Empowering Students to Solve Local Problems: Adapting Materials with Service Learning

During this session, participants will:

• explore the concept of Service Learning as a teaching strategy that promotes meaningful experiential learning through community service and reflective classroom activities

• consider ways to use adapted materials in local environments to examine regional real-world problems

• learn specific strategies and classroom activities that use the Service Learning framework to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic engagement
Annaliese Hausler-Akpovi

Annaliese started her career as a Peace Corps volunteer and English Language Fellow teaching English in Benin, West Africa. She has been a full-time professor at Modesto Junior College since returning to the United States.

Her interests include theme-based instruction focusing on social justice and innovative pedagogies including Service Learning, learning communities, and First-Year Experience.

Annaliese completed her undergraduate Comparative Literature and French degrees at University of California, Berkeley and her master’s degree in English with an emphasis in TESOL at San Francisco State University.
Empowering Students to Solve Local Problems: Adapting Materials with Service Learning
Questions to Ponder

• Why should teachers empower their students to solve local problems?
• How can English language teachers adapt materials to help students address problems in their community?
• What is Service Learning and how can it promote problem-solving and civic engagement in the classroom?
• How can we incorporate language learning activities into Service Learning projects?
What is Service Learning?
Have you heard of Service Learning before?

What do you **already know** about Service Learning?
Service Learning is a form of experiential education that allows students to learn by doing.
Service Learning is “a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students... seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves.” (Janet S. Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, Jr.)

https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/
Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction to:

- enrich the learning experience,
- teach civic responsibility, and
- strengthen communities.”

According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse...
How can we as language teachers incorporate language development activities into Service Learning?

What are some language activities that your students could do as part of Service Learning projects?
Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy.
practice
approach
process
technique
(a carefully planned process developed by the teacher with community partners)
Integrating meaningful community service
What are some examples of meaningful community service that you and your students could do in your communities?
(Some examples of **meaningful** community service)

- Picking up trash to clean up the local environment
- Planting trees in community spaces
- Working in local community organizations to meet needs that they identify
- Organizing health awareness and/or environmental awareness campaigns
- Assisting the elderly around the house or in the community
- Helping younger school children at school or in after school programs or clubs
with instruction and reflection
What questions would you ask your students while participating in service learning activities?
Some examples of instruction and reflection


–So What? Analyze the experience.

–Now What? Consider the future impact of the experience on the student and the community.
Important to note: Service Learning can be adapted for all levels of English language learners

- English language teachers can pair community service activities with beginning level English language assignments that match the course content and curriculum for lower level English language courses.
Sample Reflection Questions and Sentence Starters for Students

• What is the impact of the Service Learning experience on your life?
• What did you learn about solving problems because of doing Service Learning?
• How did your community change because of your volunteer work?

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• By doing Service Learning, I now understand...
• I see that Service Learning benefits my community because...
• Working to solve community problems together is a good idea because...
Examples of instruction and reflection activities

• Group discussions
• Creative projects
• Journals
• Multimedia class presentations
• Reports and essays
• Videos
• Blogs
• Community events
• Case studies
• Reflective readings
to enrich the learning experience
How does Service Learning benefit students?
teach civic responsibility
strengthen communities
Here is a short YouTube clip that elaborates on the definition of Service Learning from Learn and Serve America

(https://youtu.be/XBnZgVC2YW0)
Having examined the concept of Service Learning as a teaching strategy, the question remains:

→ How can English language teachers use Service Learning with adapted materials in local environments to examine regional real-world problems?
Making a Plan for Service Learning
Service Learning Project Check List

- Preparation + Planning
- Volunteer Service Activities
- Reflection + Application
- Evaluation + Recognition

https://www.cgc.edu/Students/studentlife/slearning/faculty/Pages/S-LProjectSteps.aspx
One Example from Benin, West Africa, of “Empowering High School Students to Solve Local Problems with Service Learning”

He suggests using the environment theme from English language curriculum and the official textbook for the final year of high school.

Mr. Hilarion Vegba is an English Teacher, High School Principal, and former Humphrey Fellow at Vanderbilt University.
Local Problem

Desertification is caused from cutting down trees to make charcoal to sell and burn for cooking food.
Adapting materials

• Using the regular English language course textbook and curriculum about the environment + adding extra discussion and vocabulary activities

• Having students do research about the local tree and environmental situation
Adapting materials

Finding an expert who can share information about desertification, tree cutting, charcoal production and selling, alternative cooking methods
Volunteer Service Learning activity with the whole class:

- Visiting the tree nursery operated by the Forestry Department to learn more and help water, care for and tree seedlings
- Growing seedlings and planting them where needed
Doing a writing assignment about the service activity and its lasting benefits

Making posters to illustrate the tree cutting and desertification problem and show some solutions

Creating group presentations about the environment service activity to do in English language classes with younger students

Additional instruction and reflection about the Service Learning activity
Things to Consider

Adapted Materials
- Themes from English language curriculum

Local Environments
- with community partners in the school, neighborhood, town, region

Addressing Real-world Problems
- Community issues and struggles
Practical Steps for English Language Teachers to Implement Service Learning

1. Examine topics found in your course’s English teaching curriculum
2. Brainstorm possible community service volunteer activities that match curriculum topics
3. Contact potential community organizations
4. Develop a step-by-step plan for classroom instruction, service volunteer activities, and post-service reflection and assignments
Examine topics found in your course’s English teaching curriculum, (including unit themes, textbooks, and supplemental materials) to find topics that relate to issues or areas of potential need in the local environment.
What content themes or language topics from your English language curriculum would work well to do service learning projects with your students?
Brainstorm possible community service activities that match the topics from the curriculum.
Sample Class Brainstorming Activity

In small groups, students use large sheets of paper (or write on the blackboard) to compile class lists of local problems and potential solutions.

“Problems and Solutions”
Contact potential community organizations to learn more about the real needs of the organizations where students can do service activities.
What organizations in your community could you partner with?

Some examples might include: schools, places that provide activities for children, environmental organizations, civic organizations, social centers.
Develop a step-by-step plan for classroom instruction, service volunteer activities, and
post-service reflection and assignments that concisely connect the volunteer activity to the course curriculum.
How does Service Learning empower students?
How can teachers get students involved in the process?
Ways to Get Students Involved in the Service Learning Planning Process

- Brainstorm a list of community problems and needs
- Research issues and struggles in the community
- Surveys the local populations
- Conduct interviews with experts
- Develop questions about the issues
- Create a list community service and agencies
## Service Learning Planning Guide for English Instructors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-service</th>
<th>During service</th>
<th>Post-service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local problems and possible solutions</strong></td>
<td>Brainstorm solutions</td>
<td>Observe solutions in practice</td>
<td>Evaluate solutions viewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English language curriculum connections</strong></td>
<td>Introduce key terms and language concepts</td>
<td>Remind students of connections during service</td>
<td>Evaluate use of key terms and concepts in assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community and school partners</strong></td>
<td>Compile a list of potential partners</td>
<td>Coordinate with partners for service</td>
<td>Send thank you letters to partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction and assignments</strong></td>
<td>Identify possible class assignments</td>
<td>Provide student support for work</td>
<td>Collect and correct homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection activities</strong></td>
<td>Develop thoughtful reflection work</td>
<td>Assign reflection homework</td>
<td>Collect, evaluate, and share work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Design evaluations</td>
<td>Monitor service</td>
<td>Improve for future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question for Reflection

How is Service Learning an effective strategy to use in an English language class?

What do you think?
Other Questions to Consider

• How can Service Learning promote interaction and meaningful experiential learning?
• How can English language curriculum and textbooks be used with Service Learning?
• How does Service Learning compel teachers and students to examine important local problems and take actions to address those problems?
More Questions

• What specific strategies and steps are needed for service learning in your class
• Why are community partner so important when undertaking service learning?
Final Question

How does service learning provide a framework to foster critical thinking and problem-solving and civic engagement for students?
A Final Thought

“With project-based learning (and service-learning), students learn by designing and constructing actual solutions to real life problems.”

- George Lucas, Hollywood Director and Chairman of the George Lucas Educational Foundation (sppor of Edutopia.org)
Thank you!

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