

LINKING SERVICE-LEARNING AND THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: ALIGNMENT, PROGRESS, AND OBSTACLES



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most states have committed to higher learning for students through adoption of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) in the past several years. The intent of the Common Core—adopted voluntarily by 46 states and the District of Columbia—is to outline “high standards that are consistent across states [to] provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that are aligned to the expectations in college and careers.”¹ The Common Core is centered on applications of knowledge through the deeper learning skills necessary for students to compete with their peers around the world.² Students’ mastery of such higher learning skills and the ultimate success of the Common Core depend on how well educators translate the standards into curriculum and instruction.

Developers of the Common Core stress that the standards were developed to detail content and performance expectations—or the *what*—not to dictate which teaching methods and learning strategies—or the *how*—that teachers should employ for students to successfully meet Common Core expectations.³ Service-learning is one of several “deeper learning” strategies that states, districts, schools, and teachers may use to help students gain a deeper understanding of core academic content and simultaneously build deeper learning skills through the integration of content knowledge with application.⁴ Undoubtedly, “[i]f students do not have

numerous opportunities to use content knowledge to solve interesting problems, grapple with key questions and issues of the discipline, and examine social issues, they will be unlikely to perform well on the common assessments.”⁵

In recent years, the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) at the Education Commission of the States (ECS) collected robust data to support the view that “high-quality service-learning has a statistically significant and positive relationship with students’ ... acquisition of 21st century skills.”⁶ Through high-quality service-learning, students have opportunities to “develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, to work within groups developing communication and collaborative skills, and to utilize their unique abilities in creative and innovative ways.”⁷ Policymakers are increasingly supportive of service-learning, as evidenced by the pedagogy’s inclusion in state policy. By the end of 2011, almost every state had either passed legislation or adopted state board of education policy that encourages local schools to use service-learning.⁸

The purpose of these case studies is to examine in schools with high-quality service-learning programs whether and how integrating service-learning into early implementation of the Common Core provides students with the deeper learning skills to be college and career ready.

“Service-learning is one of several “deeper learning” strategies that states, districts, schools, and teachers may use to help students gain a deeper understanding of core academic content and simultaneously build deeper learning skills through the integration of content knowledge with application.”



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Case Study Interviews

NCLC staff conducted interviews with teachers and administrators in three schools and one school district with established service-learning programs: North Middle School, Colorado Springs, Colorado; Percy L. Julian High School, Chicago, Illinois; Grant's Lick Elementary School, Alexandria, Kentucky; and Montpelier Public Schools, Montpelier, Vermont. Interview questions are based on the five components of service-learning policy and practice that are recognized as fundamental to institutionalizing high-quality programs. Those five components are: (1) Leadership, (2) Continuous Improvement, (3) Professional Development, (4) Curriculum and Assessment, and (5) Community Partnerships.⁹

Consistent Themes

Despite geographic, demographic, state and local infrastructure, and policy differences across the four case study sites, NCLC staff found consistent themes throughout the interviews on the implementation of service-learning and Common Core, and the feasibility of blending the two initiatives. Such themes are detailed in the table below.

	North Middle School, Colorado Springs, CO	Percy L. Julian High School, Chicago, IL	Grant's Lick Elementary School, Alexandria, KY	Montpelier Public Schools, Montpelier, VT
State infrastructure for service-learning is strong	✓		✓	✓
District infrastructure for service-learning is strong		✓	✓	✓
Site has incorporated service-learning into early Common Core implementation		✓	✓	
Site plans to incorporate service-learning into early Common Core implementation where possible	✓			✓

Challenges

Among the many challenges that schools and districts committed to integrating service-learning and the Common Core, three consistently stand out:

- 1. Time and Resources:** Teachers and administrators today are often overextended, and finding time and resources to strategize about implementing new initiatives such as service-learning and the Common Core is increasingly difficult. Some schools are also experiencing a reduction in the number of community organizations actively participating in students' service-learning work. This reduction limits schools' collaborative and relationship building opportunities.
- 2. Communication and Infrastructure:** For states to advance Common Core implementation effectively, state departments of education, districts, and schools should communicate clearly their expectations, concerns, and creative ideas. In the absence of clear-cut guidelines, implementation efforts can lose momentum or stall.
- 3. Professional Development:** Consistent budget cuts and a growing list of new initiatives have made it difficult for schools to provide professional development for teachers beyond that mandated by districts. In states where Common Core implementation is a priority, however, effective implementation requires training for teachers on how to translate these complex new standards into higher-level learning experiences for students. To successfully integrate service-learning and the Common Core, schools should develop highly specialized instruction for teachers on how to utilize this strategy in the classroom. Teachers need access to quality tools, practical lesson examples, and metrics, as well as regular opportunities to collaborate on effective practices.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations and Best Practices

Among the recommendations and best practices found in case study sites, four stand out as consistent and significant:

- 1. Start small:** Identify a core group of teachers who understand service-learning and the Common Core, coach them on how to blend and implement the two, and provide them with opportunities to model implementation practices for fellow teachers.
- 2. Collaborate with leadership at all levels:** Enlist the collaborative support of the state department of education Common Core coordinator(s) and district and building-level curriculum coordinators; their support will determine the direction and sustainability of these reforms. Such collaboration is essential to successful Common Core implementation because communication is not always consistent between state departments of education, districts, and schools.
- 3. Make professional development a priority:** Invest in professional development for staff on how to blend the implementation of service-learning and the Common Core. High-quality service-learning and the Common Core are complex initiatives on their own; thus, training opportunities on how to blend the two are even more necessary.
- 4. Develop a detailed implementation plan:** Establish a set of viable next steps and, with a core group of committed individuals, develop a concise strategic plan that includes a timeline and team-level or departmental goals for implementing service-learning and the Common Core. Guidelines and resources are available online to teachers and help to avoid unnecessary missteps and inform their plans for incorporating service-learning into Common Core implementation.¹⁰ Schools and districts that are simultaneously working on the *what* and the *how* are successfully integrating service-learning and the Common Core.



CURRENT STATE OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS, SERVICE-LEARNING, AND DEEPER LEARNING

The Common Core State Standards

Implementation of the Common Core is underway in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories. The Common Core initiative is a state-led effort to define education standards across the states coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).¹² Released in 2010, the Common Core identifies the skills and knowledge in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics (Math) necessary for students in grades K-12 to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school.

The National Center for Research and Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing recently examined the status of the two consortia developing assessment systems to measure students' attainment of the Common Core, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced), and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Researchers concluded that thus far "both PARCC and Smarter Balanced summative assessments and students' proficiency classifications based on the assessments will represent many goals for deeper learning, particularly those related to mastering and being able to apply core academic content and cognitive strategic related to complex thinking, communication, and problem solving."¹³

Service-Learning

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse defines "service-learning" as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.¹⁴ High-quality service-learning requires: (1) meaningful service, (2) intentional link to curriculum, (3) reflection, (4) diversity among participants, (5) youth and parental engagement and decision making, (6) mutually beneficial partnerships, (7) ongoing progress monitoring, and (8) appropriate duration and intensity to meet community needs and outcomes.¹⁵ A growing body of research shows that students engaged in high-quality service-learning learn to collaborate, think critically, and problem solve.¹⁶ These same deeper learning skills are necessary for students to master the Common Core and meet the expectations of Common Core authors and advocates.

Service-learning continues to gain relevance through increased inclusion in state policy. In 2000 and 2011, NCLC conducted state policy scans on service-learning to determine the degree to which service-learning has been institutionalized in the states. By the end of 2011, almost every state had either passed legislation or adopted state board of education policy that encourages local schools to use service-learning. Many states include service-learning/community service in benchmarks and instructional strategies in state standards and/or frameworks.¹⁷

Although the field of service-learning has made impressive strides in recent decades, a significant setback occurred in April 2011 when Congress passed the fiscal year 2011 budget and eliminated funding for Learn and Serve America (LSA), the sole federal funding stream dedicated to service-learning in PK-12 schools.¹⁸ This appropriation

historically provided a steady funding stream to state LSA offices, and its absence threatens to break down the state-level infrastructure that service-learning experts and advocates have established over the past 15 years. The loss of federal support coupled with state budget shortfalls has prompted a transition period for the service-learning field.¹⁹ Advocates across the country are choosing to move beyond the devastating budget cut and seize the opportunity to refocus efforts to expand high-quality service-learning. Such efforts include:

- ✦ **Building state capacity:** Forming a coalition of service-learning leaders from across the state to create a state presence for service-learning and fill the void that the defunding of LSA created at the state level. Model states: **Colorado, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina.**
- ✦ **Leveraging support of other state reform efforts:** Finding other statewide initiatives as vehicles for service-learning, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement programs. Model states: **Arizona, Colorado, and Minnesota.**
- ✦ **Leveraging effective expertise of community partners:** Collaborating with local nonprofits and other organizations already using creative strategies to support service-learning in districts. Model state: **North Carolina.**
- ✦ **Advocating for state and federal policy:** Refocusing state efforts around clear messaging to ensure that policymakers are informed as to what high-quality service-learning is and is not. Working toward federal support for service-learning under the Department of Education. Model state: **Wisconsin.**²⁰

Deeper learning

From the perspective of NCLC staff, the most established and clearest meaning of the term “deeper learning” is the definition of “21st century skills.” In 2006, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (the Partnership) initially proposed the term “21st Century Skills” and defines it as four “21st century student outcomes:” (1) Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes, (2) Learning and Innovation Skills, (3) Information, Media, and Technology Skills, and (4) Life and Career Skills.²¹ Although additional groups have addressed the concept of 21st century skills and defined the term in various ways, most agree that it includes:

- ✦ **Basic skills in reading and math**
- ✦ **Critical thinking skills**
- ✦ **Knowledge of the economic system**
- ✦ **Global awareness**
- ✦ **Civic engagement**
- ✦ **Collaborative group skills**
- ✦ **Productivity and self efficacy**
- ✦ **Information and communications technology literacy**
- ✦ **Creativity and innovation.**²²

The Partnership has advocated for an integrated set of multi-dimension competencies and an interconnected approach to the educational programs supporting the competencies.²³ Students must master such deeper learning competencies to succeed on Common Core assessment. Service-learning is one of several proven deeper learning strategies—or *hows*—that states, districts, schools, and teachers may use to help students meet the *what* of Common Core expectations to be career and college ready.

“ A growing body of research shows that students engaged in high-quality service-learning learn to collaborate, think critically, and problem solve. These same deeper learning skills are necessary for students to master the Common Core and meet the expectations of Common Core authors and advocates. ”



RESEARCH RATIONALE

NCLC embarked on these case studies to:

- ✦ Learn how implementation of the Common Core is affecting established service-learning practices in a representative sampling of districts and schools around the country
- ✦ Identify challenges/anticipated challenges facing district and school leaders with regard to blending service-learning and Common Core implementation
- ✦ Describe the best practices and models school and district service-learning leaders are using or plan to use to align high-quality service-learning practices and Common Core implementation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of these case studies is to examine in schools with high-quality service-learning programs whether and how integrating service-learning into early implementation of the Common Core provides students with the deeper learning skills to be college and career ready.

Warrant Statement

These case studies are warranted because achieving proficiency on the Common Core requires students to engage in a higher level of learning, and states, districts, schools, and teachers may decide which pedagogies best help students learn core academic content and simultaneously develop the deeper learning skills inherent in the Common Core. Service-learning is one educational model that has been proven to achieve such results. Through these case studies, NCLC aims to offer examples to policymakers and practitioners as to how they might encourage incorporation of high-quality service-learning into Common Core implementation and prepare students to compete with their peers across the country and around the world.

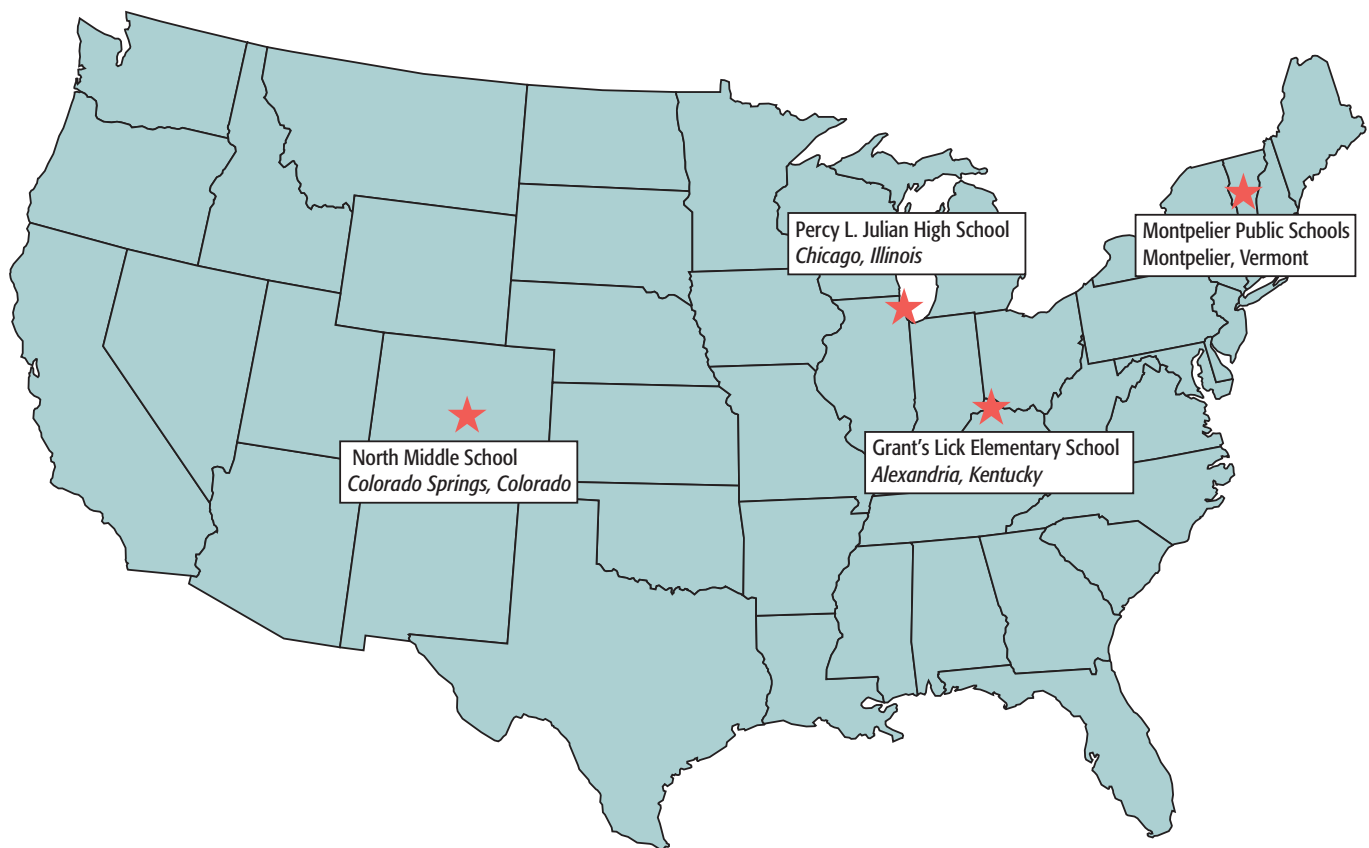


CASE STUDY SITES

NCLC staff selected three schools and one district to participate in this set of case studies: *North Middle School*, Colorado Springs, Colorado; *Percy L. Julian High School*, Chicago, Illinois; *Grant's Lick Elementary School*, Alexandria, Kentucky; and *Montpelier Public Schools*, Montpelier, Vermont. The sites are diverse not only geographically, demographically, and politically, but also reflect variety in school or district approaches to service-learning.

The four sites appear to be united in their support of high-quality service-learning as a critical pedagogy for student academic, civic, social, emotional, and career development. Moreover, the four sites maintain that service-learning is one proven deeper learning strategy that may be utilized to help students attain the competencies and skills necessary to meet the Common Core standards.

NCLC staff interviewed principals, a district curriculum coordinator, and teachers committed to service-learning about alignment, progress, and obstacles in reconciling service-learning and the Common Core.



In the following pages, NCLC reports on how the four sites are merging or plan to integrate service-learning with Common Core implementation.

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY SITES

North Middle School Colorado Springs, Colorado

North Middle School (North), founded in the late 1920s, is in Colorado Springs, the second-most populous city in Colorado. North serves more than 650 students in grades 6-8 and houses the Colorado Springs District's (District 11) only school-wide International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IB Program).²⁴ Through the IB Program, the school's mission is for all North students to gain the knowledge and inquiry and critical thinking skills necessary to apply a global and real world perspective to what is learned in the classroom.²⁵ Central elements of the IB Program include service-learning and a teaching structure that is student centered.²⁶

Service-Learning Implementation at North

Until the recent defunding of the federal Learn and Serve America (LSA) program, the sole federal funding stream dedicated to service-learning in PK-12 schools, the practice of service-learning at North was strong and poised to grow. This growth was largely due to the support and guidance provided by the district service-learning coordinator. In addition to providing direction and sustainability for service-learning in district schools and collaborating with the Colorado State Department of Education, the service-learning coordinator created a Middle School Youth Council for Service-Learning with students from three middle schools including North, and edited and updated the district's service-learning guidebook.

North administrators note that although support for service-learning at the district level now "varies" and they have had to regroup and refocus the school's service-learning practice, most staff members strongly support service-learning.²⁷ North staff members stress student voice in the school's service-learning practice and require students to design their own service-learning projects. Student voice reaffirms to teachers who may feel that they do not have time to implement service-learning the numerous ways the practice can be blended into the curriculum and utilized in classroom. Moreover, while the district board of education has not passed a policy on service-learning, the board appears to support and encourage the pedagogy.

North Middle School

- Urban
- More than 650 students in grades 6-8
- 62% White/non-Hispanic
- 23% Hispanic
- 11% Black
- Approximately 50% free and reduced meals
- Did not make AYP in 2011
- Full Common Core implementation by: School year 2013-14
- Located in Colorado, a member of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)



Photo courtesy of North Middle School

Like many districts and states around the country, District 11 faces a significant period of transition resulting from the elimination of service-learning coordinators. The loss of federal support coupled with state budget shortfalls have threatened the sustainability and institutionalization of high-quality service-learning practice. Service-learning advocates in Colorado and several other states have addressed these issues by forming statewide coalitions of service-learning leaders to fill the void created at the district and state level.²⁸ The Colorado Springs District 11 Volunteer Services Supervisor is a member of the Colorado Service-Learning Coalition.



For the past six years, North students have participated in service-learning through a grant-funded partnership with Colorado College, a private college located very close to North's campus. Through the college's Public Achievement Program, college student "coaches" meet with a small group of students twice a week at North and other area schools over the course of the school year. Typically, two coaches are each assigned to work with six North students as the students identify and research a school or community need and individually design and submit a proposal to address that need. This process provides North students with rich service-learning experiences through which they can see the connection between what they are learning and how it applies to real-world situations, and how they can make a difference in their community.

In addition, despite the absence of a district service-learning coordinator, service-learning has become part of the culture at North for several reasons. First, service-learning is a key element of the school's IB program. Because the IB program requires students to think globally, many students design service-learning experiences that address an issue in the global community in addition to the local community. Also, through professional development with the IB coordinator, school staff members have drafted a service-learning policy and have begun training on the policy. Lastly, service-learning leaders at North have proposed moving away from assessing students' service-learning experience based on the number of hours logged to a more holistic assessment framework.

Common Core Implementation at North

The general feeling of teachers and administrators at North in regard to the Common Core is very positive. Most agree with the commonly shared sentiment in the education field that the new standards surpass current state standards in quality and rigor and

require deeper learning strategies to help students meet learning targets.²⁹ Colorado adopted the Common Core in August 2012, and the Colorado Department of Education expects schools to have fully implemented the new standards by the 2013-14 school year.³⁰ Despite the undoubtedly "tricky transition" from current state standards to the Common Core standards, North administrators feel that their implementation efforts are supported both by the district and the state department of education.

North staff members report that the district has a strong support system in place, in which the district curriculum facilitators collaborate with the district department chairs who then guide and work with building-level staff. At the beginning of the 2012-13 school year, district curriculum facilitators provided professional development for all schools on Common Core implementation that focused on depth of knowledge and learning targets. The state department of education also disseminated a Common Core implementation guide that identifies deeper learning instruction opportunities. For example, a deeper learning experience in geometry may ask students to consider why patterns are important in the real world.³¹ Thus, while teachers at North may be experiencing added stress during this early implementation period, administrators have observed that when teachers feel supported at the building, district, and state level, the teachers are ready to move forward and things fall into place.³²

To meet the 2013-14 implementation deadline, North is operating under a two-year plan where students are taught the new standards and tested under the current state assessment. A 15-member curriculum team has met consistently over the past two years to design a curriculum aligned to the Common Core and create a new pacing guide. The goal is to get this first group of students who are being taught under the new curriculum but tested under the old assessment to 2015 to pass successfully.

Common Core Implementation and Service-Learning at North

Although administrators at North have not yet connected service-learning and the Common Core and have only focused on them separately, they acknowledge that deeper learning strategies such as service-learning are necessary for students to meet Common Core goals. North administrators explain that communication and reasoning skills are emphasized more in the Common Core than in current state standards and these and other deeper learning skills are a natural byproduct of high-quality service-learning.

Challenges

- ★ **Lack of resources and staff:** Sustainability and infrastructure, perennial issues for the service-learning field, have been exacerbated by the defunding of Learn and Serve America and the loss of dedicated service-learning positions at the district and state level. State departments of education, local school districts, and schools cannot support and provide high-quality service-learning without infrastructure to support it. North has entered a transition period where administrators and teachers are attempting to sustain service-learning practices with little to no outside support.
- ★ **Connecting service-learning and the Common Core:** Until now, North administrators and teachers have focused on service-learning and Common Core separately. Although both initiatives are complex and successful integration will likely take time, when asked if the two initiatives could be effectively blended, administrators responded positively and stated that they hoped to undertake such an integration in the future.

Recommendations

- ★ **Explain that service-learning is just good teaching:** Administrators can help staff see the value of service-learning by explaining that it is a proven pedagogy at their disposal rather than another new project they must implement.
- ★ **Initiate on a small scale:** Using service-learning to implement the Common Core seems less daunting when implementation is initiated on a small scale. Administrators may find staff who are passionate about service-learning or addressing community needs and connect them with staff passionate about curriculum to build a long-range plan for making service-learning a part of Common Core implementation.



Percy L. Julian High School

Chicago, Illinois

Percy L. Julian High School (Julian) is located on the far south side of Chicago in the Washington Heights neighborhood. Julian serves a 99% African American student body of 1,159 in grades 9-12. In 2011, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) designated Julian as a College and Career Academies High School. This designation offers students the opportunity to enroll in a Business/Finance Academy, Computer Gaming, Digital Media/Broadcast Academy, or an Allied Health/Medical Academy. Students enrolled in the college preparatory curriculums of the three academies may earn an industry credential in addition to class credits.

Service-Learning Implementation at Julian

Service-learning is thriving in CPS due to the district's commitment to the practice and the vision and leadership of the district service-learning manager. CPS recognizes service-learning as a proven instructional strategy to "deepen and extend classroom instruction for CPS high school students in all subject areas to improve academic achievement, build social skills, and develop civic skills and attitudes."³³ The district has demonstrated its commitment to service-learning by requiring each school to designate a service-learning coach who is responsible for working with teachers and students to develop service-learning projects. Having a staff person dedicated to service-learning at the district and school level fosters sustainability of the pedagogy.

CPS has further demonstrated its commitment to service-learning by including service-learning in high school students' graduation requirements. In the past, students were required to complete 40 hours of service-learning in order to graduate from high school. Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, the CPS Office of Social Sciences and Service-Learning launched a new service-learning initiative that changed the district's graduation requirement for service-learning from 40 hours to three projects. All students must complete three service-learning projects throughout high school that include classroom-integrated preparation, action, and reflection components. Also, sophomores are required to complete at least one project in order to be promoted to junior status. A 13-school cohort piloted this strategy with their 2010-11 freshmen.³⁴ Julian was part of this cohort, and although some teachers initially questioned the transition, school administrators attest that both the students and community have benefited from this policy. The project-based framework provides students with opportunities to engage more thoughtfully in the service-learning project than the previous service-hour framework and traditional classroom environment. Also, once community members have had the opportunity to interact with students during service-learning projects, they see the value in those students. The Julian principal asserted that the only way to see change in the community is when "youth embrace their community and stay around to own it."³⁵

In the 2010-11 school year, Julian administrators launched the new initiative by having the students in each grade level design individual service-learning projects based on the same theme. Such themes included Civic Responsibility, African American Health and Wellness, Violence and Peace, and the Great Migration. Administrators note that it was the Great Migration projects designed by the 11th graders that helped ignite service-learning at Julian. As part of this theme, students were asked to create a project based on the question: "Why did so many African Americans leave the South, and what impact did the 'Great Migration' of African Americans have on the city of Chicago?"³⁶ The curriculum-based learning goals for the project were for students to use research, writing, analysis, speaking, and technical skills to prepare a presentation on their project.³⁷

Percy L. Julian High School

- Urban
- 1,159 students in grades 9-12
- 99% African American
- 94% free and reduced meals
- Did not make AYP in 2012
- Full Common Core implementation by: School year 2014-15
- Located in Illinois, a member of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)



Photo courtesy of Percy L. Julian High School

Over the course of this project, teachers witnessed students “going deep” into their work and feeling empowered. Administrators saw teachers taking on more of a facilitative role, which is a critical component of high-quality service-learning.

Julian attributes much of its success in service-learning to strong district support. Julian administrators state that district staff made the expectations clear regarding service-learning and then provided the professional development and support necessary to successfully meet expectations. Administrators maintain that having a “go-to” person at the district level made all the difference.

Common Core Implementation at Julian

Illinois adopted the Common Core in June 2010, and CPS expects all schools to have implemented the Common Core by 2015. Specifically, CPS envisions that by the 2014-15 school year “all students will have access to high-quality Common Core-aligned curricula as defined by CPS Framework for Content Standards in literacy and mathematics.”³⁸ To date, the district has provided all

principals and freshmen and sophomore teachers professional development on the Common Core.

Although transitioning to the Common Core is a substantial change, Julian administrators state the transition has not been difficult. Administrators attribute this to the fact that they employed change theory in working with teachers and stressed that the quality teaching required by the Common Core is the kind of teaching already expected of them. Administrators went on to stress to the teachers that in the past, CPS may have mandated increased rigor with no context, and now the Common Core provides the context.

Julian administrators further facilitated a smooth transition by identifying teacher anchors within grade levels and departments to meet weekly to work on implementation strategies. The administration is able to pay the anchor teachers “extra duty pay” for their contribution, because as a high school in “transformation”—a multi-year effort to comprehensively improve student achievement in CPS high schools—Julian receives grant funds that may be used for this purpose.³⁹

Common Core Implementation and Service-Learning at Julian

Julian administrators embrace the idea of blending service-learning and Common Core and are in the process of aligning service-learning project outcomes with the new standards. Administrators and most staff maintain the view that Common Core provides the content targets necessary to create rich learning experiences that students acquire from high-quality service-learning. They also assert that for the practice of connecting service-learning to the Common Core to be sustainable the connection must become habit, which requires time and practice. One Julian administrator noted that “it needs to be a mindset, not a one-time experience.”⁴⁰

Challenges

- ★ **Misconceptions about what high-quality service-learning looks like:** Administrators and teacher leaders should educate staff, students, and community members that high-quality service-learning is intentionally connected to the curriculum; it is not merely community service.
- ★ **Time and patience:** Julian administrators stress that it will take time for the connection between service-learning and Common Core to become part of school culture and an integral part of teaching practice. Administrators and teachers must be patient and “stay the course.”

Recommendations

- ★ **Designate anchor teachers:** Administrators should find staff who are passionate about service-learning or addressing community needs and connect them with staff passionate about curriculum to build a long-range plan for making service-learning a part of Common Core implementation.
- ★ **Designate planning time:** Common planning time is imperative for both Common Core and service-learning implementation.
- ★ **Explain that service-learning is just good teaching:** Administrators can help staff see the value of service-learning by explaining that it is a proven pedagogy at their disposal, rather than another new project they must implement. Administrators and teachers should collaborate with local experts and engage them in service-learning projects. For example, Julian staff collaborated with a local judge on a civic engagement-themed service-learning project.
- ★ **Maintain communication:** Administrators should regularly ask students and teachers what kinds of support they need in relation to service-learning projects and the Common Core and work to provide those supports.

Grant's Lick Elementary School

Alexandria, Kentucky

Grant's Lick Elementary (GLE) is a small rural school in northern Kentucky that serves approximately 283 students grades PreK-5, 99% White, non-Hispanic. Despite being Campbell County's smallest school, GLE leads the district in service-learning implementation. In 2009, NCLC selected Grant's Lick to participate in its Schools of Success program because of the school's exemplary work in service-learning, which has been shown to lead to greater student achievement and civic engagement. In October 2012, the Mayerson Family Foundation, a philanthropic organization in Cincinnati, Ohio, recognized GLE as a School of Contribution for the sixth consecutive year for its commitment to offering students the opportunity to incorporate service-learning into their school experiences.

Service-Learning Implementation at Grant's Lick

For the past several years, service-learning has been at the heart of learning at GLE. The pedagogy is valued by administrators, staff, school board members, and the community as a hands-on approach that fully immerses students in the learning process. The principal, service-learning coordinator, and a core group of teachers work diligently to weave service-learning into the school's curriculum and culture. Administrators have helped teachers funnel service-learning projects through a process designed to ensure project alignment with Kentucky state standards and to provide all students a variety of service-learning opportunities throughout the school year.

Service-learning is also part of GLE's and Campbell County's district improvement plans. Several years ago, GLE created a paid extra-duty service-learning coordinator position and designated one of its teachers to provide guidance and support to all teachers implementing service-learning in their classrooms.

In 2010, Campbell County hosted a training workshop for all schools in the district on service-learning fundamentals and best practices. The workshop was facilitated by KIDS Consortium, a non-profit organization in Maine. Because the staff had attended similar service-learning trainings during the Schools of Success grant program, they helped to generate excitement about the workshop. This training provided teachers and administrators with time and a framework for deep discussion and developing strategies to fortify the district's commitment to quality service-learning practice.

GLE staff members report that while considerable planning is required on the front end of service-learning projects, as teachers become more experienced and efficient the overall time investment typically decreases. Moreover, student achievement improves. Since the defunding of Learn and Serve America in 2011, GLE has received a series of small service-learning project grants from Children, Inc., a local nonprofit, that have helped to sustain service-learning momentum. Teachers and students see endless possibilities for continued service-learning experiences as there will always be ways to serve the local community.

In May 2012, the state of Kentucky assessed students for the first time on the Common Core for ELA and math.⁴¹ Since students were not being assessed on the Common Core prior to that time, most districts did not begin using the new standards until the 2011-12 school year. However, school administrators in Campbell County realized early on that embracing the Common Core was in everyone's best interest.

Grant's Lick Elementary School

- Rural
- 283 students, grades PreK-5
- 99% White/non-Hispanic
- 24% eligible for free and reduced meals
- Met AYP in school year 2011-12
- Full Common Core implementation: School year 2010-11
- Located in Kentucky, a member of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).



Photo courtesy of Grant's Lick Elementary School

Common Core Implementation at Grant's Lick

Before the state cohorts were developed, GLE teachers worked with other teachers in the district to deconstruct the Common Core into learning targets and to align the district's units and common assessments with the new standards. The Kentucky Department of Education (DOE) provided professional development sessions at the district and school levels to help teachers understand and implement the ELA and math standards.

Campbell County is examining various assessment strategies for the new standards and is engaging GLE teachers in that process. Groups of teachers across the district have received stipends to meet and create assessment metrics; some collaborate with peers during their professional learning community (PLC) time, and others receive instruction and guidance during scheduled professional development sessions. Despite this well thought-out plan and support, some teachers initially found the transition overwhelming. Three years later, however, teachers report feeling better prepared to implement the standards effectively in their classrooms but stress the need for consistent monitoring and ongoing professional development.

Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core.⁴² To keep everyone on the same page with Common Core implementation, the Kentucky DOE formed regional cohorts during the 2010-11 school year—one in English Language Arts (ELA) and one in math—comprised of representatives from each district. Members of the cohorts became familiar with the standards and worked together to deconstruct the standards into specific learning targets. The cohorts continue to meet to gain a deeper understanding of the standards and best practices for implementation. District representatives are responsible for sharing the information within their schools/districts.

“*Teachers and administrators who make themselves accessible to one another help create an atmosphere that fosters open communication, innovation, and collaboration.*”



Common Core Implementation and Service-Learning at Grant's Lick

For several years, GLE staff have used service-learning projects to help students attain deeper learning skills. Teachers proficient in service-learning practice demonstrate to peers how the project-based design of service-learning fits well with the Common Core. Many teachers have found the new standards, especially in math, to be more rigorous than Kentucky's previous state standards, and they have found service-learning useful in meeting the new standards. Successful integration of the two reforms has generated enthusiasm among staff.

GLE staff members strongly encourage students to practice taking positive risks in life. The confluence of service-learning and the Common Core provides staff with a unique opportunity to model positive risk-taking by working together with a positive attitude to discover new and innovative ways to help students excel. Such collaboration coupled with a willingness to try new approaches may help students and teachers to see both service-learning and the Common Core in a positive light—as a way to help prepare students for a successful future.

Challenges

- ★ **Making the transition:** Administrators and teachers at GLE report that the transition from traditional state standards to the Common Core is an arduous process. Current reading and math programs are not fully aligned to the new standards and the district has limited funding to purchase the fully aligned versions of those standards. GLE administrators also struggle to find the time and money to effectively implement the new standards in the classroom. In addition, teachers need guidance and practice on how to use service-learning to implement the Common Core.
- ★ **Time constraints:** Quality service-learning and Common Core implementation requires some trial and error. The pressure generated by time constraints and compliance deadlines, especially when working with new strategies, can be stressful for staff and students.
- ★ **Unclear expectations:** Parents are unclear about what their children are expected to know and master under the new standards, and how service-learning integrated with the Common Core can enhance their children's learning. GLE is considering providing training for parents on general Common Core vocabulary, what the standards might look like in practice, and how the Common Core fits into service-learning frameworks. The hope is that by informing and involving parents in the new initiative, they will grow more comfortable with, and supportive of, service-learning and the Common Core.

Recommendations

- ★ **Identify teacher leaders:** Draw upon the leadership strengths of teachers who understand the value of service-learning and the Common Core; work with them on developing effective implementation practices, then have them model those practices for others. When teachers witness their peers having success they are more likely to try new approaches. Provide opportunities for teachers and students to share their insights and experiences with service-learning and the Common Core. Testimonials can be powerful motivators.
- ★ **Prioritize professional development:** Make training staff on the Common Core and service-learning a priority. Include teacher coaches in the training who can then help train other teachers. All teachers have unique learning curves and are continually being asked to do more with less. Thus, teachers need to know they are supported by administration at all levels. Include students and their parents in professional development sessions to increase their understanding of service-learning and the Common Core and how both prepare students for life and work in the 21st century.
- ★ **Maintain an open-door culture:** Teachers and administrators who make themselves accessible to one another help create an atmosphere that fosters open communication, innovation, and collaboration. Such a working environment can be empowering for staff and alleviate feelings of isolation.

Montpelier Public Schools

Montpelier, Vermont

The Montpelier Public School (MPS) district in Montpelier, Vermont, is nestled in a vibrant, semi-rural community in the central part of the state and serves roughly 940 students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The student demographic is approximately 90% White, non-Hispanic. Postsecondary education is valued highly—57% of high school students participate in Advanced Placement coursework. In 2011, nearly 64% of Montpelier graduates were accepted to two- or four-year colleges.

The Montpelier community is known for its strong commitment to environmental sustainability and social justice; this commitment is reflected in the district's investment in service-learning. In 2007, U.S. News and World Report ranked Montpelier High School (MHS) in the top 2.8% of American high schools and one of the best public high schools in Vermont. In 2009, NCLC selected MHS to participate in its Schools of Success program because of the school's exemplary work in service-learning.

Service-Learning Implementation in Montpelier

Service-learning is an integral part of the MPS's climate and culture largely because service-learning requires the deeper learning skills that create 21st century thinkers. MPS administrators and staff have worked diligently to cultivate an atmosphere in which service-learning can thrive. The school board strongly demonstrated its support for service-learning practice by identifying service-learning as one of several strategies for measuring whether staff members meet district "ends policies" for broad-based objectives. While service-learning is not required, it is a key component of the district's curriculum and strategic plan and is recognized as a way to engage students holistically in their learning.

Several years ago in an effort to grow service-learning district wide, MPS assembled a service-learning leadership team to support teachers in developing the skills necessary to implement quality service-learning in the classroom. The team is comprised of administrators, a core academic teacher, elementary, middle, and high school education leaders, the district curriculum coordinator and, when possible, community partners and parents. The team meets monthly and is available to work with teachers in designing, implementing, and assessing service-learning projects. Those designated as education leaders receive a stipend for their work.

In addition, administrators at MPS have appointed a community-based learning (CBL) coordinator to facilitate student work-study programs with partner organizations. These programs give students the ability to "try on" work scenarios in a field of their choice, encourage collaborative skills, and provide students with opportunities to blend community service, service-learning projects, and potential career tracks. The CBL coordinator also co-teaches with practitioners who are implementing service-learning and mentors them as they develop effective practice. This arrangement has been highly successful in helping teachers broaden their skills and create more robust, real-life learning for students.

Montpelier Public Schools

- Semi-rural
- 940 students, grades K-12
- 92% White/non-Hispanic
- 1.7% Hispanic
- 1.7% African American
- 5% other
- 23% eligible for free and reduced meals
- Did not meet AYP in 2011-12
- Full Common Core implementation: School year 2014
- Located in Vermont, a member of Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).



Photos courtesy of Montpelier High School

Common Core State Standards Implementation in Montpelier

Like many districts today, MPS faces the challenges and pressure of high-stakes accountability, budget cuts, and eliminating achievement gaps. When the Vermont Department of Education (DOE) first adopted the Common Core, teachers already felt overwhelmed and news of the new standards raised concerns that implementation might require more than they could manage. At that time, MHS was undergoing an intense school accreditation process and adjusting to changes in the administration. As a result, Common Core implementation lost momentum. The staff continues to adapt to these changes with the understanding that quality implementation of the new standards will take time and shared leadership. To date, the Vermont DOE has not issued prescriptive regulations for Common Core implementation, however, all districts are expected to be fully Common Core compliant by 2014.

MPS administrators realized the need for a team to lead the Common Core implementation efforts and thus created full-time paid positions for content coaches and provided stipends for professional learning community (PLC) leaders (five or six from each content area) interested in being part of an implementation team. The district's curriculum coordinator and several administrators subsequently joined the team to broaden the perspectives represented.

Generally, teachers at MPS support the Common Core and have demonstrated a commitment to quality implementation in their classrooms; yet some feel ill-prepared to make the transition at this time. The shift from traditional units, tailored lessons, and traditional grades to the concept of mastering learning standards continues to evolve and may take time.



To help alleviate these concerns, over the course of the 2011-13 school years, MPS offered Common Core trainings to administrators, literacy and math coaches, and teacher leaders. MPS administrators and teachers reported that districts will be responsible for determining how those standards will be implemented in classroom settings. Although this gives the district flexibility, the administrators and teachers find the time commitment daunting.

Positive changes are taking place in MPS with regard to the Common Core. More teachers are emphasizing teaching students how to interpret authentic texts in different content areas and are being more intentional about using the Common Core to help students meet learning goals. Teachers are also taking a more active role in developing curriculum than they have in the past. Administrators, faculty, and staff seem to recognize the benefit of having an established set of nationally recognized learning targets and a sense of consistency in the learning community across the country.

When Vermont first announced its support of the Common Core, MPS administrators hired a writing consultant to spend 10 days working with high school staff to develop a Common Core framework for English Language Arts. The staff also has access to resource personnel in neighboring districts through the Vermont Writing Consortium who are creating rubrics, benchmarks, and literacy standards for all content areas. Although MPS does not have a math resource person on staff, the district has plans to secure a resource specialist to support teachers in this subject area as well.



Common Core Implementation and Service-Learning in Montpelier

Teachers and students at MPS have a unique opportunity to use service-learning projects in tandem with the Common Core in all subject areas district wide. Service-learning first emerged in pockets around MPS. Only after receiving professional development and time to practice have teachers been able to cultivate a strong culture of service-learning and a comfort level for teachers and students. Similarly, the Common Core is beginning to take hold in pockets, but districtwide implementation is not a conversation staff is having at this point. Teachers first need structured time to design instructional frameworks that engage students more fully in their learning.

As teachers at MPS begin to blend service-learning and the Common Core in their classrooms, they must establish new and innovative ways to assess student learning. MPS staff report that one strategy they are considering is to have teachers design their own assessments and create a repository of high-quality assessment tools that other teachers can use as a resource. Student portfolios—increasingly popular assessment tools—are designed to capture students’ content mastery and acquisition of deeper learning. Teachers expressed concern, however, over whether or how well-equipped colleges and universities are to transition from a traditional grade and transcription system to one that supports student coursework using portfolios.

As is the case with any new initiative, Common Core implementation will take time, flexibility, and, for some, a leap of faith. But teachers at MPS consider it a worthy investment.

Challenges

- ★ **Perceptions of marginal communication with the state:** In the absence of clear direction from the state in regard to Common Core implementation expectations, teachers are ambivalent about how best to begin implementing the Common Core. Since neither service-learning nor the Common Core are official state mandates, MPS staff members struggle to get other teachers impassioned about adjusting their classroom practice to support quality service-learning and to meet the new standards.
- ★ **Time constraints:** Allocating time for training on complex reforms like service-learning and the Common Core in an already packed professional development agenda is challenging for district administrators, particularly since teachers need multiple training sessions and practice opportunities to sharpen their teaching skills for these reforms.

Recommendations

- ★ **Know your targets:** Familiarize teachers with the Common Core document issued by NGA/CCSSO and the National Youth Leadership Council’s Standards for Quality Service-Learning Practice.⁴³ These documents provide a roadmap for implementing service-learning and the Common Core effectively.
- ★ **Train the trainers:** Train administrators and teacher coaches on effective service-learning and Common Core implementation and include local curriculum groups and key individuals from the state department of education in these trainings. Similarly, provide informational sessions for students and parents on the fundamentals of service-learning and the Common Core to clarify student learning expectations.
- ★ **Do not need to reinvent the wheel:** Identify teachers in the state who are engaged in service-learning and Common Core implementation and reach out to them for creative ideas and advice on how to incorporate both reforms into everyday learning activities for students.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Educators and administrators in states that have adopted the Common Core are in the process of determining how to most effectively implement the new standards. NCLC conducted these case studies to examine whether and how four diverse sites are utilizing service-learning as a platform for Common Core implementation, and what types of supports teachers and administrators need to effectively implement the Common Core using service-learning as a strategy. New questions arose, however, as the study evolved: *Does it appear that the Common Core will support deeper learning strategies like service-learning? Does service-learning support Common Core implementation or are the new standards pushing service-learning out?*

Through interviews with case study site teachers and administrators, answers to some of these questions became clear and common themes emerged. All interviewees embrace service-learning as an effective teaching strategy that encourages deeper learning, and regard the Common Core as a valuable set of clear, consistent learning targets that, when effectively implemented, prepare students for success in the 21st century. The four sites illustrate some of the many challenges schools around the country face as they navigate

Common Core implementation and find ways to utilize service-learning in that process. Since this study comes very early in Common Core implementation, the fact that some sites are just beginning to work through the complexities of integrating the Common Core and service-learning is not surprising. NCLC is committed to following the progress of these sites as they work to advance and integrate the Common Core and service-learning.

Undoubtedly, a transition of the magnitude of the Common Core is daunting for teachers trying to adapt their teaching styles while simultaneously keeping students highly engaged. Many teachers already know what quality service-learning is and are using service-learning as a *how* to implement the *what* of the Common Core.

What the teachers and administrators interviewed need most at this juncture is guidance, support, and training on how to effectively utilize service-learning for Common Core implementation. As teachers delve into the intricacies of these complex education reforms, those who integrate service-learning and the Common Core confidently and skillfully can serve as examples to others just beginning the implementation process.



Challenges

Among the many challenges that schools and districts face with regard to blending service-learning and Common Core implementation, three consistently stand out:

Time and Resources

Teachers and administrators today are typically overextended and finding time to strategize about implementing service-learning and the Common Core is problematic. The Common Core is intended to detail content and performance expectations—or the *what*—not dictate which teaching methods and learning strategies—or the *how*—that teachers should employ to help students be Common Core ready. It appears that schools and districts that are simultaneously working on the *what* and the *how* are successfully integrating service-learning and the Common Core. Schools and districts focusing solely on the *what* of deeper learning risk the possibility of unsuccessful implementation.

Additionally, at some sites, the participation of community partners in service-learning projects has declined. This limits opportunities for schools and partner organizations to collaborate and cultivate mutually beneficial relationships. Three of the four sites indicated that a key resource missing in their districts are teachers knowledgeable and experienced in service-learning and Common Core implementation. For those teachers just getting started with service-learning, the Common Core, or both, the lack of a “go-to” person impedes implementation efforts.

Communication and Infrastructure

Communication between state departments of education, districts, and schools is not always consistent within and across states. For states to effectively advance and blend service-learning and Common Core implementation, all entities must clearly communicate their expectations, concerns, and creative ideas for quality implementation. In the absence of clear guidelines, implementation efforts can lose momentum or stall altogether.

NCLC staff found that the level of assistance teachers and administrators receive appears to vary greatly from state to state. Those sites that receive strong support from the state have been more successful at connecting and implementing service-learning and the Common Core. Sites that receive little or no direction from the state do not have the benefit of sustained support networks like regional cohorts in Kentucky; a lack of direction can slow the implementation process. Although many states plan to require their school districts to implement the Common Core, not all are requiring districts to initiate new programs or practices to support or complement implementation.⁴⁴ Requiring teachers to address the *what* of deeper learning without providing guidance for executing the *how* does little to effectively advance Common Core implementation.

Professional Development

Consistent budget cuts and a growing list of new initiatives appear to make it difficult for schools to provide professional development for teachers beyond that mandated by districts. In states where the Common Core implementation is a priority, however, effective implementation will require that teachers be trained on how to translate these complex new standards into higher-level learning experiences for their students. A single cursory course on service-learning and the Common Core will not suffice. Quality service-learning implementation on its own takes continual, intentional practice. Coupled with the intricacies of the Common Core, teachers are apprehensive about mixing the two initiatives in meaningful ways. To successfully integrate service-learning and the Common Core, schools must develop highly specialized instruction for teachers on how to utilize these strategies in the classroom. Teachers need access to quality tools, practical lesson examples and metrics, as well as regular opportunities to collaborate on effective practices.

Recommendations and Best Practices

Among the recommendations and best practices found in case study sites, four stand out as consistent and significant:

Start Small

Identify a core group of teachers to lead service-learning and Common Core implementation. This group should be composed of teachers experienced in and passionate about service-learning as well as teachers familiar with Common Core and/or passionate about curriculum in general. Provide these teachers with opportunities to model implementation practices for fellow teachers. Teachers who witness their peers being successful are more likely to try new approaches to teaching their content.

Lead Collaboratively

Enlist the collaborative support of state Common Core coordinators and district and building-level curriculum coordinators as they play an integral role in moving the Common Core and service-learning forward. Their support will largely determine the direction and sustainability of these initiatives. Administrators who maintain an open door policy with staff foster bold and creative implementation strategies and reduce feelings of isolation that teachers may experience when facing new and unfamiliar challenges.

Make Professional Development a Priority

The complex nature of the Common Core requires a new level of sophisticated teaching approaches. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the gravity of helping students master content and apply what they learn to real-life situations. A recent study found that less than a third of middle-school math teachers hold math or math-education degrees, and many teachers report feeling unprepared to create lessons that meet the needs of students at varied math and science achievement levels or for English-language learners.⁴⁵ Professional development for teachers, administrators, and teacher coaches is essential to the success and sustainability of service-learning and the Common Core. Training sessions should focus on both the *what* (Common Core) and the *how* (service-learning) of deeper learning and involve individuals from state departments of education and local curriculum groups to engage education stakeholders at every level.

Develop a Detailed Implementation Plan

Identify districts and schools that are successfully implementing service-learning and the Common Core and ask them for creative suggestions on how to replicate these efforts. Establish a set of viable next-steps and, with a core group of committed individuals, develop a concise strategic plan that includes a timeline and team-level or departmental goals for integrating service-learning and Common Core implementation. A growing number of states are making significant progress with Common Core implementation—teachers do not have to reinvent the wheel. Guidelines and resources are available so teachers can avoid unnecessary missteps and inform their plans for implementing the Common Core in the classroom.

The Common Core has arrived. Service-learning—a proven strategy for helping students master content and cultivate deeper learning—clearly fits well with the Common Core. Many teachers already recognize the individual and collective value of these education reforms. The time is now for states, districts, and schools to unite to create the kind of compelling educational experiences that will prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. As state Common Core implementation deadlines draw near, teachers and administrators require and deserve training and support in how to meld service-learning and the Common Core effectively.

“ Requiring teachers to address the **what** of deeper learning without providing guidance for executing the **how** does little to effectively advance Common Core implementation. ”



APPENDIX: CASE STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

We will refer to the Common Core State Standards as the Common Core and Service-Learning as S-L.

State Policy

1. Describe what you know about your state's short- and long-term plans for implementing the Common Core.
2. What implementation regulations from your state must you follow as you implement the Common Core?
 - (a) How have those regulations influenced your implementation process?
 - (b) How have those regulations shaped your thoughts on whether and how you will continue to use S-L as an instructional strategy?
3. What sort of influence has your state department/state policymakers had on your implementation of the Common Core?

District Policy

4. When is your school/district expected to be Common Core compliant?
 - (a) Do you feel you are on-track to meet that deadline, or are there particular challenges that may make this time frame difficult?
5. Has your school/district embraced a commitment to implementing the Common Core or is there resistance, or is there some degree of both?
 - (a) How is S-L perceived by the administration, staff, and parents in your school/district?
 - (b) In your estimation, is S-L seen as a viable pedagogy for implementing the Common Core?
 - (c) If not, what other pedagogies are considered viable?
6. Describe the level of support your school board has demonstrated for Common Core implementation in your district.
 - (a) How does it compare to the board's support for S-L practice in your district?
7. To what degree is the implementation of the Common Core part of your district's improvement/strategic plan?
 - (a) Is S-L an integral part of your district's improvement/strategic plan?

Implementation & Practice

8. A. In order to ensure effective implementation of Common Core, will fundamental changes be necessary in any of the following areas?
 - a) Curriculum: If so, how? If not, then why not?
 - b) Instruction: If so, how? If not, then why not?
 - c) Assessment: If so, how? If not, then why not?
 - d) Teacher Professional Development: If so, how? If not, then why not?
 - e) Other: If so, how? If not, then why not?
- B. In each of the above-mentioned areas, explain the role that S-L will play in the process.

9. **Who in your school/district is leading the Common Core implementation process?**
 - (a) How were those individuals identified?
 - (b) Are the same individuals heading up the S-L initiative, or are there different people involved?
 - (c) Are these individuals working in collaboration or independently, and how, if at all, has that affected your ability to move Common Core and S-L forward?
 - (d) Are there other individuals who should be involved?
10. **What specific steps has your school/district taken to implement the Common Core into:**
 - (a) The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum?
 - (b) The Math curriculum?
11. **Does your district plan to include S-L as a part of this process? Why or why not?**
 - (a) Are there plans to incorporate the Common Core, particularly the ELA literacy standards, into other subject areas like geography, science, physical education, the arts?
 - (b) Does your district plan to include S-L as a part of this process? Why or why not?
 - (c) How does your school/district plan to continue utilizing S-L in its implementation of the Common Core?
 - (d) How does your school/district plan to assess the implementation of S-L and the Common Core?

Implementation Resources/Professional Knowledge

1. **What, if any, resources have you used as a guide for implementation of the Common Core?**
 - (a) Are there individuals/organizations that have been instrumental in helping staff implement the Common Core?
 - (b) Which, if any, of those resources specifically address a connection between S-L and Common Core?
2. **Has your school/district reached out to any neighboring schools/districts for advice/support in regard to implementing the Common Core?**
 - (a) What prompted this outreach?
 - (b) What sorts of advice/support have you received?
3. **To date have you or any of your school/district staff received professional development on Common Core implementation strategies?**
 - (a) Did any of this training focus on S-L and the Common Core?
 - (b) If not, are you aware of any plans for S-L/ Common Core professional development on the horizon, and what kinds of training experiences would you find most helpful?

Challenges, Obstacles, and Opportunities for Success

1. What challenges/obstacles, if any, do you anticipate/have you experienced in employing S-L as a tool for implementing the Common Core in your school/district?
2. What do you feel are some best practices and strategies for overcoming those challenges?
3. What suggestions/advice do you have for schools/districts just beginning the Common Core implementation process?
4. What would make the implementation process for both S-L and Common Core more effective/less daunting for your staff?

Wrap-Up

1. What specific questions or concerns do you have in regard to S-L as a means of implementing the Common Core?
2. Are there particular issues that we have not addressed that you would like to discuss?

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