

## FROM THE EDITOR FROM THE EDITOR FROM THE EDITOR



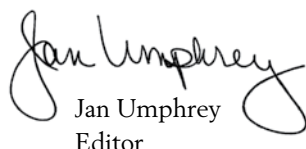
### Added Value

I imagine that the topic of service learning prompts many of you to grimace or roll your eyes, thinking that until service learning is on “the test,” it won’t be a priority and isn’t worth the trouble. But that is a mistake. Long recognized as an effective way to teach character and civic education, high-quality service learning is also, according to Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, a way to engage students in the curriculum, to make learning meaningful and authentic, to increase retention of knowledge, and to have an effect on people’s lives.

This month’s authors provide detailed information about what service learning is—and isn’t—and how it can enhance and perhaps even transform academic achievement. As author Shelley Billig points out in her article, community service, such as picking up trash, is a worthwhile activity, but it is not service learning unless it is linked to a learning objective. Her research has shown that high-quality service learning is linked to higher test scores and improved attendance, among other things.

Fittingly for an issue about service learning, the authors offer many examples of successful projects to give readers a sense of what is possible in all kinds of schools. Jon Schmidt and Jerryelyn Jones share the success that urban Chicago schools have had with work that empowers students to make change for the common good in their own communities. Elizabeth Townsend connects her middle school students to their New Orleans heritage and history in an interdisciplinary curriculum that uses *In Our Global Village*, a model that started in Tanzania. Of course, such non-traditional learning must be assessed appropriately: Andrew Furco discusses how to measure the three different types of learning that occur during service-learning projects, and Kate McPherson’s article discusses how to use culminating projects to assess learning.

If you have done any research on service learning, you will recognize the names of several of this month’s authors. Thanks to Catherine Berger Kaye, whose article leads this issue and delves into the connection between service learning and literacy, I was able to find educators who are immersed in service learning and have experienced the benefits that well-executed curriculum-based projects have for students and experts who have done research, compiled knowledge, and amassed best practices. This issue introduces you to the people who know the why, what, and how of service learning. It’s a resource that you and your school can use to challenge, connect, and empower students and staff members.

  
Jan Umphrey  
Editor

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