

Professional Development for Service Learning at American School of Bombay

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PART ONE

Professional Development for Service Learning at American School of Bombay: An Overview

by Alexandra Ritt Gustad, Community and Social Responsibility Program Coordinator

At the American School of Bombay (ASB), we have been working towards imparting the value of service learning within our faculty in many ways. Most important is to begin with faculty members who express interest in service and want to learn about service learning in order to bring this pedagogy into their classrooms. We were in the second year of our Community and Social Responsibility Program (CSR) and knew that we should offer professional development activities, specifically, what is service learning, why we should know this method, and how to move toward curriculum integration. Historically, there had never been professional development opportunities offered at our school geared towards service learning. However, with the CSR Program underway, we realized there was momentum and a sincere desire to implement service learning within various disciplines.

The evolution of service learning at ASB began with Andrew Hoover, our Middle School Principal, who attended a presentation given by Cathryn Berger Kaye at an education conference. He was already entirely committed to service learning (he played a major role in the creation of the CSR Program at our school, and has built similar programs in various schools), and after meeting Cathy, he knew she had the energy and expertise to inspire our faculty. He contacted Cathy and inquired about the possibility of providing ASB with some form of service learning PD. Being an international school, distance often impacts our PD options; it's often a struggle to get consultants to travel to Asia, to pay for them to come such a long distance, and to engage in meaningful experiences that may be shortened due to time constraints. Luckily, at ASB, we embrace technology and had that year started offering webinars to our faculty from all over the world. Andrew proposed this idea to Cathy, and the two of them created a 6-week service-learning webinar series, *Extending the Conversation About Service and Learning at ASB* (see document for description), for ASB faculty that would be transmitted through Adobe Connect. This allowed Cathy to engage with our group through synchronous communication using webcam visuals, audio, and shared documents simultaneously.

There was tremendous interest in the webinar, despite the early morning sessions and the fact that it coincided with another popular webinar being offered in our school. We had 15 participants from across divisions (elementary, middle, and high schools), subject areas, and even had two

principals in attendance! This benefitted teachers while helping administrators such as myself (the CSR Coordinator) and the Principals examine our current service programs and find ways to develop them into well constructed service learning opportunities. Read the description of the webinar series following this article.

At the end of that webinar, half of the participants left ASB, but the other half were bubbling with excitement as to how to take the next step. Cathy had armed us with a tremendous amount of knowledge with which to convince our colleagues and students that service learning is a valuable part of education that will enhance our students' lives in myriad ways. An example of one teacher's use of the webinar led to her 5th grade environmental project that was described previously (that project was described in my earlier piece).

This year, Andrew and I led a presentation and group activity that involved the entire middle school faculty during our first PD Day of the year. We talked about what we have done in our CSR program in the past, where we would like to go, and how to branch out from our program and bring service learning into the classrooms. We explained service learning as a concept, answered questions about how it is different from our current practices, and how this process can help us to achieve positive educational goals that also contribute to character development within our students. As a group, we worked on common learning outcomes for our current CSR program, and then we engaged in one of Cathy's activities entitled, "Service Learning Across the Curriculum." This activity encourages teachers to look for service learning opportunities within every single subject from creating graphs and charts on recycling activities in the city within Math class to painting striking posters that promote animal welfare in art class. This activity successfully encouraged a dialogue between teachers about ways in which to organically include service learning within their curriculum. This interaction also helped them recognize that they need not undergo major changes within their curriculum to include service learning, a daunting concept for some teachers; whatever fears that existed were quelled with the explanation that service learning can be built *into* existing curriculum.

We plan to hold more PD activities at school next semester. This will continue the conversation, and help us agree on what can be done within the various subjects and determine who is committed to actually implementing service learning this year. We are also planning service activities for faculty that are both long- and short-term on weekends throughout the year; this begins this spring semester. This will offer teachers a chance to engage in service activities, acquaint themselves with the school's NGO partners, learn about diverse parts of our community, and of course, to inspire service learning in participants' classes.

Next year, we will continue to offer related PD opportunities to support our staff as they implement service learning within their curriculum, as well as encourage new teachers to learn how and why they may want to do the same.

PART TWO

A Service Learning Webinar Series

by Cathryn Berger Kaye

As a professional development provider, most of my experience is onsite working directly with participants, be they administrators or teachers or students. Beginning with a webinar series presented challenges in making the initial relationships that occur more naturally in person. Other up front considerations had to do with timing of six sessions that would make the topics sequential, balancing presentation with discussion, having a static visual (PowerPoint slides) as opposed to a flip chart with markers, and providing an element for consideration—a “think piece” —between sessions to keep ideas ongoing and further onsite conversations among participants.

As with every consultation, a professional development provider must find out the priorities for the sessions, the school’s history with service and service learning, and where the school is headed. This discussion is of paramount importance to ensure the interactions lead to growth, stability, and sustainability. With international schools, we also look at staffing and family changes, and language issues. We discuss existing and potential community partners. One of the most important conversations in preparing is, What is current staff knowledge about service learning? Is there clarity about the difference between community service and service learning? Is service learning perceived as an “add-on” or a teaching and learning pedagogy? Do you have examples of service learning integrated into classroom curricula?

Andrew Hoover, ASB Middle School Principal, and I had several Skype calls and transmitted a planning document back and forth to develop agreement on how this would proceed. The resulting document *Extending the Conversation About Service and Learning at ASB* is included with these materials. I prepared a PowerPoint for each session and sent documents to be printed out. The school also acquired copies of *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* (then still in its first edition) to use as reference. The sessions were scheduled before school at 6:30 am in Mumbai which usually translated to early evening wherever I happened to be in the United States. The technology was reviewed in a online session with their technology expert and all was finalized and ready to go.

What struck me as the provider was the surprising ease of establishing the relationships and the dialogue exchange that evolved. In fact, there was on occasion *more* dialogue than in a standard in person presentation as I had to use a different means to confirm understanding than usual. The depth of conversation was almost most notable. Emphasis during the first three sessions was most definitely on pedagogy and aligning service learning theories with other concepts within the school. There was alignment and agreement. While we did speak on school curriculum, most important at ASB was examining meaningful partnerships. With many visible issues within the community, having sustained relationships with community groups that could solidify and move toward deep impact was of great importance. Transience within the school would exist, however these partnerships would be stable and assist students in understanding commitment

“The tip I remember most was advise and don’t monopolize; allow students to tap into the potential of the group.”
Oanh Vovan, High School French Teacher

to authentic needs with meaningful appropriate response.

Participants also discussed the value that would occur by faculty participating in service together through a planned experience. This idea could reinforce the concept of affective and cognitive learning that occurs in well-designed service opportunities.

As you read through the planning document you will have a better understanding of the ideas and how the sequencing evolved. We did hold to this content for each session. The variations came in the amount of time spent in conversation over presentation and that worked out exceedingly well: the dialogue was the best manner to reinforce concepts with this particular group.

PART THREE

Professional Development Series: Service Learning Webinar – Fall 2009

Extending the Conversation About Service and Learning at ASB

Prepared and Reviewed by Cathryn Berger Kaye and Andrew Hoover

PURPOSE

Develop our understanding of service learning and how this knowledge can deepen our thinking about teaching.

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday, September 16, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

Foundations of Service Learning

- Knowing the Historic Context
- The Balance between Learning and Service (Community Service-Service Learning)
- Removing Competition
- The Importance of Literacy and Literature in the Service Learning Process

What is the *preparation*? What are *critical questions* for discussion?

Reading Chapters 1-3 of *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* (CGSL)

Note: During this session, being more of an introduction, we would rely more on Power Point slides either used during the discussion or presented as handouts

Q: What makes service learning essential for education today?

What distinguishes service learning from community service, good deeds, and acts of charity?

Wednesday, September 23, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

- The K-12 Service Learning Standards, with a focus on Linking to the Curriculum
- The Five Stages of Service Learning with a focus on Investigation

What is the *investigation*? What are *critical questions* for discussion?

Handouts to Supplement Discussion

K-12 Standards

Across the Curriculum

The Five Stages of Service Learning

Q: What do I (the teacher) do to make service learning high quality and effective?

How does service learning advance the “business” of educating our youth?

OCTOBER

Email Correspondence as needed

NOVEMBER

Wednesday, November 4, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

- Reviewing the Themes – based on *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*
- Looking at Points of Entry

- Establishing Purpose
- Youth Voice and Choice
- Planning

What are *entry points*? What are the critical questions for discussion?

Handouts to Supplement Discussion

Clarifying Roles for Service Learning

Planning for Service Learning

Reference to CGSL

Q: How does “purpose” inform the “process” of service learning?

What is this “youth voice and choice” all about – and how does this translate into action?

Wednesday, November 11, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

- Curricular Framework for Service Learning
- Guiding the Service Learning Process to include Reflection

- Establishing Partnerships

What is *authentic reflection*? What are the critical questions for discussion?

Handouts to Supplement Discussion

Planning for Service Learning

Four Square Reflection Tool

CGSL Book Forms

Q: How can we frame service learning when youth voice is an imperative?

How do we avoid superficiality in service, learning, partnerships, and reflection?

Wednesday, November 18, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

- Continuation of Planning
- Opportunities for Learning in the Service
- Building in Systemic Reflection

What is *authentic reflection*? What are the critical questions for discussion?

Handouts to Supplement Discussion

Planning for Service Learning

CGSL Book Forms

Q: Where is the unique ongoing learning that makes this process worthwhile?

How do we avoid reflection being mundane, repetitive, and “one more thing to do”?

DECEMBER

Wednesday, December 2, 6:45-7:45 (Mumbai)

- Reflection and Demonstration
- The Road Traveled: What has been accomplished? Next Steps

What is the importance of *demonstration* and its distinct purpose? What are the critical questions for discussion?

Q: So what?

Now what?