded that it was not school policy and requested permission with the new information. I was granted access to the parents and faculty. Initially, an email was sent
to four of the volunteer coordinators, four parents who had children in the club for an extended period of time, and five faculty volunteers with the request to be interviewed. Then, a cover letter and informed consent form were given to the participants to acquire written agreement for their participation in the study. Those who agreed to be interviewed were contacted to schedule a date, time, and location for the interview. (See Appendix C for interview questions) During the interviews, questions were asked of each participant and the researcher handwrote anecdotal responses. Each interview took approximately 35 minutes to an hour. As an ongoing assessment tool for the SLC and SL activities in the curriculum, student reflections are filled out. From these reflections, I have gathered general information about the efficacy of the activities and their emotional reactions. I will refer to them in broad terms, with most of the information validated by parent and faculty observations.

The five faculty participants in both the SLC and in cross-curricular projects answered questions that I had prepared for the interviews, which led to more expansive reflections on their overall perceptions of what effects were being achieved with our collaborative service-learning projects(see Appendix D for interview questions). In most of the interviews, the conversation revolved around both the club and the curricular activities because the faculty members were involved in both. A core of teachers who are interested in service-learning has formed in the Lower School, making the transition from the club to the curriculum more fluid. Through the collaborations with art, music and library departments, the outcomes and understanding of the content seemed richer. The music teacher, Mary, talked about the transfer of knowledge from one project to the next, beginning with the “Road to Recovery” relief effort for Haiti in the previous year to the
“Banner Project for New Covenant Soup Kitchen” in the following year. Through these projects, as explored in art and music, the students learned about a need to help the less fortunate and victims of natural disasters and economic disadvantage. They designed and produced art and music projects to benefit the recipients. Representatives from the organization to benefit Haiti came to the school, the students learned about the geography and culture of Haiti, read books about the country, and eventually wrote songs and produced a CD to raise money and awareness. In art, they designed the jacket for the CD, using symbols and images from their studies. They continued to use design and produce service-learning projects in the following year with the “Banner Project” that eventually brought art and music together as it culminated with a holiday concert at the soup kitchen as they presented the banners.

In their reflections, the fifth grade students reported feeling less nervous as they started to sing and the guests of the soup kitchen clapped and sang along. The raising of the banners seemed to lift their spirits. The music teacher talked about making connections through the curriculum and reinforcing the service-learning actions through multi-media actions. The music teacher has asked the students to put themselves in the shoes of the ones with whom they are interacting and elicits responses through group conversations. Mary, the music teacher, states “I think that it is important to string the service-learning projects together to reinforce the transfer of knowledge from one event to the next”. She thinks that, through discussions and reflections, the students were made more aware of the impact they are having on their community, local and global. “When teachers facilitate discussions that help the students to see deeper meaning, such as
understanding and valuing cultural backgrounds, students are more apt to identify these outcomes and retain the outcomes for a longer period of time.” (Billig 2000b)

Another faculty member, Gloria, who comes weekly on the SLC trips, finds that the students are learning social interactions and interpersonal skills but need constant prompting on their role as a club member and the purpose of the visits. “Some of the students are (appear to be) self-absorbed and think about their own satisfaction before others with whom they are visiting.” Gloria recommends more student involvement in planning and preparing for the activities and journal writing to access and document the learning to give them more ownership. In response to her suggestions and research, we have planned to have an in school pre-service day every four or five weeks to give the students this opportunity. Restructuring the club will make it meet the definition of the high quality service-learning approach that Shelley Billig gives:

Thoughtfully organized service experiences must meet community needs, structured time that allows the students to talk, think, and/or write or otherwise reflect about the service experience: and activities that enable the students to engage in planning service in collaboration with community members, specifically giving students an opportunity to make decisions and solve problems. (Billig, 2000a)

The parental support for and involvement in the Service Learning Club has been impressive. Traditionally, the parents do not interact with the students in club or after school activities. In research on effective service-learning programs, parents are a vital component of the program in modeling the actions and making it accessible to the entire school community.

As with service-learning, parent involvement through community projects is recommended through-out the field’s literature. This practice has been advanced through research conducted at Johns Hopkins University on the
schools belonging to the Network of Partnership Schools. (Neal and Kaye 2006)

The parents have been supportive in organizing activities as well as participating in the weekly trips of the club. When I interviewed four of the most active parent members, I found similar responses to the questions. The parents noted that in the second year, all of the participants seemed more comfortable and familiar with the experiences. They sensed more trust from the agencies and those with whom we interact. The parents thought that the most positive outcome of the club was the conversations that it provoked at home.

I was able to get much of the student feedback through the interviews with the parents and saw a great disparity between the student writing, which was brief, and the parents recounts of the same questions. This has given me insight into the reflection process, which would benefit more from prompts and discussions before the writing activities. The parents noted that the students have many questions about the groups that they visit and sometimes worry about the situations that those groups are in: extreme poverty and old age. In asking about motivation for going to the SLC trips every week, Melinda, a parent, made the observation that “it seemed to be automatic and my daughter felt a sense of pride and satisfaction with spending their free time doing the activities.” She noticed that her two children mentioned many of the senior residents by name and found that after they conducted interviews at one visit, the students felt more connected to the person they were questioning. Another parent, Lise, thought “Susan was intrigued with the ways that the elderly were individuals with whom they had things in common and saw them as individuals who had special talents, professions, and interests.” When I asked the parents if they thought that their children were more empathetic, civic minded,
socially adept, or otherwise benefited from the experiences, there were various responses. One parent, Lise, could not say so specifically, but she said, “I have to think “that Susan was filing it way.” The long range effects my be more in line with Lise’s reflection on her daughter’s and her own participation in the club. Emma, a parent and a faculty participant noted that their visits to the soup kitchen, “ influenced their conversations that we had about the environment at school compared to the soup kitchen neighborhood.” She talked to her daughter about the different realities of both settings and put life at the school in perspective with the rest of the community, and even the world.

**Conclusion and Reflections on Leadership**

In my own development as a service-learning advisor and teacher, I have been constantly revising my approach to make it align with the effective characteristics of service-learning in order to give all involved the most fruitful experience. To determine the success of the program and individual projects, I have found that reflection throughout the piece can give insight to the changes in thinking. The students, parents and community members can all contribute to give a bigger picture on the impact and feelings on the actions taken. The practice of service-learning is still new and there is little long-term research on the impacts on the participants as they mature.

Since many of the important goals for service-learning involve citizenship behavior, there is a tremendous need for well-designed studies that follow students through school and into their adult lives in the community (Eyler, 2002, p. 6)

In planning the future activities for the club, I called for an end-of-the-year meeting to discuss the club’s year in retrospect and places going forward. These meetings had and will have an agenda to look at prior activities based on historical documentation, action plans for new projects, reflection guides and materials and supply inventory (see
notes from meeting in Appendix F). The students will be given a greater responsibility in their roles to create the curriculum for their group going to specific sites. They can access the needs, teach the new students about the specific characteristics of the agencies, and make proposals for new activities. This will hopefully promote leadership within the student group and give them more ownership in their club. Through my curriculum course at Bank Street, I have begun to plan the framework that will help students, faculty, and parents to collaborate on the Service Learning Curriculum for the upcoming year. (see Appendix I) As I have been doing more research on service learning opportunities for students, the notion of student leadership has been a constant topic in creating a quality experience. The students, along with faculty and parent participants should be directly involved in planning the action, researching relevant topics and documenting the activities. As I was preparing to create a collection of our activities, agencies and ideas for the upcoming year, my thinking shifted to the students leading the role as curriculum designers. How can I facilitate by giving them support and information without dictating the curriculum? In this undertaking, I would also hope to teach about protocols and listening skills to make the group process more equitable.

Students may be able to identify their strengths and contribute to the group process after they recognize their talents and interests. The writing and reflection component is an essential skill that helps an individual to become more aware of their own ideas and reactions that might not be exposed otherwise. Once the club members generate some ideas for the club activities, we can have the students write to the agencies to present the suggestions and get feedback form their end. Eventually, there could be the possibility to develop the curriculum as a team of community members, parents, students,
and faculty. Organizationally, it seems large but as the relationships deepen, the communication gets easier and fluid. Our interaction with our partner sites has also given us insight into the specific limitations, interests, and focal points of our visits from both perspectives. For example, we know that knitting with the elderly was difficult because many of them have arthritis, poor vision or have forgotten the skill and the students need more one on one attention to pick up the skill in that setting. But, games, especially scrabble slam, cards, and dominos are very popular and facilitate pleasant conversation. We will discuss and document the activities and interactions that have been successful as a starting point to build on.

In making the club more of a commitment in time and responsibility for the student, parent, and faculty members, I hope to extend leadership opportunities to them. While still providing the oversight and structure, I would hope the club to function as a collaborative effort. The use of protocols and background material will be useful in getting information effectively communicated. As I move forward, I will bring my research to all of the members, to share best practices and exemplars for the future of the Ring service-learning opportunities.
APPENDIX A

Ring Service Learning Day 2013, Classroom discussions and materials

**Vase painting**
For: New House soup kitchen, Senior Tea Party (Sunset, Johnson House and Low Ridge residents)

Images: cheerful, uplifting  
Related books: Willie and the Soup Kitchen, Stone Soup  
Preparatory activities: Sketch related images  
Reflection questions: What makes others feel happy? Do you like getting presents? How does it make you feel to make a gift for another person in mind? Can you imagine what the person might be like who is receiving your handmade gift? Do you think that they might wonder about who took the time to make the gift for them?

**Inspirational Quote Placemats**
For: New House soup kitchen, Senior Tea Party (Sunset, Johnson House and Low Ridge residents)

Images: illustrations of quotes or abstracts of ideas, words  
Related books: Willie and the Soup Kitchen, Stone Soup  
Preparatory activities: read through quotes and discuss concepts, sketch ideas  
Reflection questions: Why did you choose the quote? What does it mean to you?  
Who do you look to for inspiration in your life?

**One Million Bones**
For: international project to benefit children in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (vocational training)  
$1 for each bone from Bezos Foundation given to CARE  
began by Naomi Natale, art activist in New Mexico

Image: Clay bone made in Science or Art  
Related materials: human skeleton as a commonality for all humans, map of Somalia,  
symbols: Explore the word *symbol*: Something that stands for or represents something else. This is an abstract concept, and use this opportunity to think of and discuss different symbols. What do you think of when you see Santa Claus, a Menorah, a flag or a stop sign? Begin to identify symbols in our environment, and how they can be used in art too. What could a bone symbolize? Explore the word *virtue*: A behavior showing high moral standard. Discuss - we can’t see our bones, but they make up the structure of our body. Likewise, we can’t see our virtues, but they make up *who* we are.
Reflection questions: Why they have created the bones? How might you make an art project to symbolize RESPECT, PEACE and HOPE? Why do you think that One Million Bones chose BONES? How do you feel when you look at your bone? What do you think when you look at other bones? What are your virtues?

**Sandwich-making**
For: New House Soup Kitchen
Reflection questions: What is a soup kitchen? Where is one located in Stamford? Who goes to it? Why do we need soup kitchens? Who makes the food and serves it? What does it look like? How many sandwiches will we make today?
APPENDIX B

Student Reflections

How often do you go on SLC trips?
Where have you been?
What makes you want to go each week?
What is difficult about going?
Do you seem to have gotten to know anyone there better than when you began going? If so, do you share stories at home?
What activities have you liked best?
What have you learned about yourself by being part of the SLC? What are your skills/interests?
What have you learned about the seniors or children?
Would you like to plan some of the activities for future trips? Any ideas right now?

Grade Five Reflection on Service Learning Project: Banners for the New House Soup Kitchen

What is service learning?
What is a soup kitchen?
Did you ever visit a soup kitchen before you went this year with the 5th grade to sing, play and serve cookies? If yes, where and when?
How did you first learn about what a soup kitchen does?
What did you think/feel when you went into the soup kitchen for the first time?
How has your idea of a soup kitchen changed?
What have you done for the New House soup kitchen?
Make a list:
Would you like to go back? How could you continue to help the poor in our community?
What did you think about seeing the banners at the New House?
Any other comments?
### APPENDIX B

**Table 1**

5th Grade Student Reflections from Soup Kitchen Trip 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Knows what Serv. Learn. is</th>
<th>Knows what soup kitchen is</th>
<th>First Time?</th>
<th>Will return?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
<td>7 (yes/no)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

5th Grade Student Reflections from Soup Kitchen Trip 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Knows what Serv. Learn. is</th>
<th>Knows what soup kitchen is</th>
<th>First Time?</th>
<th>Will return?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
<td>7 (yes/no)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (Maybe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

Student Feelings about experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trip 1</th>
<th>Trip 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry/bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weird</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scared/nervous</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/helpful/happy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Parent Interview Questions

How often does your child you go on SLC trips?

Where have they been?

What motivates them to go each week?

Do they seem to have gotten to know anyone there better than when they began going? If so, do they share stories at home?

What activities have been the most satisfying/successful/had the most impact?

What makes the visits more or less successful?

Has their opinion of the community, an organization or individual changed with the program involvement?

How can they get more involved?
APPENDIX D

Faculty Interview Questions

How often do you go on SLC trips?

Where have you been?

Have you gotten to know anyone there better than when you began going?

What activities have been the most satisfying/successful/had the most impact?

What makes the visits more or less successful?

What connections to see for life in school or the curriculum?

Has your opinion of any student, organization or individual changed with the program involvement?

How do you think that the students and advisors are perceived by the participants/organizations?
APPENDIX E

SLC Membership Statistics and Activities

Table 1
Student Membership in SLC and Attendance by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students in Club Total</th>
<th>Students at Preschool</th>
<th>Students at Soup Kitchen</th>
<th>Students at Elderly Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Student Membership and Attendance by Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students in Club Total</th>
<th>Students at Preschool</th>
<th>Students at Soup Kitchen</th>
<th>Students at Elderly Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Student’s Reasons for Attendance by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fun</th>
<th>Like to help</th>
<th>Like interactions with others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Student Activity Preferences by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crafts</th>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Reading/Playing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Notes from Final Meeting Faculty and Parents in the SLC

- CBK Complete Guide to Service Learning: dense but very helpful reference
- Send out sign up for SLC in email in August or hard copy or post on grade pages
- Get days set early for scheduling
- Animal day: maybe to attract different group of kids
- Animal Embassy (maybe only high school volunteers)
- Attract more boys
- Work with Ann on student council? For special events
- Scheduling
  - Go out for 4-5 times and have meeting on 5th week to make plans for next series of outings (maybe 6 weeks)
  - Only have kids sign up for those small sessions
  - Involve parents with sign-up process more
  - Students would be able to take responsibility for those 6 weeks and delegate roles
to students to take notes, come up with ideas
  - Students could send out invitations to invite their friends, like an “invite a friend” week to increase interest and membership
  - 3rd or 4th week and then the students might want to sign up for the next session
  - Align it with after school schedule? Maybe send out evites
  - Have everyone who’s interested in going to soup kitchen get together beforehand
  - It’ll be on different days; there are more options for students to attend (not as limiting)
  - Preschools: projects and anything hands-on was best
  - Sit down with students to tell them the expectations and remind them that they’re representing the school
  - Maybe council could come up with a set of expectations
  - Especially now that students must have their parents signature to go off campus
  - Reminder that students must be accountable
  - Bake sale, lemonade stand or car wash? Fundraising for special projects, ie
- Ecuadorian books for Ana’s school
  - Students could do board displays (another area for student leadership of the club)
  - Leadership group could meet during lunch? Skills list, rotate jobs
  - Smaller groups during orientation to reflect and brainstorm
  - Try to get a room to store craft supplies/books and way to transport them? With shelf?
Create book of activities and take picture of each game or activity with notes on which
ones worked and which didn’t
APPENDIX G

October 23, 2012

Dear ,

I am a LITA: Visual Arts Focus student at Bank Street College. This fall I am beginning the process of creating an Integrated Masters Project (IMP) in which I am planning to create a multi media work that explores the impact on the community of the Service Learning Club.

I am asking if you would be willing to be interviewed for the project. A pseudonym will replace your name in the piece and the school name or institution will not be used. The study will be shared as a PDF with the Bank Street community in a password-protected searchable database and may also be submitted to the Bank Street Library where it would be catalogued as part of the Library collection and entered into an international database for wider circulation.

Please sign this form to confirm your consent.

Thank you for your contribution!

Sincerely,

Lori Auletta

*********************************************************

I understand that Lori Auletta, Master’s Degree Candidate at Bank Street College of Education, is studying the connection of Service-Learning program with the community through the arts. I consent to the use of my interviews, photographed and videotaped images and words to be included in this study.

_______________________   ____________________   __________
Name (Please Print)       Signature        Date
## Appendix H

### Service Learning Club Calendar Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (Haywood/Westover) 2:45-4:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Aletta/Sra Gallegos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunrise Asst 2:45-4:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Aletta/Ms Albrecht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Agenda for SLC curriculum meetings: students, faculty, parents

Together, students and advisors will consider the following questions as they prepare activities for the SLC site that they have chosen to visit.

Looking back and describing for new members

1. Where are we going? Describe sites/agencies for new members

What does the building look like from the outside?

What do you do when you first enter?

Where do you go to interact with the residents, guests, children?

What is the room, light, set up like?

What might surprise someone going for the first time?

2. Describe activities

What activities do you see in the photos?

What went well for it?

What would you change?

What do we need to bring for the activity?

3. Who do know there?

What are their names?

How would you describe them?

Plan new activities: Brainstorm, research, assign roles, document, budget, reflection questions

Brainstorm: Propose short and long-term plans/events
Fall, Winter, Spring, Holidays

**Research:** What are their needs, interests, and capabilities

**Assign roles:** Skills, talents, and interests of members

**Document:** Cameras, journals, interviews

**Take inventory of supplies for each site:**

What do we have for the seniors?/soup kitchen?/preschools?

What do we need? How much will it cost?

**Make reflection sheets:**

What questions can we ask before we go?

After the first few trip?

At the end of five weeks?
References


