ENGAGING TEENS WITH THEIR COMMUNITY

A Service Learning Resource
These resources were developed to engage teens in meaningful and intentional service-learning and volunteerism to grow their civic awareness and ethic of service.

“... your own story and the American story are not separate, they are shared. And they will both be enriched if together we answer a new call to service to meet the challenges of our new century.”

— Barack Obama, speech on July 2, 2008
“Inside each of us are powers so strong, treasures so rich, and possibilities so endless that to command them all to action would change the history of the world.”

— H. Jackson Brown, Jr.
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WELCOME

Engaging Teens with Their Community offers four components to creating a service learning experience.

• **Survey**—a fun survey for teens that results in the a Personal Profile
• **Video Reflection**—youth are encouraged to capture and share their volunteer experiences and reflections via the Y’s youtube channel by putting YMCA Service Learning in their tag
• **YMCA Resources**—a collection of resources with specific information about service-learning, volunteerism and related organizations for youth-serving staff, volunteers and community partners
• **This Guide**—a resource that details how adults cab engage with teens around volunteerism

**WHY IS SERVICE LEARNING IMPORTANT?**

Helping kids engage with their community is about making connections. It is about youth-serving professionals and volunteers helping teens to discover and realize their passions and “sparks.” Sparks, according to Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., of Search Institute, a Minneapolis-based non-profit that promotes healthy youth development, are the “hidden flames” that all youth possess. Sparks are not learned but rather “come from the gut ... They’re authentic passions, talents, assets, skills and dreams ... Sparks can be musical, athletic, intellectual, academic, recreational ...” ([Sparks: How Parents Can Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers](https://example.com), p. 2). By igniting these sparks, teens can channel their energy into positive outlets; motivated teens are more likely to avoid compromising situations.

This work is also about creating and building strong community connections and partnerships. It is about sourcing and developing service-learning and volunteer opportunities that meet the needs of the teens, the local and the community. There may be many volunteer opportunities that exist within your local organization. Most important is finding the right project or activity that matches the teen’s passions and “sparks” to ensure a positive and enriching experience. This will encourage further service-learning or volunteer exploration and involvement, thus building the ethic of service.

Youth-serving professionals, volunteers and community partners are positioned to become teenagers’ “spark champions” (another term from Benson’s *Sparks*). A spark champion provides a teen with a time and place to hone her spark. A spark champion also introduces structure to encourage the teen to learn discipline, and offers new activities and ideas when inevitable setbacks occur. A spark champion asks reflective questions. Finally, a spark champion connects teens to others who share the spark, both people the same age and older role models. Through all of these actions, a spark champion helps fuel the teen’s spark into something larger and life giving.
WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

This service learning tool is for youth-serving professionals, volunteers, community partners and above all, teens. Adults are strongly encouraged to take the Survey beforehand to understand the potential and possibilities of this tool. The Survey is fun, informative and takes only about ten minutes to complete. Taking the Survey will give the adult a perspective with which to relate to the teens she works with, especially those she knows little about or does not know at all. It is a perfect way to start a conversation with teens.

The Survey is specifically for teens. It was created with the help of teens to deliberately speak to teens about themselves in relation to service-learning and volunteering.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

The intended audience for the Guide is youth-serving professionals and volunteers who are getting to know the teens they sponsor, teach, coach, manage, support or mentor for the purpose of service-learning and volunteering. It can also be useful in other areas such as asset building, civic engagement, community mapping, international involvement, community collaborations, diversity, member involvement and character development as well as fostering positive youth/adult relationships.

This Guide includes a general overview for using the Survey as a jumping-off point to encourage and support active, engaged teens. It also provides a brief review of service-learning, building assets and the Y’s 5 Basic Steps to Service that are easy to follow as a tool to enrich a teen’s service experience. These 5 Basic Steps, purposely developed to be flexible depending on your organization, situation and involvement with teens, include:

I. Survey
II. Personal Profile
III. Interview
IV. Connection, Placement or Project
V. Follow-up and Reflection
   Service-Learning Lesson*

* Depending upon time, it is recommended that you include some activities around service-learning and volunteerism. Review the suggested activities on pages 19–21 or incorporate some of your own ideas. Included in this section are some games and activities to explain, teach and motivate thinking about service-learning and volunteerism.
While the Survey was originally designed to use in a one-on-one youth/adult setting, it can be successfully used with existing groups, programs or clubs such as Youth and Government or teen leader groups. Look for the “Working with a Group” sidebars within this Guide for specific group use suggestions.

The guidelines within this Guide are to assist adults who work with teens; do not be afraid to try new ideas. Be creative and enthusiastic, and teens will sense the excitement and energy that comes from sharing time and talent in a service learning project.

**INTERNET SAFETY FOR YOUTH**

It is important for youth-serving adults to remind the young people they are in contact with about using the Internet safely.

- Never share personal information such as your full name, address, social security, etc.
- In sharing or posting videos of yourself, never include identifying information such as your house address or school name.
- Never meet in person with someone you first “met” online.
- Use nondescript screen names so as not to identify the user as a child or teen.

Check with your local YMCA or organization about its specific Internet use policies. For more information on youth and Internet safety, visit [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org).
WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Service-learning is a deliberate process through which people of all ages, including teens, develop specific skills, knowledge and behaviors while making meaningful contributions to their communities and developing civic awareness. The process includes three core components:

• establishing learning objectives
• performing meaningful service and
• engaging in structured reflection.

While it is understood that service-learning is not merely volunteerism or community service, this Guide is equally useful for the entire spectrum of service from community service to volunteerism to service-learning to civic engagement. Anywhere a young person is involved in doing good, the Guide can assist and enhance the experience.

Best Practices of Service-Learning

• Engage people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
• Provide structured opportunities for reflection.
• Articulate service and learning goals for all involved.
• Clarify goals/responsibilities for everyone.
• Match service with needs to the best of ability.
• Expect genuine, active, sustained organizational commitment.
• Include training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
• Insure flexible time commitments.
• Commit to participation by and with a diverse population.

(Honnet & Paulson, 1989—Johnson Foundation Wingspread Conference)

The best service-learning and volunteer projects are ones that help the community and allow for teens to develop the skills and interests that excite them. After the teen completes the Survey, review the results with her (see III. Interview, p. 12, for examples of questions to ask). Consider which of the four service categories the teen is most passionate about: environmental issues; social issues; healthy, safety and community issues; or community activism. Do organizations in or near the community do this kind of work or might they be interested in a project? What appropriate activities or opportunities are already available in the area of the teen’s interests at your organization or with another community organization? Brainstorm other possible project ideas together with the teen. Above all, encourage the teen to engage in a suitable activity or project that also motivates him so he will stick with it and remain involved.
For example, if the Survey identifies the teen likes to spend time doing art, suggest that she beautify a worn-down or vandalized piece of public property. Connect the teen with the right community organization, which can help find an appropriate location. You and the teen can recruit others, if needed, for the project. You can help the teen by determining from the personality choices on the Survey how much assistance and guidance the teen needs or if the teen possesses the skills necessary to successfully lead a teen group and complete all of the tasks associated with the project. This includes: organizing the project, making a schedule, assigning tasks and responsibilities, buying or finding the supplies, creating the mural and working with the organization to assure approval and completion. After the project is completed, follow up with the teen: How does he feel when he sees the finished mural? Was it physically easier or harder than she expected? What was the community reaction, and how did that make him feel? Would she consider taking on another similar project?

**ASSET BUILDING**

To become engaged citizens, young people need assistance in their development. Search Institute has pinpointed 40 Developmental Assets™, both external and internal, that are beneficial to teens. External assets are the support and opportunities provided by family, friends and organizations for teens, such as positive adult role models and participation in youth programs. Internal assets are the teen’s growing capacities, skills and values, such as being motivated to achieve in school and valuing equality and social justice.

One of the external Assets is service to others. By devoting time to the service of others, teens develop their self-worth, contribute to the community and build other assets such as caring, responsibility, respect and planning and decision-making. At least one hour a week can make a world of difference for the community and for the teen doing the good deeds.

GO TO WWW.ABUNDANTASSETS.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ASSET BUILDING THE YMCA WAY INCLUDING THE COMPLETE LIST OF 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS™
SERVICE LEARNING
5 BASIC STEPS

I. Survey

The Survey is meant to help the teen and the youth-serving professionals and volunteers who work with him, discover his personality traits, skills and interests, what motivates him and his preferred area of service. It is the first step towards finding the right service connection or placement for the teen, and towards establishing or sustaining a positive one-on-one relationship between the teen and the staff member or volunteer. The Survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete. Encourage the teen to answer the questions honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. The Survey is designed to be fun, positive, enlightening and informative for all.

The Survey was initially developed to use in a one-on-one setting with a teen and an adult, but it can also be effectively used in a variety of teen group settings. It is available as a downloadable PDF from www.ymca.net under Youth Development/Education and Leadership or you can photocopy it from page 23 of this Guide.

Each teen should take the Survey and answer the questions based on her own personal observations and not on how her friends respond. To use the Survey with a larger group of teens, such as a club, class or conference, connect a computer to an LCD projector (make sure the sound works, too!) and show the Survey on a large screen where everyone can see it. Give every teen a copy of the Personal Profile Worksheet to fill out, which corresponds to the questions given in the Survey.

Determine ahead of time who and how many people will guide or lead the teen group through the Survey experience. Having cheerful, energetic, knowledgeable leaders who are familiar with the Survey is important to successful group participation and completion. The leader explains the Survey questions and why the group is taking the Survey. Below is a sample script to lead the teen group through the Survey. Be playful and improvise; the right leader can make this seem like an intimate experience and a fun and informative activity.
HOW YOU LIKE TO SPEND YOUR TIME

“There are 13 general categories in this section. Each one has different words and images, so I’m going to go through them all. For instance, by holding the cursor on the ‘music’ image, you will see the words ‘listening to music,’ ‘performing’ and ‘playing an instrument’ that further define ‘music.’ Under ‘nature’ you will see ‘hiking,’ ‘paddling’ and ‘being outside.’” [Continue with list.] “Pick the three main categories that best fit how you like to spend your time.”

TALENTS AND SKILLS

“This section has a list of nine general talents and skills. Each talent and skill category has three more specific ideas listed on the screen. Let’s go through these. For example, ‘leadership’ encompasses ‘influencing,’ ‘promoting’ and ‘motivating.’ Is that you?” [Continue with list.] “Choose the three general talents and skills that best fit you.”

YOUR SERVICE INTEREST

“In this section, you’ll listen to four short stories around service and volunteer issues. Within each category, there are specific ideas that relate to the issue. Which one sounds the most like you? This time, you only get to pick one.”

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU

“So what motivates you to take action? Here are ten choices.” [Read the choices.] “You only get to choose one, so pick the one that most sounds like you!”

II. Personal Profile

When the teen completes the Survey, they will have a Personal Profile that contains their answers to the survey questions. The resulting Personal Profile helps the youth-serving professionals and volunteers consider:

- Areas to focus on (what the teen wants to do)
- Areas to affirm (snapshot of the teen’s personality traits, talents, skills and interests)
- Best types of service opportunities for the teen (provide direction based upon preferred service area, personality traits, talents, skills, interests and what is available within a specific time frame)
- How to interact, support and motivate the teen (give insight into how the teen sees himself)
- How to create opportunities to learn more about the teen (use the results to tailor the reflection component, leading to a deeper relationship with the teen and an actualization of her “spark”)
III. Interview

Most often, the youth-serving professionals and volunteers who will utilize the Survey and accompanying Personal Profile to find fitting service opportunities and projects for teens, already know and work with them in various capacities. For those adults not familiar with the teens, the Survey provides a perfect place for them to start a conversation. The importance of making connections and building positive relationships between adults and teens begins by listening to what teens want and need.

The Survey provides a general overview of how a teen thinks about himself, what he likes to do, what skills and talents he has and what motivates him to consider a specific area of service. Adults use the tallied results in the Personal Profile as a beginning point to then obtain more specific information during the face-to-face interview process with the teen. (See p. 15 “Working with a Group” for group ideas.)

Use the Interview as an opportunity to establish or sustain a relationship with the teen. Put her at ease by asking or confirming the following:

- Proper pronunciation and origin of name
- Nickname or what the teen prefers to be called
- School attended
- Grade
- Family members and situation
- Pets

After reviewing the Personal Profile, ask the teen for his opinion of the Survey.

- What were your general impressions of the Survey?
- What did you like about it?
- Were there any questions you found hard to answer? Why?
- Which questions were the easiest for you to answer? Why?

Next, move on to the specific sections. The following lists of questions are suggestions to begin the conversation with the teen based upon the teen’s Personal Profile. Not all of the questions may apply to each teen, and you may glean enough information from one question versus asking a lot of questions. Determine how much time you and the teen will spend in the interview process so neither party feels stressed or pressured by the experience. The interview process can take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. Next is a sample script to use during the interview process.

1. **IS THIS “ME” OR “NOT ME?”**

   “Let’s see what you said about what’s you and what’s not you. I’m going to read some of your answers and ask you about them.” [Read from the Personal Profile.]
   - Why did you pick these things as being most like you?
   - How do these things describe who you really are? (Example: If the teen picked “active,” what does that mean to him? Is it being unable to stay still? Is it a way of avoiding boredom? Does being active mean being athletic?)
   - Were there any choices that definitely weren’t you? What were they and how are you not like that at all? What have you done in the past when you had to deal with something like this? (Example: If you don’t like to work alone, how have you adapted in the past to a solo assignment?)
2. HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME?
"Let's look at how you spend your time." [Read from the Personal Profile.]
• Why did you choose these three areas as your favorite ways of spending your time?
• Why are these areas important to you? What makes them memorable for you?
• What do you value about them?
• Are there things that get in the way of you spending your time in these three areas?
• Do you have special skills that come out in particular when you’re spending your time in these areas?

3. WHAT ARE YOUR TALENTS AND SKILLS?
"Let’s see what three talents and skills you identified for yourself.” [Read from the Personal Profile.]
• What made you choose these three in particular?
• Each category had three descriptors under each one. Did any of those descriptors strike you as really being you or did you choose those talents for another reason? Can you further explain?
• Can you give me some specific examples of how you’ve used these skills?
• Why or how would you like to further develop these skills?
• Are these skills or talents things you do easily or do you have to work at using them? Tell me more about the ones you’ve worked hard in developing.

4. WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? WHAT ISSUES DO YOU CARE ABOUT?
"Let’s talk more about the different areas of service and things you care most about from the choice you made.” [Read from the Personal Profile.]
• What appealed to you the most about this area?
• What interests you about this area and why?
• What are some things within this area you have done or thought about doing?

5. WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO TAKE ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY?
"Let’s look at what you indicated motivates you.” [Read from the Personal Profile.]
• Can you tell me a little more about how this really keeps you on track when you are doing a project?
• How can I help motivate and support you?

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER
Now, consider the teen’s answers as a whole. How would you interpret them? Tailor your discussion regarding the right service-learning or volunteer project to the teen’s interests and needs.
Below are some suggested questions for the teen that will help in determining and arranging the appropriate volunteer project:
"Let’s see if we can figure out a way for you to use all of your talents, skills and passions in a service-learning experience that is the right fit for you. I am going to ask you a few more questions.”
How do you think you could use your skills and talents in [area of service] to make a difference? What might you do?

• Do you see a pattern between how you like to spend your time and the issues that are important to you?
• What do you ideally want to do?
• What do you want your experience to be like? What do you think it will be like?
• What do you hope to learn?
• Are there obstacles that could keep you from doing your project? (Job, babysitting, no car, curfew, grades, sports, money, etc.)
• What ideas do you have to overcome these obstacles and commit to doing your project?

WORKING WITH A GROUP

If time doesn’t allow for one-on-one discussions, conduct a teen group "interview." Keep the group manageable; break it into smaller numbers if necessary. Sort the teens according to their service area categories: environmental issues; social issues; health, safety and community issues; and community activism. Which group has the most members? If there are too few teens in an area, ask for their second choices and combine groups if necessary.

A good way to start a group interview process may be to ask, “What would you change in your community?” to get the conversation flowing. Let the discussion grow organically but lead into asking some of the questions from the “Interview” section on pages 12–14 to channel the group’s focus toward their Personal Profile Worksheet results.

Next, lead each group in a brainstorm of possible projects or activities based on the specific areas of service. Collectively, what kind of activity is the group most interested in? Determine whether more information about specific community needs or opportunities is necessary, and how and where to obtain it. Have the group assign tasks in response to their cited needs. If a computer connected to the Internet is available, a lot can be accomplished very quickly. Determine whether volunteer opportunities already exist or whether there is a need to create new ones.

IN SURVEY, TEENS CHOOSE THE SERVICE CATEGORY THEY ARE MOST INTERESTED IN:

• ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
• SOCIAL ISSUES
• HEALTH, SAFETY AND COMMUNITY ISSUES
• COMMUNITY ACTIVISM ISSUES
IV. Connection, Placement or Project

Which of the four service categories on the Survey did the teen indicate was her top choice: environmental issues; social issues; health, safety and community issues; or community activism issues?

• Think about how the teen works best: alone, or with a group?

• Gauge the teen’s level of involvement: is she committed to a long-term project, or is this a one-time event?

Based on the above questions, brainstorm with the teen a list of possible activities or projects. No idea is too silly or outrageous; spark his imagination.

For example:

**Environmental issues**—planting a garden in your neighborhood, spearheading a recycling campaign at your school, starting an eco-friendly club or beautifying the side of a road

**Social issues**—feeding the hungry at a soup kitchen, baby sitting at a homeless shelter, tutoring students at school who need help with English or sponsoring a dog wash to benefit the local animal rescue organization

**Health, safety and community issues**—creating posters about immunizations for local elementary schools, making a video about bike and sport safety or helping community seniors with yard work or house chores so they can remain in their neighborhood homes

**Community activism issues**—organizing a neighborhood community crime watch event, starting a petition about the need for a new park where an empty lot now exists or answering phones at a local political campaign office

It may be useful to share your own meaningful experiences or projects and relate those experiences to your talents and skills. This exchange of dialogue helps with relationship building between the youth-serving professional, volunteers and teens.

Share and discuss with the teen options available for his service-learning or volunteer project or activity. If there is nothing suitable immediately available, here are some options to suggest:

• Connect the teen with another trusted community partner that best matches his interests. If nothing is obvious, involve the teen in a search for an acceptable opportunity. Make sure to consult with your local organization concerning policies around youth, safety, legal and responsibility issues when sending young people outside of your organization.*

• Contact a national organization and inquire about the nearest local branch.

• See if other teens share similar interests and would be willing to start a new service or volunteer project with your assistance and guidance.

• Ask the teen if she would like to present his idea to an existing organization or start a youth-led effort within that organization around the common mission with your assistance and guidance.

* In the interest of educational benefit for the youth and risk management on behalf of the Y, it is recommended that the youth be the agent of third-party communication in making the connection with a volunteer or service-learning project outside of the YMCA. In addition, consult your YMCA’s policies regarding youth service.
• Suggest a similar alternative service-learning or volunteer project: “Based on your skills and interests, [specific project or organization] might also be a good idea, since we don’t have or can’t find exactly what you want.”

• Attend local and neighborhood events with the teen to meet organizations or groups that could use his talents and skills.

Working with a teen to create a new project—or even the idea of one—is an excellent way to build a positive adult/youth relationship. Whether the project or activity is for one day or an extended period, make sure the teen’s schedule and commitments are clear to him: location, date, time, frequency of service, expectations and responsibilities. It is important to discuss how you plan to keep in touch with the teen and assist with issues that could arise. Schedule a check-in date at your local Y in person with the teen or by phone if timing is a problem. Emphasize that the teen should feel free to contact you or ask for help if and when it is needed. If the assignment is long term, consider how else you will monitor the teen’s progress through the process of the project.

Tips for overseeing a successful service-learning or volunteer project:

• Introduce the teen to others with similar interests and to other role models to boost enthusiasm and gain support for the project.

• Help the teen create an executable, well-organized plan that is doable for the project and the teen.

• Have alternative plans and activities ready for the teen if she meets an insurmountable obstacle.

• Observe the teen performing the service-learning or volunteer project and offer assistance, encouragement and tips that enhance the overall experience.

• Don’t be afraid to celebrate the teen’s accomplishments. Consider recognizing or honoring him at a special event, giving him an achievement award or submitting an article about his contribution for your local, school or organization newspaper.

V. Follow-up and Reflection

For youth-serving staff and volunteers, ongoing communication is key to building a relationship with teens during, and even after, the service or volunteer project experience. Teens can be valuable resources in spreading the word about the good they are doing and your organization’s commitment to youth and service.

The importance of creating an opportunity for reflection at the conclusion of the project is a crucial component to service-learning. Encourage the teen to keep a journal, notes or a way of collecting feelings and actions throughout the project. If she is not the writing type, there are plenty of other activities that could fulfill the reflection component: teach younger children about the project, sketch a picture, develop a comic strip, write a song or create a blog.
Whether the activity was a one-day event or on-going project, schedule a phone call or meeting at your local facility with the teen. Ask him how the experience is going/how it went logistically and how she feels/felt about the project. Talk about the upcoming commitment goal if applicable, and continue coaching as necessary. Below are some questions for the teen to guide her reflection:

**GENERAL:**
- How did the project go?
- What did you do?
- Did you use your skills and talents as you thought you would?
- What new skills did you learn?
- What did you learn from the person/organization leading the project?

**REFLECTIVE:**
- What was the service experience like?
- What did you learn about the service area or related issue?
- What are you learning about yourself?
- Is this experience what you hoped for? Why or why not?
- What have you given to the project? What did you get from the project?
- Did you have the impact you anticipated?
- How did your project make a difference?
- If so, how has your opinion of the project changed between when you started and now?

Effective service-learning must involve the reflective element. Encourage the teen, with permission from a parent or guardian depending upon the teen’s age, to record her thoughts by posting a video to youtube that includes YMCA Service Learning in its tag or by emailing eunice.yi@ymca.net. It creates a powerful message that allows others to know about the positive things the teen is doing, as well as a way of getting his friends interested and involved.

When the service-learning project is over, have the teen consider taking the Survey again. Talk about what has changed for and about him since the last time he took the Survey. It’s also important to discuss the next steps: Would the teen benefit from another guided service-learning project? Or is she ready to create her own project or consider mentoring another teen with similar interests?

**Conclusion**

The goal of the process, from completing the Survey and assessing the Profile to reflecting on the service-learning or volunteer experience, is an enthusiastic, connected, engaged teen: someone who is able to use his existing skills, talents and interests in a real-life situation that sparks his passions to want to do more. Through the appropriate and fitting service-learning project, teens feel connected to their communities and believe their involvement makes a difference. Through the support of youth-serving professionals and volunteers, teens realize that their sparks can be put to good use and develop a commitment to lifelong service. All situations, circumstances and people differ, so be flexible, and most importantly, enjoy your time building and nurturing mutually respectful, positive and supportive experiences with teens that make a difference.
SERVICE-LEARNING LESSON

While this resource can promote all kinds of volunteer and community engagement opportunities, the Y is a committed proponent of service-learning, which differs from volunteer activities in its learning objectives and reflection. This exercise is meant to help teens better understand the service-learning components.

Here is a sample of an informal talk to have with a teen or teens after completing the Survey:

“Service-learning is an opportunity to get engaged with your community, using skills or talents you already have. You can have fun and make a difference at the same time. For some of you, service-learning is part of your graduation requirements. Service-learning can be really exciting, creative and rewarding, just like doing anything you like to do. The Survey helps identify your personality, talents, skills and interests, as well as what motivates you. The Personality Profile helps us figure out what kind of service-learning or volunteer opportunity or project would be the most valuable for you. I'll sit down with each of you, one-on-one, to talk about your Survey results and what best suits who you are and what you want to do.”

ACTIVITIES (FOR ANY SIZE GROUP):

SERVICE-LEARNING DICTIONARY GAME

This activity is a good way to establish and clarify what service-learning means compared to other forms of service. It is important to stress this is not a “test” but rather a way of making sure everyone understands the difference between various service experiences. Finding your passions will enhance the experience and help build a commitment to life-long community involvement and service.

• Have participants write down their own definitions of service-learning.
• Write the definition used in this Guide on a whiteboard, chalkboard or flip chart and keep it hidden (see p. 8). Write it on a piece of paper as well.
• Collect the definitions, including the definition from the Guide, and read them all out loud. Have the teens ‘vote’ on which one they think is correct.
• Reveal the definition from the Guide and discuss why it is being used. Explain that there can be many different definitions of service-learning.
• Discuss other words such as “community service” and “volunteering,” and why they can also be used.

SERVICE-LEARNING QUIZ

This is a good activity to follow the “Service-Learning Dictionary Game,” because it provides additional specific examples to further define and explain service-learning in relation to other forms of service. It can be simply a true or false exercise or played as a Jeopardy-type game: be creative with it.

1. Service-learning is the same thing as community service ............................................... T  F
2. Service-learning is basically volunteer work ................................................................. T  F
3. Service-learning differs from other forms of community service or volunteer work because the education of participants is at its core ...................................................... T  F
4. A group of teens volunteer at the local zoo. They file paperwork and mail out invitations for a fundraiser. This is considered a service-learning project ................................................................. T F

5. A group of teens volunteer at a local community garden. They learn how to use the garden tools, mulch and identify native plants. They spend the day weeding, planting and making compost. In class the next day, participants plan to start a garden at their own school. This is considered a service-learning project ........................................................................................................ T F

6. A group of teens join in a day-long river cleanup that is being sponsored by a state conservation organization. They are amazed at what is being hauled away from the banks of the river in the course of just one day. This is considered a service-learning project ........................................................................................................ T F

7. As a class project a group of teens paint a bus shelter mural. The teens choose which bus stop they want to paint and the teacher picks up supplies. They paint pictures of animal and nature scenes. This is considered a service-learning project ........................................................................................................ T F

8. A group of teens do research on homelessness in their community. They make sack lunches for the homeless and pass them out on local streets. They reflect on their service after the project. This is considered a service-learning project ........................................................................................................ T F

Let’s now talk about the statements that aren’t really service-learning projects and why. What can we add to the projects or opportunities to make them service-learning experiences? Remember, service-learning involves learning, doing and reflecting. While all forms of service and volunteerism are valuable, the intentional three-component approach provides a deep and meaningful learning experience, especially when drawn from the results of the Survey.
SERVICE-LEARNING BEACH BALL

This is a fun and active way to wrap up the discovery process about service-learning before having teens take the survey. Have the teens toss a beach ball (or toss it to the teen yourself, if there is only one) with the questions below written on it. Whatever question the teen’s right thumb is touching, the teen must answer.

• If you could change one thing about your community, what would it be?
• If you could send one message to all the kids in your hometown, what would it be?
• What are you most proud of about your hometown?
• How could your town be made safer?
• What are your favorite ways to show people you care about them?
• How could people in your community be healthier?
• What gives your life a sense of meaning and purpose?
• What values do you want to model for your friends, family and community?

(Used with permission from Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor, The YMCA Center for Asset Development, Nashville)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (FOR ONE OR ANY SIZE GROUP)

• Has there ever been a time when you have served and/or made a positive difference in your community (neighborhood, school, family, etc.)?
• What was that activity or project and why did you choose it?
• Who were you with? Who supported your efforts?
• How did it make you feel?
• What did you gain from the experience?

Allow everyone an opportunity to go over the questions and share their answers. Explain that opportunities where you "learn by doing" frequently have a lasting impact. There are varied opportunities to learn by doing—brainstorm more specific ideas or projects.

FREE WRITE (FOR ONE OR ANY SIZE GROUP)

• Think about the most significant learning experience you have had.
• Where did it take place (school, with family, church, on a team, at an organization)?
• What did you do?

Discuss how learning can take place anywhere, not just in a classroom. Explain that opportunities where you “learn by doing” frequently have a lasting impact. There are varied opportunities to learn by doing—brainstorm more specific ideas or projects.
SURVEY/PERSONAL PROFILE

NAME AGE

MAILING ADDRESS

EMAIL ADDRESS

SCHOOL ATTENDING

YOUR PERSONALITY Put an X where best describes you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT ME</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>ME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solver</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried and Stressed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy and Upbeat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Independently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed and Easygoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME? Circle three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Creating</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YOUR TALENTS & SKILLS Circle three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicating</th>
<th>Collaborating</th>
<th>Constructing</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Active &amp; Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YOUR SERVICE INTEREST Circle one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Issues</th>
<th>Community Activism</th>
<th>Environmental Issues</th>
<th>Health, Safety &amp; Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU Circle one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My faith inspires me</th>
<th>To meet new people</th>
<th>Idea appeals to me</th>
<th>To help the world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults encourage me</td>
<td>To develop job skills</td>
<td>My friends encourage me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s the right thing to do</td>
<td>College application</td>
<td>Because I have to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share your Personal Prole with a YMCA professional, relative, friend, teacher, or counselor to further explore your interests and what service opportunities might exist in your community with which you can get involved. Visit www.ymca.net for more information. © 2008 YMCA of the USA.
QUICK START TIP SHEET
In a group setting with teens

1. TAKE THE SURVEY
Teens will love this fun, interactive multimedia survey. It takes about 10 minutes to complete. The Survey asks questions about a teen’s personality traits, skills/talents, interests and what motivates him in a positive and engaging format. Try it yourself!

2. PRINT THE PERSONAL PROFILE
The one-page Personal Profile printout gives an overview of the teen’s responses, including the service category that suits the teen most appropriately: environmental issues; social issues; health, safety or community issues; or community activism issues.

3. CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW
Using the information from the Personal Profile, ask questions to get more specifics about the teen’s passions, skills and talents. This process will help establish an encouraging and supportive relationship with the teen to find out what will ignite her to take action on a service or volunteer project.

4. DETERMINE A CONNECTION, PLACEMENT OR PROJECT*
Brainstorm with the teen possible service projects based upon his Personal Profile. Suggest existing events, activities, clubs or groups for the teen to join within your organization or the community, or assist in the creation of a new project that best fits the teen’s Personal Profile responses.

5. FOLLOW UP AND REFLECTION
Reflection, a crucial component to service-learning, is what separates service-learning from volunteerism. What did the teen do? How has the experience changed the teen or impacted her life? Suggest ways of marking the experience, such as journaling, making a video, teaching others about the project, creating a piece of artwork, writing a poem or sharing the experience on a blog or social networking site.**

* In the interest of educational benefit for the youth and risk management on behalf of the Y, it is recommended that the youth be the agent of third-party communication in making the connection with a volunteer or service-learning project outside of the Y. In addition, consult your YMCA’s policies regarding youth service.
** Refer to page 7 in the Guide for internet safety recommendations.
QUICK START TIP SHEET

In a group setting with teens

1. **GIVE THE SURVEY TO A GROUP OF TEENS**
   For a large group, connect a computer to an LCD projector (make sure the sound works too!) and show the Survey on a large screen. Have energetic, enthusiastic leaders who are familiar with the Survey explain the Survey and why the group is taking it. The right leaders will create a fun and informational activity.

2. **RECORD ANSWERS ON THE PERSONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET**
   Each teen should have a copy of the Personal Profile Worksheet and will circle the answers to the questions as they would respond to the online version.

3. **CONDUCT A GROUP INTERVIEW OR DISCUSSION**
   Keep the group manageable; break into smaller numbers if necessary. What are the talents of the group members? Who is interested in what service category? Give everyone the opportunity to speak. Discuss how personality traits, interests, skills and motivations relate and complement each other.

4. **DETERMINE CONNECTION, PLACEMENT OR PROJECT**
   Sort the teens according to their chosen service categories. Lead the groups in a brainstorm of possible service or volunteer projects or activities. If multiple groups are not possible, base the discussion on the most common category. Collectively, what is the group most interested in doing? Once the service or volunteer project or activity is determined, assign roles and responsibilities based on skills, talents and interests within the group to ensure success and completion.

5. **FOLLOW UP WITH REFLECTION**
   Reflection, a crucial component to service-learning, is what separates service-learning from volunteerism. Lead a group discussion at the conclusion of the project or activity, allowing everyone a chance to speak. How has the experience changed the teens or impacted their lives? Suggest ways of marking the experience, such as journaling, making a video, teaching others about the project, creating a piece of artwork, writing a poem or sharing the experience on a blog or social networking site.

* In the interest of educational benefit for the youth and risk management on behalf of the YMCA, it is recommended that the youth be the agent of third-party communication in making the connection with a volunteer or service-learning project outside of the YMCA. In addition, consult your YMCA’s policies regarding youth service.

** Refer to page 7 in the Guide for internet safety recommendations.
COMMUNITY PARTNER CONNECTIONS

Effective service learning relies on positive adult and youth relationships as well as community connections to provide fitting service experiences for teens. In order to provide teens with a rich set of options for service, YMCAs and other organizations who use this resource will want to 1) share the tool, 2) work together to make connecting youth with service opportunities a smooth and rewarding experience and 3) maintain a full and varied roster of volunteer ideas. Here are some suggestions for working with your community:

1. CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WHO VALUE YOUTH AND SERVICE

Many schools, clubs, colleges, faith-based communities, other community groups and government agencies include a service goal or requirement.

2. INCREASE VISIBILITY THROUGH COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION

Every community has a wealth of resources and needs. Use Service Learning as a way for teens to address community needs. This positions your organization as a vested leader and champion for youth, service-learning and volunteerism in the community.

3. CREATE CONSCIENTIOUS ALLIANCES THAT SUPPORT AND BENEFIT BOTH PARTNERS

Trusted community partners outside of your organization are critical but can be difficult to create due to time, staffing, location and budgets. Share this resource with community organizations to encourage collaboration around youth, service and the community. Determine opportunities that strengthen both organizations and build positive community awareness.

4. PROVIDE SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND YOUR FOUR WALLS*

When appropriate service opportunities do not exist within your Y, have teens research or use your connections in the community to find a project elsewhere.

VISIT www.ymca.net to access Service Learning Tools and Resources

SERVICE CATEGORIES:
• ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
• SOCIAL ISSUES
• HEALTH, SAFETY AND COMMUNITY ISSUES
• COMMUNITY ACTIVISM ISSUES
5. GROW AND STRENGTHEN SERVICE-LEARNING AND VolUNTEER EFFORTS

The Y recognizes the national call to action for community service and volunteerism, especially for youth, which may require mobilizing efforts and working together with others to make a difference. This Guide is one platform that provides innovative tools to accommodate building effective community partnership connections.

How to Spread the Word About Service Learning

• Host a community breakfast to demonstrate this resource and solicit community partner collaboration
• Ask for time on the agenda at a community organization meeting and present service learning ideas with teen participation
• Meet with high school personnel to share this tool in relation to service graduation requirements
• Attend youth-focused conferences, workshops or symposiums to make connections
• Sponsor collaborative opportunities around specific youth-oriented events such as Earth Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Veteran’s Day, National Service Day, etc
• Organize a teen volunteer fair with community organizations and local schools utilizing this tool to connect youth with community opportunities
• Share service learning ideas on professional blogs and networking sites

This guide is based on work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under a Learn and Serve America Grant. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation or the Learn and Serve America Program.
“In a democratic society we must live cooperatively, and serve the community in which we live, to the best of our ability. For our own success to be real, it must contribute to the success of others.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt
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