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Recommended Citation

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The Common Core State Standards for Literacy in the Content Areas (CCSS) have been designed to ensure that students will be college and career ready in terms of reading and writing skills. Ironically, the purpose behind these standards is to have students prepared to engage in processes in the college classroom or in the workforce. However, many students, educators, and parents are concerned with the product (test scores) rather than the enhanced learning process (applying skills and knowledge in meaningful and sustainable ways) that can result from CCSS-based learning. Service learning is a teaching methodology that can return our focus to the process of meaningful learning that, in turn, results in students' development of the capacities of the literate individual to succeed in college and in the workforce. If students have developed these capacities, they should be able to perform well on exams.

The CCSS Capacities of the Literate Individual

According to Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, "Effective curriculum is planned backward from long-term, desired results through a three-stage design process (Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan)" (1). Wiggins and McTighe state that it is important to ask questions about the goals of education before implementing a specific set of lessons and evaluations. They urge educators to establish what the end result(s) should be in the grand scheme of the students' education. The Common Core State Standards for Literacy in the Content Areas (CCSS) help provide a framework for said end results that ensures that students are prepared for college and work. Some of these Desired Results may be based on the CCSS, which aim to "promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines" (NGA Center/CCSO 1). The CCSS list seven capacities

of the literate individual. According to this list, the literate individual is able to

1. Demonstrate independence with complex text by asking questions and clarifying information.
2. Build strong content knowledge through purposeful reading, viewing, listening, and research.
3. Respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose and discipline by shifting tone and selecting convincing evidence.
4. Comprehend as well as critique by analyzing the content and bias of sources.
5. Value evidence in arguments they hear, read, or develop.
6. Use technology strategically and capably by integrating sources and using tools to support their intentions.
7. Come to understand other perspectives and cultures through evaluation of their own perspectives and those of others. (7)

Consider an example of the way that these capacities are tested. Below is a sample 7th grade PARCC Research Simulation Task:

> You have read a website entry and an article and watched a video describing Amelia Earhart. All three include information that supports the claim that Earhart was a brave, courageous person.
>
> The three texts are:
> "The Biography of Amelia Earhart"
> "Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found"
> "Amelia Earhart's Life and Disappearance" (video)
>
> Consider the argument each author uses to demonstrate Earhart's bravery.

Write an essay that analyzes the strength of the arguments related to Earhart's bravery in at least two of the three supporting materials. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas. (PARCC 31)

This task requires students to demonstrate independence reading and viewing the sources in order to build strong content knowledge. The video element requires students to use technology strategically and capably. They must value evidence and comprehend as well as critique the information gathered in order to write the essay. The final capacity, coming to understand other perspectives and cultures, is not as clearly addressed through this task, however, one might argue that the standard is addressed because students must consider the context of the time period in which Earhart lived in order to understand the sources.

Many teachers would agree that our curriculum supports the development of these capacities. Rather than moving toward a model of teaching that leads students to believe that the purpose of school is to pass tests, service learning provides a means for developing the long-term skills and knowledge represented in the CCSS by engaging students in meaningful learning that connects classroom content and skills with real-world needs. According to Guilfoile and Ryan,

Service-learning is one of several "deeper learning" strategies that states, districts, schools, and teachers may use to help students gain a deeper understanding of core academic content and simultaneously build deeper learning skills through the integration of content knowledge with application. (3)

Wiggins and McTighe discuss the concept of application or "transfer": "Transfer is about intelligently and effectively drawing from their [students'] repertoire, independently to handle new contexts on their own" (65). Students must use strategic thinking to decide how apply their knowledge and skills in new situations. This concept is not new. Dewey promoted the idea of transfer in order to support students' development into effective citizens, applying their learning to the greater good.

The Five Stages of Service Learning

Service learning supports students in developing and applying 21st Century Skills, absorbing content, and self-motivating to complete meaningful initiatives. Below, we note how each of the stages of service learning supports the CCSS by referencing the standards addressed in brackets. For example, R.1 stands for reading anchor standard 1. W.2 stands for writing anchor standard 2. As students engage in the five stages of service learning, they meet and exceed many of the CCSS, and thus the CCSS capacities of the literate individual are advanced.

Investigation

During the investigation stage students gather information about their own talents and skills and try to clarify the needs of their community and how best to meet them. Investigation can take the form of interview, survey, research through media or print sources, and observation. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of written or oral communications [R.1, R.2. R.3], develop content specific vocabulary [R.4], analyze text [R.3, R.4, R.5], consider the bias of authors [R.6, R.8, R.9], make use of textual evidence found through their research [W.7, W.8, W.9], and use technology strategically [W.6].

Preparation

When preparing for action based on the findings of their investigation, students may gather and read resources related to the issue that they are addressing, create new resources for distribution or to aide in their efforts, and work with their school personnel or community organization to be sure that their plan is appropriate and that they are operating within parameters that are acceptable. The skills listed under investigation above continue to apply here. In addition, because students may be developing written work, they may be engaged in the writing process [W.5] and considering the appropriate voice for their intended audience [W.4].

Action

Student action can come in the form of direct action, indirect action, advocacy, and/or research. Direct action involves working face-to-face with the community that students are helping. Indirect action is behind-the-scenes work. Advocacy involves raising awareness about an

issue. Research is often a part of the three types of service noted above, or it can stand alone if students are conducting research that will help an organization or an individual. Depending on the form of action, any and all of the standards noted above may be met through service learning. When engaged in action, "children and adolescents strive to make sense of their world and their place in it, so they must think about themselves. The beauty in service learning, when implemented with youth initiative, is that kids get to see themselves as people of influence" (Kaye 35).

Reflection

According to "The K-12 Standards for Quality Service Learning Practice," "Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens" (NYLC 2). Each of the three types of writing called for by the CCSS—argument [W.1], informative/explanatory [W.2], and narrative [W.3] can be utilized during reflection. The final anchor standard for writing [W.10] directly reference reflection—students will "Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences." Reflection is not singularly linked with writing. Howard Gardner would support Kaye's assertion that reflection should appeal to multiple intelligences. In whatever form it takes, "allowing students to assess themselves as part of the process creates a thoughtful, recurring time for them to look at their own growth and set new goals" (Schwartz 1).

Demonstration

There are several means by which students may demonstrate their service learning experience and findings. "Depending on the project, students might publish their work online, make presentations at a public event, or pitch their ideas to a panel of judges" (Boss 1). Whether writing an article about their experiences or giving an oral presentation to interested parties in their community, students must consider if the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience [W.4]. They work to develop their demonstration based on their own experience and related sources [W.8,

W.9]; they revise their work [W.5], and they may opt to use technology to share their findings/experience [W.6].

"Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults." (NYLC 3). With service learning, students have a high level of autonomy, allowing them to critically assess as well as creatively approach a situation that is relevant to them. This autonomy and the critical thinking skills called for when students are engaged in service learning support students' development of the capacities of the literate individual. Guilfoile and Ryan state, "The Common Core is centered on application of knowledge through deeper learning skills…. Students' mastery of such higher learning skills and the ultimate success of the Common Core depend on how well educators translate the [Common Core State] standards into curriculum instruction" (3).

If students engage in meaningful work that ties to the standards and thus helps them develop the capacities of a literate individual, they will be equipped to perform well on assessments, and more importantly, they will be able to engage in more sophisticated processes with transferable skills as they move through the grades and into college and the workforce.

Process versus Product

Though the development of the capacities of the literate individual and the process by which students engage in this development are important, the most common questions that teachers hear from students are often in regard to an end result. "How long does the paper have to be?" "What kind of questions will be on the test?" "How many weeks are we spending on this unit?" "How many points is this worksheet worth?" These student concerns are direct reflections of a pervasive ideology promoted in the school system that seldom has students engaged in the process: rather, they spend most of their time thinking about the product, or the way that they are measured. Thus, an education is diluted down from an experience to a means to an end.

To counteract this paradigm, it is crucial that teachers further consider the relationship that they promote between their students and the classroom content. Essentially, this invites a deeper analysis of student motivation, raising

questions about the central drive behind achievement. Students who are presented solely with extrinsic rewards, such as grades or test scores, are provided with a measurable, but possibly unreliable and likely superficial means of calculating the value of their learning experience. This approach is not likely to produce what Kaye refers to as "sustainable learning."

Service learning, on the other hand, creates a sense of purpose and fulfillment that goes beyond what can be scored numerically. Rather, this methodology promotes a meaningful relationship between the student and the content from start to finish. A sense of intrinsic motivation takes the place of an external incentive, setting a firm foundation for students to see their academic roles as meaningful because they see that they can impact their environment based on their learning.

Kaye asserts, "when students have a sense of purpose and know someone is depending on them for the research, the incentive for grades and meeting basic expectations may be replaced with an intrinsic desire to help a person or cause" (36). Students transfer the knowledge they develop through their reading to action related to a genuine need. According to Guilfoile and Ryan, "Undoubtedly, if students do not have numerous opportunities to use content knowledge to solve interesting problems, grapple with key questions and issues of the discipline, and examine social issues, they will be unlikely to perform well on the common assessments" (3). Service learning provides students with such opportunities to support their knowledge and skills development.

Students as Agents of Change

When students perceive themselves as change agents through service learning they work more independently. When engaged in service learning, students will often gather crucial skills and knowledge without being prompted. They will learn, for example, to figure out how to interpret complex graphs and charts to ascertain the levels of poverty in a particular area because they have given themselves the task in order to reach fair and appropriate answers to the questions about food distribution. Students' work goes beyond the academic bar that has been set in terms of quantifiable objectives. This concept is the key element in a student-based approach to learning. Sustainability comes from the students' opportunity to construct a durable definition of self as a learner and as an agent of change.

With service learning, students are intrinsically motivated to learn as they design their own service learning process that moves the curriculum forward. We have been focused on the idea of process being more important than product, however, as Cathryn Berger Kaye noted at a Service Learning Institute this past summer, it is critical to remember that "we teach kids before content." Although teachers are pressed to get a lot accomplished in 180 school days, we must always remember that students are the main reason we are there in this job in the first place. We must engage them socially, emotionally, and intellectually in order for meaningful and enduring learning to occur.

Service Learning Resources

This article was developed as part of a MUSE research grant from The College of New Jersey. Based on surveys of New Jersey teachers regarding their use of service learning, their perceptions of how service learning relates to the CCSS, and their statements regarding what would best support their implementation of service learning, the researchers designed the New Jersey Service Learning website. Please check it out at http://njservicelearning.weebly.com.

To learn more about Cathy Berger Kaye and her teaching methodologies and professional development related to service learning, visit www.cbkassociates.com.

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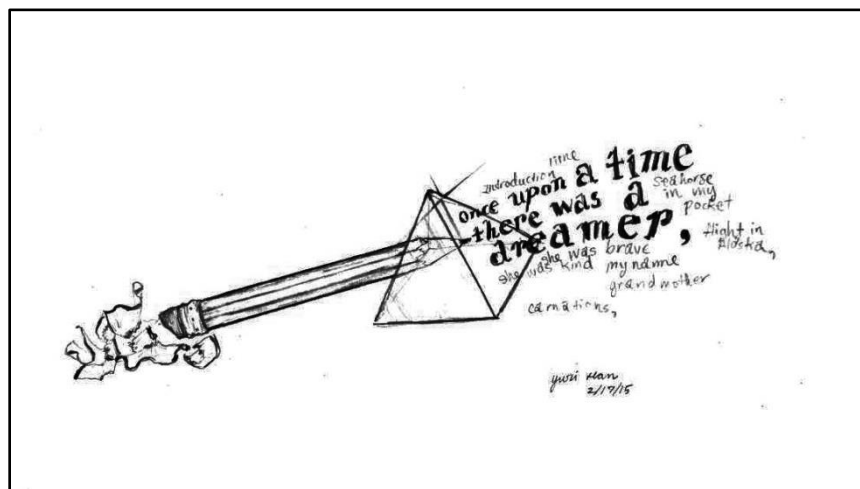
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