

*Youth Service California's*



# **After-School Service-Learning:**

## *Four Profiles of Youth Engagement*

 *Dare to Dream*

*Del Norte Schools Kids 1<sup>st</sup>* 

 *Petaluma City Schools*  
*Communities and Schools for Career Success*

*Youth Community Service* 

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## ABOUT YOUTH SERVICE CALIFORNIA

Youth Service California is a statewide organization that seeks to make meaningful service a part of every young person's life in California. It informs, convenes, networks, and advocates for youth service and service-learning programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

As an organization whose mission is to make service a meaningful part of every young person’s life in California, we provide technical assistance, training, support and advocacy for schools, and other youth-serving organizations to develop high quality community service and service-learning opportunities.

With research showing service-learning’s positive impacts on students in schools, YSCal decided that it was worth exploring whether service-learning could also be a successful tool for after-school programs.

YSCal believes youth service fits within a broader framework of healthy youth development. As explained by the Community Network for Youth Development, Youth Development Guide, there are five key experiences for healthy youth development:

- **Physical and Emotional Safety:** so that young people feel secure and can take risks that help them grow;
- **Multiple Supportive Relationships** where young people receive guidance from adults and emotional and practical support from both adults and peers so that they learn to connect;
- **Meaningful Participation** through which young people experience real involvement and decision-making so that they are able to take on leadership roles and gain a sense of belonging.
- **Community Involvement:** where young people gain an understanding of the greater community so that they feel able to make an impact in and be a productive part of their community;
- **Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences:** through which young people build a wide array of skills and competencies and experience a sense of growth and progress.

YSCal funded and supported seven after-school programs throughout California to explore the fit between service-learning and after-school programming in the last two of the five key areas: Community Involvement and Challenging and Engaging Learning Experiences. We found that service-learning can be a low-cost and highly effective strategy for after-school programs to provide these key experiences; and that such programming increases youth participants’ developmental “assets,” as measured by the California Healthy Kids Survey, (WestEd). Interestingly, research also shows that service-learning can also be a strategy for providing other keys such as the development of Multiple Supportive Relationships.

The following, written by staff from four after-school programs, describes service-learning project examples, as well as promising and exemplary practices. Our hope is that this booklet will support further dialogue about, and development of, engaging after-school programs for youth during out of school time.





Debbie Genzer  
Executive Director, Youth Service California

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## HOW THIS GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

After-School Service-Learning: Four Profiles of Youth Engagement details four after-school programs that have successfully incorporated service-learning into their lessons. The four programs were funded, in part, by the California After-School Service-Learning (CASSL) initiative managed by Youth Service California. CASSL is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service Learn and Serve America, through the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism (GO SERV).

The four programs highlighted in this guide are:

<b>Youth Community Service</b>		<b>Del Norte Kids 1st</b>	
<b>Petaluma City Schools Communities and Schools for Career Success</b>		<b>Dare to Dream</b>	

The programs are all quite different from one another, and include elementary, middle, and high school-age youth; they are located in rural, suburban, and semi-urban areas; and they are grounded in both formal curriculum and a variety of loosely-connected student-selected projects.

Each site profile takes a slightly different approach, which is reflective of the varying styles and complexities of after-school service-learning programs. They are meant to stand alone and can be read in any order.

The programs were designed for unique student/community environments. Some may easily be adapted and/or replicated in other after-school programs while others may not. They are all intended to encourage participation, stimulate creative and productive thinking, and provide examples of service-learning activities.

This guide is not meant to be a step-by-step manual or a how-to kit, but rather it is intended to show various ways that service-learning programs have been implemented, share lessons learned, and spark your imagination about new ways that service-learning could be integrated into programs in your community.

Each site profile contains a “Lessons Learned” section which reflects the thoughts on the service-learning programs as described by the site coordinator. They are offered as words of encouragement and a transfer of wisdom gained from personal experience.

One final note: These programs were developed through many years of dedicated work. New service-learning efforts should start small and allow for room to grow!

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## DEFINING SERVICE-LEARNING

In order to clarify the theory and practice of service-learning, a discussion of the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning is included in each profile.

Youth Service California emphasizes these seven elements in all of its service-learning work because they provide a powerful lens to guide project planning, reflection, and evaluation.

The Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning supported by Youth Service California are:

1. **Integrated Learning** Service-learning projects support the academic curriculum. The service informs academic content, and classroom lessons help shape the service-learning plan.
2. **Service to the Community** Service-learning projects bring together students, teachers and community partners to provide meaningful service that meets real community needs.
3. **Collaboration** A high quality service-learning project incorporates many partners in its design and implementation, including students, parents, community-based organizations, teachers, school administrators, and recipients of service. All partners benefit from the project and contribute to its planning.
4. **Student Voice** Students participate actively in every step of the project, including identifying community needs and issues, choosing and planning the project, implementing reflection sessions, evaluation, and celebration.
5. **Civic Responsibility** By participating in a service-learning project, young people learn that they can have an impact on their community; they learn that their voice counts, and that what they do can make a difference.
6. **Reflection** Service-learning incorporates important reflection time before, during, and after the project to draw links between the social and personal aspects of the project and the academic curriculum.
7. **Evaluation** Evaluation measures progress towards the learning and service goals of the project, and is conducted by all partners, including the students.

Developing service-learning projects that incorporate all elements listed at a high level requires many years of development. No project begins being strong in more than two or three of the elements, but they serve as a goal for which to strive.

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# Youth Community Service



## Overview

Youth Community Service, a collaboration between the Ravenswood and Palo Alto school districts and cities of East Palo Alto and Palo Alto, operates weekly after-school community service clubs at five middle schools in both low-income and affluent areas. The implemented curriculum incorporates themes which focus on social issues, such as poverty, homelessness, and the environment.

## Who We Are

Youth Community Service (YCS) was formed in 1990 to promote youth leadership and service in East Palo Alto and Palo Alto. It is a collaboration between two cities and local school districts and receives support from the Palo Alto Rotary Club. The partners provide invaluable resources through in-kind contributions including printing costs, vans to transport students to service projects, and office space.

YCS facilitates after-school clubs in five middle schools. The clubs meet one hour each week and are open to all students in grades six through eight. Most clubs have 15 – 25 self-selected members. Each club is co-facilitated by a teacher-sponsor and YCS staff. The teacher-sponsor serves as the liaison to the school community, provides the meeting space, recruits students, and helps facilitate club meetings. The YCS staff member

provides a service-learning curriculum and training, co-facilitates club meetings, and serves as a liaison to community-based organizations.

YCS service clubs provide opportunities for middle school-age young people who live in the diverse and economically disparate cities of East Palo Alto, East Menlo Park, and Palo Alto to engage in one-time and on-going, meaningful service-learning activities during out-of-school time. These clubs are designed to help young people understand they can be resources to their communities, capable of making positive choices in their own lives and positive contributions to the larger community.

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## What We Did – Our Service-Learning Project

Examples of local projects planned by students involved with different clubs include:

- Organizing a carpool to a local soup kitchen to help the staff prepare and serve dinner
- Weekly visits to a local homeless shelter and reading with the children who live there while their parents attend job training meetings
- Organizing a school-wide canned food drive for Thanksgiving
- Habitat restoration at a local park.

In addition, our international projects provide students with the opportunity to look beyond their immediate community and view themselves as part of the global society. Most projects focus on students of a similar age group, inspiring compassion and empathy for people living in different situations.

One club organized a drive for school supplies for students in Afghanistan. Students researched issues in Afghanistan by reading the newspaper and searching online. They contacted OxFam, an international aid organization, and learned what supplies the schools in Afghanistan needed. They advertised their school-supply drive at school through posters and the school newsletter, collected supplies in each classroom, and organized the supplies into kits for shipment. The project enabled students to relate to and support their peers in another country. They no longer had to watch the news each night and feel powerless. Instead, they responded to a real need by making a contribution.

Since each club typically plans only three service projects each year, YCS offers monthly service days for all five clubs to ensure regular opportunities for community involvement are available. These service days bring students together to learn about social issues, serve, and break down some of the barriers that exist between the two communities. Service days cover a variety of topics: one day students learned about natural resources and then volunteered on a farm; another day they heard a presentation from a person who is homeless and then volunteered at a shelter.





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## How We Did It

YCS modified its already existing community service clubs to incorporate a service-learning curriculum, enhance student voice, and promote civic responsibility. Essentially, the community service clubs grew into service-learning programs.

The YCS club meetings use a curriculum that focuses on skill-building, leadership, social awareness, service, and a sense of belonging to the club and the community. The curriculum is divided into four main sections: skill-building, school-based service, community-based service, and global service. Each section incorporates weekly flexible lesson plans that include an ice breaker, skill-based or service-based activity, and reflection. The curriculum provides a basic structure for the club but the specific timeline, goals, and projects are defined by the students.

During the first four to six weeks of each school year, club meetings center on building skills and a sense of community within the club — service is not the focus

until later in the year. During this period, students participate in team-building activities, (i.e. low ropes course challenges), and examine leadership styles, cultural values, and goal setting through games, role playing, and discussions.

After developing a club identity, the YCS clubs then shift the focus to service. Students design and implement three service-learning projects per year. The schedule is very flexible, allowing students to spend as much or as little time as required to complete each project. The first project is school-based, the second is community-based, and the third is a global service project.

To ensure that students meet real needs, each project begins with a community need assessment. Based on the information learned, students choose a focus area and brainstorm ways to address the issue. Students then design a plan, identify materials they will need, create a time line, and delegate responsibility.





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## **Integrating the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning**

The integration of the Seven Elements is illustrated in an ongoing recycling program described below.

### **Integrated Learning**

Students decided that one of the biggest challenges facing a school recycling program was motivating their peers to separate their trash. Students prepared lesson plans on the value of recycling and how to recycle at school. Club members learned about solid waste, recycling, and energy through activities facilitated by YCS staff, including Recycling Jeopardy, skits, and demonstrations. The students used these activities and ideas to create their own lesson plans, and student teams presenting 40-minute lessons to their peers.

### **Service to the Community**

To ensure that projects meet real needs, students brainstormed issues (rather than projects) at school. While a few classes recycled paper, there was no program on campus for aluminum, glass, or plastic. On a weekly basis, students helped the custodian collect the recyclable materials.

### **Collaboration**

To ensure program success, students involved school administrators, teachers, and custodial staff. After approving the project, the school administration approved the placement of recycling bins on campus. Custodial staff helped students empty the bins weekly. Teachers allowed YCS club members to make classroom presentations. Also, the local recycling center served as a consultant,

providing strategy and educational resources. The YCS staff provided ongoing guidance and assistance with recycling information and activities, as well as funds to purchase the bins.

### **Student Voice**

After discussing their concerns, students voted to address the waste problem at school through a recycling program. Three club members met with their teacher-sponsor and a representative from the local recycling center to develop strategies for initiating the program. Students prepared questions before the meeting and reported back to the group with information on recyclable materials, bins, collection, and logistics. Based on the information gathered, students created a project plan that included teaching their peers about the value of recycling, decorating recycling bins, and collecting recyclable materials from the bins on a weekly basis.

### **Civic Responsibility**

Students began to develop a sense of civic responsibility by learning about the impact of waste on the environment and actively striving to change the behavior of students at their school through the introduction of an effective recycling program. By examining and then changing their waste production at home and at school, students saw the direct impact of their actions on the larger community and therefore felt both connected to the community and responsible for initiating change.



## Reflection

Students began the reflection with a group discussion. They predicted the impact of their project intervention and later compared their predictions with actual results to guide their ongoing planning and action. They also reflected through their written and oral project evaluation.

## Evaluation

After the recycling program was initiated, students evaluated the quantity of materials recycled at school, discussed the impact of their classroom presentations, and created a list of successes and modifications for the project.

## What We Learned

Since our service-learning clubs are voluntary, regular attendance at club meetings and projects was a challenge in some schools, especially those in under-served districts. We found that by spending a significant amount of time (three to four weeks) on team-building activities at the beginning of the year, students felt more connected to the club and their peers and were more likely to remain active. This strategy diminished the number of projects the club could complete in a year but increased the overall impact and participation levels.

A similar challenge is balancing the needs of the community with the needs and interests of the youth. In one community, serious issues revolve around environmental justice, drugs, and poverty, yet the students all wanted to volunteer

with animals. After analyzing the true needs within their community, they recognized hunger as an issue and decided to coordinate a canned food drive in addition to visits to a local animal shelter. Our challenge is to meet viable community needs while ensuring that students enjoy the projects.

We quickly learned the value of becoming part of the school culture and working directly with a teacher to run each club. This provides us with the necessary connection to the administration, school staff, parents, PTA, and other clubs. Our students are able to give presentations during school time, organize school-wide projects, and use resources such as copy machines, paper, markers, etc. The access afforded through this relationship allows students to coordinate successful service projects such as canned food drives, tutoring programs, and read-a-thon fundraisers. While not all programs may have the luxury of working directly with a teacher, these simple connections help with logistics such as scheduling a meeting with the school principal, speaking at a teachers' meeting, visiting PTA meetings, and sitting down with custodial staff. These relationships developed and strengthened over time.

The students enjoy performing service outside of the school campus. Any opportunity to make a real contribution to a larger community gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Many youth stay in the YCS club because of the adult relationships they form with their teacher-sponsor and YCS staff as well as the sense of belonging to the club. Most students in YCS are not active in other organizations and do not consider

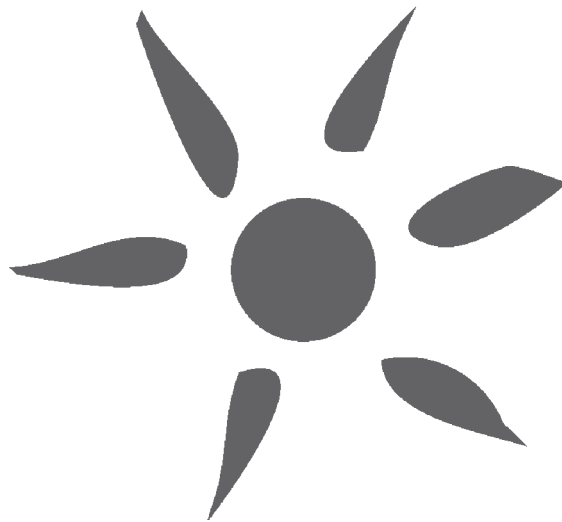
themselves “popular” at their schools. YCS clubs are a safe place to meet friends, share ideas, and feel important regardless of academic or athletic performance. Club members enjoy having two adults (the teacher-sponsor and YCS staff) listen to their ideas and care about their well-being. These relationships and the sense of community are what students repeatedly describe as most rewarding.

At the same time, one of the toughest challenges in our after-school programs is the high turnover rate of staff (both YCS staff and teacher-sponsors). Several schools have over a 50% turnover rate in their staff each year, so about half of the clubs lose a teacher-sponsor each year. To deal with this challenge, we created a curriculum with weekly lesson plans that

can be implemented by any teacher with minimal to no preparation. To combat the high turnover rate of YCS staff, we carefully document all programs.

Evaluation could have been enhanced with a more structured written assessment for the teachers, students, students not directly involved in the project, and partners such as the custodial staff.

Personally, I find working with these students most gratifying. Watching a typically shy student plan and deliver a presentation to a class of her peers is inspiring. Seeing a student who struggles with writing and spelling choose to be club recorder makes any day worthwhile. Watching students gain confidence, skills, and a desire to help others is the most rewarding part of the program.



**About the author:**

**Kristen Rupp**, Director of the Community Service and Leadership program at YCS, has a background in education and natural resources, and has taught special education and science both in and out of the classroom. She currently runs after-school service-learning clubs at five middle schools and two high schools.

**Youth Community Service**  
[www.youthcommunityservice.org](http://www.youthcommunityservice.org)

# Del Norte Schools

## Kids 1<sup>st</sup>



### Overview

The Del Norte Schools Kids 1<sup>st</sup> program proves that after-school service-learning can start early. The program, a partnership between the Del Norte Unified School District and Public Service Solutions in rural Crescent City, reaches out to youth who are at high-risk academically, engaging them in a range of service-learning projects.

### Who We Are

Del Norte County is a rural community of less than 30,000 people located in the far north western corner of California. The district serves a broad cross-section of ethnic groups, with the highest minority populations being Hispanic and Native American.

The need for after-school assistance programs is well documented. The county has high rates of teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and families headed by a single parent (or grandparents) who are not home when students come home from school. Over 70% of the K-8 students qualify for free/reduced lunch. A significant number of the students score below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on the standardized achievement tests, and need extra time after school with tutors to help them meet their grade level goals.

Kids 1<sup>st</sup> is a K-8 program, with the students performing between 30 and 100 hours of service-learning between the third through eighth grades. The program focuses on three areas – academics, recreation, and service-learning. Since

2000, over 300 students per year have been served at five elementary school sites, and there are plans to expand to four more school sites, including one middle school.

### What We Did – Our Service-Learning Project

The Kids 1<sup>st</sup> program has kids learning while doing. Students have:

- Rebuilt three school gardens, focusing on mathematical/spatial skills while planning and constructing their projects
- Raised chickens and given the eggs to needy elders in the community, engaging their sense of civic responsibility
- Raised a dog for the deaf, and
- Landscaped community grounds.

The children plan, develop, and implement their projects, based on academic connections with their interests in the community.

One school community is predominately comprised of Latino farm workers' children, so the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning was particularly interesting to them. After learning about plants and the history of agriculture in the community, students planted a butterfly garden outside the kindergarten classroom, so that the youngsters could learn about pollination and insect life cycles first hand. Students researched and chose the plants, which involved determining which flowers would attract the most butterflies. Reading and writing were practiced throughout this project: students journaled their daily progress, reflecting upon their daily actions, how they felt about what they were doing, and what they were learning.

## How We Did It

The program is based on a 4-H model of gardening, small animal husbandry, sewing and crafts, and peer-mentoring.

Partners from the school district include 4-H (who provided technical support), Master Gardeners (who helped us get some of the gardens started), Del Norte County's Substance Abuse Prevention Services/Friday Night Live (who ran the entire peer mentoring component of the project), the Del Norte Schools in Service Program (the grant administrator), the North Coast Indian Development Center (who supplied a classroom), and the Del Norte County Teachers Association (moral support and great ideas).

The teachers and instructional assistants who run the Kids 1<sup>st</sup> program are project facilitators. They are there to offer guidance and suggestions, but not to take the project over. In the butterfly garden mentioned earlier, they led the academic instruction, but let the students decide how they would participate in service to the community, empowering students to gain leadership skills, self-esteem, and goal setting abilities.



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## **Integrating the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning**

The Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning guided the development and implementation of all Kids 1<sup>st</sup> projects. All staff were trained in the elements, and instructed their students in them as well. The following example illustrates how the Seven Elements were integrated into one Kids 1<sup>st</sup> project.

### **Project Description:**

The Smith River community is a subset of Del Norte County comprised mostly of Latino farmworker families. Their low income qualifies them for many social services, including community health clinic visits. The children all know the clinic and its staff because they visit regularly for colds and flu, and particularly immunizations.

The students recognized that if younger kids had something warm and fuzzy, such as a stuffed animal, to bring home from the clinic after shots, the child might feel better about the experience. This led to a field trip to the clinic, on which students learned about the clinic and the services it provides, and heard a brief overview of healthcare as a career.

Students decided that they wanted to make teddy bears themselves. Boys and girls between the ages of five and eight drew and cut out the pattern, hand-sewed the sides, stuffed the bears, and embroidered eyes, noses and mouths on their creations.

**The Seven Elements of Service-Learning** were met in the teddy bear project as follows:

### **Integrated Learning**

During the entire process, the instructor guided the students, tying academic content to the bears. Mathematical/spatial concepts were practiced while measuring material and cutting out the patterns. The students knew they had only so much material to use, so the concept of economy was introduced. Language Arts was a daily part of the project, as students wrote in service-learning journals from the start of the project to the end, reflecting upon their feelings about making the bears.

### **Service to the Community**

The project met a designated need for children who visit the clinic that the students conceived of themselves.

### **Collaboration**

The Smith River Community Health Clinic was a key partner that enhanced both the learning and service experience for participants.

### **Student Voice**

Students helped plan, develop, and implement the teddy bear project.

### **Civic Responsibility**

Students analyzed the need, substantiated its merit with community partners, and took action to make a contribution targeting a specific population – young children.



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## Reflection

Students reflected upon their project through journaling. They received prompts to engage their thinking about the project, how they were feeling about what they were doing, and how the project was helping them learn.

## Evaluation

Students evaluated their success, and what they would do differently next time if given the opportunity. Evaluation is an area that could have been improved upon. The service recipients (the Clinic and the children receiving the bears) should have been asked how they felt about the service students provided, and what (if anything) could have been done differently. The evaluation on the following page was used as a gauge of gauging pre-project and post-project levels of student awareness of their civic responsibility.



## About the author:

**Natalie Schaefer, M.S.** has been in education for over 20 years as a teacher, naturalist, and consultant. She has a Master's Degree in Environmental Science and has been a longtime advocate and practitioner of service-learning.

## What We Learned

We met several challenges along the way, all of which provided learning experiences for our staff and students.

Staff training and a dedicated project leader to act as a school/after-school liaison are helpful in planning and implementing service-learning activities.

One aspect that some youth find frustrating is that they can't do it all overnight. My own most frequent frustration is the lack of willingness by some staff members to implement new ideas or strategies for their classrooms. This impacts the quality of education available to many students. However, I've come to understand that some, and hopefully most, people come around eventually through other teachers' modeling of proper behavior and instruction. It is best to start with willing individuals, and let the others come along on their own time. They will, because service-learning speaks for itself.

My advice to people who are just starting out:

- Start small, with projects you know; choose to do your first project from a project with which you already are very familiar, and keep it simple. The first project is often difficult to implement.
- Get administrative support early on, and nurture that support through regular updates.
- Be easy on yourself!



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## Del Norte Schools in Service Pre- and Post-Activity Civic Responsibility Survey

**Civic:** of a city, citizen or citizenship

**Responsibility:** the act of being personally accountable, dependable, or reliable

**Civic Responsibility:** citizens of a community being personally accountable to and for that community.

**Circle your choice of answers.**

**1 – Strongly Agree   2 – Agree   3 – Don’t Know   4 – Disagree   5 – Strongly Disagree**

No matter what I do, good or bad,  
I make a difference in my neighborhood. 1 2 3 4 5

I can work with people who are different than me. 1 2 3 4 5

What I do helps others. 1 2 3 4 5

What I do makes a difference with problems in my town. 1 2 3 4 5

No matter what I do, good or bad,  
I make a difference in the natural environment. 1 2 3 4 5

Problems in my community affect me. 1 2 3 4 5

I belong to a community where people help each other. 1 2 3 4 5

I should help others when I can. 1 2 3 4 5

Helping others makes me feel good. 1 2 3 4 5

Having many cultures in our community is a good thing. 1 2 3 4 5

This information will be used to gauge the growth of civic responsibility in our community.  
Thank you for your input!

Note: This survey was initially developed through College of the Redwoods Del Norte Math 15 - Elementary Statistics, taught by Walter Deckert, Assistant Professor of Mathematics. It has been modified from its original version with the participation and approval of Professor Deckert.

# Petaluma City Schools Communities and Schools for Career Success



## Overview

After-School Programs of Petaluma works with academically-struggling students at two junior high schools. Through service-learning projects, counseling, tutoring and life skills education, students find a safe place to re-engage in learning and get involved in their community.

## Who We Are

In 2001, Communities and Schools for Career Success, a systems-change initiative of Petaluma City Schools, brought an after-school program to a local junior high school. After four years, both public junior high schools and one high school in the area have instituted after-school programs that serve approximately 200 students a year. In addition, the program is now integrated with the district's summer school curriculum, and is a required course for both seventh and eighth grade curriculum.

The after-school program was founded to target and recruit seventh and eighth grade students who were academically at-risk for non-promotion to the next grade level. "Traditional" remediation methods with these students had been unsuccessful. Through service-learning projects, lessons on life skills, on-site counseling, and collaborating with community partners, students re-engage with learning and find a safe place to experience positive tutoring, learn leadership skills and become civically active. The program is designed

to help them gain a better understanding of themselves and their families, the community in which they live and ultimately, the world.

## What We Did – Our Service-Learning Project

In one example of a successful service-learning project, students contacted a nearby senior center and gathered information on the needs of the facility and its clients. The students learned that the center no longer had a groundskeeper and needed help with gardening. Subsequently, the students helped landscape the grounds of the facility. They mowed and weeded the lawn and planted flowers. Local stores provided the materials necessary for the landscaping: gloves, gardening tools, seeds, soil, and plants.

The Activities Director also told students that residents lacked visitors and entertainment. Students learned about the center's population: the ages, abilities, and

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reasons for needing assisted living (primarily Alzheimer’s, and other debilitating illnesses).

The teacher prepared lessons on the era the residents grew up in and provided information about different illnesses that were affecting them. Using the Internet, students researched what music and dances were popular in the ‘40s and ‘50s. They made an original compilation of music, and put on a dance for the patients. The students made refreshments, in accordance with residents’ dietary restrictions, and danced with the residents. This was a unique experience for the students and the elders.

Some other examples of service-learning projects accomplished include:

- Making cobblestone steps for a vegetable garden at a local high school
- Writing, performing and filming skits on the effects of peer pressure, bullying, and drug use

- Creating books on cultural heritage and reading them to fifth grade students
- Building a garden to grow vegetables for a local homeless shelter kitchen
- Working with a tobacco prevention agency to ensure that local merchants display the appropriate signs regarding age requirements for purchasing tobacco products.

These service-learning projects have been very effective in re-engaging students in learning. For the first time in many of these students’ lives, they are choosing what and how they want to learn, and what they want to do to make a contribution to the community.

At the end of school year, all students are awarded certificates of participation and are recognized by school administrators who attend the ceremony.



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## How We Did It

The after-school program uses a three-pronged approach of service-learning oriented academic support, life skills exploration and preparation, and individual and sometimes group counseling services. Each day, after-school students get a snack and have a few minutes of free time before the program begins. The class then starts with an activity followed by time to work on homework assignments with help from teachers and peers. The class moves into a team-building activity which leads into a life skills/character education lesson and work on a service-learning project. Throughout the afternoon, marriage and family therapist trainees and interns meet with students and provide outlets for personal needs and emotional expression.

Life skills lessons focus on health and body image, alcohol and drug awareness, cultural heritage and diversity, career exploration, school success, depression and suicide, sexual assault and violence prevention, gender equity, and gang awareness. Most lessons are hands-on activities in which students move around, do artwork, perform skits, work in groups, and participate in class discussions. Students receive age-appropriate information and resources and hear guest speakers each week. While the life skills lessons can and do stand independently from service-learning projects, most of the time the two are woven together. As the students move through the service-learning project of their choosing, the teachers modify life skills lessons to highlight certain issues that come up. The service-learning promotes civic involvement, personal growth and academic achievement.



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## **Integrating the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning**

A variety of projects illustrate five of the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning.

### **Integrated Learning**

While brainstorming possible service-learning projects in class, students discussed the rising number of elementary school students who were using drugs. Coincidentally, one of the life skills topics they discuss is drugs and alcohol abuse and prevention. Students decided to replicate the “Truth” anti-tobacco commercials in skits, and film and present them to a sixth grade class. After a presentation by a local drug prevention agency, teens used the Internet to research the products used in cigarettes, and the short-term effects of marijuana and alcohol.

### **Service to the Community**

In the spring of 2003, a well-respected and loved teacher suddenly passed away. Students came to the after-school program for comfort, and asked what they could do to help. In response, the teachers facilitated a brainstorming session with the students. They decided to design a mosaic memorial for the teacher and raise money for his family’s trust fund. They organized and planned a car wash, which raised over four hundred dollars in just a few hours. With discontinued tiles donated from a local tile shop, they also designed and made a mosaic memorial which now hangs at the school as a permanent memorial.

### **Collaboration**

As part of the summer school “Life Skills” course, each student participates in a

service-learning project. Working as a team, students decide on a project, and work with their teacher and the school to research community needs and create a plan. For the past two summers, students have worked with a local senior care center. They determined what supplies they needed (whether it be gardening materials or art supplies), and solicited donations from local stores.

### **Student Voice**

During the holiday season, students decided to design and sell t-shirts to advertise a toy drive (this was done with the assistance of a community partner who donated the use of a t-shirt making machine). The money raised was used to purchase toys to donate to a local children’s center. In a short time, students came up with an original design for the t-shirt, purchased shirts and created the final product. They used math skills to determine their profit based on how much they wanted to spend on toys and where to purchase them. The students also exercised time management skills to meet their strict timeline. The project was student-driven from start to finish.

### **Reflection**

While students were making the mosaic and putting on the carwash to honor the teacher who passed away, photos were taken every step of the way. In the end, students were able to see their progress, hard work and success through a slide show.

Each project runs on a short timeframe and it is an effort to budget time for reflection. Reflection is key in our program as writing is a huge struggle for our students. Students would much rather reflect verbally or artistically.

### **What We Learned**

A challenge for our program is finding ways to draw upon student voice in authentic and meaningful ways. In asking students for their opinions, teacher/adult receptivity is most essential. Expecting students to already have the skills to articulate their ideas is unrealistic; this must be nurtured through frequent practice. By explaining the process of service-learning and the importance of student voice, participating youth will have a more viable context and field in which to engage. Remember, most young people are unaccustomed to serving in the community and most communities are similarly unaccustomed to being served by youth. These relationships and the necessary skills to be effective require our time, effort and patience.

One should try to stay flexible and not be attached to the final outcome. For example, one class of students noticed the abundance of feral cats on campus being trapped and taken to the animal shelter. In response, they wanted to volunteer to help out. The first obstacle encountered was that our junior high students were not old enough to work at the shelter. Then, while learning about how the shelter works, they were shocked to learn that the feral cats being trapped were euthanized. The students simplified the project, and decided to run a donation drive to raise money for the shelter's wish list. This illustrates how a project can change its direction, often influenced by circumstances beyond our control. Regardless, the students learned valuable thinking and action skills, knowing that they had a key role in decision making.

Our program could have benefited from more parent involvement and school-wide recognition of the service completed in the after-school hours.

In the future, we want to encourage more direct feedback from those benefiting from our service. This will help deepen our relationships with community partners.

### **About the authors:**

**Jocelyn Hall** has been involved in the After-School Programs of Petaluma for the past three years, serving as a teacher, service-learning coordinator, and currently, as a marriage and family therapist (MFT) trainee. She will graduate in Spring 2004 with a Master's degree in English from Sonoma State University, and is in her second year of study towards a graduate degree in Counseling Psychology at Dominican University of California.

**Jennifer Newhoff** began working with the Petaluma After-School Programs at its inception. She worked at an after-school program as part of her psychology degree internship, and grew to become not only a teacher in the programs, but a supervisor for all the sites.



# Dare to Dream



## Overview

In Dare to Dream, students from predominantly low-income areas have a chance to explore their life goals, practice decision making, and learn about responsibility, respect and cooperation. Initiated by the Fresno County Office of Education, in collaboration with the Fresno Boys and Girls Clubs and CSU Fresno, Dare to Dream has engaged students from sixteen schools in more than 5,000 hours of service.

## Who We Are

In 1999, the Safe and Healthy Kids Department of the Fresno County Office of Education created the Dare to Dream Program to promote academic achievement and personal, social and civic responsibility through leadership training and service-learning. The program has now expanded to 16 schools (K-12) in Fresno County. The program developers believe that to be successful in education, vocation and citizenship, students must have a vision, a dream, with positive goals for themselves, their community, their nation, and their world. The most basic skill for success is self-leadership, which includes impulse control, commitment to civic virtues and character values, and responsible decision-making. An essential civic participation skill is group leadership: working together to set goals, solve problems, serve the community, and include and support every group member. The primary challenge for teachers is to give students opportunities to apply and practice the skills and virtues daily. Their motto is “you are what you practice.”

## What We Did – Our Service-Learning Project

One example of a service project undertaken by Dare to Dream students involved interviewing World War II veterans and producing video mini-documentaries, or Stories of Service. The students learn about a critical period of our history from people with direct experience and determine how to produce a dynamic 3-5 minute digital story. The veterans see their story documented for posterity with a copy entered into the Library of Congress as part of the Veteran’s Memorial Project.

Another project involved an elementary school Dare to Dream class creating a Cesar Chavez Garden to honor the values and contributions of Chavez, to learn about food production and to feed hungry people in the community. Parents and volunteers from the local chapter of the United Farm Workers (UFW) helped students build boxes for dirt and plants and set up an irrigation system. Students from CSU Fresno contributed books on Chavez, garden tools and supplies. At the



dedication ceremony in the spring, school and community leaders heard student presentations on Chavez and the United Farm Workers. UFW leaders told stories and gave advice on service, civic participation and social justice. The local UFW office contributed a statue of Cesar Chavez for the garden and a local university contributed books about the farmworkers movement to the school. The following year, when the participating students moved onto middle school, they asked about the service-learning after-school program and were told that none existed. They kept asking the principal, “When can we get a Dare to Dream class?” until he found a way to provide one.

Other projects included visiting senior citizens at a convalescent hospital, painting school murals depicting messages of pride, and presenting programs to

younger students to prevent violence or drug abuse. At one elementary school, students designed an after-school recreation program. Middle school students in Fresno published a school newspaper. At a high school, students used the music video “Don’t Laugh at Me” by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary to create dramatic presentations on creating “respect zones” to prevent bullying.

Students document their learning experiences in a Dare to Dream Journal, which includes sections for notes, reflections, and a record of service. Eligible students who meet the criteria of enough service hours (50+ for youth under 15, 100+ for youth 15 and older) apply for the President’s Student Service Award through the Corporation for National and Community Service. Last year in Fresno County, 120 students received this award, completing over 10,000 hours of community service.



## How We Did It

At first, some teachers expressed concern that they were not aware of genuine needs in the community to be addressed by service-learning projects. In response, the Superintendent organized a community service forum inviting representatives from city government, Parks and Recreation, a senior center, and the Chamber of Commerce to share ideas for student service activities. Student representatives recorded their suggestions, shared them with other student leaders, and compiled a list of service-learning opportunities that students would like to implement. Students then presented this list to teachers at every school in their district. The Forum is now an annual event to explore meaningful ways to connect students with community partners and meet real needs in the school and community through purposeful service-learning projects.

The Dare to Dream curriculum includes three components:

1. **Leadership Training:** Young people need to identify a positive direction for their life, and learn and practice the skills and values to make responsible decisions. Students first learn to lead themselves and then to lead others. Leadership training includes the Three Rs: Respect, Responsibility, and Resourcefulness; the Three Fs: Fun and Failing-Forward; and the Three Cs: Cooperation, Commitment, and Cooperation.

2. **Human Relations:** Young people need to learn the dynamics of human relations, especially the skills of communication and conflict resolution. A vital feature is the balance of respecting the unique value and interests of each individual and the recognition that we are all one human family.
3. **Civic Responsibility:** Young people need to learn that civic responsibility and community service are essential to maintain the rights and freedoms that we all value. Students learn to assess school and community needs and to develop action plans to engage students and community partners in addressing those needs.

Dare to Dream classes can be incorporated into the schedules of each school. Some classes meet after-school five days a week for an hour, while others meet two days a week for an hour and a half. The program has three stages during a year:

- 1) “Vision Quest” (value: respect). Students consider: Who am I? Where am I going?
- 2) “E Pluribus Unum” “Many into One” (value: unity). Students consider: Why care for others? Students identify school/community needs and begin to plan service-learning projects that address those needs.
- 3) Service (value: responsibility). Students consider: What can we do to serve our school/community? Students implement their service-learning projects.

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## **Integrating the Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning**

The following Seven Elements are illustrated in a variety of different projects accomplished by Dare to Dream students.

### **Integrated Learning**

First grade students planted flowers to make the area around their classroom more attractive. The teacher incorporated a science lesson on how plants grow, a social studies lesson on authority in the school, and a language arts lesson on oral and written communication of the proposal. Students demonstrated these skills by preparing presentations to the principal requesting permission to plant the flowers and to a representative from a local nursery to ask for advice and supplies.

### **Service to Community**

Middle school students brought gifts and presented a musical program to senior citizens isolated from community contact. High school students interviewed veterans and produced “Stories of Service” that captured their war time experiences for posterity.

### **Collaboration**

High school students partnered with elementary school students to create a videotape featuring the younger students’ play about the painful impact of bullying and the importance of respect.

### **Student Voice**

High school students identified and documented needed facility improvements in their locker rooms and persuaded administrators to make the repairs.

### **Civic Responsibility**

Student leaders from several schools are negotiating with community leaders to create a teen center for youth. Several Dare to Dream classes organized Freedom Tree ceremonies, planting trees in a memorial dedicated to the heroes and victims of 9/11. High school students adopted a local park, organizing clean-up work parties and a culture jam, featuring ethnic food, music and dances.

### **Reflection**

Students record personal reflections on what they learn from classes and service-learning activities in their Dare to Dream Journal. Staff and students engage in follow-up conversations in which they share what they learned from implementing the project, including curriculum content, the impact on school and community, and personal growth.

### **Evaluation**

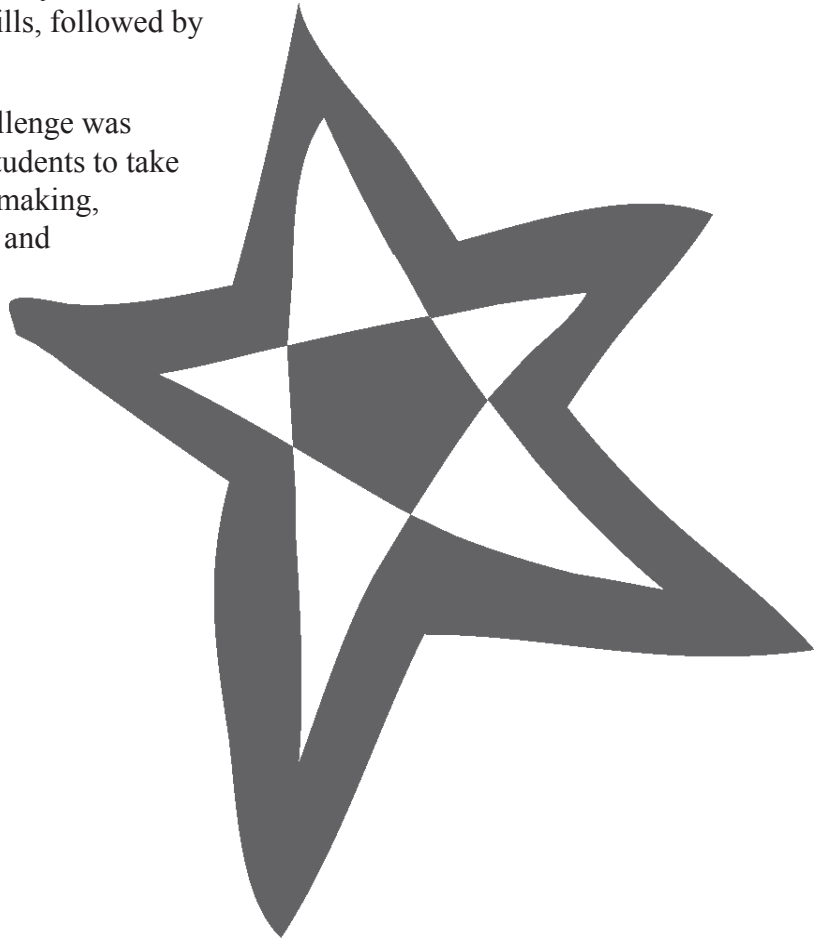
Evaluation for this project was done by California State University professors, who reviewed journals, conducted focus groups, and collected data on grades, test scores and California Healthy Kids Surveys.

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## What We Learned

Students often struggle with cooperative tasks because they lack the skills of effective communication, conflict resolution, and multicultural understanding. We found it necessary to emphasize this skill development in the program. Our process typically included describing concepts and skills, followed by activities to practice them.

Another programmatic challenge was helping teachers to allow students to take responsibility for decision-making, problem solving, planning, and implementing projects.



### About the author:

**John Minkler, Ph.D.**, coordinator of Dare to Dream, was a high school history/civics teacher for 26 years. He is author of *Active Citizenship, Empowering America's Youth*, a curriculum on civic responsibility and service-learning. John is the Co-Chair of the Task Force on the Revitalization of Citizenship Education for the National Council for the Social Studies.

### Dare to Dream

[www.safeandhealthykids.fcoe.net/daretodream](http://www.safeandhealthykids.fcoe.net/daretodream)

### Central Valley Stories of Service

[www.civednet7.org/sos1.html](http://www.civednet7.org/sos1.html)

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## RESOURCES

The following organizations provide useful service-learning information:

**Youth Service California**

[www.yscal.org](http://www.yscal.org)

**ABCDBooks**

[www.abcdbooks.org](http://www.abcdbooks.org)

**Active Citizenship, Empowering America's Youth**

[www.activecitizenship.org](http://www.activecitizenship.org)

**Community Network for Youth Development**

[www.cnyd.org](http://www.cnyd.org)

**Constitutional Rights Foundation**

[www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org)

**National Dropout Prevention Center**

**Clemson University**

[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)

**National Institute on Out-of-School Time**

[www.niost.org](http://www.niost.org)

**National Service-Learning Clearinghouse**

[www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

**National Service-Learning Exchange**

[www.nslexchange.org](http://www.nslexchange.org)

**National Service-Learning Partnership**

[www.service-learningpartnership.org](http://www.service-learningpartnership.org)

**National Youth Leadership Council**

[www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)

**Youth Service America**

[www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org)

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