Stories of Sustainability for
Service-Learning Implementation

By Paul Baumann
June 2013

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) established the Schools of Success, a national network of 19 schools that use service-learning as an instructional strategy.[1] Thanks to funding from the State Farm Companies Foundation and Learn and Serve America, the schools were part of a three-year effort to examine how the elements of service-learning enhance student performance on key outcomes.[2] Through this project, the NCLC also has gathered stories of how participating schools implemented five critical components shown to institutionalize and maximize service-learning effectiveness and success: vision and leadership, curriculum and assessment, professional development, community-school partnerships, and continuous improvement.[3] This paper contains these "stories of sustainability"—how these schools created a culture and policy environment that will serve to sustain implementation of service-learning over time—in an effort to provide examples of what sustainability looks like through a variety of mechanisms and in a variety of school settings.

Key Findings:
- The five critical components for service-learning sustainability and success helped participating schools establish service-learning as an institutionalized component of each schools' culture and practices.
- Although each of the five components is distinct and conceptually clear, how schools manifested each component is unique to each school. School context seems to play an important role in determining whether and how a school goes about putting a component into place.
- The critical components defined and illustrated in this paper provide guidance for education leaders who are looking to foster and guide the implementation of high-quality service-learning practice on a large scale.

National Center for Learning and Citizenship

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

1

BACKGROUND

The NCLC selected participating schools for the Schools of Success network based on their willingness to support implementation of the five critical components of service-learning institutionalization and effectiveness mentioned in the introduction to this paper. In 2008, NCLC staff members identified these components through a review of rigorous qualitative and quantitative research.[4]

As participants in the Schools of Success network, each school received funding over three years ($5,000 per year), on- and off-site professional development opportunities, and ongoing technical assistance to expand and deepen existing service-learning initiatives and build greater capacity within their school and district. In return, the NCLC asked schools to test and learn from leadership strategies that integrate and sustain quality service-learning for all students to succeed in school and in their communities.

The Schools of Success network had two funders—the State Farm Companies Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service/Learn and Serve America. Staff members of the NCLC grouped the participating schools according to funder because each funder required a specific set of programmatic elements (see Table 1, below). State Farm-funded schools included 10 schools that ranged from preschool to high school. These schools could implement service-learning in any school subject area. Learn and Serve-funded schools included nine middle schools, all of which were designated as Title I schools (high poverty) during the time of this program. In addition, service-learning projects in the Learn and Serve-funded schools required a STEM focus.[5]

Exhibit 1: *Schools of Success Network Participating Schools, by Funder*

State Farm Funded (service-learning in any subject area)			Learn and Serve Funded (STEM-focused service-learning)		
duPont Manual High School	Louisville, KY	9-12 Magnet High School	Christian County Middle School	Hopkinsville, KY	6-8 Middle School
Grant's Lick Elementary School	Alexandria, KY	K-5 Elementary School	Detroit Edison Public School Academy	Detroit, MI	P-10 Public Charter School (only grades 6-8 participated)
Greendale Middle School	Greendale, WI	6-8 Middle School	Hopkinsville Middle School	Hopkinsville, KY	6-8 Middle School
Liberty High School	Louisville, KY	9-12 Alternative High School	MS 442	Brooklyn, NY	6-8 Middle School
Malcolm Shabazz City High School	Madison, WI	9-12 Alternative High School	New Foundations Charter School	Philadelphia, PA	P-10 Public Charter School (only grades 6-8 participated)
Montpelier High School	Montpelier, VT	9-12 High School	North Drive Middle School	Hopkinsville, KY	6-8 Middle School
Park Forest Elementary School	State College, PA	K-5 Elementary School	School for Global Leaders	New York, NY	6-8 Middle School
Patriot Academy	Madison, AL	9-12 Alternative High School	Sutter Middle School	Fowler, CA	6-8 Middle School
Raymond School District	Franksville, WI	K-8 School	Tupelo Middle School	Tupelo, MS	6-8 Middle School
Waterford High School	Waterford, CT	9-12 High School			

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

2

RESEARCH METHODS

The NCLC contracted with RMC Research Denver[6] to examine the Schools of Success program's effects on schools, community conditions, and students' academic and civic engagement. While this evaluation was wide ranging, here we report on data gathered during our site visits to schools, which we conducted in 2010 and 2011, as well as written annual reports of grant activities and performance submitted by the schools. Data analysis consisted of coding site visit and annual reports to identify when and how participating schools implemented one or more of the five critical components. The examples provided below are those that best illustrate each of the critical components identified at the beginning of this paper.

The following sections include brief descriptions of each critical component, followed by the exemplars gathered from participating schools.

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

Vision and leadership exist in many forms and at many different levels. For example, leadership may come from an individual or group, and may take the form of policy, advocacy, mentoring, or many others. School administrators, teachers, students, and board members all have the ability to contribute to a vision and lead a school to that vision. In our search to identify the role of vision and leadership in fostering the institutionalization of service-learning, we engaged educators from participating schools in conversations about the following issues:

- The support of service-learning through school policy, including professional development plans, budgets, transportation resources, school planning documents, school improvement plans, and accreditation reports
- The extent to which service-learning plays a role in hiring decisions
- The placement of service-learning in school communication tools, including websites, newsletters, etc.
- The establishment of a formal service-learning leadership team that meets regularly and has representative members from all groups (students, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, community members, and administrators)
- The building and district administrators' role in providing vision and leadership for service-learning and facilitating communication between the school and the larger community.

We routinely encouraged school leaders to develop these mechanisms of vision and leadership in order to help sustain service-learning as a part of their schools' cultures. In the three years that we ran the Schools of Success program, we saw many schools make great strides in the vision and leadership for service-learning sustainability and offer a few examples below.

Greendale Middle School: Leadership from Within

Teachers and administrators at Greendale Middle School, located in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, enjoyed support for service-learning from "the top." The district superintendent is a strong supporter of service-learning, and the local school board enacted policy to foster implementation of service-learning throughout the district. In this context, however, a strong example of leadership from "within" emerged.

A group of teachers and administrators at Greendale Middle School joined together to create a service-learning professional development cohort as a means of improving their own service-learning practice. Through their professional development work, these educators realized, however, that service-learning practice at the school was not as strong or pervasive as they thought it ought to be. As a result, these

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

3

teachers decided to join forces with the schools' Partners for Community Action team to develop and carry out a list of action steps to improve service-learning practice and increase service-learning sustainability at the building level. The action plan included the following items:

1. Educate staff regarding service-learning—its status in the district, example projects, status of funding, etc.
2. Update all staff members about the progress of the cohort's work and information on the service-learning resources that are available to them
3. Identify current service-learning projects at each grade level and articulate these projects' links to the curriculum
4. Establish grade-level service-learning planning guides and identify when projects will occur at each grade level
5. Establish a process of sharing service-learning activities with middle school staff, students, and parents
6. Showcase the service-learning projects completed at each of the three grade levels.

This plan gave direction for fostering the improvements the staff identified as necessary for the long-term viability of service-learning in the school. In their written report to NCLC, representatives of the school stated, "The success of this work is that we have collaboration between administration, teachers, parents, and community to provide students with opportunities to engage in service-learning." In this instance, the vision and leadership necessary for service-learning sustainability came from within and not from above.

Raymond School District: A Factor in Hiring Decisions

Raymond School District, a single-school K-8 district in rural southeastern Wisconsin, has a well-established service-learning program that operates across all grade levels in the school. During the Schools of Success project, the Raymond District hired a new principal and an assistant principal. Because the previous principal and the Raymond School Board made a commitment to sustaining and expanding service-learning at Raymond, service-learning became a factor in these hiring decisions. The previous principal stayed on for several months after the new principal began for a "transition period," which, among other things, helped to ensure that the new principal was knowledgeable and supportive of the district's service-learning practices. An important element of the job description posted for the assistant principal position was the supervision of the service-learning program. Inclusion of service-learning in both of these hiring processes helped to ensure that administrative support for service-learning in the Raymond School District remains strong. This administrative support, in turn, will help to sustain service-learning practice in the district through the change in leadership and beyond.

Detroit Edison Public School Academy (DEPSA): Standing on Solid Footing with Supportive School Board Policy

Through their experiences with the Schools of Success network, teachers, administrators, and leaders of DEPSA saw the benefits of service-learning for students. As noted in one of DEPSA's annual reports, adults throughout the school discovered that through service-learning, "… information being taught became relevant, [and] student comprehension increased. Civic responsibility was ignited. Students requested more service-learning projects in the future." Because of this response to service-learning, school leaders made a commitment to continue supporting the implementation of service-learning at the school after the close of the Schools of Success project.

To help support the continuation and expansion of service-learning at the school, DEPSA's board of directors passed a service-learning policy that ensures all students have the opportunity to participate in

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

4

high-quality service-learning experiences. In turn, this policy prompted school leaders to allocate specific funds to support service-learning projects and prioritize high-quality professional development opportunities for staff members. During the 2011-12 school year, the school's entire staff—including administrators, curriculum coaches, special education and preschool teachers, and all other instructional staff—participated in a two-day professional development workshop that was dedicated to service-learning practice. With the support of the school's board through enacted policy, educators at DEPSA are confident that service-learning will continue to thrive at the school.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Most individuals familiar with service-learning understand that the link(s) between the school curriculum and service is a key element that distinguishes service-learning from volunteerism.[7] When we discussed curriculum and assessment as a component of service-learning sustainability with educators in the Schools of Success, however, we asked them to consider whether and how they are thinking strategically about curricular linkages. Rather than thinking piecemeal about individual projects and how they are linked to the curriculum, we asked administrators and teachers to think about service-learning and curriculum on a school- or district-wide scale. In doing so, we discussed the following issues with school leaders:

- The extent to which service-learning is connected to academic standards across the curriculum and across grade levels, and is evident in classroom practice throughout the school year
- The explicitness with which service-learning is used to address state standards and/or curriculum frameworks in curriculum planning meetings and documents
- The involvement of curriculum and assessment directors in the development of service-learning implementation plans.

Again, we asked educators to address these issues in their efforts to institutionalize service-learning practice in their buildings. The sections below include descriptions of how some schools did so.

Montpelier High School: From Piecemeal to Planned

As a result of their participation in the Schools of Success network, educators at Montpelier (Vermont) High School stated that they made "significant progress" in integrating service-learning across the curriculum throughout the school and the district in which the school is located. These educators also acknowledged, however, that "… there is more work to be done. We are close but not fully there." One of the district's efforts to strengthen service-learning sustainability focused on moving from piecemeal implementation that school leaders described as a "popcorn approach" to "a more formalized use of grade-level objectives in determining how and when service-learning will be integrated into the curriculum." To this end, across the district, teachers at each grade level, cluster, or content area are working to identify the key areas where they see service-learning naturally fitting into their curriculum. To ensure a tight coupling with the established curriculum, the district's curriculum director is overseeing this work, and teacher leaders are facilitating each working group.

Beyond identifying clear curricular links, educators in the district also want to make certain that service-learning projects are "authentic" and in fact meet a real community need rather than being made up for the sake fulfilling a "mandatory" service-learning requirement. For this reason, teachers are talking honestly and creatively about how to not only ensure that service-learning is positioned well in the curriculum, but also about how to structure the curriculum in general so that there is flexibility to take on a service-learning project that may not be predicted by teachers or students. Educators in Montpelier find this work exciting, not only because of the challenge and creative thinking it provokes, but because it will help to make certain that all students in the district have the opportunities to participate in high-quality, meaningful service-learning projects.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

5

Detroit Edison Public School Academy (DEPSA): Positioning Service-Learning within Pacing Guides

As previously stated, during the course of the Schools of Success project, DEPSA's entire staff participated in a two-day professional development workshop dedicated to improving service-learning practice. During these two days, all staff members developed multiple ideas for service-learning projects, which they then mapped onto the school's pacing guides. With regards to this planning, a school staff member stated that, "In order to maintain academic integrity, it is imperative that service is connected to the standards that are being taught in the classroom. Placing a number of service project ideas into the pacing guides removes that obstacle. We now have multiple service projects suggested for every grade level as a result of this training."

Educators at the school, however, were careful not to usurp a key element of high-quality service-learning practice—student voice—through their planning. Rather, DEPSA teachers intentionally left aspects of each possible project incomplete in order to preserve room for student voice during project implementation. In some instances, students have the option of selecting which service-learning project to pursue at a given time or over the course of the year. While this sort of "planned uncertainty" leaves room for student voice, it also complicates teacher planning. Nevertheless, members of the schools' instructional staff stated that "this training and brainstorming increased their comfort with service-learning throughout the school year." In other words, they know how service-learning might fit through a multitude of project ideas and possible curricular links, though they ultimately may end up only pursuing a few of these possibilities. The key element here is that teachers see many possibilities, which fosters the institutionalization of service-learning throughout the school.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Using service-learning as an instructional strategy requires teachers to have facility and flexibility with a specialized knowledge and skill set. In particular, high-quality service-learning practice requires that teachers possess a nuanced theoretical and practical understanding of the standards for high-quality practice.[8] Obtaining and maintaining the professional tools necessary for implementing high-quality service-learning may be a challenge, however, particularly for those who may be using service-learning for the first time or who may be more accustomed to using teacher-centered, rather than student-centered, strategies. Fostering teachers' acquisition of the knowledge and skills necessary for high-quality service-learning practice requires sustained, strategically delivered professional development opportunities that are aligned with standards for high-quality professional learning[9] rather than a one-shot workshop on service-learning. Accordingly, when we discussed professional development with school leaders, we addressed the following issues:

- The availability of service-learning professional development opportunities for all teachers, paraprofessionals, participating community members, and school support staff at least once each school year
- The availability of multiple professional learning opportunities for teachers who are new to service-learning
- The availability of weekly or monthly teacher collaboration time that allows teachers to engage in professional learning communities and collaborative planning.

We asked leaders of participating schools to consider these issues in order to foster service-learning sustainability in their building. The sections below contain descriptions of how some school leaders addressed these issues.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

6

Park Forest Elementary School: A Collaborative Approach to Building Professional Capacity

Located in State College, Pennsylvania, Park Forest Elementary School is fortunate to have the resources of a large state university, Penn State, close by. When planning professional development opportunities for her staff, the school principal, whose official title is "Lead Learner," is sure to foster the growth of professional capacity within her school, as well as capitalize on opportunities for the school to support the learning of teachers from across the district and students from the university.

Throughout the course of the Schools of Success project, teachers at Park Forest Elementary had the opportunity to participate in teacher-directed professional learning communities (PLCs) focused on service-learning questions or topics. Teachers received release time, resources, and mini-grant funds to support their inquiries and use of service-learning in the classroom. According to the school's progress report, this "team approach to service-learning, particularly using our PLC model, has sustained service-learning at Park Forest Elementary. Teachers involved in these PLCs found that students developed skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and discourse, and honed skills in language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies throughout their service-learning projects."

Over the course of Schools of Success project, service-learning leaders at Park Forest Elementary set out to expand service-learning practice across the State College district and support student-teachers' knowledge of and facility with service-learning practice. In the second year of the Schools of Success program, PFE's principal coordinated a "Service-Learning 101" professional development for 12 teachers from PFE, as well as two teachers from each building across the district. Teachers participated in a full-day service-learning training and subsequently received a half-day release time for service-learning planning and integration. All of the teachers involved led a semester-long service-learning project in their classrooms or collaboratively with one of their colleagues and shared and celebrated their successes at the district's first annual Service-Learning Showcase. At the completion of this year of professional development, teachers were asked to mentor another teacher or student teacher in their building who would participate in "Service-Learning 101" the following year. Overall, across the district, 90 personnel and 56 student teachers received training in service-learning facilitation over the two years. In this time, the district had 500 students engaged in service-learning, 224,700 student hours devoted to service-learning, and more than 20 distinct projects completed.

Malcolm Shabazz City High School: Fostering Professional Growth by Building Consensus

Malcolm Shabazz City High School, located in Madison, Wisconsin, is an alternative high school for students who may not thrive in a traditional high school setting. Service-learning is a core component of the school's vision of creating an intentional community of engaged learners. To build faculty consensus about service-learning's role within the school and common understandings about service-learning practice, the school's Service-Learning Team (SLT) led a series of consensus-building professional development sessions for the school's entire faculty. As stated in one of the school's written annual reports:

> … [T]he SLT brought proposals to the school as a whole to commit to improving service-learning at Shabazz. During a school in-service, staff members agreed that improving service-learning was a worthwhile goal to expend time and resources on. The goal of improving service-learning was placed in our school-wide school improvement plan. As a result, the SLT will plan a series of staff development opportunities in order to meet the following ends: (1) to create a consistent model for our service-learning instruction; (2) to train the whole staff on the definition of service-learning; (3) to train the staff on the basic steps of service-learning.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

7

Collectively, these steps will help to ensure the sustainability of service-learning at the school by helping all instructional staff to be clear as to what is and what is not service-learning, to build the knowledge and skill necessary to implement service-learning, and to ensure that service-learning is a clear component of the school's improvement efforts.

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between varied types of community organizations and schools are a defining feature of high-quality service-learning.[10] Service-learning projects typically involve students working hand in hand with community- or faith-based organizations, grassroots or advocacy organizations, other schools, colleges, businesses, or government agencies. With regards to sustaining service-learning in their schools, we asked members of the Schools of Success network to consider the nature of these partnerships. In particular, we hoped to move administrators, teachers, and students from considering service as something that is done "for" or "to" other organizations and individuals, to considering service as something that is done "with" other organizations and individuals through reciprocal relationships. For this reason, we encouraged service-learning leaders in participating schools to consider the following issues:

- The basis for choosing a service-learning project is extensive research of community needs and consultation with community partners
- The basis for evaluation of service-learning includes the project's effectiveness in meeting the identified community need
- The involvement of multiple community groups in the development, implementation, evaluation, and celebration of service-learning projects
- The establishment of partnerships in which participants view each other as valued resources, collaborate to establish a shared vision and common goals, and maintain frequent and regular communication.

During the three years in which the Schools of Success existed, many participating schools made significant progress in establishing reciprocal community partnerships. The following describes two schools' efforts to do so.

New Foundations Charter School: Leveraging Parental Resources for Reciprocal Partnerships

New Foundations Charter School, located just outside of Philadelphia, is a nationally known leader in service-learning. Although the school staff members are well-versed in service-learning implementation, they also admit that establishing and maintaining partnerships takes some effort. As stated in one of the school's written annual reports, "We are constantly working to not only build new community partnerships, but to move our current partnerships along the reciprocal partnership continuum." Such reciprocal partnerships require attention from the school, as well as partnership involvement in the school on decisions regarding service-learning.

In an effort to help forge relationships with community partners, service-learning leaders from New Foundations Charter School went to a group of individuals with whom the school already has strong relationships—students' parents. School leaders asked parents to complete a survey to find out what skills, talents, and workplace connections parents have and would be willing to leverage on behalf of the school, and are using these data to identify possibilities to build new community-school partnerships and to strengthen existing partnerships. By building community-school partnerships through existing relationships, school leaders are hopeful that they will be able to develop sustainable, healthy relationships between the school and its community partners for service-learning.

Malcolm Shabazz City High School: Identifying Best Practices for School-Community Partnerships

In working to build the service-learning knowledge and skills of teachers at the school, Shabazz's SLT identified characteristics that they saw as critical to the success of community-school partnerships. These characteristics included:

- Working with an established set of community partners
- Communicating regularly with community partners
- Involving community partners in identifying community needs to be met through service-learning projects.

The SLT then set out to establish mechanisms to ensure that these best practices were put in place for each community-school partnership. To do this, the SLT established a plan to build a list of community partners that had strong relationships to the school. This list would be provided to teachers as a resource to use when they began service-learning projects. To ensure that all community partners received information from the school on a regular basis, the SLT created a newsletter that they used to provide community partners with information about the school's service-learning activities on a regular basis. The SLT also examined whether and how teachers throughout the school involved community partners in identifying community needs, and made recommendations on how to improve this practice. Collectively, these actions will help to ensure that Shabazz's community-school partnerships for service-learning are sustainable.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

For service-learning to be sustained over time in a school or district, educators must continually review and improve their service-learning practice, as well as the impact that service-learning is having on student outcomes. An integrated and strategic plan of program evaluation not only will allow educators to show that service-learning is fostering the development of students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, but also inform the development of each of the other five components for sustainability discussed in this paper. In our conversations with Schools of Success participants, we asked them to consider several aspects of continuous improvement for service-learning, including:

- The goals and objectives for service-learning are clearly specified and measurable
- The evaluation of each service-learning project includes a description of how the project supports the service-learning program's stated goals and objectives
- The results of project and program evaluations inform efforts to improve instruction and project development.

The text below provides examples of how several members of the Schools of Success engaged in continuous improvement during the course of the program.

New Foundations Charter School: Benchmarking Service-Learning Performance

To gauge the school's successes with service-learning, as well as understanding service-learning's impact on student performance, the members of New Foundation Charter School's Service-Learning Leadership Team developed service-learning standards and benchmarks for each grade level. The school's board of directors recognized that the standards and benchmarks provided mechanisms for committing to high-quality service-learning at the school and measuring service-learning progress and success, and adopted the standards and benchmarks in October 2010.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

9

New Foundations Charter School's service-learning standards, which are based on the eight standards of high-quality service-learning practice[11] and the principles of the Caring School Community model,[12] provide teachers at each grade level with targets for student and teacher performance in service-learning in seven areas: linking to academic curriculum, addressing social and emotional learning competencies, length and duration of experience, program partnerships, population/community served, components of youth voice, and assessing and monitoring student progress. Staff members from across the school use the standards and benchmarks to conduct annual evaluations of the school's service-learning program. These evaluations facilitate the development of shared understandings of areas in which the school has strong service-learning practice, as well as action plans to address weaknesses identified in the evaluations. These actions help to ensure that the service-learning program at NFCS continues to mature and is sustained over time.

Montpelier HS: Progress Monitoring through Reflective Practice

Members of Montpelier's Service-Learning Leadership team participated in Leading Reflective Practice training offered through the National School Reform Faculty.[13] Through this training, members of the team gained the skills and knowledge necessary to skillfully facilitate reflective thinking with colleagues about their service-learning practice. These trained teacher-leaders use the facilitation tools and protocols learned through the Leading Reflective Practice training within the framework of the district's PLC working groups. Through dialogues in these working groups, teachers have identified successes and areas for improvement in the service-learning practices of teachers, students, and community partners.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The illustrations provided in the paper provide a small but important glimpse into how schools can go about implementing the components that the NCLC identified as critically important to service-learning sustainability and institutionalization. When examined collectively, these illustrations provide several lessons that can help to inform and strengthen service-learning implementation on a broad scale.

> ➢ *The five critical components for service-learning sustainability and success helped participating schools establish service-learning as an institutionalized component of each schools' culture and practices*.

While few, if any, schools that participated in the Schools of Success network were able to fully implement all five of the critical components for service-learning sustainability and success, many were able to implement one or more of the components. In all instances, a school's focus on a particular component was strategic—either school leaders felt they adequately had addressed other critical components, or they prioritized those they felt needed the most attention or led to desired goals. In other words, school leaders chose to focus on specific components because they saw that component as being key to fostering the sustainability, institutionalization, and success of service-learning throughout the school.

This finding suggests that while all five of the components may be critical, the emphasis placed on any one component need not indicate a reduction in status for the other components. Rather, school leaders may choose to focus on any one component for a variety of reasons—strategic, political, or otherwise. The simultaneous implementation of all five critical components is not likely to be practical or realistic—or lead to successful results—in many circumstances. Nevertheless, leaders in school may successfully build sustainability for service-learning over time by addressing each critical component through a series of strategic choices and planning.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

10

> *Although each of the five components is distinct and conceptually clear, how each school manifested each component is unique to that school. School context seems to play an important role in determining how a school goes about putting a component into place.*

Although each of the critical components has a clear definition, how schools went about putting components into place looked different in each school. Take the final component, Continuous Improvement, for example. New Foundations Charter School (NFCS) chose to address this component through a set of standards and benchmarks, while Montpelier High School addressed the component through reflective practice dialogues. NFCS' approach likely will provide educators in the building with very concrete expectations for every student and teacher with regards to service-learning. Montpelier's mechanism for Performance Monitoring, however, provides opportunity for a much more iterative approach to what counts as success.

While each school's approach to progress monitoring has its advantages and disadvantages, each approach was designed and selected by individuals within a school as the better solution for that school at that time. In all likelihood, many other ways to address progress monitoring are possible. This finding brings to light the individuality of schools and the extent to which context matters. Service-learning advocates cannot and should not expect to find the "best" way or the "only" way to address any one of the critical components. Rather, thoughtful attention to school context likely will yield an approach to each component that is somewhat unique to that school and fits with that school's culture and practices, and consequently, is most likely to yield desired results.

> *The critical components defined and illustrated in this paper provide guidance for education leaders who are looking to foster and guide the implementation of high-quality service-learning practice on a large scale.*

In many examples provided in this paper, service-learning leaders engaged large groups of educators—often the entire staff of a school or a large group from across a district—through the critical components for service-learning success. Due to their nature, the critical components provided guidance for the leaders in these schools that prompted them to engage many, rather than a few, in the process of institutionalizing service-learning.

While the well-known standards for high-quality service-learning[14] provide important guidance for teachers, they do little to help school leaders understand how to take service-learning to scale. The findings here suggest that scale and sustainability are likely connected to each other in important ways. By addressing service-learning institutionalization and sustainability, education leaders are also likely to help spread service-learning beyond the walls of a single classroom or small cluster of teachers.

Without a doubt, the examples provided in this paper do not capture the full spectrum of possible ways schools can address the critical components for service-learning institutionalization and sustainability. The examples, however, do provide a sense of how and why the critical components function to support service-learning, as well as the variation that can exist in implementation of the components across schools. Most importantly, the examples provide assurances to education leaders that the critical components can be implemented across a wide variety of school settings.

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

11

ENDNOTES

[1] The Schools of Success network was part of group of program evaluations conducted by RMC Research Denver that used a set of common measures across a cluster of Learn and Serve states (Arizona, Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin) and national programs (e.g., Youth Service America's STEMester of Service).

[2] We report on these outcomes in other papers in this series.

[3] T.Pickeral, T.Lennon, and J.Piscatelli, *Service-Learning Policies and Practices: A Research-Based Advocacy Paper* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2008). http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/78/58/7858.pdf

[4] T.Pickeral, T.Lennon, and J.Piscatelli, *Service-Learning Policies and Practices: A Research-Based Advocacy Paper* (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 2008). http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/78/58/7858.pdf

[5] While we did assess the relationship between service-learning and student outcomes related to STEM coursework, we do not provide these data here. The third paper in this series addresses our findings on STEM and service-learning. High Quality Service-Learning Opens the Door for Students' Entry into STEM Fields http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/07/62/10762.pdf

[6] RMC also conducted evaluations of other states and national programs in our Learn and Serve cluster.

[7] Cf., *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice* (Saint Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council, 2009).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Cf., http://learningforward.org/standards#.UaUZBZywXjQ (accessed on June 5, 2013).

[10] *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice* (Saint Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council, 2009).

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] http://www.devstu.org/caring-school-community (accessed on June 5, 2013).

[13] http://www.nsrfharmony.org/index.html (accessed on June 5, 2013).

[14] *K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice* (Saint Paul, MN: National Youth Leadership Council, 2009).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paul Baumann is the Director of the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) at the Education Commission of the States. He can be reached at pbaumann@ecs.org.

Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • fax 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

12