



## Background (From Discovering Classroom Earth Curriculum Lesson #3)

### Why Service-Learning?

Just as we learned that the word leadership means many things to many people, so does service-learning. Over the past 10 years, service-learning has become a hot topic in academic education ranging from primary school on up through college. A 1999 survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics showed, for example, that 64% of all public elementary and secondary schools including 83% of all high schools had students participating in community service activities recognized by and/or arranged through the school. 32% of all public schools organized community service activities for their students.<sup>1</sup> At the college level, Campus Compact, a national organization that encourages and supports service-learning, has more than 900 member campuses. A 1998 Campus Compact survey estimated that on its member campuses, 10,800 faculty members were involved in teaching 11,800 service-learning courses.<sup>2</sup>



Clearly, service-learning is a popular learning tool. But why include it in the Global Explorers Program? For three reasons:

1. It deepens student learning around Global Explorers' core educational disciplines (science, culture, leadership and service).
2. It makes a positive contribution to the communities we visit and to your own community.
3. It encourages students to pursue a life that involves service to others.



### What Students Learn

As you can imagine with any new hot educational topic, much has been written about the *learning* in service-learning. Here are some of the key things that Global Explorers believes students learn through service-learning projects:<sup>2</sup>

- ✓ *Tolerance*: contributes to a sense that the people students work with are “like them” and demonstrates a growing appreciation for other cultures.
- ✓ *Personal Development*: contributes to greater self-knowledge, spiritual growth and finding reward in helping others.
- ✓ *Interpersonal Skills*: contributes to students' ability to work well with others.
- ✓ *Motivation*: students report that they learn more and are motivated to work harder in service-learning classes than in regular classes.
- ✓ *Improved Understanding*: helps deepen understanding of subject matter, the complexity of social issues, and how to apply classroom lessons to real problems.
- ✓ *Citizenship Skills*: prepares students for becoming an active citizen in the world.

<sup>1</sup> *Service-Learning and Community Service in K-12 Public Schools*. Na. Cntr. for Ed. Stats. September 1999.

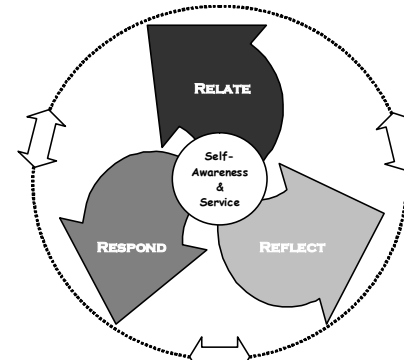
<sup>2</sup> See *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning* by Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, 1999.



## What Students Learn (continued)

In the Global Explorers Program, service offers an opportunity to put many of the student’s educational lessons into practice. Here are some examples of how this works within our core disciplines:

*Leadership:* As students develop and implement their service projects before, during and after their international field workshop, they have a venue for practicing their leadership skills. They are forced to deal with complex issues as a team and come up with creative solutions to problems. At the same time, they learn about the importance of Relating, Reflecting and Responding because they are doing it in practice!



*Science:* Many of the international field service projects relate to a conservation issue, whether creating a park trail in Baja California or a community garden in the Arctic. Our emphasis on service reminds students that scientific research must give back to communities in order to make a real difference.

*Culture:* Service projects are frequently conducted with people of different cultures. Much of the Global Explorers experience deals with learning how to bridge gaps between different cultures so that opportunities for genuine learning, interaction and service emerge.

## Good & Not-So-Good Service

Perhaps to the initial surprise of your students, not all service is considered “good”. Most students tend to feel that if doing the service “feels good”, then it must be good. But it’s not quite so simple. For example, what if the service you are giving isn’t what the community wants? There are countless examples of organizations and individuals with good intentions giving to communities before asking what the community actually wants.



Good service is often considered to have some of the following characteristics:

- *It addresses expressed community needs*
- *It generates sustainable, long-term results*
- *It involves local participants as partners*
- *It increases local capacity (the skills and abilities of local communities)*
- *It fosters long-term partnership*

Of course, any service opportunity needs to be considered within the time and resources available to those who serve. This lesson helps students evaluate good projects in their own community so that they can choose service that will make the most difference given the resources available to your group.



## Good & Not-So-Good Service-Learning (continued)

The learning in *service-learning* involves much more than simply doing service. Whereas *service* can be a one-time event, *service-learning* is a longer process. Good service-learning typically: is organized in relationship to an academic course or curriculum; has clearly stated learning objectives; addresses real community needs in a sustained manner over a period of time; and involves regularly scheduled, organized reflection that engages students in dialogue about their service experiences.<sup>3</sup> The good news is that this type of service-learning is already incorporated into the Global Explorers Program.



### GEx Service Responsibilities

There are three structured opportunities for service in the GEx Program. Below is a brief description of each and what we hope to accomplish through these opportunities.

***Preliminary Service Activity:*** *A service activity conducted prior to travel.*

*Purpose:* To give students a first taste of service and what it entails; to get students out of their element so they can experience something unique and different.

*Examples:* Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity or at a local soup kitchen

***International Field Service:*** *A service project conducted with international students on your Field Workshop.*

*Purpose:* To engage students of different cultures together in a joint project and thereby offer opportunities for cross-cultural exchange; to give back to the community you are visiting.

*Examples:* Build trails in a national park in Mexico; build a community garden in the Arctic

***Follow-Up Service Project:*** *A student-driven service project conducted after the International Field Workshop.*

*Purpose:* To serve as a culminating project that ties the program together; to teach students that they can work together to make a difference in the world and to launch them out into the world as servant-leaders.

*Examples:* Identify the needs of the school you visited on your International Field Workshop and raise awareness and funds back home to meet some of those needs; build awareness at home about urban poverty issues.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics, Service-Learning and Community Service in K-12 Public Schools, Statistics in Brief, September 1999.



## Managing Your Time: a Reality Check



As group sponsor, you have many responsibilities for the GEx Program. Though you definitely need to be involved in whatever service projects are selected, we highly recommend *getting another teacher* (or parent volunteer) to take a leadership role in helping students organize the details of their service responsibilities for the GEx Program. We also recommend *empowering the students* as quickly as possible to take their own leadership role in crafting and implementing their Follow-Up Service Project.

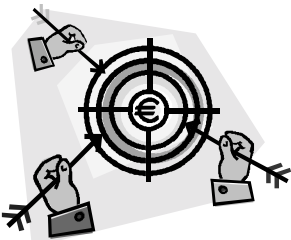
In the end, each Global Explorers Group will end up doing different levels of service based on the resources (time, money, energy) available to them. Below are some things we encourage you to consider before embarking upon your service adventure. Thinking of these things ahead of time will help you define the scope of your group's potential service efforts.

- ✓ How much time can you devote to planning and implementing the Preliminary Service Activity and the Follow-Up Service Project? Who can help you get the job done?
- ✓ How involved do you want your students to be in service?
- ✓ Do you want to work with an established organization, within the context of what the school already does, or on something completely new?
- ✓ Are you willing to get involved in service that involves additional costs and if so, how will those costs be supported?

## Getting and Maintaining Administrative Support

Key to the success of any service-project is to gain the commitment of your school administration to your project. Principals, assistant principals, headmasters, division heads – all of these people need to believe in the value of what you are doing. Gaining this commitment will ensure the long-term viability of your project. Be confident that your administration will buy in – service-learning has been shown to be of tremendous educational value in schools of all shapes and sizes.

Maintaining the support of administration likely will require that you show that what you are doing is making an educational difference in the lives of your students. Many teachers assume that if it looks good and feels good, then it is good. Though gut feelings about the value of the educational experience are often correct, we feel it is important to encourage teachers to evaluate success.



Evaluation can be as simple as reviewing as a class and as a teacher how well you met the goals that you set out at the beginning of the project. Evaluations can also be more complex, including surveys of students, community participants in the service project and non-service participants. Choose a method that reflects the resources available to you.

If you can illustrate the clear value of your project through facts, figures, surveys and even anecdotal stories, this will strengthen the long-term support of your administration, your students, and the community that you serve.