

SERVICE-LEARNING: MOTIVATIONS FOR K-12 TEACHERS

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## ABSTRACT

Judy Jackson May, Advisor

The purpose of this dissertation is to describe the essence of the service-learning experience for K-12 teachers in central and northwest Ohio, specifically exploring teacher motivations for initiating service-learning in the classroom. Service-learning is defined as an educational methodology that incorporates student preparation, service to the community, and reflection, with links to the academic curriculum (Billig, 2002).

There are six guiding questions that direct this study: a) How do teachers understand and describe their experiences in implementing service-learning projects? b) What motivates teachers to initiate service-learning experiences for their students? c) What benefits, if any, do teachers derive from their service-learning experiences? d) What, if any, academic student benefits do teachers perceive resulting from service-learning experiences? e) What, if any, personal student benefits do teachers perceive resulting from service-learning experiences? and f) What role does administrative leadership play in aiding teachers in sustaining service-learning experiences for their students?

This is a phenomenological study. The co-researchers of this study were seven K-12 teachers in central and northwest Ohio who had implemented service-learning in their classrooms in the 24 months prior to the study. I interviewed each co-researcher, transcribed each interview, and used the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data for data analysis.

Three major themes emerged to describe the essence of implementing service-learning from the K-12 teacher's perspective: a) Connections, b) Resonation in the Heart of the Teacher, and c) The Right Fit with a Teacher's Philosophy and Teaching Style.

*Connections* explains the extreme importance of creating, maintaining, extending, and nurturing connections between teachers and other people with whom they work, between teachers and their students, between teachers and other teachers, between the different areas of the curriculum, and between teachers and members of the community-at-large. The second emergent theme is *Resonation in the Heart of the Teacher*, which involves a deep, personal belief about the importance of making a positive difference in the world, and teaching this belief to students. The third emergent theme is *The Right Fit with Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Style*, which explains the importance of creating a well-balanced, harmonious relationship between service-learning and a teacher's philosophy about teaching involving being centered on the students themselves, not just the content, and a teacher's experiential teaching style.

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Paul Krebs, who insisted that I pursue this degree, even when he knew it would entail great sacrifice on his part. Thank you, Paul, for your encouragement, your patience, and your confidence.

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I would not be typing this acknowledgments page today if it were not for my doctoral cohort members. What a ride! I will always look back on these last four years (is that all??) of my life as a time when I was challenged to grow and to learn with a group of truly remarkable people who have had such an impact on how I think and who I am today—We ARE “Tuesday People.” The professors in our Leadership Studies program provided many opportunities for us to be challenged, go to the edge, and to fly. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity and for your educational leadership for our cohort.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Problem

In my 14 years of experience as a high school social studies teacher, I had the opportunity to work with hundreds of students. I taught students who had grand plans for their lives, who worked hard, who were kind to their classmates and teachers, and who generally had positive outlooks on life. I also taught students who did not like themselves or others, who used alcohol and other drugs to ease their pain—more than one student resorted to suicide to solve the problems they faced both at home and at school. Many students simply could not cope with life and expressed this in the way they dressed, the music to which they listened, their attitudes towards adults and other classmates, their lack of achievement in school, and their lack of hope.

Even with the dire situations of some of my students, I found one particular teaching method that seemed to help students find a sense of passion and purpose in their lives (Aquila & Dodd, 2003; Eyster & Giles, 2002; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Service-learning was that teaching method. As defined by the National Commission on Service-Learning (2002), service-learning is “a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (p. 3). By involving students in service-learning activities, I was able to catch a glimpse of the positive effects these activities could have in the lives of my students. This method had a positive impact on their personal development as well as their academic achievement. When thinking about reasons why service-learning is important to me, I think about the academic connections my students were able to make when they participated in service-learning activities and all the gains in maturity I observed over the course of a year.

In my first year of teaching in 1985, two school administrators introduced me to the idea of career education and invited me to attend a local conference. The next year I became the career education representative for our building. I was introduced to service-learning through this connection to career education. I might not have labeled my personal activities as *service* in my younger years, but I have always been involved in helping people, from organizing a Muscular Dystrophy Association collection when I was 10 years old, to collecting canned foods for my high school student council, to fund-raising for and building a playground at my children's Montessori School, to bringing a group of mothers and daughters together to make polar fleece blankets for the local battered women's shelter. I gain energy and satisfaction from this type of work. It has enabled me to use my gifts of organizing and motivating others to help those in need. One of my goals in this study is to encourage teachers to use their own gifts and talents to help their students realize those same benefits in a methodical, reflective way.

Westat and Chapman (1999) conducted the first comprehensive K-12 survey of the incorporation of community service and/or service-learning into the academic curriculum. Service-learning differs from community service in that service-learning has the educational goals of the students at its core (Kaye, 2004). Westat and Chapman found that 57% of all public schools provided some form of community service activities in which their students could participate. Although almost 50% of public high schools did include some form of service-learning for their students, only 32% of all K-12 public schools included service-learning in their curriculum. Most schools using service-learning as part of their courses cited improved relations among the students, the school, and the community as key reasons for practicing service-learning (Westat & Chapman, 1999).

Scales and Roehlkepartain (2004) sought to build upon this previous study to determine the scope of K-12 community service and service-learning in public schools in the United States five years later. Researchers surveyed principals of 2,002 schools (933 elementary schools, 523 middle schools, and 546 secondary schools) and followed-up with selected telephone interviews. After statistical analysis, researchers found that while 7 of 10 public schools in the U.S. had students who were involved in community service projects, only 3 out of 10 schools actually added the necessary academic component necessary to implement service-learning. These results are consistent with those patterns found in the Westat and Chapman (1999) study:

This study's [Scales & Roehlkepartain (2004)] findings show that the human and financial energy spent on committing support to service-learning—policy, training, administrative, funding—is likely well-spent, perhaps especially in high-poverty schools, where principals may see it as an especially valuable part of promoting academic achievement. (Scales & Roehlkepartain, p. 6)

I find it puzzling that with all the benefits service-learning brings to students and to communities, the actual percentage of schools incorporating service-learning actually decreased from 1999 (32%) to 2004 (28%), with a “meaningful decline in the proportion of middle schools that offer both community service and service-learning (77% to 70%)” (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004, p. 7). The methods and participants of these two studies do not allow for strict data comparisons, but Scales and Roehlkepartain made “trend comparisons between the 2004 study and the 1999 study” (p. 7). It is important to question, to listen, and to learn from the teachers who are including service-learning in their teaching to determine why teachers choose to incorporate service-learning in their courses. I want to know what their experiences have been. I am curious to find out what factors motivate and help them initiate their projects. I also

want to learn what benefits they derive from their projects and how these K-12 classroom teachers describe their service-learning experiences.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the essence of the service-learning experience for K-12 teachers in central and northwest Ohio. Service-learning is defined as an educational methodology that incorporates student preparation, service to the community, and reflection, with links to the academic curriculum (Billig, 2002).

In phenomenology, researchers study *lived experiences* and conduct studies with individuals to explore a particular concept or *phenomenon*. Lived experiences are events or experiences that have occurred in people's lives (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). I will study the phenomenon of service-learning by interviewing teachers who have incorporated service-learning in their classrooms.

In reviewing my own experience with this phenomenon, I started small. I began my experience with service-learning with a group of approximately 10 at-risk ninth grade students. These students visited a nursing home in the area, cleaned the residents' apartments and did lawn work around the facility. Next, I moved on to involve students in my social studies classes who interviewed the nursing home residents about their experiences during World War II. During follow-up visits, the students read to the residents, painted their nails, played cards, and spent personal time getting to know them. After each visit, the students wrote journal entries and discussed their experiences in small groups and as an entire class.

I will never forget a bright student named Shad who was achieving much below his potential in my class. He visited a nursing home each week, where he typically played euchre and other card games with three men over the age of 75. One morning, I saw Shad in the

hallway just as the first bell was about to ring. As we passed, he said, “Hey, Mrs. Krebs! I was about to cut school today, but then I remembered, ‘Hey, it’s service-learning day.’ I just knew I had to be here.” That was an epiphany for me. That statement was made over 10 years ago and yet I recall it as if it were yesterday. It was on that day that I began to truly pay attention to the power of service-learning to change the behaviors, and therefore change the lives, of students.

My involvement in implementing service-learning increased and academic curricular connections were clearer when I taught American Humanities in a team-teaching environment with an English teacher. We integrated service-learning in a unit on the Great Depression and its relationship to current poverty issues in our area. In studying the 1930s, we read John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* and compared the poverty of the Joad Family in the 1930s to the poverty facing area families in the 1990s. As a part of that unit, students visited a soup kitchen, food pantry, homeless shelter, family shelter, and county welfare office. The students gathered information and presented recommendations to our State Representative in the State Legislature. The Congressman listened intently to the students’ proposals and engaged them in meaningful conversation that took most of the afternoon.

A few years later, I received a telephone call from a former student named Jeff, who had participated in this American Humanities Unit on the Great Depression. When Jeff called me from his college campus, he informed me that it was from that Humanities experience of meeting with the State Representative that he found his passion for politics. That afternoon he was moving to Washington, D.C., to be an intern in a congressional office to make a difference for those less fortunate, and he just wanted me to know.

These are two simple stories, and yet, they are quite profound. I have taught many high school students who make poor choices, who had neither hope nor resilience. One possible

solution toward engaging each student in a more meaningful role in his or her own education, finding passion and purpose in their lives, is through service-learning (Aquila & Dodd, 2003; Eyler & Giles, 2002; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). No matter how profound the experience for students, it takes the motivation, initiation, organization, and planning of the classroom teacher to create and provide this experience for students.

Researchers have reported that resilient children typically possess four characteristics: “social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future” (Bernard, 1993, p. 44). Schools that provide a rich curriculum and integrate academics with the arts, sports, service, and vocational skills provide greater opportunities for students to be successful. It is a challenge for schools to “engage children by providing them opportunities to participate in meaningful activities and roles” (Bernard, 1993, p. 47).

It is my opinion that service-learning provides a venue for schools to incorporate this type of meaningful curriculum to help children develop more resilient qualities. In order for a student to experience the positive benefits of service-learning in the classroom, the leader of the classroom—the teacher—must choose to incorporate service-learning as a teaching method. The key to broader infusion of service-learning into the curriculum is in the hands of teachers. In order for teachers to incorporate this method, they must be motivated to do so. They must be personally motivated to participate in the experience and they must find value in it—both for themselves and for their students. I believe, therefore, it is important to explore the gap in the research that exists to determine the essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher’s perspective to discover these motivating factors. Once I begin to discover the essence of this service-learning experience, I will be better able to communicate the benefits of service-learning to more teachers and administrators, thereby encouraging them to incorporate service-

learning into their own academic curriculum. Through this, more students will be able to discover their gifts and talents and find more meaning and value in their school work as they serve the community in a meaningful way.

### Guiding Questions

In thinking about the essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher's point-of-view, several guiding questions emerge:

1. How do teachers understand and describe their experiences in implementing service-learning projects?
2. What motivates teachers to initiate service-learning experiences for their students?
3. What benefits, if any, do teachers derive from their service-learning experiences?
4. What academic student benefits, if any, do teachers perceive resulting from service-learning experiences?
5. What personal student benefits, if any, do teachers perceive resulting from service-learning experiences?
6. What role does administrative leadership play in aiding teachers in sustaining service-learning experiences for their students?

### Significance of the Study

The findings of this study benefit educators in several ways. First, the study provides educators with an understanding of the benefits of service-learning opportunities for students and ways to incorporate successful service-learning activities in their classrooms. It has been my personal experience that if teachers and administrators better understand the social, emotional, and academic benefits service-learning can provide their students, they will work to continue to implement it, no matter how many hours, phone calls, or headaches they encounter along the

way. Second, this study will provide educators with an understanding of what the sustainability needs are for incorporating service-learning, so that teachers will better understand how to use this teaching method even when the going gets tough. By understanding the components of sustainability and systemic leadership and support, even when they face roadblocks, teachers may be more likely to work with school district leaders and the community to provide that support to sustain service-learning projects. Finally, if more teachers understand ways to incorporate service-learning into their classes, more students may reap the benefits of participation in service-learning activities and develop a greater sense of passion and purpose in their lives. If teachers and administrators are motivated to participate in service-learning, then more students will have these beneficial service opportunities.

#### Definition of Terms

*Service learning:* “a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002, p. 3).

*Community service:* a one-time activity to help accomplish a goal in the community, but relies little on educational goals, and incorporates little or no preparation or reflection (Ohio Department of Education, 2001; Wade, 1997).

*Sustainability:* the continuation of a program over time, with long-term partnerships, and supportive stakeholders, and secure funding sources (Billig, 2002).

*Institutionalization:* a new or innovative program becoming part of the mainstream culture of an organization (Billig, 2002; Kramer, 2000).

*Essence:* “the very nature of a phenomenon,...which makes a ‘thing’ what it *is*—and without which it could not be what it is” (van Manen, 1990, p. 10).

### Delimitations and Limitations

I studied the service-learning experience by listening to the perspectives of K-12 teachers. Using in-depth interviews of six co-researchers along with my own experiences, I gathered data on this topic and then analyzed the data according to the themes that emerged.

One delimitation of this study is that I confined my research to interviews of teachers from kindergarten through grade 12 in public schools in central and northwest Ohio. A second delimitation is my focus on teachers who have had positive service-learning experiences with their students. The purpose of this study does not include an all-encompassing survey of the service-learning implementation process, both positive and negative. Its purpose is to focus only on the positive aspects of service-learning implementation. A third delimitation is the sole focus on service-learning and not community service. In the data collection and analysis process, I filtered out references to community service activities as clearly as possible. The fourth delimitation is that this study only focused on teachers, not others who were impacted by or involved with service-learning. Finally, the reader should also remember the goal of this study is not statistical generalization, but a compilation of themes to determine the essence of a teacher's experience in implementing service-learning in a K-12 classroom.

A limitation of this study is the level of openness and honesty with which the co-researchers explained their experiences with service-learning during the interviews. Depending on the levels of openness and honesty, the data could be misconstrued or misanalyzed.

### Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to service-learning. Specific topics addressed in Chapter Two include background information on service-learning, the definitions and components of service-learning, student benefits of service-learning, sustainability and

institutionalization of service-learning in K-12 school districts, and teacher motivation for implementing service-learning in K-12 classrooms. Chapter Three presents the research methodology, the method used for selecting co-researchers, and the procedures for gathering and analyzing the data. Separate single-case analyses of each co-researcher's experience with service-learning are included in Chapter 4-10. Chapter 11 details the major themes discovered during the coding and analysis process. The essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher's experience is detailed in Chapter 12. Chapter 13 provides answers for each of the remaining five guiding questions of the study, concluding with Chapter 14, containing recommendations for school district leaders, teachers, and researchers regarding teacher motivation for implementing service-learning in the K-12 classroom.

## CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Service-Learning: Background Information

Service-learning is a relatively young concept in American education. The term *service-learning* was first used in 1966 to describe a project linking college students in Tennessee with organizations involved in studying river tributaries as a part of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Soon after, educators defined service-learning as the combining of educational growth with the accomplishment of tasks to meet genuine human needs. This definition was officially adopted at the Atlanta Service-Learning Conference in 1969 (Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer, & Brahler, 2004).

Because of its relative newness in the field of education, there is little research available on the topic of service-learning, especially research connecting service-learning and its long-range effects on students' behavior and attitudes (Lipka, 1997). Most studies contain statistical analyses of survey responses with regard to short-term changes in the attitudes of the participants. There are a disproportionate number of these types of studies (Serow, 1997). In addition, most articles written on the topic of K-12 service-learning involve program evaluations, descriptions of projects, or anecdotal records. Random assignment and control groups are rarely utilized. Measurement tools are not frequently tested for reliability (Billig & Furco, 2002). Scholarly research on service-learning in higher education, however, is increasing. The *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning* is a refereed journal dedicated solely to the research agenda of service-learning in higher education. Since its initial publication in 1994, scholarly research efforts involving service-learning in higher education have increased (Billig & Furco, 2002). This researcher has found few studies focusing on K-12 teacher implementation of service-learning, nor the motivating and initiating factors for these teachers.

The literature review for this phenomenological study, seeking to define the essence of service-learning from the K-12 teacher's perspective, will be divided into several sections: a) service-learning: its definitions and components, b) student benefits of service-learning, c) leadership and sustainability factors for service-learning programs, and d) teacher motivations for implementing service-learning in K-12 classrooms.

### Service-Learning: Its Definitions and Components

#### *Differentiation Between Service-Learning and Community Service*

Various definitions have emerged since 1966 as service-learning has continued to grow and change. Because service-learning can take a variety of forms, defining service-learning is a challenging task (Wade, 1997). It is important to initially distinguish between community service and service-learning. Of the two educational activities, community service is the lesser involved and does not purposefully connect to academic goals (Burns, 1998; Westat & Chapman, 1999). Similar to community service, part of service-learning includes service to the community, but service-learning deepens this experience by connecting that service directly to the academic curriculum. Service-learning is distinguished from community service in that service-learning is an integral part of the curriculum, providing preparation, service, and reflection opportunities for students (ODE, 2001; Wade, 1997).

Community service is usually a one-time activity performed to help accomplish a goal in the community, but incorporates little or no preparation or reflection (ODE, 2001; Wade, 1997). Community service is commonly defined as the performing of a service by individuals for the benefit of others. These *others* can be individuals, groups, organizations, or communities as a whole. Community service is usually performed without a focus on learning (Burns, 1998; Westat & Chapman, 1999). Students can perform community service in school or community

settings and that service may or may not be voluntary. Even though the service hours may be required for a class, the service does not necessarily have a purposeful connection to academic learning objectives. Also, in community service, there may be no purposeful reflection or critical analyses of the experience for students (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004).

Service-learning is both an educational philosophy and a teaching pedagogy (Shumer, 1997). For example, when elementary school students collect canned goods at Thanksgiving and donate them to the local food pantry for distribution, they are performing an act of community service. In comparison, students participating in service-learning may also collect canned foods, but their activity is directly connected to the curriculum. Multiple models exist for implementing the service-learning philosophy in the classroom. For example, students might integrate specific learning objectives such as health, language arts, and social studies by not only collecting the canned foods, but also by writing pamphlets on the importance of eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and proteins. The food pantry workers then distribute copies of these pamphlets along with the canned goods to families in need. These same students then extend their learning by visiting a first grade classroom and performing a skit on the importance of eating healthy foods. Throughout the service-learning process, students reflect on their experiences and write journal entries about what they have learned about healthy eating habits and what they contributed personally to the project. During class reflection discussions, the students then share what they learned about the importance of leadership, helping others, and working together toward a common goal.

Billig (2002), noted service-learning researcher and author, defines the type of service-learning illustrated above, by including the importance of academic connections, partnerships, and reflection in her comprehensive definition of service-learning:

Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that links academic learning to service that meets authentic community needs. Students who engage in high quality service-learning activities typically have some choice in the service they provide, work cooperatively with each other and with members of the community, receive at least some cognitive guidance from adults and/or peers as they reflect on and make sense of their experiences, and acquire a new knowledge or skills that recognizably link to academic content areas. (p. 246)

### *Major Concepts in Service-Learning*

The definition of service-learning includes three major concepts—a connection to the academic curriculum, a partnership with a group outside the classroom, and reflection on the service and the learning that occurred (Billig, 2002; Burns, 1998; Eyler and Giles, 1999; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). Each of these concepts will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

#### *Connection to the academic curriculum.*

The first concept included in almost all definitions of service-learning reviewed in the literature include the importance of directly connecting service-learning to the academic curriculum, standards, or learning objectives (Billig, 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Billig & Kraft, 1998; Burns, 1998; Kaye, 2004; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; Education Commission of the States, 2002; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; ODE, n.d.; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). One source also mentions the importance of student choice in selecting the service performed and the importance of cognitive guidance by the teacher during the selection and service process (Billig, 2002).

There are several important factors in connecting service-learning to the academic curriculum. The National Service-Learning Cooperative (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004) stresses the importance of involving students in challenging tasks that require them to apply their knowledge and skills during the experience. When students participate in service-learning as a part of academic study, they learn civic responsibility while strengthening their communities (Billig & Kraft, 1998). When analyzing the academic connection in the definition of service-learning, Eyler and Giles (1999) found that many programs do not strike a meaningful balance between service and learning. Eyler and Giles conducted two national research projects between 1993 and 1998, surveying almost 4,000 college students from across the country. The researchers found that either the service dwarfs the learning or the learning dominates the service activity.

Sigmon (1996) created a visual of this difficult balance by illustrating the varieties of combinations of service and learning using different typology (See Table 1). Either the service is the dominant factor as mentioned by Eyler and Giles (1999), indicated by *SERVICE-learning*, or the academic goals are the focus of service activity, as Sigmon illustrates in *service-LEARNING*. In some classes, service is part of the course requirement, but students are left to make their own academic connections as in *service-learning*. Finally, when the learning goals are met and the service meets a community need and connects to the learning goals, students have participated in *SERVICE-LEARNING*, which illustrates the desired emphasis and balance (Sigmon, 1996). When service and learning are integrated, they reinforce and enrich one another (Billig & Kraft, 1998).

Table 1

*A Service and Learning Typology*


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service-LEARNING	Learning goals primary; service outcomes secondary
SERVICE-learning	Service outcomes primary; learning goals secondary
service-learning	Service and learning goals separate
SERVICE-LEARNING	Service and learning goals of equal weight; each enhances the other for all participants

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(Sigmon, 1996, p. 184)

*Partnerships.*

The second concept in defining service-learning is the importance of community partnerships that meet real community needs (Billig & Kraft, 1998; Burns, 1998; Education Commission of the States, 2002; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; ODE, n.d; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Some researchers also include other concepts related to partnerships such as applying service-learning to real-life situations (Burns, 1998; ODE, n.d.), teaching civic and social responsibility through service (Burns, 1998; National Commission on Service-Learning, 2002), and helping students learn to care for others (Kaye, 2004; ODE, n.d.).

As Billig (2002) mentions in her definition, the community plays an important role in the definition of service-learning. When students learn in a community-based setting, they have the opportunity for true, meaningful application of their knowledge and skills (ODE, n.d.) and they are able to integrate all they have learned and apply it in a community-based situation (Burns,

1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Students are able to extend their learning beyond the classroom (ODE, n.d.), provide leadership, and participate in projects that meet genuine community needs (ODE, n.d.; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). This type of community partnership helps students develop a sense of civic and social responsibility (Burns, 1998). Because of the value of this partnership, it is indeed important that both the student group and the community partner arrive at and operate from a shared definition of service-learning (Burns, 1998).

In the Eyler and Giles study (1999), 66% of students believed their service met a community need fairly often or very often. In addition, community voice was a significant predictor of students' personal development in the areas of tolerance, cultural appreciation, and believing the community members being served shared similar characteristics with the students who were performing the service. Researchers with the National Service-Learning Cooperative (1998) concur that the partnership component clearly distinguishes service-learning from other educational methods and that "at its very core is the emphasis on efforts to meet genuine community needs, to make a difference in ways both students and the community see as important and worthwhile" (p. 4).

#### *Reflection.*

The third concept in defining service-learning is the importance of structured student reflection on the entire service-learning experience (Billig, 2002; Education Commission of the States, 2002; ODE, n.d.; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Reflection provides the opportunity for each student to discover his or her role in civic and social responsibility. On-going reflection opportunities allow time for students to think critically about their service to the community (Education Commission of the States, 2002).

Eyler and Giles (1999) note that reflection can be described as “the hyphen in service-learning; it is the link that ties student experience in the community to academic learning and symbolizes the central role of reflection in the process of learning through community experience” (p. 171).

Reflection is manifested in the classroom in various ways. Teachers can direct students to write in journals, create art projects, write letters to the editor of the newspaper, write poetry, give oral reports to the group, present to a school assembly, and/or prepare booklets on the experience. These are just a few of the variety of ways students can connect their service to learning through reflection (Search Institute, 2000).

#### *Central Definition of Service-Learning*

For the purpose of this study, service-learning, in all its various forms, will be defined using the definition developed by Westat and Chapman (1999) and Scales and Roehlkepartain (2004), who conducted national service-learning research for the Corporation for National Service and the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. Their definition incorporates all three major components discussed above. Westat and Chapman (1999) and Scales and Roehlkepartain (2004) used the following definition in their two national studies of K-12 service-learning:

Service-learning is defined as curriculum-based community service done through schools that integrates classroom instruction with community service activities. The service must:

- a) be organized in relation to an academic course or curriculum,
- b) have clearly stated learning objectives,
- c) address real community needs in a sustained manner over a period of time, and

- d) assist students in drawing lessons from the service through regularly schedule, organized reflection or critical analysis activities, such as classroom discussions, presentations, or directed writings. (p. 5)

### *Key Components in Service-Learning*

As delineated in the above review of service-learning definitions, there are three important concepts of service-learning for it to be defined as such—academic connection, partnership, and reflection. Similarly, service-learning pedagogy also contains four critical phases. Researchers have labeled these major essential elements of service-learning into four major phases: preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration (Kaye, 2004; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

#### *Preparation phase.*

In the preparation phase of service-learning, teachers and students work together to prepare for learning combined with social action (Kaye, 2004). Specific objectives in the preparation phase link state and local academic standards to learning. This purposeful linkage to state and local standards encourages students to use higher order thinking skills by applying their learning to the service initiative (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

During the preparation phase, students, with help from teachers, identify a need and begin to research (Billig & Klute, 2002). Teachers design classroom activities to help students personalize and learn about the chosen issue. From there, teachers and students begin to generate plans for action and to establish partnerships with community agencies, other schools or classrooms, or national groups for additional learning resources and service opportunities (Kaye, 2004). In effective service-learning projects, student voice is valued in the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of the project, with teachers serving as facilitators of learning.

Appropriate selection of the service activity involves clearly stating the goals of the activity, making sure the service activity meets a genuine need, and includes tasks that are significant and that have real consequences (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). When students have responsibilities for events that have real consequences, they are more likely to take the activity and their learning more seriously (Shumer, 1997).

During the preparation phase, it is important to determine the goals of a program before implementation because different program goals and designs can produce different results. For example, a program involving mentoring of younger children can result in more mature behavior of the older mentor as well as the younger mentee, whereas collaboration between students of the same age in two different schools can develop group problem-solving skills in the students in both schools. It is important for teachers to collaborate with students, as well as with other teachers, regarding appropriate goals, themes, issues, and optimal learning experiences for students (Shumer, 1997). During the preparation phase, students should understand their roles during the project, prepare for safety issues, and gain knowledge and sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

Not only is student voice important during the preparation phase, but so is the community voice. All students should have meaningful interaction and collaboration with community members during the formation of partnerships (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). Clear communication between the school and the partner organization, whether it is another classroom, school, or community or government organization, is important for the success of the project (Shumer, 1997). To incorporate the community voice in the preparation phase, teachers and students must work to understand and meet the needs identified by the community members (Eyler & Giles, 1999). When service-learning is implemented

properly, teachers devote a significant amount of preparation time coordinating with community agencies. All participants should help to determine what community needs will be met along with what students will learn and what services will be performed. In addition, students and teachers should design a method to promote communication and collaboration among students, teachers, and community partners (Shumer, 1997).

*Action phase.*

The importance of community partnership in the preparation phase is most strongly connected to the second phase of service-learning: *action* (Eyler & Giles, 1999; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). As students transition from preparation into action, they continue to gather resources and information by interacting with the community partner directly involved with the issue. Because of questions raised and answered, students begin to think more deeply about the issues and their social contexts and begin to experience first-hand the results of their learning in action. They apply their knowledge, energy, skills, and enthusiasm in showing concern for others and begin to appreciate the contributions of their classmates (Kaye, 2004).

This application of learning through action links the community experience to classroom learning. Eyler and Giles (1999) found that this type of application is a predictor of academic learning outcomes, problem-solving, critical thinking, and perspective transformation. Students reported they were more intellectually stimulated with their service-learning experiences than by other classes and reported a deeper understanding of the academic content, the complexity of issues, and an understanding of the work of various social service agencies.

As part of the action phase, Eyler and Giles (1999) also emphasize the importance of establishing relationships with the community to locate productive service sites for students. During the action phase, the quality of the placement is important in providing an

environment where students can take initiative, assume responsibility, and work together with community members. According to Eyler and Giles (1999):

placement quality was most consistently associated with impact on personal and interpersonal outcomes. It was a positive predictor of virtually all measures of tolerance and stereotyping—such personal development as knowing the self better, spiritual growth, and reward in helping others; and interpersonal outcomes such as leadership and communication skills, and the ability to work with others. (p. 170)

Students working with diverse populations also showed a reduction in stereotypes and increases in tolerance, cultural appreciation, spiritual growth, and self-knowledge (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Effective service-learning programs value diversity in those who participate, in the projects selected, and in the populations served. When individuals discuss and value diversity and when diverse individuals and groups participate and work together to complete a project, interaction and respect for all involved can result (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

#### *Reflection phase.*

*Reflection* is the third phase of implementation in the service-learning processes following preparation linked to academic content, and community action, ideally having taken place in a quality placement offering a diverse perspective. . As previously indicated in the definition of service-learning, reflection purposefully ties service in the action phase to academic learning in the preparation phase. Some students naturally share their experiences with friends, relatives, roommates, and classmates. Other students need specific direction in the reflective process before they can become thoughtful about their experiences and their personal growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999; National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998). Reflection provides an

opportunity for the integration of learning, experiences, and awareness of personal growth. Students begin to see the impact of combining what they learned and its effect on their future thinking and action. It is also important that adults model the reflective process for students (Kaye, 2004).

While listening to students discuss their reflection processes and the types of reflection activities that were helpful for them, Eyler and Giles (1999) examined the relationship between problem-solving and service-learning. In doing so, they arrived at a series of five reflective principles: *connection, continuity, context, challenge, and coaching* (p. 183) that led to effective connections between service and learning.

*Connection* is a key quality because of the connections that exist between the classroom and the community, the connections between the people involved in the project, and the connection of learning in the community setting and learning in the classroom. Encouraging reflection that focuses on these connections brings to light their importance and what can be gained from these connections (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

*Continuity* is evident in the reflection phase because reflection is a continuous process, occurring before, during, and after service. Students who have multiple opportunities for reflection are better able to grow and develop and to test out their understanding of the world (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The third quality of reflection is *context*. The community setting provides a context for learning and reflection. When students learn outside the classroom, they have a true context for solving problems. The context of the reflection sessions should be a consideration. Varying the style and place and including community partners in reflection sessions can be powerful tools to make the reflection process more meaningful (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The fourth quality of effective reflection is *challenge*, how experiences provide challenges for students. These challenges lead students to obtaining more complex ways to view the world. During the reflection process, teachers should challenge students to create meaning from their service-learning experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

*Coaching* is the final reflective quality. Students participating in service-learning need emotional support when serving in new settings and facing new problems. Students need intellectual support and coaching as their questions and challenges become more complex. Teachers must be aware of the academic content connection and the essence of the service-learning experience for each student, which can be time-consuming and difficult. Interaction and feedback from teachers during the reflection process provide both challenge and support to students (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

When teachers provide students opportunities for multiple methods of reflection in an ongoing fashion, while keeping in mind these five qualities of reflection, they are able to more effectively promote critical thinking and meet curricular objectives. “Reflection is a useful tool for most service-learning goals, but it is central to a question for improved academic outcomes” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 173). Through reflection, students are able to use higher-order thinking to connect their service experience to curricular objectives more clearly (Kaye, 2004, National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

*Demonstration and celebration phase.*

An additional challenge for teachers is incorporating the fourth and final phase of service-learning following preparation, action, and reflection phases: *demonstration and celebration*. Teachers create a variety of methods to acknowledge student work, and to celebrate and validate student service to the community. The public, the school community and the

community-at-large, should have the opportunity to publicly recognize the positive contributions students have made to the community. Through this celebration, each student has the opportunity to envision him or herself as a valuable resource in the community, not just as a recipient of service, but also as a provider of service (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998).

In addition to celebration as a culminating phase, demonstration provides students the opportunity to share what they have learned and accomplished in their communities. Students can create an exhibition of their expertise through public displays, speeches, and letters to the editor, for example. Kaye (2004) advocates demonstration instead of celebration because demonstration allows students to confirm what they have learned and continue to learn more. Kaye urges that celebration be a part of demonstration, where community members and media are invited, but the emphasis should remain focused on “the intrinsic benefits of learning and on the satisfaction of helping to meet community needs” (pp. 11-12). Through this demonstration process, students not only teach others, but also acknowledge to themselves the depth and breadth of their learning. Demonstration and celebration are authentic expressions of learning in real-life settings involving the students and members of the community (Kaye, 2004).

Ted Sizer (2004), founder of the Coalition for Essential Schools, advocates for high schools to require student *exhibitions of mastery*, which compel teachers, as well as students, to “focus on the substance of schooling” (p. 215). Sizer explains that an exhibition of skills and knowledge “gives the state, the parents, prospective employers, and the adolescents themselves a real reading of what a student can do. It is the only sensible basis for accountability” (p. 215).

From a public relations perspective for school districts, because exhibitions and demonstrations provide an authentic link to the community, students feel more connected to and

valued by their communities. Likewise, communities feel more connected to their students (Thomsen, 2006).

Researchers at Brandeis University (1999) conducted an evaluation of programs that were part of Learn and Serve America, a service-learning, grant-making organization. Researchers surveyed approximately 1000 middle school and high school students who had participated in Learn and Serve grant-sponsored activities along with a comparison group. They also interviewed school staff and teachers along with community agency staff. Of the community agency representatives interviewed, 96% reported they would utilize service-learning program participants again and 90% of those representatives stated that the students helped improve the quality of services they provided to their clients. In addition, over 66% reported that service-learning students had created a more positive attitude in community-school relationships and over 50% reported that their organizations had created new partnerships with the schools.

This experience of working directly with students helps community members see themselves as positive stakeholders in their schools (Boston, 1997). The demonstration process is an opportunity to capitalize on the positive public relations that service-learning programs can create in communities (Brandeis University, 1999).

#### *Summary of Definition and Components of Service-Learning*

In conclusion, service-learning may potentially have as many definitions as the number of teachers who implement it as a teaching method. In reviewing the literature, however, there are three major components that distinguish service-learning from other teaching methods such as community service and other experiential learning concepts. Those determining factors are a) a direct link to the curriculum; b) a direct, purposeful connection to a community need outside the classroom; and c) a systemic method for reflection and evaluation. When examining the

major phases of service-learning and their various components, researchers and authors have determined that there are many important phases in creating and implementing a successful service-learning program, the most important of which are preparation, action, reflection, and celebration/demonstration. Of these four phases, reflection is the connective tissue that enables students to relate the social and academic purposes of the project, their service experiences, and the positive difference made in the community.

Even though researchers have determined there are essential components when implementing service-learning, one of the reasons for its success is its flexibility as a teaching method and its application to a variety of settings for different purposes. “Skillful educators consciously mix and match service components in any one project to produce substantial learning and service outcomes” (National Service-Learning Cooperative, 1998, p. 6). This skillful application of service-learning leads to benefits for students.

#### Student Benefits of Service-Learning

Researchers report that students derive personal, interpersonal, social, and academic benefits from participation in service-learning (Aquila & Dodd, 2003; Eyler & Giles, 2002; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004; Search Institute, 2000). In the area of personal development, students self-report increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills, personal decision-making skills (Aquila & Dodd, 2003), career benefits, and spiritual growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Socially, students who participate in service-learning report a positive impact on their own social responsibility (Scales, et al., 2000), civic attitudes, and volunteerism (Brandeis University, 1999). Students see themselves as valuable resources for their organizations and their communities (Eyler & Giles,

1999; Search Institute, 2000). Students express that taking care of others who experience difficulties is truly everyone's responsibility (Melchior & Bailis, 2002).

A well-designed service-learning program can contribute to students' attainment of important values, knowledge, skills, and commitment necessary for good citizenship (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Melchior & Bailis, 2002). When participating in service-learning, students are given opportunities to practice and nurture social skills by interacting with different types of people (Search Institute, 2000). Interpersonally, teachers and administrators note an improvement in students' abilities to work with others. The students themselves report that it was rewarding to help others (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students showed support and concern for the well-being of others (Search Institute, 2000) and tended to maintain that concern over time more than students who did not participate in service-learning (Scales, et al., 2000). Students also tended to develop a greater tolerance and appreciation for other cultures (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and those students who participated in service also reported talking more often with their parents about school than students who did not participate (Scales, et al., 2000).

In the Brandeis University (1999) quantitative and qualitative Learn and Serve America study previously mentioned, over 60% of students reported their service "involved real responsibilities, a chance to do things themselves, a variety of tasks, opportunities for discussion, and to develop and use their own ideas. Nearly 80% reported feeling they had made a contribution" (p. 3).

Students who participated in service-learning not only reported personal developmental success, but also reported greater academic success (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Melchior, 1999; Scales, et al., 2000). Students' attitudes toward education and school performance improved

(Melchior, 1999); students also experienced a positive impact on their feelings toward school, their grades in math and science, and also an increase in their overall grade point averages (Scales, et al., 2000; Melchior & Bailis, 2002).

To arrive at the above results, Scales, et al., (2000) studied the effects of service-learning on students by conducting a qualitative research study. Researchers conducted a detailed search process focusing on schools with quality service-learning programs in place and selected three middle schools located in Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Missouri. Each school operated with a team-teaching structure. Researchers randomly assigned students in each school to teams and worked to balance gender, academic performance, and ethnicity. Researchers also created treatment and control classes on each team. Students on the control teams did not participate in any service-learning activities. The students on the treatment teams performed a broad mix of service activities of direct human service, environmental service, and/or career exploration. Students completed pre-post test surveys at the beginning and end of the school year. Students in the treatment groups who had participated in 31 or more hours of service had significantly higher posttest scores in their efficacy of helping others. Students who reported they did *a lot of reflection* reported a significant increase in personal development opportunities and “improved in their pursuit of good grades and maintained their perception that school provides personal opportunities, and decreased less than did other students in their commitment to classwork” (p. 349). Students in the treatment groups reported that their service experiences had made them more interested in other classes and felt more highly motivated. Researchers found no significant effects on student engagement in school, perceived academic competence, GPA, or conduct at school.

In looking more closely at specific academic benefits to students, Wurr (2002) conducted a study on writing quality, in which judges scored written essays of 33 college students enrolled in an introductory first-year composition course. The treatment group participated in service-learning; the control group did not participate in service. Judges assessed the essays both holistically and analytically, scoring for rhetorical appeal, reasoning, coherence, and mechanics. The service-learning students scored significantly higher (8%) in holistic scoring and significantly higher (13%) in analytic scoring, as compared to students enrolled in traditional writing classes. Students in the service-learning class also demonstrated through their writing their greater understanding and appreciation of the complexities of public issues and of the writing and research strategies necessary to communicate such complexities.

In another study of academic benefits of service-learning, Strage (2004) examined the academic records of 477 college students enrolled in a child development course. She compared the grades earned by students who were required to perform service hours working with children and to reflect on those experiences with those students who had no required service or reflection. Student performance differences favored the students who participated in service-learning, but did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. The service-learning students strongly out-performed the non-serving students on the essay questions. These results seem to concur with the Wurr (2002) study that service-learning experiences enhance students' expression and understanding of complex issues.

Not all researchers agree with the positive aspects of service. Boyte (1991) takes issue with the use of service to motivate students to be engaged in the political process. Instead of teaching politics, Boyte believes service meets a young person's need for a connection to the community, but the politics is missing from the experience. Similarly, Alt (1997) suggests there

is little connection between service-learning and academic skills mainly because most service-learning programs are not designed with specific academic skills in mind. Alt asserts, “documentation of results to date is generally sparse and unreliable...especially for academic outcomes” (p. 13).

Galley (2003) concurs with the lack of connection between service and academic skills by criticizing the interpretation of the service-learning requirement made by some school districts in the state of Maryland. The State of Maryland requires each student to perform 75 hours of service to qualify for high school graduation. Galley believes there is a lack of connection between service and academics for some students.

Similarly, Sheffield (2005) criticizes service-learning as becoming *over-defined* in that almost any student experience that connects students with the community is being labeled as service-learning. With service-learning becoming a more over-arching term and “by being everything for everyone, service-learning is quickly becoming nothing” (p. 47). In addition, Sheffield criticizes that what has been written about service-learning is void of basic philosophical concepts. He argues that until authors, researchers, and practitioners explore the philosophical concepts of the major components of service-learning—service, reflection, and experiential learning—that service-learning will not survive as a viable teaching method.

Even though not all studies agree about the positive aspects of service-learning, the majority of studies do support the benefits service-learning experiences provide for students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. In addition, students who participated in service-learning activities experienced a positive impact on personal and social development, school-community relations, and academic achievement (Kielsmeier, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Neal, 2004; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004;). To summarize, representatives from the Search Institute (2000), an

independent, nonprofit organization whose mission it is to work toward the advancement of the well-being of children and youth, state that “service-learning becomes an important catalyst for shaping positive identity as young people discover their gifts and a place in the world through their acts of service and justice” (p. 20).

### Sustainability and Institutionalization of Service-Learning in K-12

#### School Districts

In order to maintain such student benefits, school district leaders must work to sustain and institutionalize service-learning as a teaching method. The terms sustainability and institutionalization are used synonymously in much service-learning research. To distinguish the two terms, *institutionalization* refers to a new or innovative program becoming part of the mainstream culture of an organization (Billig, 2002; Kramer, 2000). When service-learning is a natural part of the educational process of a district and is woven into the learning process as an accepted, even expected pedagogy, then it has become institutionalized. *Sustainability*, then, refers to the continuation of a program over time, with long-term partnerships, supportive stakeholders, and secure funding sources. Service-learning is institutionalized when it is an expected part of the curriculum at every grade level and is sustained when it is supported with financial and human resources (Billig, 2002). For the purposes of this literature review, the two terms: *institutionalization* and *sustainability* will be used interchangeably.

According to Billig (2002), little research has been conducted on sustainability or institutionalization of service-learning. Kramer (2000) conducted a study for the Corporation for National Service and reported on service-learning institutionalization and its connection to educational reform. He developed a conceptual framework for service-learning institutionalization naming three conditions that provide sustainability and institutionalization of

service-learning in K-12 education: a) legitimizing service-learning practices and activities in the classroom, b) widely communicating the service-learning activities and their effectiveness, and c) providing evidence to the community that service-learning improves student performance. To arrive at these qualities, Kramer conducted over 100 phone interviews of service-learning providers in 20 states in over 80 school districts and schools, along with state education service-learning coordinators, and recipients of national service-learning grants. Kramer believes that in order for service-learning to be sustained in a K-12 environment, its practice must be “routine, widespread, legitimized, expected, supported, permanent, and resilient” (p. 17).

To sustain a service-learning program, school district leaders must be committed to service-learning and must show that commitment philosophically through financial support, evidence in strategic planning, and connection to other educational reforms.

#### *Philosophical Support*

In addressing philosophical support for service-learning, Billig and Klute’s (2002) qualitative study for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation described the collective impact of service-learning programs of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation grantees. Researchers concluded that sustainability of service-learning requires attention to fundraising, policy development, creation of support networks, opportunities for participant sharing and reflection, and advanced professional development opportunities. Pontbriand (2003) supported these findings in reporting the results of his case study of a suburban high school in the northeastern United States. He concluded that sustainability of service-learning requires “high system-level support” (p. 110) with a commitment from district leaders, curricular integration, and support and assistance for teachers.

Essential to service-learning institutionalization is the philosophical belief in the integration of service-learning in the curriculum and linking service-learning to educational standards. The district must philosophically support program sequencing to sustain the progression of implementation of service-learning activities for students each year, and provide appropriate professional development for such sequencing (Kramer, 2000). In Pontbriand's study (2003), he found that the excitement generated by the students who participated in service-learning projects in elementary schools generated both student and parental pressure for teachers to continue to implement service-learning in middle school and high school. A district must philosophically support service-learning in order for it to be sustained and institutionalized (Billig & Klute, 2002).

#### *Financial Support*

Financially, a district should fund the vision of the strategic plan (Ammon, Furco, Chi, & Middaugh, 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Kramer, 2000), hire a service-learning partnership coordinator to carry out the strategic plan, and organize professional development for teachers at both the novice and advanced levels (Ammon et al., 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Kramer, 2000). These steps help ensure growth in both the quantity of service-learning projects in which students participate, and the quality of those projects as they integrate the academic standards (Ammon et al., 2002).

Even though a district might philosophically support service-learning and believe it to be an effective methodology, district administrators must also provide the financial support to make this philosophy a reality in the classroom. A district must envision what its service-learning program will look like after grant funding ends. A key part of administrative leadership is

providing funding in addition to available grant dollars to enable the continuation of the program after grants have been depleted (Ammon et al., 2002).

District leadership must also provide a key staff member or members whose responsibility it is to create and promote service-learning in the schools and in the community. In successfully sustained programs, a designated permanent staff member should administer the service-learning program and assist in teacher training and recruitment, as well as locate and foster community partnerships (Ammon, et al., 2000; Billig & Klute, 2002). The service-learning coordinator holds the key position linked to sustainability and should be a professional with philosophical, personal, and financial support. This partnership coordinator should have a continual budget line and a manageable number of responsibilities. Finding one person who is capable of providing leadership, funding, networking with key stakeholders in the community, and providing professional development and support to teachers and other school staff can be a difficult task (Ammon, et al., 2002).

As part of funding the vision for institutionalized service-learning in a district, the administration must make a financial commitment to provide introductory and advanced professional development opportunities for teachers to implement quality service-learning experiences for their students (Ammon et al., 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Pontbriand, 2003). Ammon, et al. (2002) conducted a study of 28 schools participating in the CalServe Initiative who received grants providing seed money to support new or expanding service-learning partnerships. They collected narratives from evaluation reports of these 28 schools, interviewed partnership coordinators, teachers, administrators, and community members at seven CalServe sites, and collected field notes at these same sites. In this study, more service-learning partnerships emphasized expanding the quantity of service-learning projects over improving their

quality. It was the general belief of participants that when working toward sustainability, the emphasis was on getting more teachers and administrators involved. The authors warn, however, that having numerous service-learning activities that are not of high quality could actually hamper sustainability efforts. One goal of CalServe grant participants was to provide one service-learning opportunity at each grade span (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) which resulted in more teachers implementing service-learning, but because of the focus on the numbers of students involved in projects, the quality of the projects suffered. The authors suggest a balance of emphasis on both quantity and quality of service-learning activities, thereby allowing school districts to focus their energies and resources on clear and realistic implementation standards, leading to better sustainability and institutionalization of their service-learning partnerships over time.

Effective integration of quality service-learning into the curriculum requires professional development training in service-learning methods and its benefits for teachers new to the district and advanced training for teachers who have previously implemented service-learning projects in their classrooms (Billig & Klute, 2002; Kramer, 2000; Rada, n.d.). Kramer (2000) suggests that even though training teachers to embrace a new methodology takes time, the return on the investment can be unlimited if new projects and ideas with curricular connections continue to evolve. “In theory, once all of the elements of a service-learning system are established, they should continue to function with little effort” (pp. 20-21). When service-learning is self-regulating and maintains itself, functioning efficiently and growing throughout the district, it has been institutionalized (Kramer, 2000).

### *Strategic Planning*

The creation and implementation of a formal, written strategic plan is another important component in sustaining a district's service-learning program. CalServe researchers concluded that a strategic plan should clearly outline how service-learning works in conjunction with the overall goals of the district. These researchers noted several tangible benefits of including service-learning in a district's strategic plan: a) the strategic plan can define service-learning as a collaborative process, not just the responsibility of the service-learning coordinator, b) as key stakeholders leave the district, the plan enables the coordination of the program to continue, and c) the strategic plan also serves as a guide for new staff members and stakeholders (Ammon, et al., 2002).

#### *Vision.*

Part of the strategic planning process is acquiring a vision for the future of service-learning in a district. Visioning is an important element in the sustainability of service-learning (Ammon, et al., 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Kramer, 2000;). Few of the 28 CalServe Initiative schools had a clear vision of what their service-learning programs might look like in the future. This lack of vision seemed to be tied to a number of other missing elements for successful sustainability, including relying on short-term grant funds and securing few long-term partnerships (Ammon, et al., 2002). Billig and Klute (2002) contend that a comprehensive vision of sustainability should be part of the discussion early in the implementation phase. In addition, district leaders should work to ensure that vision for service-learning is a part of the marketing, media, and business plans for a district. Publicity encourages interest and support for the sustaining of service-learning, in addition to gaining support from potential partners and funders.

A committee or advisory board, organized for the purpose of providing a vision for service-learning in the district, should be made up of key stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, students, community members, and other key partners (Ammon, et al., 2002). In the CalServe study (Ammon, et al., 2002), researchers found incidents of key stakeholders, i.e., teachers, administrators, and service-learning coordinators, having significantly differing views of the vision for their programs. This can be a threat to institutionalization.

*Development of community partners.*

In addition to a strategic plan including a vision for the district, another key component in sustainability is the role of community partners as part of the district's vision (Ammon, et al., 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Rada, n.d.; Pontbriand, 2003). According to school superintendent Rada (n.d.), who is also a member of the Board of Directors for the National Service-Learning Partnerships, district administrators should provide leadership for establishing and maintaining community partnerships by providing opportunities for collaboration between teachers and community members. Administrators should serve as role models, strengthening ties to the community and should promote shared ownership of the outcomes of service-learning between the school district and the community which it serves (Ammon, et al., 2002; Pontbriand, 2003).

Service-learning programs have the unique ability to link a school and its community, increasing the likelihood of sustainability and institutionalization of service-learning (Pontbriand, 2003). For sustainability to be taken as a serious district issue, district administrators must focus on securing and retaining key stakeholders who can move the district's service-learning initiatives forward (Ammon, et al., 2002).

Pontbriand (2003) conducted a case study of one suburban high school in the northeastern United States that had been recognized nationally by the Corporation for National

and Community Service as a Leader School. In the study of this high school with over 1000 students and 98 faculty, Pontbriand conducted structured and semi-structured, on-site observations to determine what, if any, were the key features, supports, obstacles, and coping strategies to sustaining its service-learning program. He collected objective data in the form of documents, artifacts, and results of a faculty survey. In the narrative produced, Pontbriand explained, among other things, that when teachers tie several service-learning activities to an important local issue, partnerships have a broad appeal to maximize student and stakeholder participation. This central issue also served to integrate the core values of the community. Thus, Pontbriand determined that one key to successful sustainability is practitioners spending time connecting with the community and understanding and integrating its issues into service-learning opportunities for students. A variety of stakeholders can become vested in service-learning because of the shared commitment and value of community development that a service project can add to the curriculum. Community partnerships occurred because service-learning met the needs of the students through clear integration with curriculum standards, and community businesses and agencies, and the entire community.

#### *Connection to Educational Reforms*

To be sustained, service-learning should not only connect to the community, but to other educational reforms as well (Ammon et al., 2002; Billig, 2002; Billig & Klute, 2002; Rada, n.d.). To link with educational reform, service-learning can effectively be tied to academics, assessment, professional development, and program evaluation. To improve coordination and implementation, partnership coordinator positions are sometimes tied to other areas of educational reform. This personnel connection allows service-learning to become more integral to the overall educational goals of the district (Ammon, et. al, 2002).

Schools recognize the power and importance in educational reform of linking students' learning of the curriculum with service. When service-learning is linked to educational reform, service-learning can be named as a key strategy in meeting educational reform outcomes. To do this, district administrators need to show how service-learning has a positive, tangible impact on teachers and students and that the program engages the school in continuous improvement. To engage in educational reform, a service-learning program should operate like a learning organization, involving all stakeholders in continuous improvement of the educational progress of the school district (Billig & Klute, 2002).

#### *Connection to comprehensive school reform*

Named in federal legislation, Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) is a federal initiative included as a part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (Pearson, 2002).

Kramer (2000) reviewed 22 CSR initiatives including Accelerated Schools, Coalition of Essential Schools, Core Knowledge, Foxfire, and High Schools That Work, and found that only three programs specifically referenced service-learning in their literature outlining their school reform efforts, however; many endorsed community involvement as a part of school reform. Many reform initiatives included some teaching methodologies that did share similar components to service-learning. The majority of reform initiatives, however, did not use the language of service-learning in their documentation.

When Pearson (2002) surveyed 28 CSR programs to determine whether districts participating in CSR used service-learning or service-learning-like activities as a part of their designs for school reform, she found that "significant common ground exists between service-learning advocates and educational reformers" (p. 11). Several elements of service-learning are highly effective in helping meet the needs of CSR. Those elements include the use of various

learning materials other than textbooks; providing students opportunities to apply skills and knowledge to community-based issues; and assessing students using portfolios, presentations, rubrics, journaling, and other forms of alternative assessments. In addition elements of service-learning considered to be compatible with educational reform are project-based learning, flexible use of school time, interdisciplinary team teaching, experiential learning, community-based curricular connections to meet specific local needs, and the students' role in planning these curricular activities.

Pearson (2002) noted that CSR provides incentives to those schools that involve parents and the community in initiating school reform. These reform programs must then be grounded in research and proven practice. She concludes that:

service-learning is a powerful tool for reaching both academic and social objectives of education. It has the potential to reinvigorate the education reform movement by encouraging the creation of a caring community of students to improve the school's culture and positively impact our world. (p. 114)

One of the drawbacks of coupling service-learning with school reform as reported in the CalServe study (Ammon, et. al, 2002), is the tenuous future of service-learning as a district program if the educational reform movement to which it is tied does not survive. Reform movements have the potential to actually divert attention away from service-learning if the reform movement is not successful. Then, service-learning and the educational reform movement could both come to an end at the same time. While the importance of service-learning is illustrated through its inclusion in No Child Left Behind, Comprehensive School Reform could increase the likelihood of maximizing its potential through including service-learning as a reform strategy.

### *Threats to Sustainability and Institutionalization*

There are other threats that could dampen the success of service-learning sustainability other than its direct connection to an educational reform movement. These threats include the questioning of continued funding after initiating grants have expired and the difficulty of adopting time schedules to allow for varied, flexible usage of time. In addition, the lack of consistent building leadership and administrative support, along with the infusion of many new staff members unfamiliar with service-learning can threaten its sustainability. The perception that academic gains through service-learning can lack rigor if improperly coordinated is also a threat to its continuation. Finally, the lack of continuity of personnel and programming can affect all levels of service-learning partnerships (Pontbriand, 2003). This lack of continuity can be caused by high turnover of various categories of stakeholders: partnership coordinators, administrators, teachers involved in implementing service-learning, program evaluators, and others (Ammon, et al., 2002).

### *Summary of Sustainability and Institutionalization of Service-Learning in K-12 School Districts*

In order for school district leaders to avoid these threats and to work to sustain service-learning efforts, they must support service-learning both philosophically and financially. Service-learning should be included in the strategic planning process and be communicated as part of the vision for the district. District leaders must focus on developing community partners and provide meaningful roles for those partners. Leaders should consider connecting service-learning to other educational reform initiatives. Providing on-going professional development for teachers at various levels of experiences increases not only the quantity of service-learning programs in the district, but also the quality of those programs.

## Teacher Motivations for Implementing Service-Learning in K-12 Classrooms

This researcher could locate few studies regarding K-12 teacher motivation for implementing service-learning in the classroom. The majority of the limited research conducted on motivation focuses on higher education and faculty members' motivation to implement service-learning into their college-level courses. In 1998, Giles and Eyler wrote that the key question for the service-learning agenda regarding faculty should be "what factors explain faculty involvement in service-learning and how they are affected by participation" (p. 65). Even so, there is a dearth of research in this area (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Palmer, 2003).

### *Teacher Motivation Regarding Benefits for Students*

Of the few studies conducted on faculty motivation, the majority attributed that motivation to students and their learning (Abes, et al., 2002; Hammond, 1994; McKay & Rozee, 2004; Palmer, 2003). In one study, the researcher found that faculty members were most motivated by the level of student learning, especially in the areas of analytical and problem-solving skills. The concern with learning course content was a more significant motivator than were faculty concerns for values and citizenship (Hammond, 1994).

In another faculty survey, faculty rank-ordered their reasons for implementing service-learning, ranking first the importance of student learning outcomes (69.5%); second, community outcomes (38.6%); and third, professional responsibilities (19%). In addition, faculty named increased student understanding of course material (47%) as the most important factor that most strongly motivated their use of service-learning (Abes, et al., 2002).

In a qualitative study, researchers reported that faculty who incorporated service-learning personally "value the active and experiential learning methods...that enhance student learning"

(McKay & Rozee, 2004, p. 27). Further, the faculty expressed the importance of students taking responsibility for their own learning and the opportunity for students to apply learned concepts in the community. The faculty identified several student learning needs that were also met: increasing student exposure to social issues, learning the value of community and citizenship, improving critical thinking and communication skills and enhancing classroom learning in the community.

Few studies exist that focus on motivating factors of K-12 teachers. Ammon (2002) and Toole (2004) did conduct such studies and reported that the most important motivating factor for K-12 teachers was to incorporate service-learning in their classrooms was the importance of active learning (e.g., experiential, hands-on, problem-solving teaching methods). K-12 teachers also mentioned the importance of student motivation when service-learning was a part of the curriculum (Ammon, 2002).

### *Benefits to Teachers*

When teachers in K-12 classrooms and faculty in higher education settings incorporate service-learning into their coursework, they tended to fulfill both personal and professional needs (Ammon, 2002; Palmer, 2004). Teachers found service-learning to be personally rewarding because they could relate the curriculum and service to their own interests and experiences. Service-learning also met faculty needs for their belief in promoting civic engagement in their classes (Palmer, 2004). Professionally, teachers could relate service-learning to their educational philosophies and to their teaching goals (Ammon, 2002) as well as to solve pedagogical problems such as the need to connect content to current worldly events (Palmer, 2004).

Faculty in higher education settings also incorporated service-learning to satisfy professional needs such as the need to teach values and citizenship, to enhance student learning

about diversity, to link theory to practice, to connect learning goals and assignments to assessment, and to improve teaching overall (McKay, 2004).

### *Support and Mentoring From Others*

Both K-12 teachers and higher education faculty mentioned the importance of support and/or mentoring from others as an important motivating factor (Ammon, 2002; Abes, et al., 2002; McKay, 2004; Palmer, 2004). Of faculty respondents in the Abes, et al. (2002) higher education study, 60% received encouragement to include service-learning in their courses from faculty outside their departments; 56% received encouragement from faculty within their departments, and 43% were encouraged by community members. However, when asked to rate the most influential sources of support, faculty ranked student encouragement as the most influential and community member encouragement as the second most influential source of encouragement to incorporate service-learning into their curriculum.

Faculty respondents in Palmer's (2004) study also named mentors or role models as important influences for incorporating non-traditional pedagogy, such as service-learning, in their courses. To further illustrate the importance of mentors, McKay and Rozee (2004) and Abes, et al., (2002) mentioned the importance of faculty sharing information with other faculty to create a network of service-learning practitioners. Faculty who do not currently use service-learning were asked to indicate what factors would increase the likelihood that they would incorporate service-learning. They responded that receiving more information on how to use service-learning, help with logistics, and increased release time would be important in helping them to decide whether or not to incorporate service-learning in the future (Abes, et al., 2002). When studying K-12 teachers, Ammon, et al., (2002) found that teachers valued the influence of

administrators, other teachers, students, or community members when deciding whether to include service-learning in their curriculum.

#### *Other Motivating or Deterring Factors*

Other motivating factors for incorporating service-learning into the curriculum included the availability of grant funds for faculty (Palmer, 2004) and the mention of service-learning in school, state, or district mandates for K-12 teachers (Ammon, 2002).

Conversely, faculty, as opposed to K-12 teachers, were not motivated by such external factors as being required to teach a service-learning course or having service-learning as a department requirement for the course (Hammond, 1994).

Faculty who did not incorporate service-learning into their courses named four main deterring factors: a) anticipated logistical problems, b) lack of familiarity with effective implications of service-learning, c) no relevance to course content, and d) no release time to develop a service-learning course (Abes, et. al 2002).

#### *Summary of Teacher Motivations for Implementing Service-Learning*

Even though only a few studies are available on faculty or K-12 teacher motivations to incorporate service-learning into the curriculum, those studies that do exist share several important factors. Faculty and K-12 teachers name the importance of student benefits; experiential learning opportunities, and the support and encouragement of colleagues, students, and community members as major motivating factors for incorporating service-learning into their courses.

#### Summary of the Review of the Literature

In this review of service-learning literature relevant to this study, several important points can be made. First, the definition of the term *service-learning* is multi-faceted, including the

importance of curricular connections, partnerships, and reflection. The four main components of service-learning are preparation, action, reflection, and celebration/demonstration. When service-learning is included in a district's curriculum, students benefit personally, interpersonally, socially, and academically. Most researchers agree that school administrators must provide leadership both philosophically and financially to sustain service-learning efforts. Also important to sustainability is the inclusion of service-learning in the strategic plan and vision for a school district.

Researchers have conducted quantitative and qualitative studies on the effects of service-learning on the attitudes, academic progress, and motivations of *students*. Few studies have been conducted on the teachers who ultimately choose whether these students actually have the opportunity to participate in service-learning programs to actually receive these potential benefits. Findings from studies that have been conducted examining motivation factors for teachers indicate that the importance of active student learning, connection to the curriculum, mentoring, and encouragement are important motivating factors. These motivating factors occur once a service-learning project has been *conducted*. This researcher explored not only the motivation behind the first time teachers experiment with and participate in service-learning, but also considered the bigger picture of service-learning from a K-12 teacher's perspective to determine what the experiences of these teachers are. This qualitative study to seek the essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher's perspective, especially focusing on motivation and initiation, will help to fill an existing void in the literature.

### CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used in this study. Phenomenology is this qualitative research strategy. This chapter describes the major components of phenomenology and specific phenomenological methods the researcher used to in this study. In addition, this chapter describes the role of the researcher, strategies for co-researcher selection, data collection, data analyses, and validation. Finally addressed are the narrative structure, anticipated ethical issues, pilot study findings, and expected outcomes.

#### Characteristics of Phenomenology

I chose phenomenology as my research methodology because phenomenology is the study of lived experiences. In phenomenology researchers conduct studies with several individuals to explore a particular concept or *phenomenon* (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). In phenomenology, researchers seek to discover the essence of the experience for the participants (Creswell, 1998). Edmund Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994), one of the early founders of phenomenology, believed that any phenomenon can be a beginning for investigation. The phenomenon researched in this study is service-learning. Husserl focused on discovering meaning and the essence of knowledge. To explain the transformation of experience into essential insights, Husserl incorporated the process of *ideation*:

The object that appears in consciousness mingles with the object in nature so that a meaning is created, and knowledge is extended. Thus, a relationship exists between what exists in conscious awareness and what exists in the world. What appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears in the world is a product of learning. (p. 27)

Using ideation, the researcher seeks to create and attach meaning to an experience or phenomenon (Moran, 2000). By focusing on a phenomenon, describing it just as it seems, and then continuing to focus and look, the researcher incorporates the many varied dimensions of the phenomenon. According to Moustakas (1994):

We look and describe, we look again and describe, until there is a sense of having fulfilled our intention, of having arrived at a breaking off point, of having a sense of completion or closure, of really knowing what is there before us. (p. 73-74)

By recording the experiences of others, in essence, *borrowing* them, researchers gain experience and knowledge (van Manen, 1990). In this study, I sought the essence and meaning of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher's perspective, specifically focusing on the motivations to initiate service-learning, thus making phenomenology the logical research method to employ.

#### *Key Components of Phenomenological Research*

The two important key components of phenomenology that enable the researcher to participate in self-reflection and awareness of intuition are what Moustakas (1994) labels *intentionality* and *intuition*.

Intentionality is consciousness—being aware of factors such as joy, judgment, or wishes. “Knowledge of intentionality requires that we be present to ourselves and to things in the world, that we recognize that self and world are inseparable components of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28). As a researcher, I worked to remain aware of my feelings and perceptions as I intentionally conducted my research.

The second key component is *intuition*. Intuition involves a pure and attentive mind born from the light of reason alone. To derive the essence of an experience, the researcher must use

intuition to describe the experience (Moustakas, 1994). According to Descartes (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) intuition is “to be primary, an inborn talent directed toward producing solid and true judgments concerning everything that presents itself” (p. 22). By purposely incorporating intentionality and intuition, I will more likely be able to arrive at the true essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher’s perspective.

### *Key Processes Whereby Phenomenologists Derive Knowledge*

In conducting phenomenological studies, Moustakas (1994) identifies five key processes researchers can use to derive knowledge: *époche*, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, intersubjectivity, and essences. These key processes are described below.

- *Époche*: *Époche* requires the researcher to set aside beliefs, judgments, and perceptions to focus fully on the experience. *Époche* allows the researcher to look at the experience from a fresh, naïve, open perspective. “The challenge of the *Époche* is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (p. 86).
- *Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction*: Using this process, the researcher considers each experience for itself, as a separate, individual experience. This allows the researcher to look at each phenomenon in a fresh, new, open way. Ultimately, through transcendental-phenomenological reduction, the researcher creates, according to Schmitt (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) “a textural description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon...from the vantage point of an open self” (p. 34).
- *Imaginative Variation*: The researcher, according to Descartes (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) uses imaginative variation to grasp the essence of the phenomenon, using imagination, senses, and memory “to correctly unite what is sought after with what is known in order that

the former may be distinguished” (p. 35). This process assists the researcher in unifying the experience into essences that form a complete picture of the phenomenon.

- *Intersubjectivity*: The researcher must seek to recognize his or her own experiences, connections, empathies, insights, and perceptions when synthesizing information of the experiences of others. One must first explicate his or her own intertwined consciousness before being able to understand another’s experience. The researcher’s personal perceptions, however, are primary to describing the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Reflexivity, sometimes referred to as intersubjectivity, is the awareness that the subjectivity of the researcher and co-researcher exist simultaneously. The beliefs and experiences (i.e., subjectivities) of the researcher and the participant direct and guide the research process and the research content (Glesne, 1999).
- *Essences*: Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) described essence as the universal condition without which a thing would not be what it is. Seeking essence is a result of integrating the fundamental textural and structural descriptions of a phenomenon into a unified explanation of the essences of the experiences. If the essence of a phenomenon were to be removed, it would no longer exist as it is.

The remainder of this chapter addresses each of these key components of phenomenology. Époche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, intersubjectivity, and essences are address through the role and personal subjectivities of the researcher. Imaginative variation and essences are considered in the data analysis section.

#### Role of the Researcher and Personal Subjectivities

As I searched for the essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher’s perspective, a possibility existed that my passion about service-learning could cloud my

objectivity and make it difficult to achieve *époche*. I worked to overcome this issue and to achieve *époche* in two specific ways. First, before I conducted any other co-researcher interviews, a former colleague interviewed me about my own service-learning experiences as a classroom teacher. This allowed me to re-live, recall, and express my own experiences and then set them aside to focus with greater openness and *époche* on the experiences of my co-researchers. In addition, this interview allowed me to include myself as a participant in the data collection process.

Second, and prior to interviewing each co-researcher, I recorded, in writing, my initial thoughts and reflections, allowing me to incorporate Moustakas' (1994) idea of setting aside my own judgments and understandings, thus allowing me to enter each interview with a fresh, naïve, open sense of self. During this self-reflection, I focused on being open to new ideas, listening carefully to co-researchers' stories, and suspending personal judgments of these experiences by recording these ideas and feelings in writing.

I also incorporated the phenomenological concept of intersubjectivity or reflexivity, which calls for incorporating the researcher's own experiences with the phenomenon, into the research process (Creswell, 1998). Including myself as a co-researcher allowed me to accept and to be consciously aware of my experiences as a former K-12 teacher who initiated service-learning, thus increasing my personal awareness of and involvement with the phenomenon. This personal perspective also added richness and texture to the research (Creswell, 1998).

By relating to my participants as co-researchers, I believe I had a greater potential for ascertaining the essences of the service-learning experience. I relied on my co-researchers to read, reflect on, and respond to my synthesis of the data as I wrote, creating an *interview partnership* (Weiss, 1994). With continual feedback from my co-researchers, I believe I was

also better able to keep my personal subjectivities at bay. Moustakas (1994) encourages the role of co-researcher through his or her reviewing, confirming, or altering the data collected during the interview to correspond to the co-researcher's perceptions of the experience. Maxwell (2005) refers to this process as incorporating *respondent validation*, otherwise known as *member checks* into the research process. The use of member checks assisted me in achieving transcendental-phenomenological reduction, considering each experience as a separate entity.

#### Co-Researcher Selection

The co-researchers for this study were six teachers who are currently teaching in kindergarten through grade 12 in public schools in central and northwestern Ohio and me as a former K-12 teacher. I chose this number of co-researchers because in a phenomenological study, Creswell (1998) recommends, "long interviews with up to 10 people" (p. 65). Each co-researcher, other than myself, met four basic criteria. Each co-researcher, at the time of the study: a) was currently teaching in a K-12 public school classroom, b) had implemented service-learning in his or her classroom within the last 24 months, c) was interested in reflecting on the service-learning experience, and d) was a willing co-researcher throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Interviewing necessitates "close researcher-other interaction" and is a "distance-reducing" experience. This makes interviewing a matter of "rapport" (Glesne, 1999, p. 93). To enable my co-researcher relationship to be built on previously-established rapport, I intentionally contacted K-12 teachers with whom I was personally or professionally acquainted. One co-researcher was contacted through a mutual professional colleague prior to participation. I also intentionally sought out co-researchers who represented a variety of grade levels and subject

areas. These co-researchers ranged in grade level from primary (third grade) to intermediate (fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grades) to secondary (twelfth grade).

#### Preliminary Pilot Findings

When conducting an initial pilot interview I tested the interview protocol and series of interview questions. I interviewed a teacher who had recently conducted a service-learning project with her fourth grade students. I found the interview questions and protocol appropriate for the study. Following the pilot interview, I did re-arrange the order of the original interview questions to achieve a smoother flow for the interview.

#### Data Collection Procedures

I collected data by conducting one *long interview* with each co-researcher. Polkinghorn (as cited in Creswell, 1998) describes a long interview as lasting as long as two hours. Each co-researcher chose the location of his or her interview, thus increasing their comfort levels during the interviews.

In order to allow for reflexivity, I conducted *reflexive dyadic interviews* so I could include my own personal experiences and reflections during the data collection process. In this format, the interview is more conversational, as between two equal parties. The interviewer is allowed to share personal experiences and thoughts during the interview not only to help establish rapport, but also to participate in the disclosure of personal experiences and details (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). The final product of such reflective dyadic interviews “includes the cognitive and emotional reflections of the researcher, which add context and layers to the story being told about participants” (Ellis & Berger, 2002, p. 854).

The following is a brief outline of the stages in the data collection process. Following this outline is a more detailed description of each stage in the process.

- I. Stage One: Pre-Interview
  - A. Interview of self as co-researcher conducted by a colleague.
  - B. Personal telephone call made to each co-researcher inviting him or her to participate in the study as a co-researcher. Approximately two weeks prior to the interview, confirmation letter mailed to each co-researcher detailing date, time, location, and other details of the interview.
  - C. Two days prior to each interview, telephone call made to confirm logistical details of the interview.
  - D. Personal preparation approximately 30 minutes prior to interview through personal centering and contemplation.
  - E. Completion of the Pre-Interview Reflection Form (see Appendix C).
  - F. Pre-Interview Reflection Form (see Appendix A).
- II. Stage Two: Interview
  - A. Interview Protocol (see Appendix B).
  - B. Informed Consent (see Appendix E).
  - C. Interview Questions (see Appendix C).
  - D. Field notes completed by interviewer during interview on Interview Questions form.
  - E. Thank you gift given to co-researcher at conclusion of interview.
- III. Stage Three: Post-Interview
  - A. Post-Interview Reflection Form (see Appendix D).
  - B. Post-Interview Reflection Form returned by each co-researcher following the interview.

#### IV. Stage Four: Transcription and Coding

- A. One week following the interview, approximately, verbatim transcription of interview personally transcribed by the researcher.
- B. Two weeks following the interview, Single-Case Analysis of each co-researcher written and mailed to each co-researcher for comment.
- C. Single-Case Analysis with comments returned to researcher by each co-researcher.
- D. Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis used for coding of transcripts.
- E. Twice during the research process, peer debriefers reviewed the coding process and emerging themes.

The following section provides elaboration on each stage in the data collection and analysis process.

##### *Stage One: Pre-Interview Protocol*

I first asked a colleague to conduct an interview of myself as a co-researcher in the research process. Once that was complete, I contacted each additional co-researcher by telephone to explain the study and obtain his or her initial consent to participate, following the Initial Participant/Co-Researcher Telephone Contact Script. I then mail each co-researcher a confirmation letter, which included the date, time, and location of the interview, as well as a list of potential interview questions to be discussed during the interview. This allowed participants to prepare for the interview and to gather any artifacts, if appropriate. Some co-researchers provided student journals, letters from community members, and curriculum guides as artifacts during the interview. I telephoned each co-researcher two days prior to the interview to confirm logistical details.

Immediately prior to each interview, I followed a personal protocol of relaxation, meditation, prayer, and written reflection, seeking to achieve greater personal *époche*.

Moustakas (1994) encourages this time to review personal biases and prejudgments “with hope and intention of seeing this person...with new and receptive eyes” (p. 89). Following this personal centering activity, I conducted the interviews.

### *Stage Two: Interview*

In following the procedures outlined in the Interview Protocol, I welcomed each participant and read the introductory script, and each co-researcher then signed an Informed Consent Form acknowledging participation and giving permission to be audiotaped. Next, I conducted the interview, using the Interview Questions as a general guide.

I followed van Manen’s (1990) suggestions for interviewing, including that “as we interview others about their experience of a certain phenomenon, it is imperative to stay close to experience [sic] as lived” (p. 67). In addition, van Manen suggests the interviewer remain concrete, asking the co-researcher to think of a specific instance or event and then to explore the whole experience to the fullest. Being patient and using silence is a tactful way for the co-researcher to collect his or her thoughts and proceed with their story.

I strove to follow these guidelines during each interview. Also during each interview, I wrote field notes on my list of interview questions. My personal field notes followed these suggestions outlined by Creswell (1998):

- Use a header to record essential information about the project and as a reminder to go over the purpose of the study with the interviewee...
- Place space between the questions on the protocol form...

- Write out the closing comments to thank the individual for the interview and request follow-up information, if needed, from them. (p. 126)

In my field notes, I described details such as specific hand gestures, long pauses, interruptions, and artifacts supplied during certain points of the interview. At the conclusion of each interview, I presented each co-researcher with a thank you gift.

### *Stage Three: Post-Interview*

Immediately following each interview, I recorded personal observations, enhanced the detail of my field notes, reflected on the data obtained during the interview, and completed field notes using the artifacts shared during the interview. Within three days after each interview, I mailed each co-researcher a thank you letter, a personalized certificate of participation, a Post-Interview Reflection Form, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of the Post-Interview Reflection Form. The contents of this form asked the co-researcher to evaluate the interview experience and to express any new ideas that emerged in the days following the interview.

Within a week after each interview, I personally transcribed the audiotape of the interview, removing any identifying information from the transcription. Within two weeks after the interview, I wrote a single-case analysis of each co-researcher as a step toward transcendental-phenomenological reduction, allowing me to reduce each interview into a separate, individual experience (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, within two weeks after each interview, I mailed each single-case analysis of each interview to each co-researcher for comment, correction, addition, and feedback, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope for its return.

Throughout the data collection process, I coded the transcriptions and the comments from the post-interview reflection forms for various themes involving service-learning. Once the

comments on the Single-Case Analyses were received, those were also added to the coding procedure. To incorporate Moustakas' (1994) imaginative variation, I met with two peer debriefers on two different occasions during the coding process. These peer debriefers provided an outside perspective on the themes emerging and pointed out any oversights in the analysis of the data. This experience enabled me to better eliminate my own personal subjectivities. These peer debriefers were former classroom teachers and administrators who were practitioners of service-learning when they taught and who currently, as consultants, provide professional development workshops and seminars on the topic of K-12 service-learning.

### Strategies for Analyzing Findings

In analyzing my data and coding for significant themes, I used Moustakas' (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data:

1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of [the co-researcher's] experience of the phenomenon.
2. From the verbatim transcript of [the co-researcher's] experience complete the following steps:
  - a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
  - b. Record all relevant statements.
  - c. List each nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statement [horizontalization]. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience.
  - d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
  - e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into *a description of the textures of the experience*. Include verbatim examples.

- f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct *a description of the structures of your experience*.
  - g. Construct a *textural-structural description* of the meanings and essences of your experience.
3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of *each* of the other *co-researchers*, complete the above steps, a through g.
  4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers' experiences, construct *a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience*, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole. (p. 122)

Following Moustakas' (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data provided structure for *horizontalization*, as defined above. This specified process also helped me achieve transcendental-phenomenological reduction. Coding my own personal interview and using myself as a co-researcher allowed for intersubjectivity, along with reviewing the results with peer debriefers. Synthesizing the themes following horizontalization provided opportunity for imaginative variation.

#### Anticipated Ethical Issues

In order to perform this research with ethical integrity, I took several steps to protect my co-researchers during this process. First, I obtained the mandated approval from the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) as required by my university, and followed the guidelines set forth by HSRB to protect the confidentiality of the co-researchers, including having the co-researchers select pseudonyms for themselves. It is important to note that each co-researcher chose his or her own name for each pseudonym. Second, I fully disclosed the nature of the study

to the co-researchers, and each co-researcher signed a consent form and verbally consented on audio tape at the beginning of the interview process. In addition, I removed any comments from the transcript that the co-researcher deemed off-the-record to maintain the purity of the interview (Creswell, 1998).

### Validity Threats and Strategies for Validating Findings

I believe the main validity threats to this study were researcher bias and reflexivity. Researcher bias was a concern because of my own fourteen-year history as a teacher of service-learning, both in my own classroom and in training teachers to implement this teaching methodology in their own classrooms. From personal experience, I had insight to what I believed were the motivating and initiating factors for teachers involved in service-learning projects. I had to take care first, not to assume I understand a respondent's reasoning as it fit with my own definitions; and second, not to ignore other reasons for initiation or other benefits because I might not have been listening for ideas different from my own. In order to avoid researcher bias, I worked to understand how my values and expectations of service-learning and of the teachers themselves could have influenced my data collection and analysis (Maxwell, 2005). I believe these safeguards helped guard against researcher bias as I conducted this study.

In addition, I needed to be conscious of reflexivity during this interview process because I personally interviewed my respondents and personally interpreted the themes from the interviews. I analyzed the interviews to determine if what I said or the way I asked a question in a particularly leading way could have influenced what the respondents might have said (Maxwell, 2005).

To reduce both researcher bias and reflexivity, I incorporated several steps in my data collection and analyses phases. First, I worked to collect *rich data* to provide a complete

summary of the experience (Maxwell, 2005). To do this I audiotaped each interview and then personally transcribed each interview for detailed theme coding. During the interview process, I took my own personal notes and followed-up with detailed field notes immediately following the interview. The use of audio recordings and transcriptions enabled me to review the major themes and ideas emerging, allowing for greater richness of data.

Second, I incorporated *respondent validation* or *member checks* to gain feedback about the data collected (Maxwell, 2005). Prior to the interview, I communicated the key questions of the interview in writing to allow the respondents to thoughtfully prepare for the interview. This gave each co-researcher the opportunity to collect any artifacts that would be helpful during the interview process to more clearly describe his or her service-learning experiences. Through audio taping each interview, I had a greater likelihood of correctly interpreting the data collected. Following each the interview, I sent a Post-Interview Reflection Form to each co-researcher to allow him or her to record any thoughts that occurred to him or her after the interview took place. One co-researcher returned artifacts referred to during the interview that were not available at the time of the interview when she returned the Post-Interview Reflection Form. After three contacts, one co-researcher failed to return the Post-Interview Reflection Form.

Third, I searched for *discrepant evidence* by meeting twice with peer debriefers (Maxwell, 2005). These meetings, held during data collection and analysis, gave me further opportunities to ask for feedback on my own assumptions and biases throughout the process.

Fourth, I incorporated *comparisons* to obtain more valid results (Maxwell, 2005). The heart of my coding for themes involved comparing and contrasting the various motivations for implementing service-learning projects and the issues teachers faced when implementing these projects.

Table 2 lists the methodology incorporated into the study in striving to reduce and/or eliminate validity threats.

Table 2

*Researcher Methodology to Reduce and/or Eliminate Validity Threats*

Key Research Processes	Researcher Action
Époche	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Interview of self as co-researcher.</li> <li>b) Completion of Pre-Interview Reflection Form prior to each interview noting initial thoughts, perceptions, and expectations.</li> <li>c) Interview of co-researchers.</li> </ul>
Intersubjectivity/Reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Interview of self as co-researcher.</li> <li>e) Completion of Pre-Interview Reflection Form prior to each interview noting initial thoughts, perceptions, and expectations.</li> <li>f) Interview of co-researchers.</li> <li>g) Meeting with two peer debriefers to obtain outside perspectives in emerging themes.</li> </ul>
Imaginative Variation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h) Co-researchers completed and submitted Post-Interview Reflection Forms.</li> <li>i) Completion of field notes during and after interviews.</li> <li>j) Use of peer debriefers.</li> </ul>

	k) Synthesis of themes after horizontalization.
Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction	l) Writing single-case analyses of each co-researcher.
	m) Horizontalization of themes.
Seeking Essences	n) Continual coding of data as it is gathered and analyzed.
	o) Use of Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Phenomenological Data Analysis.
	p) Meeting with peer debriefers.

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### Expected Outcomes

Prior to conducting this study, I expected to learn the essence of the K-12 teacher's experience and motivation when implementing service-learning in the classroom. It is my hope that through this study I will enable classroom teachers to continue to affect the lives of young people through service-learning by helping them discover their passion and purpose in teaching through service-learning. I had also hoped to identify qualities to help teachers and administrators make service-learning systemic and sustainable, enabling more teachers to have great impact on the lives of students. It is my belief that when teachers have positive experiences incorporating service-learning in their classrooms, they, too, are able to get in touch with their passion and purpose in education, and possibly in life. By discovering the essence of the service-

learning experience from the K-12 teacher's perspective, I will more readily be able to describe the experience to teachers, so they can visualize themselves participating in such educational endeavors for the benefit of their students and themselves.

### Narrative Structure

In narrating the research and findings, I used the four basic components of service-learning as a framework: preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration. Using these scaffolds, the *Preparation* section is Chapters 4 through 10, including each single-case analysis of each of the co-researchers. In Chapters 11 and 12, the *Action* section, I included the emergent themes from the research as well as the summary of the essence of service-learning from the K-12 teacher's perspective. Chapter 13 is the *Reflection* section, including summary thoughts on each of the guiding questions and connections to prior research. Chapter 13, the *Demonstration/Celebration* section, contains recommendations for increasing teacher implementation of service-learning and suggestions for further research. Throughout these narrative chapters, I have used short, eye-catching quotations, embedded quotes, and longer quotations to illustrate the key themes of the research (Creswell, 2003).

## CHAPTER IV. JILL

### Background

Jill is a middle school teacher in a suburban school district in central Ohio, who is purposefully and methodically teaching her students to care. Her eighth grade Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) students learn core standards of the curriculum through planning, implementing, and reflecting on service-learning projects of their own design. She began her teaching career in 1977, teaching seventh and eighth grade students, and plans to retire in 2007.

### Personal History

As a child, Jill recalls accompanying her mother to her “Wednesday Club” where a group of women planned and implemented service projects for others in the community. Currently, however, Jill accompanies her students to many service locations to perform service while serving as a role model for her students as well. She transports students to the Mid-Ohio Food Bank, the Merry Moppet’s Preschool and the Safe and Sound, a preschool for homeless children. While there, she serves these agencies side-by-side with her students.

### Teaching Style

Describing her teaching style as “*student-friendly*,” Jill uses humor along with events current in her students’ lives to make her teaching relevant. To tie her FCS curriculum to the core courses of social studies, science, and language arts together for her FCS for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, Jill incorporates current world events and issues. She appreciates the flexibility of her course allowing her to tie everything together to bring meaning to her students’ lives. She incorporates service-learning to allow students the opportunity to use their gifts and talents, fascinations, and passions to connect them to a “*community of their choice*.” This community could be their school, neighborhood, or church community, or it could mean the global community.

### Service-Learning Experiences

Almost all of the students in Jill's students plan their own personal service-learning projects. She wants the students to be able to personalize their plans and,

*“work it out with themselves or with their family or friends so that it is more meaningful for them.”*

When asked to describe one or two of her most successful service-learning experiences for students, she had difficulty naming just a few because so many have been so successful. She did share about two brothers, one of whom is now in college and one in high school, who both volunteered in a special needs elementary classroom during middle school and who now both continues to visit that classroom to follow-up on the children with whom they worked.

Another student became closely involved in setting up a child care program for parents in job training programs. As a high school student, she continued her service to this agency. The child care program was expanding until the funding was cut. The student was a senior in high school by that time and called Jill wanting help. Jill then mentored her through contacting legislators and congress members, and even the president, to speak out about the importance of this program and its need for funding.

Through a visit with a People-to-People to Alaska, Jill learned about a special facility for cold-weather birds that is the only one in the world. The veterinarians shared the needs of their clinic, so when Jill returned to her school, she shared those needs with her students. One student took this project on, contacted all the veterinarian facilities in the area, and collected unused rolls of medical tape. He then shipped all that tape to Alaska to help with raptor rehabilitation.

*“There are so many projects we could talk about. They are just too numerous to specify. A lot of them have to do with animals...and children. I think those are immediate,*

*purposeful things that kids recognize right away and it is the ones where they have that direct contact, too, with the recipient, that are the best ones.”*

Some of the projects she has attempted with her core team of 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have involved the whole group of students to build a sense of community on each middle school team. Some of those projects have involved returning to the students’ elementary schools for fall clean-up days. This past year the students completed a beautification project on their own middle school grounds. Students also work with retirement centers. Two student-led groups, Impact and Pay-It-Forward, have emerged from these service experiences. There has had to be some mediation between the two groups and their faculty advisors because both want to be involved with service and do not want their services to overlap or compete with each other.

*“Is this not a glorious argument, because how many schools have that problem? I don’t know. I wish it were a lot.”*

Jill recognizes there are several key components in implementing service-learning projects with her students. First, the students explore options and work on communication skills so they are prepared for interviewing community members at potential service sites. The students research their topics, incorporating a school-wide initiative using student-led research. Jill believes this research is a key component.

*“Whatever specific project my students are doing, there are days that we focus totally on research about that so if they are going to do something for cancer awareness, then I want them to specify the type of cancer they are going to be fund-raising for,...to find out what they can both in newspapers, locally by calling people and interviewing them, meeting them face-to-face, internet, research, whatever we can find so they are going in not cold, but warmed up to the fact that ‘I have some knowledge about this.’”*

This research helps each student choose an appropriate project for him or her personally. Once a project is chosen, each student follows a six-step process, working from planning through reflection, as outlined in the FCS state curriculum standards. Finally, after the project has been completed, each student compiles a portfolio, ready to take to job interviews, highlighting skills and accomplishments throughout the project.

Jill's students complete a creative Barbara Walter's-style interview as part of their reflection process. Parents ask the questions of their children, with the parents also recording the answers. This process helps strengthen relationships between the student, parent(s), and teacher. It requires the parents to listen to the students talk about their experiences and learn what the students accomplished throughout the service-learning experience from planning, to implementation, to reflection and portfolio construction.

Throughout the service-learning process, students identify and begin to recognize their personal strengths through Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, John Holland's personality types, their gifts and fascinations, and how to tie all that information about themselves together to create a purposeful, self-designed service-learning experience. Jill requires her students to perform five hours of service for the community of their choice. When students ask if they can *only* do five hours, Jill explains,

*“If every student [94 students total in one semester] had done their minimum requirement of five hours, they would have completed 470 hours, but the total [for last year] was 1021.75 hours.”*

#### Personal Benefits for Students

Jill recognizes many personal benefits for students through the service-learning process. She finds it valuable that the students want to continue the service after their required hours have

been met. One student completed 43 service hours in one year. It is her goal for students to *want* to continue to serve.

*“I think when the kids have trouble separating service and what they do as a regular part of their day; those are the things that are just remarkable.”*

In terms of other benefits, Jill believes that

*“the direct benefit is coming out of it with a feeling like as a teenager, ‘I can serve a purpose that is meaningful. And everybody’s not looking at me like I’m a trouble-maker, you know, I really have contributed.’ When they get these letters from people that they have met at an agency or during an activity and they write to me....Then the students say, ‘Oh, they said that about me?’ They will put that in their portfolio. They can go back to that and say ‘Whoa. I was really helpful!’”*

Jill also shared that the first time she heard a student actually speak in class was during the sharing of project ideas. It had been five weeks into the semester and the student had not spoken to the whole class until he talked about his ideas for his service project. She also recounted about a student who is an English Language Learner, and very quiet and withdrawn in class, but became quite excited about the possibility of volunteering to help with a Special Olympics soccer program.

About seven years ago, Jill began the tradition of presenting service awards to students at 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation who had completed the most service hours and/or provided a very significant contribution through her class. This gives her the opportunity to not only recognize the students, but also to make the parents aware of the tremendous number of hours students have donated to serving their community, however each student chose to define that community.

### Academic Benefits for Students

To learn the key concept of communication skills her FCS curriculum, students in Jill's classes interview people to find potential service projects in their area. They discuss the types of questions to ask, practice questioning and listening skills, and learn about a variety of careers. Students also learn about how volunteerism is a part of a democracy. As Jill explains, the United States is

*“a participatory citizenship, and that's the way it works and when it's not working maybe that's an issue we need to look at how we are handling that. What happens when citizens are not actively participating in their communities?”*

She and the social studies teachers work together to help students understand the importance of volunteering as a part of citizenship in this country.

Jill also names other academic benefits that include

*“enthusiasm and motivation and wanting to get some place on time and wanting to complete a project. That maybe it is the only thing we can get them to do all year, or get them to tie in another class that they haven't really been interested in.”*

During the reflection process, students share in small groups, large groups, and do a great deal of writing.

*“I think they take the time to write from the heart. Then it is more focused. I do share those with the English teacher and sometimes they have used those and say, ‘I just read a piece that you wrote in FCS and you did an awesome job. I want you to incorporate some of those thoughts into your autobiography because that is a part of you now.’”*

Jill does see the transfer of academic work and motivation from service projects to the classroom, noting, however, that it is difficult to track long-term academic change and benefits because the students are only in the middle school for two years.

Through service-learning, Jill is able to directly meet several state-mandated content standards for Family and Consumer Sciences. She incorporates state standards such as communication skills, career exploration, and service-learning itself, which is currently a state-mandated part of the curriculum.

#### Teacher Benefits

Service-learning projects are an energizer for Jill as a teacher. Prior to service-learning, FCS teachers incorporated *action projects* into their curriculum. Service-learning

*“opened me up to getting kids to focus much more with the community and not just their personal life and their family life”*

as was the case in typical action projects. Her participation in service-learning workshops and classes motivated her to complete her master’s degree as well. Another personal benefit is seeing the number of service clubs not only in her middle school, but also in the high school as well.

Jill also benefited from the connections she made with other FCS teachers to implement these service-learning projects. Incorporating service-learning

*“has made the teaching piece a lot more meaningful. When they are reporting on these projects at the end of the semester, when you’re tired in the transition, it really revs you for the next group coming in or wonder what’s going to happen next year, or over the summer....It has been a real motivator for me as a teacher.”*

#### Teacher Motivators for Implementing Service-Learning

Jill's first motivation for implementing service-learning was completing a project for her master's degree, which involved a step-by-step implementation process of the Walk-With-Me Program through the Alzheimer's Association.

*"The timing was perfect for curriculum changes that were occurring in Family and Consumer Sciences."*

She also got involved in grants and those grants were typically tied to students participating in service-learning. Another motivator was having an FCS colleague to help her, along with support from district administrators. She also learned to look at the idea of "community" in a different light.

*"It was a motivation to get out there and kind of hit the pavement and meet these [community] people and help educate them and see that they were excited about it and that became a motivation back to me."*

She understood that communities could be ones students do not even live in, she started to redefine what "community" means, and also helping her students understand that broader definition. That was a major force of motivation.

*"When you start thinking about that there are communities that I can be a part of that I am not physically a part of, it just opens it up to those places that are not connected to us physically, and then you start looking at it globally and that is that whole World is Flat concept in Tom Friedman's book. It just keeps growing and even if there is just one kid that gets excited you go, 'Whoa! Now who knows what that kid is doing now?'"*

Fun is a big motivator for her too.

*“It’s fun as you are learning it with people who want to learn it with you and help you learn and it’s fun when you do it with the kids and talk about that with the people who helped you learn it...Fun is a big motivator.”*

Jill also easily named four people who were mentors to her; all were district administrators who were involved with organizing and sponsoring the coursework and workshops, and helped provide grant funds for service-learning projects.

#### Motivation of Other Teachers

Jill has definitely played a role in motivating other teachers to incorporate service-learning. She has been a leader of FCS teachers and has led state-wide workshops on implementing service-learning as part of the FCS curriculum. She has also presented at state-wide career education conferences and at district-level teacher institutes. She motivated teachers in her middle school to become involved in helping students with their service projects. She sees an important role for herself as the district make-up begins to change, as novice teachers replace those who are experienced with service-learning, and as the teaming concept and subject areas included on the middle school teams change as well.

*“So, yes, in answer to that question, I think I have had an FCS teacher impact. I’m not sure how to keep that going if the dynamics change drastically.”*

#### Support

Jill easily cited administrative support from district administrators in her district and in consortium-partner districts as well.

*“The support was incredible. Not only was the coursework [graduate courses] there, the information-gathering that we needed to have to be able to do this. The funding support was there. There was already grant writing going on district-wide. Suggestions for*

*whom to contact or how to do this; people to call if we needed something. All I had to do was get on the phone and call.”*

She appreciates the fact that she was

*“in the right place at the right time. It was easy.”*

Jill believes that the most critical support was that which came from the district administration.

*“WE didn’t have to fight the battles and become exhausted by fighting the battles to be able to take kids places liability-wise; they helped us with that, utilized class time to tie it in, helped find places to go and things to do. There were people at the Board Office who would do that for us. To do the big grant writing, to get us involved in the consortium, to provide course work, to develop courses for us to help us work on our masters’ programs. Get dollars to help us move ahead in the pay scheme of things in the district. I don’t think I had to fight a single battle with an administrator and very few with classroom teachers because they knew that it was a big focus in our district. I can’t tell you. That was huge.”*

The second area of critical support was having the monetary support when it was needed. The administration did not necessarily provide all the funds, but pointed her and others toward grants that they could write and other funding sources. Her students have held bake sales, car washes, and school dances to help finance some of their service projects.

A district-wide service-learning agency contact bank would be a helpful asset to Jill and her students. She sees many uses for a list of service agencies utilized by elementary, middle, and high school students.

## Roadblocks

Without hesitation, Jill named transportation as a major roadblock.

*“That has always been my one remaining struggle and I still think that every school should have a van with a licensed driver.”*

However, Jill even turned this hardship into a positive by asking other teachers to help drive students to service sites after school. Through their involvement by transporting students, the teachers have begun to understand what she is trying to accomplish in her class; they see the important service the students are providing, so

*“in a round-about way, it was a good thing.”*

Sometimes there are administrative transitions at the agencies and the new leaders are not ready for the middle school students to come to their facility.

*“That happens when you are doing things over a long period of time.”*

In addition to transportation, time is another key roadblock: students’ time, teachers’ time, and parents’ time to help students complete their projects. Students are busy with clubs and sports after school, parents are working and teachers struggle with time during the school day as well. Jill has devised a program whereby students can miss a few of their classes to work on their service projects if they work out the details five days ahead of time and get all the necessary signatures. That does not always solve the problem, because students do not necessarily want to miss their classes because that just adds to their stress levels.

## Advice

Jill strongly recommends that teachers who have not incorporated service-learning definitely should try it. She recommends they find someone to be a mentor who is an effective service-learning practitioner, start small, do not get discouraged, and

*“listen to the kids.”*

A key component to her success has been to personally connect to her students, to help them get to know themselves, and to help them as they begin to narrow their career paths. She recommends connecting service-learning to students’ career and future planning so they will continue to see the benefits of their service experiences. She acknowledges that this seems to be a lot of advice and hopes it does not scare someone away from wanting to try it.

#### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

Jill takes a very personal view of helping her students incorporate service-learning into not only her class, but also into their lives. She takes a personal interest in getting to know her students, to help them find their purpose, their passion, and their meaning in life. The most rewarding part of implementing service-learning is seeing her students incorporate service not only into their actions, but also into their hearts. It makes the curriculum more meaningful and it makes their lives more meaningful, while helping teachers find meaning along the way as well.

#### Key Words

When asked to name three to five words that she would use to describe her service-learning experience, she responded with these five words:

*“Motivational...rejuvenating...purposeful...and the concept of ‘Habit of the Heart—keep that in there.’”*

#### Final Thoughts

In closing, Jill was quite appreciative of the interview experience as a personal opportunity for her to reflect on why she continues to work so hard to implement service-learning. She was also appreciative of the fact that she is now part of extending the knowledge

base through this doctoral research. She is passionate about seeing service-learning continue and gets nervous about its continuing once she retires within the next year.

Jill's passion came through loud and clear when she concluded that

*“It is that realism in school that I think we need to have kids that are ready to hit the pavement running,...making better choices for their post-high school choices, their careers, and to truly make this a habit of the heart that makes them better citizens in their own world. It is just that humanistic factor, you know, whether it be with people, agencies, animals, or whatever, it is just that humanistic quality that I think strengthens and in my opinion that should be the goal of education: To create a humanistic society to live in.”*

## CHAPTER V. NANCY

### Background

Nancy has been teaching elementary students for 25 years; she is currently a fifth grade teacher in a suburban school district in central Ohio. She began her teaching career in Madison, Wisconsin, where she taught second grade for eight years. Following a 10-year hiatus for child-rearing, she earned her Ohio Teaching Certificate and has since taught third, fourth, and fifth grades in this suburban district.

### Personal History

Nancy shared that she spent a lot of time with elderly people as a child. Her father is an attorney and her mother, a stay-at-home mom, was always volunteering. Her mother served as a member of the local school board for nine years and as president for three. Nancy said of her mother,

*“she had a vested interest in education.”*

Nancy was one of four children and her mother

*“always thought it was really important to take care of elderly people,”*

having been named Volunteer of the Year, logging over 2000 volunteer hours.

*“I guess just watching my mother, and the respect that she had for elderly people made a huge impression.”*

Her mother is now 83 years old and is still serving others. Nancy was also close to her grandparents, writing to her grandmother every week when she was in college. Nancy recalled that once she became legal age, she accompanied her father to nursing homes to visit his clients and she served as a witness for legal documents.

In her young volunteer days, she visited nursing homes with her Brownie Troop and with a few of her elementary classes. In college, she continued her volunteerism with Angel Flight, a support sorority for the Air Force ROTC. Nancy summarizes,

*“I guess there has always been service in my life.”*

Currently Nancy has served on the levy committee for the local public library and helps coordinate a program through her church sending school supplies to children in southern Ohio. She also serves shoulder-to-shoulder with her students when they go to Norworth Retirement Center.

### Teaching Style

Nancy teaches with a great deal of flexibility and creativity, seizing the moment in the classroom where students’ interests are piqued and moving forward with spontaneous lessons that simultaneously reflect the requirements of the curriculum. Nancy believes strongly that students should emerge from her classroom at the end of the school year with a sense of accomplishment and purpose. She works to create special memories in her students’ educational lives that will

*“give them some moments that will stand out as they look back at their elementary school years and they will think, ‘Wow, we did that. That was really awesome....’ Trying to create those moments for them that will really mark time as they go into the future...having kids who have memorable experiences that they are going to carry with them.”*

Nancy asks rhetorically,

*“Is it schmaltzy? Well probably, but that’s okay.”*

### Service-Learning Experiences

Nancy's first experience in implementing service-learning began at the Norworth Convalescent Center. This first experience also is an illustration of her flexible, creative teaching style and philosophy. She had reserved a school bus for her students to take a fieldtrip to the Ohio Statehouse. In planning the schedule, she realized they had some extra time after lunch and she wanted them to be able to do something special since they already had the bus.

*"I said, 'Maybe we should go somewhere.'"*

Her teammates were used to this type of idea from Nancy and when she suggested visiting the residents at Norworth where the mother of one of her students worked, they were willing to go along with it. When both the teachers and the students had positive experiences, Nancy and the parent employed at Norworth began to discuss more regular visits—and the Grandpals of Norworth service-learning project was born. This project is currently in its eighth year of implementation. The students visit Norworth once a month, planning special activities to do with the residents during each visit.

Nancy thoughtfully implements all the key components of service-learning: planning and preparation, service, reflection, and demonstration/exhibition. In preparation for the project, her students research and complete other academic work, learning through literature the issues of the elderly and also learning about empathy for the elderly. She ties in science by studying the physical and emotional needs of the body. For further preparation before service, the activity director from Norworth comes to the school to explain experiences the students may encounter and what to expect from people with Alzheimer's disease, people in poor physical condition, those who cry out, and those exhibiting other behaviors the students may not initially understand. The students also participate in an "*instant aging*" activity where they tape their fingers together,

put cotton in their ears and popcorn kernels in their socks, and then talk about what it feels like to be old.

A key component of this service-learning project, not only in preparation, but also throughout, is literature. The class participates in a novel study using *The Graduation of Jake Moon*, by Barbara Park. This story is about a boy whose grandfather suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Nancy reads articles from Ann Landers and the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books as well. The sixth graders at the school come to the classroom to talk to the students, too, about what to expect, and then some of them accompany this new group to Norworth, serving as guides and mentors.

*"It is another very neat connection because it empowers the sixth graders who did this [last year]."*

During their monthly visits to Norworth, the students spend time one-on-one with their Grandpals, talking, reading, and playing games. They also perform musical selections and create art projects with the residents, with which the music and art teachers have helped to plan and prepare.

Upon returning to the classroom, the students reflect on their experiences in large group discussions. To stimulate reflective discussion, Nancy says to her students,

*"You can't be everywhere, so what did you see today or what happened today?"*

The students receive great peer support through this reflection process.

*"Last year we had a rash of people who passed away, and the kids were very supportive of each other...it is emotional...the kids are good about giving support."*

The students also reflect in their Norworth Journals about their experiences each month.

Nancy explains that

*“after each visit the kids come back and they write about what they have done there, how it makes them feel. It is good because then it lets me know what they are thinking because otherwise I might not always know.”*

While at Norworth, they take digital pictures, and upon their return, they print out the pictures and create banners for the school hallway. Once a banner has been displayed in the school for the month, the students take it with them on their next visit to Norworth for the residents to enjoy.

At the end of the year, students re-read their journals and compile an annual edition of *Norworth Memories* of their experiences for that year. As part of this annual compilation, each student writes an essay to summarize the experience. These books are distributed to the retirement center residents as well as to the students.

*“Some of these things [entries] are extremely touching.”*

The students also create individual multimedia presentations at the end of each year about their Norworth experiences, relying on their reflections in their journals and pictures taken during their visits. So far the students have not been able to present these projects to large groups because of timing at the end of the school year. It is one of Nancy’s goals this year for her students to finish with enough time to share their multimedia programs with other students, parents, and the Norworth residents. She would like her students to have an opportunity for public demonstration of their accomplishments at Norworth to accompany the *Norworth Memories* publications.

Adults have come in to Nancy’s class to hear the students reflect upon their experiences at Norworth and the students feel their opinions are genuinely valued. Several times central

office administrators have come to the class and the students know they are sharing something important. In describing one such administrative visitor, Nancy comments that

*“he sits there and takes notes, you know, and he always wears a tie, and asks them for their opinions. And here’s an adult that they assume is an important person because of his demeanor and he is telling them that they just do wonderful stuff and it is really neat because that just reinforces that they are doing something special. And they are....Having an audience to share this with validates what they are doing.”*

To add even more power and purpose to the project, Nancy’s students even volunteer to bring their families and meet her for a visit to the nursing home during the summer. The students and their families meet at Norworth usually in July, visit the residents, then go out to lunch for a reunion of sorts. Some families continue to visit Norworth on the weekends and one family adopted two of the residents and make regular visits to see them.

Her first group of Grandpals of Norworth students graduated from high school this year. She contacted them and they came back to her classroom to pick up their journals. This re-reading of these experiences was especially touching for Nancy and for her students.

#### Personal Benefits for Students

The Norworth project provides many memorable moments for her students. She has seen personal growth and change in almost all her students through this project.

*“I think where we see some of the other things that are influencing kids in society—I’m not just being doom and gloom—but they need to have positive experiences and I think this provides that. The kids that it helps are sometimes the kids who are the most needy because they go over there and they just step outside who they are here.”*

Nancy readily admits she personally has learned a lot from this program as far as the issues of the elderly, but she also knows it has also created changes in her students. She points out the importance of longevity with this type of project.

*“It is not a one-shot deal. It’s a process we go through and when the kids go back in the spring and look at what they wrote in the fall, they know that they have grown. They know that they have changed. It’s inside them. It is a barometer they can read of their own self-assessment.... Probably one of the best barometers is that kids leave here and in eighth grade they have to do some kind of service. A lot of the kids go back to the nursing home; in high school they go back again and do their volunteer hours there.”*

A high school junior wrote to Nancy, her former fifth grade teacher. Nancy recalled the contents of the letter that she keeps at home in plain sight. Nancy paraphrases,

*“I wouldn’t be the person that I am if I hadn’t done that experience. I went back and I have worked at nursing homes. I know that I will be working with the elderly later in my life.”*

One adult daughter of a resident talked to Nancy about what a great service her students provided to her father who was a Norworth resident. The children found out that “Edelweiss” was his favorite song, so they worked with the music teacher and sang it to him. The daughter admitted that she did not even know this was her father’s favorite song and after he died, the family chose “Edelweiss” as one of the musical selections at his funeral.

*“I mean, we have had some really powerful experiences...these children touching lives and making a real positive name for kids in general. But it changes the kids. You see a different side of them.”*

Nancy sees a real change in the self-confidence of her students. They enter the project knowing it will be something really hard for them; they accomplish it and achieve that boost in self-confidence. She read an excerpt from one student's entry in a *Norworth Memories* book,

*"I have learned to never judge a book by its cover and in this case, when you open the book they seem a lot like us."*

Nancy continues,

*"Their words are powerful. It changes for that little moment anyway, who they are and what they care about and I know they won't ever forget and they write that. They say, 'I will never forget being here and this experience.' ...It gives them a purpose. It gives me a purpose and so it works."*

Nancy pointed out two students in whom she saw "*phenomenal*" changes; both boys needed to be doing "*positive things*" and Norworth provided that opportunity for them. One of her students this year has had a difficult life. But at Norworth,

*"all that pizzazz that he has is channeled in a positive way; all of that crankiness, all of that orneriness, all that changes."*

Nancy stated that the principal has also noted changes in students' behavior,

*"He goes and he sees the kids—he sees the kids who are the trouble-makers go over there and do good work."*

She finds gratification in the fact that the students truly remember doing this; she labels it as,

*"one of those memories that mark time."*

This concept is an important part of Nancy's personal teaching philosophy.

### Academic Benefits for Students

Naming academic benefits for students was harder for Nancy to pinpoint, but she definitely sees a difference in attendance on their visitation days, and she sees personal growth in leadership and performance skills. She does teach a great deal of her reading and writing curriculum through her Grandpals of Norworth project. She sees that her students are motivated through this project and believes they have a purpose, and especially a purpose for their writing. When she asks the students to write about their experiences at the nursing home, they

*“really work on it because they want to share more details and get it all down,”* much more so than typical writing assignments connected solely to the curriculum. The culminating multimedia project incorporates their technology goals as students use digital cameras, then retrieve, print, and import pictures into the computer program.

She has observed an improvement in her students’ organizational and planning skills. The students are interested in organizing games and activities for the residents and taking charge of those activities. The students suggest games to bring from home that would be appropriate for certain residents, recommending songs to sing that the residents will enjoy. The music and art teachers incorporate their curriculum standards into what the students will be performing and creating for and with the residents. Students working with two blind residents even created 3-D Valentine’s Day crafts so their Grandpals could *“see it and feel it.”* As Nancy questions,

*“How do you put a growth mark on that? I don’t know how. That is pretty hard to measure, but you see it and I see it....They can know their multiplication facts or the state capitals, but this is a different kind of self-confidence and that is not measurable on a chart, but is it measurably for them? Absolutely.”*

### Teacher Benefits

Nancy cannot imagine teaching without incorporating service-learning. She described on particular visit:

*“We went the day after Valentine’s. It was the most perfect day of the whole year. I mean it would bring tears to your eyes to see those kids. Jim, our principal, came and a mother came and we were making things and it was so special just to see the kids.”*

Nancy believes that her service-learning project has given her a real purpose in her teaching. She is able to ignore some of the petty comments about extra field trips and taking kids out of school for presentations from other teachers because she knows this is so important for her and for her students.

*“I know this is changing kids. I am just going to do it.”*

She acknowledges that if she taught fourth or sixth grade with greater pressure for performance on standardized testing she might feel differently. She believes she would not be able to spend so much time having the students read literature and children’s books about aging, however; with her principal’s support, she continues to move ahead.

Nancy feels lucky that she had all the pieces of a formula that worked for her. To Nancy, the key pieces of that formula are the funds, the opportunity, the support, and an idea. She loves literature and was able to incorporate that into the preparation for service,

*“I can give those kids that experience vicariously through the books—I can prepare them.”*

The students receive positive feedback from their peers, their parents, the principal, the residents and staff from the retirement center, as well as family members of the residents who communicated with the class through their letters.

*“They had somebody who was telling them, ‘You are really doing a great job. You are changing lives.’”*

Nancy was also able to incorporate the *Everyday People Make a Difference* curriculum, designed especially to guide the integration of service, literature, and other areas of the curriculum. That curriculum component was an important element to her success. The final piece was the funding available from service-learning grants accessible through the district office to provide the transportation.

#### Teacher Motivators for Implementing Service-Learning

No matter how much administrative support or how many conferences or in-services teachers attend, Nancy believes that service has to come from within. In terms of teacher motivation,

*“I think that it has to just come from the person and that person has to deeply feel it in order to be a part of this.”*

Nancy’s mother was an important mentor for her with the hours she has spent serving others, particularly the elderly. Nancy recognized that she had a connection to elderly people and wanted to do more with that because of her experiences at a young age with her family. She delved into service-learning because all the pieces were in place for her to be successful.

*“It fit my philosophy and I had the opportunity.”*

She knows of the importance of collegial exchanges and talking with others who have done similar projects as a motivating factor, which gives Nancy support. She finds great motivation in attending conferences and talking with people from across the United States who give her ideas, and she them.

The major source of motivation comes down to the effect she sees on her students.

*“I think it is just knowing that you change the lives of children and you make a difference in their lives and it empowers them. That empowerment and self-confidence, especially for the child who isn’t strong academically, but has other gifts and talents, and seeing that had they not been in [the project] they wouldn’t have encountered that self-confidence. They would not have developed that self-confidence.”*

#### Motivation of Other Teachers

Nancy’s service on the superintendent’s council has helped her to explain service-learning to others in the district and she believes she has had influence in that arena. The entire staff of one of her elementary schools took on service-learning as a school and her principal has told her he wants this to be something in which the entire staff participates. She continues to push her teammate to include more literature with her service-learning projects and Nancy believes she is making progress in that area. Nancy has had teachers in other school districts contact her and she has given them advice about how to implement service projects. As she shared on her Post-Interview Reflection Form, a fifth grade teacher in another district is interested in starting his own nursing home project.

*“I’m excited to think my experiences may help him as he initiates this service-learning [project].”*

Nancy’s students are also featured in an *Everyday People Make A Difference* video, so her story is being told all across the country. She has presented at state-wide conferences to share her formula for success. She does understand that sometimes teachers do not implement service-learning because they are missing one of the key components.

*“They don’t have the support of their administration; they don’t have the financial resources. Somebody can’t tell them that they have to do it. They have to internalize it. They have to know that it is just something that comes out of the heart.”*

### Support

Nancy identified support as the most critical element in implementing service-learning; her principal’s support being the most important.

*“I don’t think that I would have been able to do this program without his support and his rubber stamp.”*

Her principal sometimes accompanies the students to the Norworth Retirement Center and talks to the students about their experiences as well.

Second, Nancy identified *funding* as a necessary, even critical, and “*paramount*” form of support. For her Grandpals of Norworth project, transportation is required, so funding for buses is critical. Grant funds are used to purchase literature about aging and other helping themes to integrate the service to the curriculum. She also uses the grant money obtained for purchasing craft supplies for the students to use with their Grandpals on their visits. She has had to go to great lengths to continue the funding for this program, including writing grants, campaigning for exceptions to the “one field-trip per classroom per year” rule, and obtaining a \$650 donation from Norworth itself for transportation. That money was donated to her district’s board of education and then ear-marked for service-learning transportation for herself and for a Habitat for Humanity project for her fifth grade teaching partner. This complex budgetary arrangement necessitated a great deal of support from the principal, the treasurer, and administrators at Norworth, to name a few. Another element provided by the funding was the access to the *Everyday People Make a Difference* materials, developed by area district administrators and

teachers. With this supportive curriculum available at no charge, she was able to make the content connections necessary for a successful program.

Another area of necessary support was that of the Norworth administration and staff. With frequent turn-over at the activity director position, Nancy felt that at times she and her students were training the staff about the program.

*“Their turnover has changed what we do and we kind of had to go in and train them as to what we can do.... Some [activity directors] have been wonderful, some have been okay.”*

Parents, too, are an important source of support. On most trips to Norworth, one or more parents accompany the students

*“because they are curious and want to see and some of them get hooked and want to come back.”*

Some parents have written responses to the experiences at Norworth in several volumes of *Norworth Memories* that her class publishes every year. Nancy read the comments of several parents:

*“I think this is a wonderful project. It has helped Corbin understand about elderly people and what he may expect from her own grandparents. She knows that older people need care and love and she cares for all these people.’ Another parent commented, ‘Kelly has been deeply affected by this program.’”*

Another important form of support is the support is the support for the teacher. Nancy has found herself

*“singled out for doing good works,”*

and some staff members seem to resent that, but Nancy also notes that they do not seem willing to put in the time it takes to carry out these types of projects. Nancy has detected some forms of jealousy from other teachers, especially in the area of extra field trips.

*“But I think when they examine the situation and when they talk to the kids they know, they see the difference.”*

She does have support from her teammate, which is important because of the necessity of flexibility in their schedules. Sometimes they change the whole schedule of the day on a visitation day.

*“You have to work with people who are willing to do that.”*

Nancy sees herself as fortunate to have had support in all of these areas, particularly from her teammate whose class participates in service-learning projects with Habitat for Humanity;

*“So she understands; we support each other.”*

She also strongly feels support from certain central office administrators who have been able to allocate funds and reinforce the project. These administrators have also invited Nancy and her students to numerous conferences and in-services to share their experiences. She has been fortunate enough to attend numerous conferences, such as the National Service-Learning Conference and other state-wide and local conferences and in-services to talk with other teachers who are doing these types of projects. She earned her master’s degree in education, focusing her research on service-learning, which enabled her to find many literary connections for her students.

Nancy notes that the service must be connected to the curriculum, but teachers need support to be able to make this type of teaching method work.

*“You know, it takes a lot of work and teachers are tired. I think teachers sometimes don’t have the support.”*

### Roadblocks

Nancy identifies her own energy level as a roadblock at times:

*“Sometimes I feel like I am wearing out—it takes a toll on me.”*

But even the energy drain is worth it to her.

*“I think, if you just taught your normal day and your normal subjects and did your normal thing, you wouldn’t be giving these kids the opportunity to really shine in ways that some of them can’t shine. When you go over there and you see the little ‘trouble-maker’—so to speak—who is playing cards and carrying on a conversation with a man who has Alzheimer’s or having a chess game with one of the residents and it just touches your heart, it touches the resident’s heart. It is like a magic that happens between them and you think, ‘How could I not do this?’”*

However, Nancy realizes she needs to talk to other teachers who are doing this to get

*“revitalized.”*

Technology has been an issue in being able to prepare the individual parts of the multimedia presentations for each student, along with the time to do these sorts of culminating projects. The end of the school year comes too fast as they are trying to complete everything.

### Advice

Nancy’s advice for teachers who are considering implementing service-learning is:

*“Do it. Just go for it because it really changes lives. It changes you and it changes your students. It empowers your students. They step out of their own self-centered lives and they start thinking about other people and they realize that even at age ten that they can*

*make a real difference in the lives of others and they've got somebody who cares about them. They [the students] do see their [the residents'] faces light up. How do you put a price tag on that?"*

#### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

Nancy believes the most rewarding part of this experience is the changes she sees in her students. She knows she is providing that important memorable experience in the lives of her students, one that will make their years spent in elementary school seem special. She continues,

*"Knowing that it changes students. Just watching them change and gain self-confidence in ways that getting a 100 on a test wouldn't do."*

#### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

When asked to suggest three to five words she would use to describe her experience in implementing service-learning, she responded with these comments.

*"Gratifying...expect the unexpected [which was a phrase written by one of her students in his reflection journal, recalling when one of the residents of Norworth came out of his room wearing no underwear]...heartwarming...it is truly heartwarming...self-satisfaction—That you have been able to put it all together for that shining moment, that brief time. All the stars are in the right place."*

#### Final Thoughts

When asked about final thoughts, Nancy commented that she was thankful I was doing this project. She found it gratifying and reinforcing to spend our interview time reflecting on her program and her accomplishments and the changes she has seen in students throughout the years. She believes that more people need to know about the possible benefits of service-learning for both students and teachers.

*“I mean, I guess I just feel that we are so driven in our own curriculum by measuring kids on standards and tests and exams, and how wonderful if we could measure them by their hearts and their giving and their dedication to somebody else beyond themselves.”*

## CHAPTER VI. ANDY

### Background

Andy currently teaches sixth grade in an intermediate school made up of fifth and sixth grades, in a suburban school district in central Ohio. This is his first year in this position and his fourth year as a teacher overall. Prior to this year he taught seventh and eighth grade integrated social studies and language arts in an inner city public junior high school in northwest Ohio. Currently, Andy teaches these students social studies, math, and literacy.

### Personal History

In terms of his personal participation in service, Andy recalled projects completed during his parochial high school years along with family service commitments. He completed community service hours during his junior and senior years of high school, most of which were earned working with children at a special needs school. As part of his religion class, Andy visited nursing homes, where he partnered with specific residents and spent time with them on a regular basis. He also tutored young children as a part of the class requirements. As a member of a high school service club, Youths Experience Service (YES), he cleaned homes for elderly people, did yard clean up, and other projects. For Andy's required senior project, he designed a service project he called "*Feed the Needy.*" He recalled that he

*"advertised and collected blankets and we did an Easter meal with ham, turkey, and all the fixings, and they came into the school....we had certain criteria and I remember having a rubric...and doing reflection on Fridays."*

With his family, Andy recalls the prominent role his mother played in his service as a child,

*“I remember Mom having us go do the canned food drives and participate. I remember Easter time taking baskets to the women’s shelter. I think she always made us aware of that. She is the one that kind of got me involved with that YES program.”*

As a working mother of four boys, she instilled the importance of service in all her children.

*“Service was something that she always taught us, and Dad as well....It was one of those things where, once you got there and realized what you were doing it wasn’t so bad. It was a great self-esteem builder.”*

Andy recalls a sense of pride in his accomplishments when he was serving others.

*“Mom and Dad always told us to serve others. And after doing the senior project and just having that come across the way it did and have it turn out fine, you just feel a lot of pride and it makes you feel that you could do anything.”*

Currently, Andy’s volunteerism is limited to the work he does with his own students through the classroom. He does occasionally volunteer on weekends with his sister-in-law helping with food drives and hurricane relief. He has created an after-school service club to provide more opportunities for himself and his students to serve that is off to a strong start. He does, however, define teaching as “*service.*” He believes teachers should be called

*“service teachers and not just teachers. That’s what you do. And I think it fits in exactly with the career path that I took.”*

### Teaching Style

Andy describes his teaching style as

*“student-centered with more thematic planning.”*

He has become more of a

*“facilitator at times, letting the kids kind of discover some answers. Kids teaching each other and presenting a lot more.”*

He purposefully plays a supportive role in the classroom,

*“just kind of letting the kids take control and I am there as a facilitator to keep things in control, but it is more student-centered.”*

### Service-Learning Experiences

Andy believes Project Citizen has been one of his most successful service-learning programs. His first attempt at service-learning was through Project Citizen. It is a program

*“where kids take on a problem in their community and they come up with different strategies of how they can fix those problems....It was everything from things with teenage pregnancy and some vandalism and littering.”*

It was an appropriate fit to his eighth grade social studies curriculum, relating to content standards of civic responsibility and citizenship. Project Citizen is a pre-designed curriculum with free guidelines and student booklets provided by the State of Ohio. He said being able to follow the program step-by-step for his first attempt made it *“pretty successful.”*

During Project Citizen, students completed the basic phases of service-learning projects. During preparation, each group of students chose a community problem, researched the problem, and chose a course of action. Each project was different. Some groups brought in speakers, other groups created school-wide and community-wide awareness campaigns on the issues. The students participate in reflection activities throughout the project, following discussion questions outlined in the Project Citizen booklet. As a culmination and as the demonstration/exhibition phase of the project, the students presented the information at a school-wide showcase of their

work. Project Citizen does have a competition for the projects, but Andy has not taken his students to competition.

*“It was the first year and I wasn’t sure how things would go, but we had our own showcase and we invited in leaders and the community leaders to come and listen to their concerns. It was effective. The kids felt in control and proud of their work and their display boards.”*

Particular success was felt by the group of students who took on the cause of voter registration. To increase awareness of the importance of registering to vote, the students created a mock election in the school and did outreach to the community as well.

*“They organized it. I mean we were out in the community and people came in for the band concert and they were handing out registration forms.”*

During that fall election, voter participation increased in that city, and especially in their particular area, and the students

*“felt as though, you know, they had a certain thing to do with that.”*

Andy learned from that first experience that he had to let go of some control in his classroom and allow greater student ownership of the project.

*“That’s kind of one of the things I remember is being able to let go and taking kind of the back seat and getting your knees dirty and working with them one-on-one, and as groups. Instead of ‘Okay, this is what you need to do,’ and then they do it. It was kind of learning and finding things out together with the program in Project Citizen. I don’t know all the answers myself.... It is really when they choose their problem they have to investigate certain things. I am learning along with them as well.”*

He cites service-learning projects for making his students closer. Service-learning *“added so many elements for the year. It sets the tone if you do something like that at the beginning and relate that and have the kids see that image and feel that image. I think that is important.”*

Andy admits he was nervous and unsure about how things would go with Project Citizen since it was such an unorthodox way of teaching. He remembers thinking,

*“Okay, I am doing this for the first time. If it doesn’t work out, how are people going to conceptualize me and what I am doing in the class? Is it going to be a success? A failure? Are the kids going to get it?’ ....I just remember thinking those things. Luckily it was a success and still building.”*

Andy and his students also reached out to the community by organizing a Civil War Celebration to corroborate with the social studies and language arts curriculum. Andy’s students organized a re-enactment of a Civil War battle on the school grounds. It was held on a Saturday morning and the entire community was invited to attend.

*“It was cold, but the re-enactment went on. We had such a great turnout. Everyone thought I was crazy again for doing it. The Civil War was in the curriculum...the kids were in costumes and the choir and the band were performing and people were singing songs they had created in class.”*

In preparation for such a big day, Andy had acquired a grant to take his students to an overnight camp featuring lessons on the Underground Railroad.

*“It ALL tied in. Which, you don’t realize that when you’re doing some of these projects, that it can really make it tie in if you just look at how it can tie in. But I mean, another huge success. We taught some things in class, we prepared for the celebration. The kids*

*were there with their parents. Parents were proud of them. We had some media coverage, they did a nice story on it, and the kids were proud of it again, you know, so they took ownership. They took over. I mean that whole day from square one was, 'Welcome to [our school],' and it was coming out of a kid's mouth and I just stood back and they had ownership of it all."*

At his new school this fall, he completed a project in connection with visitors from South Africa as a part of CIVITAS, an international teacher exchange program. Andy had visited South Africa the previous summer and had made connections with educators there. When the group from South Africa came to the United States, he was able to arrange for their visit to his new school. It was a perfect fit with his sixth grade social studies curriculum of studying other cultures.

*"We had a whole unit on Africa and a section on South Africa, so it just worked perfectly with all my pictures I had taken and all the artifacts I that I had purchased and brought in."*

Initially the entire unit was going to be simply awareness and learning about a new culture. When Andy's students saw his pictures and were faced with the deplorable conditions there, they wanted to help.

*"It was through them that it kind of sparked with doing some kind of project."*

The project took on a life of its own at that point. This type of facilitation fit perfectly with Andy's teaching style where he guides, directs, and enables the students to be in charge of the project—and their own learning.

*"They raised funds. We had a community awareness night where the community [and] other school districts came in and we had a panel with the South African guests.... We*

*collected some funds that night from community members and then the kids organized a movie night here at school. They kind of had the display up on the cafeteria walls and raised \$700 bucks total for them. We presented them with the check at an assembly.”*

The assembly was another form of service to the community. Andy’s students planned an informative assembly about South Africa for the entire community that was held during the school day with members of the local community and the entire student body in attendance. It was a night of total student involvement.

*“Kids were doing first-person stories on Nelson Mandela, like they were Nelson Mandela, and we had the choir singing some songs in their native language.”*

Andy, at this point in the interview, clarifies that this entire project was taking place during his fourth week of teaching at an entirely new school.

*“It worked out great and they [the South Africans] were very appreciative.”*

For support materials during the project, Andy incorporated ideas from the *Everyday People Make a Difference* curriculum to introduce to his students other local people who had used their talents and creativity to make a difference for others.

*“We kind of jump-started that with literacy to try to get them thinking on that wavelength and then we started to talk about how visitors are coming and ‘What can we do?’”*

He was surprised at the enthusiastic response of his students. He had read educational articles about service-learning where the students came up with ideas

*“And you’re like, ‘Yeah, whatever,’ but it’s true. It really is true at times.”*

In reflecting about all his service-learning experiences during his brief, but powerful teaching career, Andy states,

*“That’s the one thing I have learned about service-learning or doing these projects is to really let them [the students] take ownership of the project. Because it is meaningful for me, but is more meaningful if you let them do things.”*

#### Personal Benefits for Students

Andy cites self-esteem as the single-greatest personal benefit for his students as a result of participation in service-learning projects.

*“It is just the self-esteem that the kids have after these projects and their self-image and just believing that they have made a difference. The kids on the voting project, even though voting was up so much this last time [election] they still felt as though it was because of them getting people to register and educating parents.*

When the students see their parents and classmates applauding them,

*“that says a lot. That’s important for people. Not only do they hear it from me or the teacher down the hall, but people in the community viewing them that way because a lot of the times kids aren’t viewed that way, even near it. They are viewed as trouble-makers or whatever.”*

Andy also sees more positive character traits revealed when his students participate in service-learning. During service-learning projects he observes changes in all of his students, especially in the area of ownership. The students come up with their own ideas, take ownership of them, and carry them out. Andy described the transformation he observed in Tiffany, a good student academically, but

*“a pretty quiet child, kind of to herself.”*

Andy never knew of her love for and talent in music. During their preparation for the Civil War Celebration, Andy assigned each student to create a song about being a slave who was trying to

escape to freedom. He described his continued surprise as Tiffany took ownership of her part in the Civil War Celebration:

*“She developed her own song and you know, it comes out pretty good. I’m just reading it and it sounds pretty good, and then she actually decided that she wanted to perform it in front of the class. So she’s Harriett Tubman, right, so she just belts this song out. And everyone is just kind of like, ‘What?’ I mean, it was one of those moments that you hear people talk about and you’re like, ‘Oh yeah, whatever.’ And there it was.”*

Tiffany attended the Civil War Celebration dressed as Harriett Tubman and sang her original composition in front of the entire crowd.

*“And then after that she was just like, not necessarily quiet, but she was more open and involved. Just one little thing...It threw me off. I was like, ‘Wow!’”*

The heartwarming stories don’t stop there. Andy went on to describe Jimmy, whose mother had discussed during conferences that Jimmy was shy and she wanted to see him push himself more. Andy seized the opportunity during the planning of the South Africa community program and named Jimmy emcee for the day.

*“He’s nervous at first, and we’re practicing...but he just shined through....Mom’s there watching. It just set the tone for the whole year for him.”*

These are not just two isolated incidents.

*“I think the stories are like that for all the kids. All the jobs that they have with those different projects. Just taking ownership. I think that’s what is so important. You see them grow and you see them, you know, talking about the different character traits and trying to shove that in there as well, and just watching them kind of show examples of those traits toward each other. Now, it’s not, you know, every single time, but every once*

*in a while you see those moments where you say, 'Hmm, they did get something out of it.'"*

By providing opportunities for students to make a difference, students benefit.

*"They make a difference in what they are doing. They really think they are doing something that is going to change or help someone, not just, 'Okay, we did it and we are done.' They really think they really were the reason [something changed]...They feel more proud."*

#### Academic Benefits for Students

Andy also sees service-learning as a valuable technique for helping students discover their academic strengths.

*"Exposing some kids' strengths who maybe academically did not do as well, but just kind of having their shining moment with the service-learning projects and seeing some skills come out that maybe you wouldn't see if we were doing lectures and doing paper-pencil type stuff."*

Andy has seen improvements in the reading and writing skills of his students, as well as test scores in areas where service has been involved.

*"When we read certain magazines or read certain articles that are related to our project, they are into it more; they are paying more attention; they are focused; they are picking things out."*

His students performed much better on their essays written following their Civil War Celebration. Their writing was more strongly connected to the essay question and

*"their writing was more detailed and had a greater impact."*

In terms of testing, Andy states,

*“I definitely would say the test results from the different areas are improved when it’s related with the project....I mean all the subject areas I would say came up.”*

In hindsight, Andy is disappointed he didn’t do a more formal assessment of academic achievement,

*“I looked at grades, but I didn’t really analyze maybe like I should have. Now after doing all this it would be nice to collect all that data.”*

Andy has little difficulty connecting service-learning to his required content standards.

*“I would definitely say with the content standards, I mean, they’re there [within the project]. Language arts and social studies, and math...the kids counting the money that they are raising, and doing more every day qualities and abilities that can show, ‘How does this relate to everyday life?’ It really comes through and makes it more meaningful.”*

Andy and his current sixth grade teaching partner sit down together periodically and plan larger, longer thematic units where they are able to coordinate content standards in several major subject areas.

#### Teacher Benefits

Andy enjoys many aspects of incorporating service-learning into his teaching, but he especially understands and appreciates the rapport he gains with his students by using this type of learning in his classroom.

*“I think my strongest point wherever I go is my rapport with kids and I think when I do these types of projects I think the rapport is even stronger. They really trust me....They see me more as kind of a mentor instead of just the teacher who is up in front of the room teaching the class.”*

He sees this rapport carry over into other areas of his teaching.

Andy believes his participation in service-learning as a teacher has changed the way he teaches all subject areas.

*“Instead of being the one that has to stand in front and be in control at all times to stepping back and watching them learn through their eyes...It has helped me try to connect it to real-life situations too.”*

He notes that he is more energized when incorporating service-learning projects. He knows his energy level is communicated to his students also.

*“I get a lot out of it. I enjoy it. It doesn’t seem like a lot, I mean, it’s a lot of work, but it is also the reward of it is fun to watch.”*

Even with the exhaustion,

*“the end result always gets you signed up for the next one. You think, ‘Oh, I’m not going to do this again for a while.’ Then, what do you do? You turn around two weeks later and you start something new, or you start a service-learning club.”*

#### Teacher Motivation for Implementing Service-Learning

Andy recalls always being motivated to incorporate different types of service into his classroom. He credits one of his college professors with providing him the Project Citizen materials and suggesting he give it a try. He had other undergraduate experiences in educational methodology classes that introduced him to service as a teaching strategy, especially through a visit to a local food bank and discussing the curricular connections that were possible through service.

Andy’s interest in service-learning led him to sign up for graduate coursework, where he eventually earned his master’s degree. It was through that master’s program that he was able to

go to South Africa, where educators there were also using the Project Citizen curriculum. He saw first-hand the showcases prepared by the South African students and knew he could help his students connect to South Africa as well. Andy has taken advantage of several conferences and other workshops on service-learning, even teaching a series of inservices to other teachers in his school himself.

Andy also incorporated the *Everyday People Make a Difference* materials,

*“having the kids reading about different stories that are more in the community at home.*

*And trying to create a legacy.”*

From here, Andy was more confident to create his own service-learning connections with curricular units.

He uses service-learning as a source of his own motivation as well.

*“It makes it interesting to me too; I can’t keep doing the same thing.”*

He finds the focus on his students motivating.

*“That’s the number one thing, not about what the adults are going to say, but what are these kids going to do later on in life? Are they going to remember those opportunities they had in school? I would hope.”*

Andy has had several mentors during his process of growth in implementing service-learning. He names his college professor who provided him with the Project Citizen materials and another who directly connected service to the social studies standards. Another mentor was his high school religion teacher who

*“guided us in the direction, always about character.”*

### Motivation of Other Teachers

Andy has served as a clear motivation for other teachers and their involvement with service-learning at both schools where he has taught. At his current school, his grade-level teaching partner has never been exposed to teaching with service-learning and his success has made her eager to learn more. They are already making plans for next year.

*“I hope to get more teachers involved here at this school.”*

The teachers at his new school connected to service-learning because of Andy’s accomplishments.

*“They knew things were happening. We were making announcements. We were doing things in class, but it was kind of a big surprise for people.”*

He appreciated the choir teacher who joined in the effort to create the assembly.

*“She stepped right in and said, ‘We’ll get some things going.’ We had them in tears. We were singing the native songs and did their [South Africa’s] National Anthem...they were singing in different languages.”*

When Andy taught the service-learning course for other teachers at his former school, he was as a tremendous source of motivation for other teachers to implement service-learning,

*“just trying to get it out there. You know it is important.”*

He would like to see more teachers involved in service-learning. He describes his mentality as,

*“If they’re not jumping on board, we’ll do it and they’ll regret not jumping on the ship.”*

### Support

Andy has had incredible support from his teaching partners, at both his former and current schools. His school principals have also been supportive. He has found that it is easier to get administrative support when he clearly shows connections to the curriculum and content

standards. He has not had many contacts with central office administrative staff. For the South Africa program, a central office administrator helped contact different media outlets for publicity of the event, but he has had no other contact with upper-level administrators. He attributes this to being so new to the district. He has received financial support through grant-writing and from the school's parent-teacher organization, but when funds were not readily available, Andy found ways to make the project work despite the lack of funding. For example, for the Civil War Celebration, his students wrote letters to different agencies and school business partners requesting donated items. He recognizes that lack of funding can be a deterrent for some teachers, but Andy knows he can find a way to make it work. Recognizing his district's current financial constraints,

*“I know things are so tight around here. I don't want to go out and say this or that. It just seems like, ‘Don't talk about money. Just try to make it happen without.’”*

And he does.

The message being sent out from his central administration office clearly indicates the need to connect with the community and for the community to recognize positive things going on in the schools. He says,

*“This [service-learning] is it. This is what you need to do. Get them [the students] out in the community. Do some of these projects not behind closed doors but maybe out where people can see what they are doing.”*

#### Roadblocks

Andy is confident in this methodology and states that even if there were roadblocks,

*“I would do it anyway.”*

He recognizes funding is a roadblock, but that will not hinder his progress.

*“I have never gone through a project where I have had to stop because of feeling we just can’t do anything because we don’t have funding.”*

Permission from administration can be a roadblock, but he has managed to bypass this issue by always connecting the service-learning project to the curriculum. He wishes he had compiled more academic data in support of service-learning to show administrators.

When serving in his role as a teacher of other teachers he sees the importance of continuity in a teaching staff. Because of budget cuts and teacher transfers, the personnel in his former school kept changing.

*“There were so many people that were switched, unfortunately. A lot of the younger people were taking the [service-learning] classes and then they are switched over here and that is the sad part...because you are doing all that reform and you are going to have all the people that were trained elsewhere.”*

A roadblock for Andy personally is his lack of job security. He left his former school because of constant budget cuts only to face potential lay-offs in his new district.

*“So that kind of gets me down at times.”*

Yet again, Andy brings up service-learning,

*“That’s where these projects come in and I say, ‘No matter what, I am doing the right thing.’”*

#### Advice

Andy advises teachers who have not tried service-learning to take the plunge.

*“I just think if they would take that first step and do it and see the results for themselves I think they would change their mind. But it is a lot of hard work. It takes a lot of organization to get it together, but you know once you do it once, and you try and do it in*

*the future, you have it all there and you reflect on it and make changes and it's pretty easy to do."*

Focusing on the students really makes it worthwhile and will help with the adjustments teachers may have to make in their teaching and management styles.

*"Just be open to the kids and realize that it is not going to be exactly what you want—how the sounds will be in your classroom, the tone, you know it is going to be having to step back and experience it. Let them experience it."*

Andy also focuses on the importance of organization and be aware of what the teacher's expectations are for the end result.

*"I'm always kind of thinking the end result, the celebration, or whatever, and then kind of working my way back with the curriculum and content standards."*

Andy recommends that teachers be open to different events in the classroom and to ask for support.

*"It's not going to go perfect your first time and to realize, don't let that fool you on doing future projects."*

#### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

One rewarding part of the experience of implementing service-learning has been in observing the growth in his students.

*"Just seeing the maturity come out or the moments where they are emceeding and the mom is out in the crowd saying, 'Okay, my son's doing this.' I think a lot of the kids just don't get those opportunities in a classroom that lectures and occasionally meets in groups. I just don't think they can shine with their true qualities that they have. I think that is the most benefit... watching the kids grow from the experience."*

Andy also finds personal rewards in seeing the success of his students. They can more easily focus on other subject areas that might be more difficult for them because he has earned their trust.

*“When I’m teaching algebra and I’m teaching some hard concept, I have them focused. They are ready to listen. They trust me more and I think it [service-learning] just helps with everything else you do. When you can tie certain concepts in with service or you name it, they are more likely to pay attention to you and respect you a little bit more.”*

#### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

Andy described his service-learning experience in a simple phrase,

*“It benefits school, teachers, and the community.”*

Andy believes that service-learning is not just for students. It can be a part of a school’s overall mission not only for the betterment of its students and teachers, but also for the community-at-large.

#### Final Thoughts

Andy’s final thoughts were succinct and optimistic.

*“I’m ready for next year. I’m ready to keep it going and they haven’t seen anything yet!”*

## CHAPTER VII. BONNIE

## Background

Bonnie teaches third and fourth grades in a suburban school district in central Ohio, where she has taught for 15 years. She teaches in a flexible looping configuration where she has the same children for both third and fourth grades, with a few changes in the roster from year to year. This year she is teaching third grade.

Bonnie has had a varied teaching career, beginning in the New England states. She taught for a total of six and one-half years first in Massachusetts, followed by teaching in Antwerp, Belgium; then in upstate New York, followed by Illinois. Following the birth of her two sons, Bonnie taught preschool for three years before she accepted her current position. She has taught a variety of grade levels: preschool, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, as well as having taught children with learning disabilities.

## Personal History

Bonnie considers herself “*mature.*” She grew up in a very “*affluent*” community outside of Boston. She attended a well-known high school, but service was not a part of her schooling. Academics and athletics were the key focus areas.

*“At that point in time the churches would be the ones who would do these kinds of service projects....The community was very well-to-do, although there was a ‘well-to-do’ and a ‘really-well-to-do.’”*

She participated in service as a member of her church, but her family did not necessarily serve the community together. She describes her father as,

*“very good to others. He was a friend to all and was kind to all, but it was just who he was. It wasn’t in sort of a calculated fashion and it wasn’t anything that anybody would*

*know about. We found out at his funeral things that he had done for folks that we never knew about, whether it was helping them to get work or jobs or whether it was loaning them money or getting them started or working with them on projects.”*

Giving was a part of her life and her father was a role model, but

*“not in a talked about fashion.”*

Bonnie became involved in service personally because of her two children and their involvement at the same elementary school where she currently teaches.

*“Once you start this kind of stuff it is hard to let go and I think it just becomes a part of who you are and what you believe in and what you think is important.”*

She credits her involvement with service to the projects in which her boys were involved.

*“We learned through our children; we learned with our children. And the projects that they did has to impact our family and myself and then as a teacher in this program, this is just who we are.”*

### Teaching Style

Bonnie teaches in the Informal Program in her elementary school. This program was designed after John Dewey’s theories in Progressive Education and is outlined below.

#### Ten Foundational Principles of the Informal Alternative Program:

As educators within the Informal Alternative Program we...

1. Structure experiences that actively engage the child in producing rather than solely consuming knowledge.
2. Integrate thematic units of study and foster authentic learning opportunities.
3. Provide opportunities for the arts to occupy an integrated place in the curriculum as an essential way to acquire and express knowledge.

4. Use time and space in a flexible manner to maximize student opportunities for in-depth inquiry.
5. Respect diversity among children and variation in their development.
6. Raise social consciousness by encouraging children to examine and confront complex issues within society.
7. Collaborate with parents as co-educators in meeting children's needs.
8. Value ongoing reflection and self-evaluation by children and adults.
9. Guide child choice and decision-making.
10. View our school as a center for teaching and learning for all ages and we are students of our own teaching. (Source: Handout provided by Bonnie during the interview.)

Bonnie describes her teaching in the Informal Program:

*"It is hands-on. It is integrated learning situations. It's treating the child as an individual and teaching the child based on his or her strengths, and of course, dealing with his or her weaknesses or struggles."*

Interestingly, Bonnie's teacher training was *"very traditional."* When asked if she personally held this philosophy or if she adopted it with her experience with the Informal Program, Bonnie states that it was through her two sons who were students in her current school that she was introduced to this type of philosophy.

*"I truly learned about Informal through my children as a classroom volunteer and then I took classes to get my certificate renewed...I would say it was on-the-job-training."*

Once formally trained in the Informal Program, Bonnie has personally adopted its philosophy as her own.

*“This program, the Informal Program, believes a lot in life-long learning and parents as co-educators....It certainly connects to service-learning so my knowledge, my understanding, my teaching is still growing, changing, developing, adapting.”*

#### Service-Learning Experiences

Bonnie recalled her first service-learning experience when she took her students to downtown to work at a regional Food Bank. She made this connection as a result of a graduate class entitled “Beyond the Freeway.”

*“I didn’t take it [the graduate course] because it was easy but it was something that appealed to me. Service-learning to me just makes sense. I’m sorry. I don’t see what the fuss is about. I don’t see why anybody would make negative connotations. Just, service is important. You need to think of others.”*

Her first service-learning experience was in approximately 1996. She had a speaker introduce the children to the issues of poverty and hunger in the area and then the children worked sorting food and filling bags at the Food Bank.

*“That was my entry into the world of service-learning, which was sort of short and sweet and easy.”*

Her projects have evolved to be much more involved and complex over the years.

Because of Bonnie’s position as a looping teacher of third and fourth graders, she directs two different service-learning projects, Kids for Critters and Buckeye Bonanza. Kids for Critters is an economics unit for third graders incorporating economics concepts in designing, producing, and selling pet treats and toys with the profits going to various charities for animals, mainly to help with spaying and neutering. To introduce the problem this year, the students went on field trips to the Humane Society and to various pet stores. They also heard from various guest

speakers: a representative from Golden Endings, a rescue program for golden retrievers; a spokesperson for the Ohio Statehouse who spoke about the animals at the Statehouse; and other organizations working with animals. Several charities made presentations to the class and the class chose the charities to which they would donate their money. To earn the money, students created a business. They learned many economic concepts,

*“It was supply and demand, it was quality control, it was cost management, profit and loss—there was a great deal of learning.”*

The children created prototypes of various pet products at home and the class voted on the items they would mass produce and sell.

*“We had the kids take them home and we asked, ‘Did your cat play with this cat toy?’ We talked about safe toys and unsafe toys. In some years we did birdseed with little baskets of lard. One of the moms made stockings and we put in cat toys and dog toys. One year we did fish toys.”*

Once the class determined which items it would produce, and after the items were made, the children set up a sales booth at a local grocery store where they learned to greet people and sell their items. This past year the children voted to donate their earnings to the Cozy Cat Cottage, Cat Welfare, Golden Endings, and the Capital Area Humane Society.

*“It was a wonderful learning project.”*

In fourth grade the students participate in Buckeye Bonanza. This project began when one student brought in a large basket of buckeye nuts he had collected from his lake cabin.

*“Well from small buckeyes grew a very big project, because what we did is we created all kinds of buckeye necklaces and products.”*

Once the products were created, Bonnie was approached by a parent who worked on a local university campus who recommended she and her class come to the campus during a spirit week and sell their items on campus. They also made and sold candy buckeyes and polar fleece neck scarves in school colors that were very popular.

*“I mean, people loved them. It offered such opportunities for creativity, so it was great.”*

Now they have expanded to selling in the student union and to advertising. Even the music teacher has gotten involved and taught the students to play “Hang on Sloopy” on their recorders. This project is entering its tenth year. Again, the students choose their charities for donations. The funds from the past year went to the Stefanie Speilman Breast Cancer and Research Foundation.

*“It was authentic. It was exciting. It was wonderful. So rewarding. So fun. I mean I think at that point the children and I did not realize how much we had learned from the entire experience. It was just wonderful.”*

#### Personal Benefits for Students

Bonnie has seen the personal benefits of service-learning even in her own children. One of her sons organized his own fund raiser for cancer research.

*“He put together a talent show and he did this on his own....He is kind of an events kind of kid who is 32 right now, so I think what he took from [his elementary school] was career education, and giving back to others, and using your gifts and talents, which is what you have to do through service-learning, because you have to be invested and motivated.”*

After this successful venture, he organized four other fundraisers for different charities.

*“I think once you become a part of it and live with it, it is just something that you value and he learned a lot.”*

Bonnie has seen “*shy and retiring*” students really become comfortable with selling and initiating conversations with the public.

*“They became like new people. It was like, ‘Who are you?’ The activity was purposeful and I think it increased their confidence, their knowledgebase.”*

The children were given opportunities to grow personally and to also use their skills and talents.

*“It provided opportunities if they were artistic to let their talents shine and to let their confidence grow. On stage, some of the ones that did the stage production, it was just such a wonderful venue for them to shine.”*

She has seen obvious benefits for students with special needs.

*“This is a safe and positive learning environment and they are the ‘givers’ as opposed to the ‘givees’, which is a very good feeling.”*

#### Academic Benefits for Students

Bonnie does not hesitate to name the many academic benefits her students learn from their service-learning experiences. In their study of *community*, the children created a documentary about their town; others wrote and performed a play about the history of their community. They contributed to a children’s book that highlighted points-of-interest in their community, working with a local artist to learn about watercolor painting for their illustrations. They sold the books and held a community night to share their learning through their films and plays. The parents donated items for raffle baskets. The children donated the money to another community in New Orleans that had been ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

*“We raised a bunch of money and that was truly just a culminating activity of the service and the learning so it was just great.”*

In terms of overall academic benefits, Bonnie says,

*“I think the learning is authentic. It provides a wonderful reference point.”*

They build on their experiences when they learn more about the history of Ohio or how communities are affected by large corporations with local headquarters such as Wendy’s International, Borden’s and Nationwide Insurance. The children talk about how large corporations benefit communities and workers, costs, and taxes.

*“It provides authentic learning and it gives a framework to so many other components of learning...I think it makes a connection. It makes a connection with the students about the future.”*

Bonnie believes service-learning also contributes to concrete learning.

*“It provides an opportunity for children to demonstrate their academic skills and also to go behind the basics. I would say that their vocabularies, their realm of experiences, their connections, are just expanded upon. I say it enriches the academics greatly.”*

When planning service-learning projects she and the other teachers in her grade level use the written curriculum and the state standards as their guides.

*“When you look at language arts, math curriculum, counting money, planning cost-and-profit, when you look at your social studies, your decision-making, your economics concepts, even your government...all those components became really important.”*

As an example, Bonnie relates that

*“It really made the concept of supply-and-demand come alive when we had 10 people who wanted cat nip bags and we were all out. We have to make more cat nip bags.”*

She believes the more “*dramatic moments*” would probably be shared at home with families. She gets very positive feedback from parents who say their children have had very meaningful experiences through service-learning.

#### Teacher Benefits

Bonnie has definitely become more comfortable with implementing service-learning projects over the years. She has learned how to successfully request money from grants such as Learn-and-Serve Ohio. When editing her personal single-case analysis, Bonnie added several other benefits she has received personally as a result of implementing service-learning. Those benefits included connecting to other teachers who were interested in the projects, developing her own presentation skills, and learning more about her students.

#### Teacher Motivation for Implementing Service-Learning

Participating in a summer course sponsored by Career Education in her district, Bonnie learned a great deal about poverty in the “Beyond the Freeway” graduate course offered in the summer. As participants they had to take city buses to destinations and

*“what a pain in the neck it was and what great understanding we took. We learned about, you know, people who don’t have cars and the working poor and minimum wage doesn’t cut it.”*

She was influenced by district office administrators and these graduate classes.

*“People sort of brought that [service-learning] to my attention and it is just something that I am very receptive to.”*

### Motivation of Other Teachers

Bonnie sees herself as a mentor to younger teachers in her building. She is a formal mentor through the state-mandated licensure program, and through that experience she has taken the opportunity to

*“model for your younger teachers and they see it and they gain confidence....I would hope it would be a positive influence on other teachers, mostly younger teachers. Because I think the older teachers have seen this...many, many years and it is either something you’re comfortable with or you’re not. Or you can start small and grow.”*

She has also presented at several conferences, staff meetings, and other staff development gatherings.

*“I think it’s the knowledge and the awareness of service-learning projects that have been meaningful and still connected to the curriculum and to the standards out there.”*

Service-learning is extra work.

*“It’s extra time; it’s extra work. It’s extra effort.”*

She understands how traditional teachers might find service-learning difficult to implement

*“because it is not cut-and-dried and easy and it’s not measurable.”*

### Support

Bonnie cited several key areas of support, the most critical of which was funding. She believes that her projects could still have been completed without funding, but there would be questions about paying for buses and field trips that make the service-learning experience more meaningful. She receives Learn-and-Serve grant funds to implement her projects.

*“That Learn-and-Serve America grant is big. That really makes a difference.”*

She knows that she would have the monetary support of the PTO if necessary.

She is grateful for the support from her district and from the Career Education Department in her district. She also mentioned support from parents who are comfortable being involved with the projects. She has building support from her principal and assistant principal and her colleagues.

*“This is not a one-man project. With the four of us [teachers], there were moments where it was, ‘Oh my goodness, what have we done?’ and yet, it was just so exciting and so rewarding and it did what we wanted it to do, so that was wonderful.”*

She was also appreciative of the support from the local newspapers and the publicity they have received from their projects.

#### Roadblocks

Bonnie indicates that standardized testing has become an issue, especially for younger teachers

*“who are without the benefit of 20 years experience.”*

She sees them worrying about getting all the information and curriculum in within the school year.

*“For me that’s not an issue, but for a new teacher, I could understand where there might be a reluctance to bite off something. That might seem overwhelming or too time-consuming.”*

She did face an issue with one particular colleague who was not supportive and quite outspoken, but she learned to set aside such negativity and continue her projects.

#### Advice

Bonnie is very energetic about getting new teachers to try service-learning. She would say to these novice teachers,

*“It’s worth your time. It’s worth your energy. It is a wonderful opportunity for your students. Go for it!”*

Her first project was very simple and straight-forward when her students volunteered at the regional Food Bank. Her projects have grown into something much more complex. She recommends this route for new teachers.

*“It really did evolve and I think that can be a safety part for new teachers.”*

She believes there are always opportunities that are presenting themselves, such as when her students took the opportunity to serve the Hurricane Katrina victims as well as victims of the Indonesian tsunami. She recommends that teachers interested in service-learning

*“keep an open mind. Keep eyes open. When an opportunity presents itself, go for it. As we age, sometimes it is challenging. That’s hard. But it’s certainly worthwhile.”*

#### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

Seeing students grasp the academic material in an authentic way has been a meaningful part of the service-learning experience for Bonnie.

*“Because I’m a teacher I’m all about learning. So when I see that a concept has clicked, when they really understand quality control, and that’s a pretty strong economics concept, that light bulb has gone on and that’s great.”*

She refers to the way service-learning has helped her to teach the two mottos she has hanging in her classroom:

*“Be grateful, not greedy. Be respectful, not rude.”*

Because Bonnie teaches in an affluent community where the children have so many possessions, she especially is rewarded when she sees the children

*“feeling good about what they’re doing and knowing that what they’re doing is going to help others less fortunate....I guess that would have to be my shining moment.”*

She is proud to have been part of an “*evolution of understanding*” in children. They are beginning to realize that doing good deeds is a positive experience for the receiver and the giver.

*“Seeing the learning and service and the giving and the joy of the receivers and appreciation. That’s a real gift.”*

She has received many heartfelt thank you notes from agencies and individuals who have benefited for her students’ work.

*“It was so marvelous. That was a gift.”*

#### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

Bonnie could not stop at just five words when describing her service-learning experience. The following is a listing of all the words Bonnie used to express her thoughts about service-learning:

*“Meaningful...important...enlightening...relevant [named twice]...an opportunity...memorable...exciting...enriching...significant...magical...incredible...worthwhile...valuable... valid.”*

#### Final Thoughts

Bonnie appreciated the qualitative approach to research and believes this work will be important to revealing the importance of service-learning and promoting its implementation in schools. She indicated that anecdotal research is difficult, but necessary.

*“It is sort of like the cookie-cutter philosophy. Kids aren’t cookie cutters. Learning does not always take place in the same way, at the same time, and because of the same things.”*

## CHAPTER VIII. KIM

### Background

Kim currently teaches eighth grade American History in a suburban middle school in central Ohio, and has taught this subject for the past 21 years. She is in her 30<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, having started her teaching in another school district, but has taught in her current district for most of her career. Kim has taught second, fourth, and sixth grades before teaching in her current position.

### Personal History

Kim grew up in a home that believed in giving to others. Both her parents had careers that involved caring and serving others. With her parents having degrees in criminology and social work, she often observed the care-taking of others. While Kim was in school she volunteered with her church and as a member of the Girls' Friendly Society, where she worked with children at local child care facilities.

*"I have totally grown up with... social awareness....I have been involved in social services all my life. Absolutely all my life."*

Currently Kim spends her personal service time with her daughters volunteering for the food pantry at her church. After retirement in June 2006, Kim is planning to be able to spend more time volunteering, including spending time at the Pediatric Orthopedic Ward of Children's Hospital, reading to and spending time with the children there. As a breast cancer survivor, Kim's oncologist asked her to serve as a mentor to other newly diagnosed cancer patients. She is considering this option as well.

### Teaching Style

Because of her elementary background, Kim has a hands-on teaching philosophy.

*“Even though they are middle school children 12 or 13 years of age, I think children learn a great deal with hands-on.”*

Even with her hands-on approach, she still is more teacher-centered in her delivery,

*“where the teacher basically has the control, but even though I have the control, it is a lot of drama and hands-on activities.”*

### Service-Learning Experiences

Kim’s major involvement with service-learning was with her 16-year project with the Open Shelter in the city’s downtown. The Open Shelter was a shelter for homeless men, ages 18 and over. To begin her description of the project, Kim told this story:

*“I think I could look at it on the side of a student and a side of one of the clients at the [homeless shelter]. There was a student and she was sitting there and she was playing cards with him during their free time after their lunch and they had cleaned up. And he was an older gentleman, I would say probably in his 70s, mid-to-late 70s, and he just came out and asked the little girl, ‘What are your goals in life? What goals do you have? What do you want to do?’ And she said she would like to do this and she would like to do that. And he immediately turned around and said to her, ‘Stay off drugs, watch your alcohol, participate in whatever faith you practice, and respect and honor your parents for they will not guide you wrong.’ And here’s this complete stranger. She just sat there and the tears just swelled up in her eyes and she just started to cry. And within a week he wrote a poem to the children about how important it is to follow rules and make good decisions because it will follow you forever. Just out of the clear blue he wrote it and that interaction between that young lady and the gentleman still sticks in my mind. That was very powerful because I think she didn’t realize how helpful she was for him to just*

*talk things out and give advice because he knew he had made some wrong decisions and didn't want to see another person make those decisions. It was very interesting."*

Kim introduced the Open Shelter project to her eighth graders each year by creating an awareness of the poverty issues in their city. Through her American History curriculum, she tied this awareness to their study of the Great Depression in the 1930s. The students participated in simulations where they had to live on minimum wage and then had to find a place to live that they could afford, buy food, find appropriate child care, and make other life decisions. Her students soon realized that this was very difficult on such a low income. She also had the children answer anonymous questionnaires about their knowledge of homelessness and then invited in the Director of the Open Shelter to speak to the students.

The students compared what they had learned about present-day to the issues of people living during the Great Depression. Then, working with the Exploratory Arts teacher, the students planned a menu to prepare and serve to the residents of the Open Shelter. Kim arranged for the students to ride city buses downtown to the shelter to experience public transportation first-hand.

*"I purposely do this in January and February, the coldest part of the year, so they know what it's like to have to wait 20 or 25 minutes for a bus and kids never will dress like they are supposed to, so they really feel the pain of what it's like to be cold."*

Parents were involved by transporting the prepared meal to the shelter. Upon arriving at the shelter, the students were divided into small groups to do volunteer work at the shelter—mopping floors, folding blankets, organizing donations closets, sorting shoes, serving food, and spending one-on-one time with the residents playing cards, games, or just talking.

Upon returning to school, the students reflected upon their experiences with one another *“and that’s when the feelings really start coming out and that is when sometimes children become very, very choked up over it because it has been such an emotional adrenaline type of day. When they are coming down, they are exhausted. Parents say sometimes they can’t talk when they go home. They can’t talk about it right then and there. They may talk about it a couple of days later....They will talk when they are ready to talk.”*

Kim was able to tie in their experience at the Open Shelter to the students’ experiences on their end-of-the-year trip to Washington, D.C.

*“Kids know how to deal with the homeless people that are standing on the streets and they are not in shock.”*

Because of the success of the program, Kim not only involved her own social studies classes, but the other eighth grade American History classes of the other middle school teams as well. At the peak of the program, students from Jones Middle School were preparing and serving food and volunteering for eight days each winter. For several years, with the help of the PTO and other parents, the children also prepared gift bags containing a wash cloth, a razor, a bar of soap, and toothpaste for the men to receive on Christmas morning. Over 100 students were involved in the project each year. This was an on-going project for 16 years, until the Open Shelter was demolished because of urban revitalization in the downtown area. It was believed that the shelter would be an eye-sore for visitors to the city.

Since the end of the Open Shelter Project in 2002, Kim and her students have been involved in other service-learning activities. She has worked with students to organize benefits to raise money for cancer research. She is currently working with her students to recognize and

honor World War II veterans in the community by organizing luncheons and assemblies. Service has become part of the culture at this middle school.

*“Service-learning is very much on the minds of the faculty and students of this building. We do a lot. Kids do it and I don’t think they even realize that it is service-learning. We are pretty proud of what we do in this building.”*

#### Personal Benefits for Students

Kim has seen the on-going effects this one-time visit to the Open Shelter has on the personal development of her students.

*“They go down one time through the class, but the interesting thing is, many of them went back to their churches and got into the youth programs at their churches and called up the Shelter, used my name as getting their foot in the door, and they were able to set up about every six to eight weeks that their group would go down and feed them in the evening. There was a domino effect.”*

She saw awareness broaden as students organizing dances at the high school would have students bring in canned goods for donations to the food pantries.

*“That stimulated from the fact that the kids experienced this [the Open Shelter] so it kind of broadened out a little bit.”*

Other students have volunteered at other shelters to continue their service. Students have contacted her and told her of their plans to major in sociology or social work because of their experience at the homeless shelter.

*“I can see I have been successful in many, many areas from this program with my kids.”*

She saw students develop and practice on-the-job problem-solving skills. The students, themselves, planned and organized how they were to unload two semi-truckloads of mattresses

that had been donated. The parents and teachers stood back and the students organized the entire process. Student organizational skills were also put to the test when faced with mounds of clothing donations to be organized by style, size, color, etc.

*“I mean they put them in sizes, but then they had them in colors. And [the Director] said ‘I have never seen such clean, organized community closets in all my life down here.’”*

One of the most important benefits Kim believes students receive is an emotional connection.

*“You can always take something and kind of put it together in an academic component, but I think it is more of just an emotional feeling that comes through.”*

Several times during the interview, Kim gestured to her heart, saying,

*“It is something that is always here. And then it’s that feeling....Your students are growing and you grow as a person.”*

As evidence of that emotional connection, several former students returned to the Open Shelter and painted a colorful mural on an entire wall.

*“These are just little things that come to mind that took place that was just a natural unraveling of what happened.”*

#### Academic Benefits for Students

Kim found it difficult to name specific academic benefits, but felt that the motivation the students had was an important benefit. She always tied her service-learning project to her curriculum through the Great Depression and other social studies content standards. She did observe that student writing was more in-depth and detailed after the experience.

*“Even if you just say, ‘write for five minutes about your experience,’ it is just so deep and so moving and again it is that feeling. They are dealing with their emotions and their thoughts.”*

#### Teacher Benefits

Because of her involvement with the shelter through her class, Kim served on the Board of Trustees of the Open Shelter for seven years.

*“I learned a great deal when I was on that Board. The politics that go along with it...and it all came from this project. They wanted someone from the ordinary community to come and serve on their board and I did. So that was a positive for me to come out and I was able to see it from a behind-the-scenes. You know, everything that goes along in the big picture to see behind-the-scenes and it wasn’t pretty. A lot of it wasn’t pretty.”*

Kim also learned about the plight of the homeless from the Director of the Open Shelter. She and her students learned lessons such as the first thing homeless people miss is

*“the privacy in the bathroom, to be able to go to the bathroom. That is the thing that homeless people miss the most. The humility it is to not have a place to go to the restroom.”*

She also learned many statistics to share with her friends and colleagues, such as

*“The fastest-growing segment of homelessness is children under five. Most people don’t understand that, but until you are in it; you are working with it; you are reading statistics; you’ve got notebooks that you are dealing with when you are on the Board of Trustees there, you learn so much about how people survive on the streets. Then I am able to relate it to my students, to parents, to faculty, to the administration, to my own private friends.”*

Kim believes that through her experience as a teacher incorporating service-learning that she learned how to tolerate different student comments and know they were growing and she had to be patient with that growth. She also believes this project had a positive impact on her skills in working with parents, particularly parents who were afraid to send their children into an environment such as the Open Shelter.

*“I tried to make them understand that their children could not catch tuberculosis in that short period of time or they would not contract some kind of fungus....I had to really explain to parents one-on-one that we were the ones when we went down there that would make the men ill.”*

Kim explained that the immune systems of the residents of the shelter were so depleted, that as visitors, her students spread more harmful germs to the men than the men would have spread to her students.

#### Teacher Motivation for Implementing Service-Learning

Kim’s initial source of motivation for implementing this service-learning project came when she saw the need to increase her students’ awareness of the issue of homelessness when she led groups of eighth graders to Washington, D.C. on their end-of-the-year class trip. She recalled on their visit to Lafayette Square that the students encountered numerous homeless people.

*“The kids couldn’t believe how many homeless there were living in front of the White House. They said, ‘Can the President see this?...Why doesn’t he stop it?’ All the way home for nine hours were kids talking about the people. Talking about people pushing grocery carts past the White House with all of their world belongings right there. It*

*bugged those kids and bugged them and I mean I was astounded with just the conversations.”*

Once she returned from the trip, she could not get those student conversations out of her mind. At that same time, the Director of Career Education put out a flyer announcing an informational meeting on service-learning. She attended, received a list of possible agencies, and finally reached an agreement with the Open Shelter. She also attended the Career Education-sponsored course “Beyond the Freeway” to increase her awareness on the issues. Once Kim had completed her first visit, the Director of the Open Shelter said,

*“I can see this happening every year.”*

And it did, for 16 years.

#### Motivation of Other Teachers

Kim was able to gain the support of almost all the teachers in her building. All the eighth grade teams got involved in the project. Almost every teacher accompanied Kim and her students to the Shelter at one time or another. As other teachers began to plan service projects, they used Kim as a resource, asking questions about funding, transportation, parent involvement, and other planning and implementation details. Teachers from other districts also contacted Kim to get details of her project to work toward implementing similar service-learning projects of their own

#### Support

Kim cites the administration as her number one level of support for incorporating service-learning into her classroom. The superintendent spent time with her students at the Open Shelter, even participating in sorting hundreds of shoes in the donation room. Various building principals have gone to the Shelter over the years to volunteer with the children. The Director of

the district's Career Education Department was a strong supporter, along with the other teachers in her building. In addition, Kim found community support as essential to the success of the project.

*"I wouldn't be able to do a thing without the community support of pushing for the project to continue. Because it became a community item that they talked about...I really believe with service-learning it will not be successful if you do not have support all the way down. It's just not going to work."*

Kim received the funding for her project from Career Education funds from the district. They were able to purchase bus passes for the city buses and also cooking utensils for meal preparation. School PTO funds and other grants were available to support her project.

*"They [the PTO] were very eager to give money and that kind of stuff."*

#### Roadblocks

Kim's biggest roadblock came during the planning stages of the project. She found it very difficult to find an agency that was willing to work with eighth graders.

*"They were afraid to work with young children."*

She called down a long list of organizations and received negative responses. The homeless shelter was the last name on the list.

*"The only person that came through was [the Director of the homeless shelter] and the reason why is that he was a graduate of [this district's high school] and he'd listen to my idea of what I wanted to do, why I wanted to do it, and he said, 'Come on down. Let's talk.'"*

### Advice

Kim's advice to teachers who want to implement service-learning is to

*"be comfortable with yourself before you tackle anything."*

Depending on the issue one is choosing to tackle, the teacher must first feel comfortable working in that situation.

*"You have to examine yourself....You have to look at yourself first to see if you're comfortable with it. That is easily going to rub off on most of your children."*

Second, she suggests that teachers work directly with administrators to get their support.

*"Once you have the administrators on board they will do anything to make their program successful because it's going to be a name for the school. The school's name will be out in the community."*

When teachers are comfortable with the topic and have the administrative support for the project,

*"everything else kind of rolls in."*

Kim also believes it is important to establish a strong relationship with the people at the agency with which teachers are working.

*"I think most important with my program and with any service-learning is the relationships that you have to develop to get it going, because whatever agency that you are working with or organization that you are working with, if you've established a relationship that is a trusting relationship, it will go very smoothly. And that is something that is not going to happen overnight."*

### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

When asked about the most rewarding part of the experience of implementing service-learning, Kim immediately responded with the relationships she developed. As a member of the

Board of Trustees for the Open Shelter for seven years, she developed strong relationships there. She also enjoyed the relationships she developed with her students and parents outside the classroom. She also enjoyed the relationships she developed with colleagues as they worked together to expand the project from one class to eight over the course of 16 years

#### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

Because I had sent the interview questions to the co-researchers ahead of time, Kim had taken the time to prepare her key words to describe service-learning prior to the interview. She read the following words from her paper:

*“Worthwhile... educational...motivational...cooperation...emotional.”*

As she said the word “*emotional*” she pointed to her heart one final time and said,

*“It’s the emotional component.”*

#### Final Thoughts

For final thoughts, Kim related that she found the interview process interesting because she was afforded the opportunity to

*“reminisce and think about what I’ve done in the past and I am now thinking about the hundreds of kids that had the experience and wondering how it’s impacted them, where they’ll take it out in the community and possibly broaden someone else’s horizons. You just don’t think about that. You just don’t know until years down the line what the impact is....They say, ‘It only takes one thing to change you.’”*

## CHAPTER IX. ERIN

## Background

Erin is in her fifth year of teaching at a rural high school in northwest Ohio. She teaches integrated social studies to students in grades 9-12, mainly teaching American history, government, and economics. Prior to this experience, Erin completed her methods and student teaching requirements in an eighth grade classroom in another rural district in the same area. She plans to finish her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Teaching within the next year.

## Personal History

Erin was an eager participant in service projects while she was growing up and credits her high school and university service-learning experiences with helping her recognize that she should enter the teaching profession.

*"I worked with the children when I was in high school and found it to be very beneficial and when I went to [the university]...we got credit for basically going to the schools and tutoring."*

This experience was very influential in her career choice.

*"I found that it made a huge impression on me and it helped me a great deal in my pursuit of a teaching career."*

In her elementary years Erin was a Girl Scout and was

*"always doing that kind of stuff."*

As she grew older, she became a Girl Scout camp leader as well as a member of several church groups who performed service. Her mother was her Girl Scout leader

*"so there's a connection there."*

As a Girl Scout, she volunteered at a nursing home, helped rake leaves for the elderly, and participated in various collections around the holidays. She also attended an elementary Christian school where, in fifth grade, she was a buddy for a resident at a nursing home. Her family also believed that service was important,

*“being that we’re church-oriented, that’s just something that is valued in our family.”*

Currently she has not found time to do much service outside of her school day because

*“I pour my heart and soul into my teaching.”*

Erin volunteers often at church events and she voluntarily organized a Model United Nations for her high school, but now she will be getting a stipend for the position,

*“so it’s not really a service thing anymore.”*

#### Teaching Style

Erin describes herself as a

*“fan of John Dewey and learning-by-doing.”*

She integrates constructivist ideas into her teaching as well, believing that

*“the kids need to be immersed in something to understand it better.”*

She sees herself as a guide in the classroom for her students,

*“guiding them to discover the knowledge themselves.”*

#### Service-Learning Experiences

Because Erin is relatively new to teaching, this past year she planned and implemented her first service-learning experience for her students. She had planned to incorporate service-learning in her American Studies class that she team-teaches with an English teacher, but that has not worked out for this year. However, in her government class, a situation arose and she knew she had to do something about it. Erin retells how her first service-learning experience began:

*“Kids today are always saying, ‘Oh that’s retarded. That’s retarded.’ Some kids had brought it up or something because we have a group of kids here who are the [special needs] students and they pass by here when they go to get their lunch. So we got to talking about it and then I thought, ‘Oh, they need to go see these kids or something because they have no idea what these kids are about.’ And so it turned into a service-learning project.”*

Erin found it ironic that as she was contemplating this project, she found herself participating in a writing conference with a special education teacher from her school, whom she had really never met.

*“We started talking about how we don’t collaborate much as teachers. I said, ‘You know, I’ve been thinking of a service-learning project, and if anything I would love to get your kids together with mine just so these kids will understand your kids are people and hence they shouldn’t be referring to them the way that they are.’”*

Erin and the special education teacher were both a bit nervous as they planned this project because they were unsure of their students’ reactions and neither teacher wanted any hurt feelings.

The two teachers arranged a few visits for small groups of about four or five of Erin’s students to go to meet the students with special needs. On these first visits they played games, talked, and got to know each other. Erin’s students had interesting responses on their return to their classroom.

*“They’d come back here, it was so funny, they’d come back here and they were like, ‘Curtis beat me at Connect Four! I can’t believe it!’”*

The curriculum connections were met through one of the state standards for Government, selected directly from the social studies content standards. The students were to learn about the history and development of the U.S. Constitution and U.S. laws. Erin's students were to decide on a topic and teach students in the special education classroom what they had learned. Erin's student worked with the special education teacher to learn at what cognitive level to present the information. The students designed various ways to teach the curriculum. One group created and performed a skit about rules and laws in which the students with learning disabilities participated. They modeled it after a town meeting and the importance of voting. Another group wrote a book containing their factual information. A third group incorporated music and wrote a song about the First Amendment. Erin noted that not only did the students learn the curriculum, but they also learned about other students in their school.

*“A lot of my students were fans of the project. I asked them what they learned. It was like, ‘You know, I realized that this group of people, you know, they are really interesting.’”*

#### Personal Benefits for Students

Erin saw true personal growth in her students through the project. Because of her students' interactions with persons with disabilities, they learned to appreciate these students as people. They were able to connect with them on a personal level.

*“The kids really never would have imagined that this student with a disability was going to be able to beat them at Connect Four, or they would come back and they would say things like, ‘Oh my goodness, Curtis loves the New York Yankees. That’s MY favorite team.’ So there was a realization and I think that they became more knowledgeable. I*

*think they gained more of a respect. I hope that they will take that and carry it on with them later in life.”*

She was impressed that individual students truly grew from their experiences, especially the group of students who were using the phrase “That’s retarded.”

*“They didn’t do it any more and I think, too, that they were maybe the most shocked because of that group, those were the kids who would come back and say, ‘Oh wow, I found out Nicole really is into this or that.’*

Other students were impressed with themselves and how creative they were when writing their songs and skits.

*“They were excited too when they found that the kids just enjoyed it. I think that was a big thing.”*

Erin shared that the students who wrote their own song and lyrics

*“came out of their shell because they were able to use some other talent, because not everybody is into social studies.”*

Erin also saw increased motivation in her students. She believes they appreciated doing something realistic and

*“something that made a difference to someone.”*

She heard them make comments such as,

*“Wow, I actually feel like I did something. I guess what I was looking for them to get out of it was that they learned that this group of kids over in the [special education] room that’s off in no-man’s-land,...that’s a group of people over there that you should pay attention to and they are real people, and you know, you have to be careful what you say about them.”*

Erin knows this goal was definitely met.

#### Academic Benefits for Students

Erin also believes the students definitely learned the content from the state standard.

*“I could definitely see that they showed me that they knew the content, the government content, but then along with it, I think some of them got the point. So I was really excited.”*

Having her students think about relating the material in different ways helped them think deeply about and learn the material. She knows she could have given the students paper-and-pencil tests, but she believes they liked creating something that someone else would enjoy and learn from at the same time.

*“Not only did they get into it, but they really sought after what would be interesting to the kids on their level, their cognitive level. And I was just really impressed with them. I was shocked.”*

Erin found this type of learning to be

*“more memorable; it is more realistic for the kids.”*

Erin also recalled a student who was struggling academically to pass her class and

*“all of a sudden he became a little more excited about class and he was a little more willing to meet me half way with stuff, you know, and do work and things....I think the fact that he did come in and play his guitar and we saw something that he could do well; he wasn't beaten down so much then.”*

### Teacher Benefits

Erin found it quite rewarding to see her students enjoying learning information about the Constitutional period in our country's history. She sometimes finds it frustrating to teach social studies because it is very difficult to teach the students empathy for other groups.

*“They have their ideas and I feel like it is my job to, without stepping on toes, you know, to debunk some of their generalities that they have.”*

Through their learning experience with the students with special needs,

*“they can go out and actually interact with the people and they start to understand better and that is when they start to empathize.”*

She said that when her students recognized the special education students as “*real people*” was the most rewarding part of the experience,

*“That was probably the best thing.”*

### Teacher Motivation for Implementing Service-Learning

Erin found herself most motivated to implement her first service-learning project because of the personal, real issue at hand—the students' attitudes toward the students with disabilities. She was familiar with the concept of service-learning because of her own personal experiences and also her experience as an intern in the Office of Service-Learning Initiatives (OSLI) at the local university.

*“I really feel like that [prior experience with service-learning] really taught me something and I wanted to do something like that.”*

During her internship, she designed the website for OSLI and became familiar with the literature, and began to do more reading on her own. To further her own professional development, she would like to take a graduate class to learn more about service-learning.

### Motivation of Other Teachers

Erin definitely sees herself as someone who has served as a motivator for other teachers, especially her co-teacher for American Studies. The two teachers were allowed a professional day to plan for next year and her co-teacher mentioned,

*“By the way, I know our goal this year was to do some service-learning and we never fit it in because our schedules are so crazy.”*

Erin was glad her co-teacher was excited because

*“it wasn’t me pushing it on her.”*

She also shares her experiences with the teacher in the classroom next door, who is always interested in what Erin is doing with her students. Erin also had an opportunity to share her service-learning progress informally with other teachers at her writing workshop.

*“It got some people excited about that and about what we were doing.”*

### Support

During the project Erin found support from the special needs teacher with whom she planned and implemented the project. She did not see the need to look for outside support, but thinks this would be a good idea in the future. She knows of grants that are available but has not had the time to pursue those grant opportunities. Her principal or other school district administrators were not involved or even aware of the project. She is getting pictures put into the school district newsletter so there will be an article explaining the project. Through this, she hopes to create greater awareness of the project and of service-learning in general.

Erin does believe it is important to have parental support because

*“sometimes I wonder, with doing service-learning, if we are kind of walking a fine line between teaching values and I know some parents don’t want me to teach their kid values. They feel that’s their job.”*

She does have plans for another project next year involving a retirement home in the area so her students can write some oral histories of the town. For that project she will need funding for transportation and also permission from district administrators to leave the school.

#### Roadblocks

Erin found “*time*” to be the biggest roadblock. She would have planned a service-learning project with her other class had there been more time to work on it.

#### Advice

Erin’s best advice to teachers trying service-learning for the first time is

*“just not to be afraid of it...go with what the students’ interests are because I think it goes back to Dewey with his learn-by-doing. You know if you start with something that interests them you then you know you are going to learn something from it.”*

She also advises that a teacher should be organized in the planning of the project and

*“start with an objective in mind.”*

She emphasizes that it is

*“service-LEARNING, and you want to make sure that the kids are going to learn something from the curriculum.”*

Once a teacher starts with the objective, it is okay to teach “*out-of-the-box.*” Then following the service, she says teachers should still assess students and have them reflect on their experiences.

### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

When Erin does her own reflecting on her experience in implementing her first service-learning experience, she says that the most rewarding experience for her was

*“seeing the kids learn, not only the state standard, but seeing them learn something about life, instead of just what’s in the textbook and what’s in the state standards.”*

She refers to this experience as the “*ah-ha factor*” for her because

*“a lot of them just had kind of this realization, ‘Oh, this is how people are.’”*

As a student participating in service-learning, Erin, herself, came to realize the importance of learning from any experience.

*“I learned, too, that I mean any experience can help you, even if it’s not catered completely to what you’re doing.”*

She first questioned her tutoring placement within a second grade classroom when she was in secondary teacher education, but then she learned that

*“doing service-learning, you know, working with kids of all ages you learn something about kids from any age that you can apply to people in general, and so it was very helpful.”*

### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

Erin found it difficult to sum up service-learning using one-word descriptors. She finally settled on “*necessary*” and returned to her description of John Dewey’s philosophy of

*“learning-by-doing.”*

### Final Thoughts

Erin has thought that for the last few years it would be helpful to bring teachers together who implement service-learning,

*“collaborating, and putting together some kind of forum where they could get together and share ideas or something.”*

She is anxious to learn more about how to continue to implement service-learning.

## CHAPTER X. MARJORI

### Background

As the researcher for this dissertation using phenomenological methodology, I chose first to have a close friend and former colleague interview me about my service-learning experiences before I interviewed the other co-researchers. Below is a summary of that interview.

I am former high school social studies teacher who taught in Worthington, Ohio, for 14 years. In that capacity, I taught ninth grade global history, eleventh grade American history, and American humanities, the latter with the colleague who interviewed me. I was also a part-time teacher-leader for career and vocational education in the district. For the past seven years, I have been an Early Childhood Studies instructor at Bowling Green State University as well as an educational consultant. It was during my high school teaching experience that I was first introduced to service-learning. That is the backdrop for the experiences shared during the interview.

### Personal History

As part of my personal history with service, I recall participating in volunteerism with my family at a young age, helping under-privileged families in the area. I also remember fundraising for different organizations in grade school.

*“It wasn’t connected to the curriculum at all, but we did volunteer and that sort of thing.”*

Throughout all these experiences, I was particularly motivated by my mother, who was a role model for serving our community. My grandmothers, too, were always helping others as well, by cooking meals for friends, or volunteering at our church.

### Teaching Style

I describe my teaching style as

*“flexible and student-centered. I like to use hands-on activities in the classroom.”*

It is important to me for students to be involved in their learning so that they will remember more of what they learn.

### Service-Learning Experiences

My first experience with formalized service-learning as a teacher involved my ninth grade global history students visiting a retirement center, doing odd jobs around their apartments, and establishing relationships with the residents.

*“They helped the residents. They had little odd jobs for them to do around their apartments...our first visit they just kind of got to know the people.”*

On subsequent visits the students interviewed the residents about their experiences during World War II.

*“Our students went over and interviewed them about World War II and then the [retirement center] people came to our school and we had a panel discussion about World War II for another class session.”*

As I became more experienced with teaching and with service-learning, I more fully incorporated service-learning into the curriculum. My favorite and most successful project involved students in American humanities who explored hunger and poverty in present day and compared that to the Joads’ Depression-era experience as told in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. These same humanities students participated in similar service activities for residents of several other retirement homes.

### Personal Benefits for Students

I saw students benefit in many ways as they participated in service-learning activities, especially in personal growth. During the Great Depression project, it was eye-opening for my upper-middle class students to see and talk to families in poverty. They realized people weren't just lazy; there were a variety of circumstances that could lead to poverty. The students realized

*“people weren't poor because they didn't care, or because they didn't try, or because they were lazy. It was the circumstances that really dictated a lot of the poverty.”*

Students also realized what they took for granted in their own lives, and

*“how much their ‘stuff’ didn't really matter any more.”*

The students who visited residents in the retirement centers described how meaningful it was for them to be needed and for others to depend on them. They also

*“acted much more maturely than when they were with the older people than they did at school.”*

The students took more responsibility and initiative and followed through on tasks with great care. They showed a caring side that I had not seen exhibited before. I believe that most teens feel they do not have much control in their lives and that there is not much they are responsible for outside of their own personal spheres. This experience provided them an opportunity to test-out their capacity for responsibility and maturity.

### Academic Benefits for Students

In terms of academic benefits, students connected more personally with the events of World War II than their peers in previous years. After having interviewed the residents about their memories of that era, I believe they retained that information in more depth than they otherwise would have. During the Great Depression project, students definitely had a greater

appreciation for the complexities of social issues and the extreme difficulties faced by those in poverty, during the 1930s and today.

*“They understood the New Deal and the legislation and the problems during the Depression, the historical side. I think students realized that a lot hadn’t changed.”*

The students understood to a greater extent the political issues of the poor and their lack of voice in local, state, and national government.

*“It was important for them to go to the legislator...to feel like they had some power in their knowledge that they could share with somebody who might make a difference.”*

#### Teacher Benefits

I enjoyed my teaching much more when I was implementing service-learning.

*“I enjoyed the energy and the enthusiasm from the kids.”*

I benefited from finding more purpose and meaning in my job, knowing I was teaching students to be true, active citizens.

*“We weren’t just learning about a democracy in American Humanities; the students were actually participating as citizens of a democracy and making a difference. That’s what I enjoyed.”*

#### Teacher Motivation for Implementing Service-Learning

In terms of my personal motivation to implement service-learning projects in my classroom, I was motivated by several experiences early in my teaching career. I was encouraged by a district-level administrator to participate in career education meetings, workshops, and graduate courses. This person was also my mentor throughout all my projects.

*“It was their encouragement and just hearing other testimonials that it really does work.”*

At those training sessions I heard testimonials from students, teachers, and community members who told of the benefits of experiential learning through service-learning. I was hooked—then with the emotional support of my mentor and the financial support of grant funds available, I jumped in and never looked back. The only limits placed on me for implementation of service-learning was that of my own imagination and energy. Implementing these projects gave me more energy and made me more dedicated to teaching and teaching the way that I believed students would truly learn—not only the content, but also about their own strengths and talents.

#### Motivation of Other Teachers

In my former positions as a classroom teacher and as a district administrator for career education, and currently as a service-learning consultant and instructor of preservice teachers, I have had the opportunity to influence and motivate many teachers, both locally and nationally. I have conducted teacher education graduate courses and in-services on service-learning

*“One of the favorite parts of my job is teaching other teachers. It is so gratifying to know that not only am I influencing teachers, but also the lives of students.”*

#### Support

In order for these and other projects to be successful, administrative support was a key ingredient. I benefited from the support of school administrators, principals, and small groups of colleagues. Another critical support was

*“money, but what we did we probably, over at the nursing home, we probably could have done without the money because we were within walking distance.”*

Also important was the philosophical support, which led to greater flexibility in such issues as transportation, liability, and scheduling,

*“having the principal say it was okay.”*

Planning and implementing service-learning with a close friend, who was also my team-teacher, was a key to successful implementation and longevity of the projects. Without my relationship with my co-teacher in American humanities, the student experiences would not have been as successful.

*“There were several people who gave encouragement, even though we might not have felt support from a lot of people, you knew they [the administration] had your back. Some teachers in our building were not so supportive. They thought service-learning took too much time away from school. What they didn’t understand was that we made sure their time spent participating in service-learning was part of their curricular education.”*

#### Roadblocks

Time and transportation were the major roadblocks—time for trips, time for planning, time in the curriculum.

*“Just cutting the time out of our class time, which we knew it [community service] was much more valuable for them to be out there than in class, but I know a lot of people didn’t necessarily share that.”*

Transportation issues involved paying for busses and fitting into the bus schedule availability. Funding was not a major issue because career education grants and service-learning grants were readily available at the time we were implementing our projects.

#### Advice

I have several pieces of advice for teachers who are thinking of implementing service-learning projects. First, I suggest teachers plan with a partner. That morale and emotional support is very important because this teaching method is a lot of work and teachers need others who will give them the encouragement and support they need to continue. Second, I recommend

teachers gain support from the principal so that transportation, scheduling, and other administrative issues are more easily remedied. Third, it is helpful to look for areas in the curriculum that need an experiential link and a boost of student involvement. Partnering with a community agency that is appropriate for that curricular area and one that can truly use the help is motivational for the teacher and students. Fourth, when parents are involved in the process they will not only be a great source of support, but will also be tremendous allies when funding issues surface. Parents can also help with making a photographic record of the project and help with the recommended celebration/demonstration as a capstone event for the project. When students are allowed to use their gifts and fascinations and are given meaningful work to do during the project, I believe they will experience both personal and academic growth.

#### Most Rewarding Part of the Experience

In working with my students, the most rewarding part of implementing service-learning *“was to see kids who seemingly had no passion or drive become motivated by participating in service-learning”*

In working with teachers, the most meaningful thing is to hear the teachers tell their success stories after having implemented service-learning and they have seen the benefits for themselves.

*“To be able to touch the future in some small way by motivating teachers to motivate students to make the world a better place is the best thing I could ever do.”*

#### Key Words to Describe Service-Learning

The key words I use to describe the implementation of service-learning are:

*“meaningful work, connection to the curriculum, motivational, fun and exciting, and purposeful.”*

### Final Thoughts

Being introduced to service-learning as a young teacher made me a better teacher, and I hope made my students better citizens. I enjoy teaching other teachers how to implement service-learning because I have personally found it to be so valuable and hope they will also.

## CHAPTER XI. EMERGENT THEMES FROM TEACHERS' SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Three major themes surrounding the experience of implementing service-learning from a K-12 teacher's perspective emerged as a result of this research: Connections, Resonation in the Heart of the Teacher and the Right Fit with Teaching Philosophy and Style. The first theme, Connections, explains the extreme importance of creating, maintaining, extending, and nurturing connections between teachers and other people with whom they work, between teachers and their students, between teachers and their students, between the different areas of the curriculum, and between teachers and members of the community-at-large. The second emergent theme is the Resonation in the Heart of the Teacher, which involves a deep, personal belief about the importance of making a positive difference in the world and teaching this belief to students. The third emergent theme is The Right Fit with Philosophy and Style, which explains the importance of creating a well-balanced, harmonious relationship between service-learning and a teacher's philosophy about teaching involving being centered on the students themselves, not just the content, and a teacher's experiential teaching style.

These themes all play an important role in motivating teachers to implement service-learning in their classrooms. In exploring these themes, there is a pattern that is somewhat cyclical in nature. First, it is necessary for a teacher who is implementing service-learning to make connections in a variety of ways and with a variety of individuals. Second, for service-learning to be effective, it is also necessary for the act of implementing service-learning to resound in the heart of the teacher, a deep and personal connection. Implementing service-learning is a very personal experience for the teacher, and when successful, leads that teacher to want to share that experience with other teachers, hence the continuation of making further

connections with others. Finally, service-learning must also fit a teacher's teaching philosophy and teaching style. The essence of the experience and motivating factors for implementing service-learning from the K-12 teacher's perspective includes these three basic themes.

#### Theme One: Connections

The most obvious theme that emerged during the coding process was the importance of connections and links made when planning and implementing service-learning projects. Teachers repeatedly mentioned connections with other teachers, administrators, students, parents, and mentors. They also explained the importance of connections made within the curriculum, as evident in their understanding of the definition of service-learning, which includes a purposeful link between service and academic learning. Finally, teachers reported the important connections made with members of the community, through various service agencies and organizations, both local and global. As Kim put it,

*“Cooperation from all areas—not only between the teachers and the students, but all of the outside elements have to come into play, and I feel the number one word is ‘cooperation’....Getting the administration on your side. You have to get your other colleagues on your side....And then the parents. That’s another group that also becomes very educated through this program.”*

#### *Connections with People*

As the K-12 teachers interviewed reflected on their service-learning experiences, each one mentioned by name specific, meaningful, motivating individuals, with whom they had made connections before, during, and after implementing service-learning in their classrooms. Those individuals filled many roles. Most often teachers mentioned students, teachers, and administrators as playing important roles in their implementation of service-learning.

*The student connection.*

Each teacher explained the importance of connecting with the students themselves as a major part of implementing service-learning in the classroom. During my own teaching experience, I also enjoyed the connection to the students that was afforded to me through service-learning. It was their enthusiasm and learning that motivated me to continue implementing service-learning projects, even though this type of planning and preparation took much longer than the typical curriculum preparation. Several students were much more motivated to learn, to participate, and even to come to school because of our service-learning connections we were making in the classroom.

Teachers in this study explained that this connection with students begins with the planning stages of a service-learning project. It is important to find a connection between the students and the topic or issue of the service-learning project. It is also important for teachers to listen to student suggestions before, during and following the project. Erin states that

*“This project [students teaching other students with learning disabilities] probably worked well because it was something that kind of arose with the kids.”*

Listening to student feedback after a project is completed is valuable as well. As Jill explains,

*“I got smart and started talking with the kids and asking them to reflect upon what worked and what didn’t work and did they have any suggestions for our students and improving it in the future and all that, so I started to gather that information.”*

It is also important to help the students get connected personally with themselves, to get to know their strengths and weaknesses, as they work toward completing a project. This personal investment and reflection can also help students with future career choices. Jill shared,

*“That career component combined with service-learning has just been a real eye-opener for me, and I think it is an eye-opener for the kids. I hope it has made a difference as they are moving in those career directions into high school into college that it has made that life a little easier and maybe more directed in the right direction.”*

Students also connect to each other through service-learning. During Nancy’s Grandpals Project, several of the Grandpals passed away.

*“The kids were very supportive of each other...it is emotional because they don’t want that to happen [to their Grandpals]. The other kids are good about giving support.”*

Students discovered and began to appreciate the skills other students brought to the project in order for the group to successfully complete it. Teachers design student-to-student mentoring so those who have experienced a project can teach those who are about to embark and thus connect to others in the grades above and below them. In Nancy’s Grandpals Project,

*“the sixth graders go and show the fifth graders around, so they are mentoring those kids. It empowers the sixth graders who do this.”*

At the conclusion of Bonnie’s two service-learning projects, the students write letters to the students in the next grade level who will complete the project the next year, explaining what they have learned and accomplished. These letters also serve as an assessment of student achievement for the teacher. Jill’s students come back to her class to tell the next group of students about their projects and to give those students ideas about what to choose for their own projects, or recruit students to carry on the projects they created.

Service can also serve as a connection for students when they enter high school. After students learned about service in middle school, they continued their dedication to service in

high school. Middle school teachers Jill and Kim have both seen an increase in the number of service clubs in high school once their students matriculated.

Teachers saw the value in not only connecting students to each other and to themselves as part of the project, but also in connecting students to other teachers. Students establish meaningful relationships with other teachers in the building through service, or may reconnect those students with their former teachers in elementary school. As Jill related,

*“It reconnects some of them to their elementary school and gets them excited about the project, so yeah, there are some specific students where this is the first time I have seen them motivated....The teachers come out of the building; they love to see the kids and the kids still feel a connection because they have only been gone for two years from that elementary school.”*

*The teacher connection.*

Each teacher mentioned the importance of connecting with other teachers through service-learning. Every teacher told at least one story of another teacher with whom they worked who made the project(s) more manageable and more enjoyable. It was important for teachers to have another teacher to plan with and to work through details. Andy found it helpful to have

*“a chance to work [with a team teacher] and bounce ideas off of her.”*

Even planning difficulties served as opportunities for more teachers to get involved in projects. When Jill struggled with getting transportation for her students to their service sites, she found a positive side.

*“The good thing about struggling with that was we would have to get teachers to volunteer to help us drive and then they got to know what we were doing, so in a round-about way, that was a good thing.”*

When newly recruited teachers experienced projects first-hand, they tended to be much more supportive of the projects and continued to be involved. Kim had a similar experience with her project with the homeless shelter and administrative support was extremely important in this case. In the beginning, administrators had to strongly encourage teachers to go along with Kim to help her with her project. Because of its success, ultimately this project became part of the school culture. So many teachers became interested that she had to turn people away.

*“They themselves wanted to go down and see what it was all about and experience it themselves.”*

Another positive way for teachers to connect with other teachers is through the curriculum. When teachers are in team-teaching situations, the benefits of service-learning can be shared more purposefully and directly with students in many different academic areas. Jill, the FCS teacher, was placed on a content-area team in her middle school.

*“I am meeting with those people [content-area teachers] on a daily basis; they understand what I’m doing, and now they bought into it like crazy, especially the English teachers, and it just became a part of what we do as a team.”*

Working with other teachers not only helps with planning and continuity, but also lends support. Teachers experience such support not only from their teaching partners, but also from other classroom teachers, counselors, music teachers, art teachers, food science teachers, and other building personnel who help with service projects and lend support when needed. Andy explained,

*“We partnered up instead of just doing it individually...I think that helped out a little bit, just having another person. Then when you actually implement, you have help around you.”*

Bonnie was appreciative of the music teacher’s involvement in teaching her students “Hang On Sloopy” on their recorders to play at the Buckeye Bonanza. The art teacher worked with the students on art projects for Nancy’s Grandpals Project. The exploratory arts teacher in Kim’s middle school helped the students plan menus for food preparation for serving men at the homeless shelter. When teachers do connect, it is helpful for both teachers to share the same philosophy regarding the implementation of service-learning. As Erin said of the teacher she partnered with,

*“We both believe in it and we have definite ideas for it.”*

Connecting with people was also an important part of my own personal service-learning experience. I was eager to plan and implement my Great Depression project because I had my team teacher by my side throughout the planning and implementation phases. Her support, encouragement, and help with logistics enabled me to see the project through.

When other teachers get involved, it is also important to be aware of the overlap of programs and work to differentiate between goals, coordinate timelines, and be respectful of the focus of each project and of each other’s boundaries. In Andy’s situation,

*“The counselor actually organized them to partner up with another school down the road...so there was a lot of stuff happening. I had to step back a little bit so everyone kind of gets their stuff done.”*

In Jill's middle school there was an overlap of activities for two different student service organizations. There was a heated debate in the teachers' workroom about what club could do which fundraiser. As Jill describes,

*"It's a good problem to have."*

Teachers not only connect with other teachers in their own schools or districts, but also are able to connect with other teachers through more formalized professional development opportunities. Often the ideas for the projects arose from the connections with other teachers made during these professional development programs. Ironically, in Erin's situation, she had the opportunity to connect with a teacher from her own high school at a professional development writing workshop outside the district.

*"We started talking about how we don't collaborate as much as teachers and I said, 'You know, I've been thinking of a service-learning project, and if anything I would love to get your kids together with mine.'"*

Nancy gained many of her ideas from attending conferences and talking not only with other elementary teachers, but also with teachers of other grade levels. These conferences broaden teachers' awareness and spark new ideas to implement in their own classrooms.

*"Getting to talk to other people who are doing it...was really good for me."*

Teachers can benefit from having a formalized mentoring relationship with other teachers to help them with their service-learning projects. These mentoring relationships were not only with other teachers, but with college professors, and building and district administrators. Teachers gained motivation and support from these mentors who motivated, guided, and supported them through the process of implementing service-learning. Jill suggests,

*“Find somebody who does it [service-learning] and sign them on as your mentor, because I think that is really important.”*

*The parent connection.*

Not only do teachers more readily connect with each other through service-learning experiences, but also, service-learning affords teachers a unique opportunity to establish meaningful connections with parents. Service-learning provides an opportunity for greater communication, for parents to see and understand what is happening in the classroom, and to see how the curriculum connects with what is happening in the community. Parents can be instrumental in facilitating connections between the school and the community because of their many contacts and networks within the community-at-large.

Parents serve as classroom aides during service-learning project implementation. During Kim’s homeless shelter project, parents volunteered to transport food down to the shelter and helped with the preparation and serving of the food. For Jill’s projects, parents provided transportation for middle school students to and from their service sites.

Parent-teacher organizations at each school provided funds for many service-learning projects. For Kim’s project, the PTO at her middle school purchased pots and pans for the food preparation. For Nancy’s project, the PTO at her elementary school purchased literature for the classroom.

Parents can provide necessary and important connections to the community. For Buckeye Bonanza, it was a parent’s idea for Bonnie to bring her fourth graders to a local university campus to sell their buckeye jewelry to raise money for their philanthropy.

*“Because parents got involved...it expanded upon the kid component and it really became a big parent component and it was all for a good purpose.”*

It was through a parent of a student that Nancy was able to connect her students to the retirement center.

*“The mother was extremely supportive who worked there. She wanted this to work and we just made it work.”*

Through service-learning opportunities, teachers have a greater opportunity to work with parents and families more closely and to learn how to better communicate with parents. Kim explains that

*“as a teacher, it taught me how to work with parents.”*

An integral part of Bonnie’s service-learning projects is the connection with families. At the elementary level, Bonnie believes this connection is necessary for true service-learning.

*“I think with true service-learning, there has to be an investment by the child—by the child, by the teacher, and even by the families.”*

Parents can provide service-learning extensions that teachers sometimes do not have the time to implement. In Kim’s situation, the parents helped the students prepare gift bags for the holidays that included toiletries and other personal items. They purchased the items and organized the gift bag preparation. It was a worthwhile activity that Kim did not have the time to do herself. Parents also continue the projects with their families once the school portion of the project has ended. Nancy has reunions with families at the retirement center during the summer, giving her students an opportunity to reconnect with their Grandpals and also giving the parents an opportunity to observe what happened with the project.

*“Last year I had a family that kind of adopted two of the residents and went regularly to see them.”*

Parents can help with all the major components of service-learning, from planning to implementation to reflection, and finally demonstration/celebration. During the planning phase, Jill's students discuss their project ideas with their parents to select appropriate projects for the students. Once their plans are made, their parents review them for any missing details. The reflection component of service-learning sometimes occurs at home. It is helpful for parents to help their children process their service-learning experiences. In fact, Bonnie shared,

*“I think really the most dramatic moments would probably be shared at home with their families.”*

Following her project, Jill has each student set up an interview with a parent, where the parent asks the child questions about the experience to facilitate thoughtful reflection, while at the same time, providing quality time for the parent and the child to process the experience in a meaningful way.

*“I think it [service-learning] helps build some really good relationships between the parents and the students and then it gets a conversation going between the parent and the teacher if they need to.”*

Through parent connections, service-learning provides an opportunity to share student accomplishments and learning through authentic means. During the demonstration/celebration phases of projects, parents are invited to join in the culmination of the projects where students share their authentic learning. Andy witnessed this connection first-hand during his Civil War Day event.

*“The kids were there with their parents. Parents were proud of them...and the kids were proud of it.”*

Service-learning experiences also provide a meaningful public relations opportunity for schools. When teachers get students involved in real issues in the community, parents respond positively. Bonnie related that

*“Moms and dads would say, ‘This was such a meaningful experience for my child.’”*

Being involved in projects such as service-learning helps the parents feel more closely connected to the school. Bonnie continues,

*“Support from parents has been wonderful support. They seem to have been comfortable being involved. Comfortable with their students doing it, with explanation of course, and newsletters, but also comfortable being a part of it.”*

When involved in meaningful projects, parents have a positive feeling about the school. They talk about that positive involvement when speaking to other parents, creating a more positive image for the school as a whole.

*The administrator connection.*

Administrators, like parents, also play a key role in making connections with teachers in many ways: personal mentoring and encouragement, providing a framework for professional development on the topic, and providing funding for projects. Through service-learning, administrators are given an authentic opportunity to support and appreciate the efforts of their teachers. That support is a strong theme throughout the service-learning process. Service-learning provides a unique opportunity for school administrators at the building and district levels to not only connect with teachers, students, parents, and the community. Teachers need to know they have the support of their administrators throughout the implementation process. I, personally, had tremendous support from my administration. There was one key administrator who personally recruited me to get involved, and who encouraged my participation in service-

learning and also provided funds for various projects. It was she who also made me aware of various professional development opportunities that eventually led to my getting my master's degree in education.

As is evident in my own experience, administrators serve as mentors for teachers through this process, introducing them to professional development opportunities focusing on service-learning. Jill credits local administrators for providing

*“that whole piece to get me started in incorporating this service into the classroom...they kind of took me under their wing.”*

Administrators also provided necessary funding for projects as well as information on potential grants for teacher use. Having district support was imperative for Jill.

*“The funding support was there. There was already grant writing going on district-wide. There were suggestions for whom to contact, and people to call if we needed something. All I had to do was get on the phone and call.”*

Service-learning often enhances the communication between teachers and administrators mainly because of the experiential nature of the learning taking place. Teachers must gain the necessary permission required for removing children from school grounds, and garner support for non-traditional learning experiences for students. Andy explains,

*“Permission...kind of at times seems to be a roadblock, but as long as you are set and you show the content standards in relation, I think that is important and showing your work.”*

Service-learning gives the administration the opportunity to see authentic connections between the students and the curriculum. When administrators take the time to experience

service-learning activities with students, they see first-hand the student benefits and curricular connections.

A connection with people was an important motivator for not only the teachers I interviewed, but is reflected in my service-learning story as well. Through service-learning, teachers described repeatedly the meaningful connections they were able to make with their students, other teachers, parents, and administrators created because of implementing service-learning in their classrooms.

### *Connections with the Community*

School-community connections are rarely more clear and concrete than when students are participating in service-learning activities. Powerful things happen when students talk to adults in the community and the adults demonstrate the connections between their careers and their passion for improving the community. The students can more readily see their own role in making their community a better place. Students are introduced to a variety of service agencies in and around their own community designed to help others. Through their own service, the students are able to donate to these agencies and thereby, help their own communities. An additional community connection is the importance of the role of the media in communicating meaningful student activities and achievements to the community.

Certainly, businesses in the community donate items and services to benefit the students as well. For fundraising efforts, students sometimes write to area businesses for donations for raffles and other fundraising events. However, the retirement center found the service of Nancy's students and their Grandpals Project so valuable that when her transportation funds were being decreased, threatening the future of the project, they donated \$650 to the school district to be placed in a budget line item specifically for student transportation.

Because of the close connection between students and their communities during service-learning, when students choose issues and concerns in their own communities through service-learning projects, they become more vested members of those communities and better citizens.

Erin articulated,

*“It’s important to find some kind of situation that the kids are concerned about or a need in the community, something that is very real to the students and something that they are interested in doing.”*

This connection led to authentic teaching and learning experiences for both students and teachers. Students felt valued in their communities and knew they were making a difference. When Andy showed his students photographs of his visit to South Africa, his students were struck by the abject poverty of the children.

*“I didn’t think it, but the KIDS thought, ‘let’s do something what can we do?’”*

By listening to his students, a fundraising project was born that resulted in a whole-school assembly raising over \$700 for children in South Africa.

Through another of Andy’s initiatives, Project Citizen, students investigate a problem in the community and then study the public policy issues surrounding that issue. This process is empowering for students.

*“Obviously they don’t make anything change right away, but through their voice, something could change.”*

When Bonnie’s students studied the topic of “communities” in their social studies curriculum, they looked at what makes up their local community. When a devastating hurricane hit the southern United States, there was an immediate connection to those communities and their losses. The students immediately responded with

*“Here’s a community that’s been devastated; how can we help them?”*

The students produced a documentary, wrote and performed a play, and wrote and illustrated a picture book about their own local community. Students then produced a program for the entire community and raised money to be donated to a city destroyed by one of the hurricanes.

The media can serve as a powerful venue for connecting schools to the community through reporting on service-learning experiences of students. Bonnie concurs,

*“I think with the publicity that we’ve received, support from our local newspapers....They have done a very good job highlighting it and I think it has become a value to the community.”*

The media were invited to Andy’s South Africa program performed for the public, and the students received positive publicity. Andy believes school districts should take greater advantage of these public relations opportunities:

*“If we can get kids out in the community and make them [the general public] aware of what we are doing, I think it is going to be extremely powerful. I think a lot of teachers do different projects that are kind of community-based or volunteer-based, but I don’t think we really get the message out there that we are doing that, you know.”*

Service-learning serves as an excellent public relations agent for a school district that can serve to unite the community behind the school. Andy is always conscious of getting publicity for the service-learning activities of his students.

*“It just doesn’t benefit yourself or how you feel, or it doesn’t just benefit how the kid feels, but it should benefit the community as well, and I just think we need to make sure that the community is seeing what we are doing. I mean sometimes we are doing stuff in the community and one portion is seeing it but no one else is seeing that. I guess that is*

*what I would change...how can we make that more effective? How can we get that more spotlighted consistently? How do we bring the community back together? We are so split right now, and what can we do? You've got to sell yourself. It's like a business....It is just one way to make that connection with the community and the kids. If you don't put yourself out there, and you keep the doors closed and you don't invite people in, they won't know what we're doing."*

For their South Africa program, Andy invited in community leaders to the program to find out what the students had been learning. Jill had similar experiences. When her students perform service in the community, Jill believes,

*"This will help communities be more supportive of schools and education in general."*

Service-learning can also be a positive public relations move for the public service agencies as well as the schools. The retirement center appreciated the service of the students so much that the retirement center advertisements featured photographs of the residents with the students. Nancy recalls that

*"We've been there and they have had people [outside evaluators and potential residents] come and look at everything. It is a lot brighter on the days we are there."*

One difficulty in working with community agencies can be the transition of personnel within an agency. During Nancy's Grandpals Project, a new activities director was hired who was unfamiliar with the program. With that personnel change also came a change in expectations for the service-learning project. There was a transition period where Nancy and her students had to convince the new director of the benefits of their program. Teachers have to be flexible in working with the employees of the agencies. Jill explains,

*"Sometimes an administrative transition is easy and sometimes it's not."*

Some of Jill's students' projects were interrupted for a while because of changes in personnel at some of the service sites. Through Jill's persistence and parental help and intervention, the students were eventually allowed to continue with their projects.

In my own service-learning experience, I, too, wanted my students to see and understand the serious issues facing the community. More importantly, I wanted my students to realize that, even as teenagers, they could help improve these situations. Several of my students had never been to the downtown area, entered a homeless shelter, or visited a nursing home. These experiences alone opened their eyes to various components of our community. But, when added to the fact that they could improve their community and make a difference, as was the experience of every teacher interviewed, the students truly felt empowered.

#### *Connections with the Curriculum*

The final major connection teachers make when implementing service-learning is a meaningful connection to the curriculum. Service-learning afforded these teachers the opportunity to make the content more meaningful to their students. Jill describes the curricular connections as an important part of service-learning for her students.

*“The whole service piece there is really good, and the fact that we can tie it to the curriculum and make the curriculum more meaningful to the kids and to the teachers—to help the teachers make it more tied to real life.”*

Nancy concurs,

*“When I think of it, I think of it as a way to weave not just helping someone, I mean the literal definition [of service-learning] is to include class work with the projects that you are doing and not to make it a separate entity, but to weave it into the things you do in your curriculum, so that it meets your guidelines of what you are supposed to be*

*teaching, but it also is a focus point for involving the kids in positive activities and positive experiences.”*

As Andy explains,

*“It ALL ties in—which, you don’t realize that when you’re doing some of these projects, that it can really make it tie in if you just look at how it can tie in.”*

That curricular connection can and does happen; it just takes specific attention from the teacher to find those curricular links.

In the planning process, Jill’s FCS students apply research skills in learning about their service-learning topics. Service-learning is an excellent method for them to learn their five-step research process, from preparation through reflection. It is an authentic fit for their curriculum. When students compile their service-learning project into a portfolio, they have an authentic example of their skills and knowledge that serves them well even during job interviews. Through reflection, students are able to express what they have learned both academically and personally from their service-learning experience. When students reflect they are able to make their own meaningful connections with the curriculum.

Through service-learning and the reflection process, students learn communication skills, career exploration, and self-identity—all of which are part of the state mandated standards for many grade levels and subject areas. Making a direct connection to academic content standards is important and must be included in the planning of a project. Teachers make a conscious effort to integrate subject areas as well. Andy says,

*“I’m more focused with the content standards and making sure I have a topic. Now our course of study, what can I pull out? If I am doing a social studies unit, I will try to pull standards from language arts, integrate them thematically. I think that’s important. My*

[team-teacher] and I partner, and we always sit down and try to plan out big ideas, big units, and try to relate it to all the subject areas. I think that helps with their writing as well, but we have to make sure that we have our content standards written down with the projects or with our lessons.”

Erin shares similar thoughts about the importance of planning for content integration,

*“There is meant to be a particular learning outcome that is achieved through service-learning and um, at least I believe that service-learning has to be planned well to be sure that the kids are getting something out of it.”*

Service-learning is an excellent vehicle for teaching citizenship skills and civic responsibility. Jill says,

*“This whole piece about ‘Are we educating for a democracy?’ has got to be a key component of it.”*

Jill works with the social studies teacher in her building and they both reinforce the concept of participatory citizen with their students through their service experiences.

A major motivation for me was to be able to infuse service-learning into my curriculum so the students more readily saw the value in what they were learning. It was not just content any more. It was important information they could use to solve real problems.

Teachers have successfully integrated specific social studies topics into their service-learning projects, such as a study of the Great Depression through visits to a homeless shelter, studying events of World War II and the Holocaust by listening to residents of a retirement home share their memories of those events, and the U.S. Constitution by having students in government class present information about the Constitution to a class of students with learning disabilities. Through their Buckeye Bonanza Project, Bonnie’s third and fourth graders learned

the working definitions to such economics terms as “supply-and-demand” and “quality control” through doing service. The students share their knowledge of these and other vocabulary terms in an authentic writing assignment where they explain what they have learned to the next group of students who will continue the project next year. This is a meaningful assignment not only for the teacher, but also for the letter writers and the recipients. Nancy explains the importance of including various academic components in her Grandpals Project.

*“The academic piece of the puzzle that goes with the service-learning is the learning that goes along with it. Is it great to volunteer? Yes. The learning through literature, the empathy and some of the details that go with Alzheimer’s or heart disease or dementia and then learning what they could do. You’ve got the science part of aging of the body and emotional needs of a person and the isolation that they can feel when they are in a nursing home. So it is tying all those learning processes in, not just ‘Show up here, let’s collect cans or clean up the park,’ you know, which are all wonderful things that need to be done in our society, but it doesn’t have the learning.”*

When I taught my service-learning units in American Humanities, I knew my students understood their social studies content because they were forced to think about it in a different way. They not only had to understand the material, but they had to apply it to new situations.

Through service-learning, teachers can integrate many different subject areas and connect with a variety of other teachers in the building. Through various projects, teachers have incorporated reading, writing, music, art, technology, and other subject areas. These types of projects, “*make learning meaningful and relevant,*” according to Bonnie.

Writing is the most popular way teachers specifically connect content to service. When reflecting on projects, students write in their journals about their experiences and what they have

learned. Through their writing, students can share their experiences with others. Nancy publishes her students' journals in a book each year, so her students' comments and reflections reach an even greater audience. Each student's family receives a copy, as does the retirement center. In Kim's homeless shelter project, the students reflect by writing poetry and journal entries.

Teachers also teach writing mechanics through service. When Bonnie's students created posters for Buckeye Bonanza,

*“we talked a lot about eye-catching and it has to be legible. It has to be readable. ‘What’s your point? What kinds of information?’ I mean, there are good, real learning moments. I think again the whole experience can’t help but be beneficial for all children....It is constantly reviewing, ‘What did you learn? How did we learn it? Why did we learn it?’ Those key concepts keep coming back. But, I think for learning-challenged children or children with special needs, this is a safe and positive learning environment and they are the ‘givers’ as opposed to the ‘givees,’ which is a very good feeling.”*

The academic and personal benefits for students complement each other so that students grow, mature, learn, and change in a number of areas.

*Summary: Connections*

The importance of Connections when implementing service-learning cannot be understated. Every teacher interviewed expressed the importance of various connections as primary motivation for implementing service-learning. Teachers were motivated because of connections with other people, connections with the community, and connections in their curriculum. These various connections were not only motivators, but also served to sustain

service-learning projects once teachers had initially implemented them. In my own personal experience, it was because of these meaningful connections that I know my students learned their content. More importantly, I believe they still remember.

### Theme Two: Resonation in the Hearts of Teachers

The third major theme associated with motivating factors in implementing service-learning is the necessity that service-learning resonate in the hearts of teachers. It was evident through the interviews that service-learning was a deeply emotional issue for these teachers. An internal motivation existed for each teacher—one that stems from the heart. Almost every teacher mentioned the importance of teaching to the heart, and they literally touched their hearts as they expressed these feelings. As Kim put it,

*“I am looking at the word ‘emotional.’ It’s right here, it boils down to that feeling,... You have got to do things for the goodness of mankind,”*

she says as she taps her heart. This is a theme that carries a message about the heart, about caring, and about the importance of making a difference in the world. That deep message was planted in the hearts of those service-learning teachers typically early in their lives, then was nurtured by mentors who helped and encouraged these teachers to learn more about service-learning. Finally, the message of service-learning was carried on through mentoring and motivating other teachers to implement service-learning activities with own their students. Teachers who implement service-learning are motivated by these ideas and experiences that resonate in their hearts: past personal experience with service in their own lives, professional development experiences featuring service-learning, and also mentoring and motivating other teachers.

*Resonation from Past Personal Experiences*

Each of these teachers had a role model who introduced them personally to service, and almost all participated in service at a young age. They all continue that service component in their personal and/or professional lives today.

One remarkable commonality among the teachers interviewed was the importance of parents, and in particular, mothers, who modeled service for and included their children in service to others. Jill's mother was a member of a Wednesday Club where she and other mothers practiced good deeds around the community. Nancy's mother cared for the elderly in her community; her father took Nancy with him when he personally delivered legal documents to the home-bound or nursing home residents. Andy's mother helped him prepare and deliver Easter baskets to the women's shelter in his hometown and was instrumental in getting him to join a high school service club. I had a similar experience in that I watched my own mother and grandmothers serve others and expected me to participate. In Kim's home, service was just expected. It was a generational expectation for Kim as well. Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s,

*“it was just expected that people just did things like that in my generation, where now you have to actually create programs because our attitudes have changed so.”*

Bonnie's introduction to service-learning came as a mother of her own two boys who were performing service as part of their own school curriculum, as she explains that,

*“My roots go back to what the boys learned....I think truly it was the school environment; it was the community environment that fostered my interest and my willingness and my pleasure and enjoyment.”*

These teachers also participated in service as members of church or youth groups, as I did. The two younger teachers interviewed, Andy and Erin, experienced service-learning as students in both high school and college. Interestingly, both of these teachers attended religions-based schools, where service was a required part of the curriculum. Both Andy and Erin recalled with great detail the service projects they had completed in school.

Currently in their lives, these teachers still appreciate the importance of service, but for lack of time, they most often meet their personal needs for serving their communities by serving side-by-side with their students. Because of participation in past service-learning experiences themselves, they have personally experienced the positive benefits of service-learning. Because I felt the personal rewards of service as a young person, such as increased self-esteem, organizational skills, and the positive feeling of making a difference, I was more eager to provide these types of experiences for my students. The teachers interviewed expressed similar benefits as motivation for their implementing service-learning as classroom teachers.

#### *Resonation from Professional Development Experiences*

From a foundation of past, personal experience, these teachers knew of the power of service to others. Through professional development experiences, they were able to hone those emotional beliefs into curricular connections for their students. Professional development experiences gave these teachers the opportunities to see how service could meet not only their personal desire for service to the community, but also their professional goals of meeting their students needs for learning through service.

Through these professional development opportunities, teachers were afforded the gift of time—time to connect, to plan, to learn and to think about potential service and learning connections for making the curriculum relevant with other interested, motivated teachers. Two

teachers, Kim and Bonnie, participated in the same hands-on service-learning workshop entitled “Beyond the Freeway,” where they were introduced to the needs of those less fortunate in the greater community in which they lived. Other teachers attended “Everyday People Make a Difference” workshops as an introduction to the power of service-learning for both personal and academic benefits for students. Bonnie explains the personal and professional connection to service and credits

*“the classes I’ve had and the influences of people who sort of brought that [service-learning] to my attention and it is just something that I am very receptive to.”*

Andy agreed when he was able to personally experience that it

*“seems as though when I see stuff I want to do it.”*

Participation in these workshops gave these teachers and me opportunities to reflect on personal learning and implementation of service-learning to improve the situation for the students—to share roadblocks and get suggestions from other teachers. Several teachers pursued or are pursuing their graduate degrees with emphasis in service-learning. Nancy went back to school and says,

*“I learned a lot. When I was there I put together a lot of literature research on service-learning and did papers on it so I was getting a chance to look at some of those studies that had been done and I realized, ‘You [college researchers] should be using us for research’.”*

Jill’s experience of taking workshops and classes was

*“an energizer for me...learning all about service-learning and it really motivated me to do my master’s work.”*

The two younger teachers, Andy and Erin, were introduced to service-learning through their undergraduate curriculum in their teacher education programs. Both experienced actual service-learning activities with their college classes and found both of these experiences to be beneficial and motivational.

I greatly benefited from participating in professional development experiences. I was encouraged by fellow teachers and administrators to learn more about service-learning and learned how to implement service-learning from those experiences. Because of those experiences, I implemented my service-learning projects with much more confidence, and those experiences have resulted in a doctoral study of the topic.

*Resonation in Mentoring and Motivating Other Teachers*

Once teachers see the personal and professional benefits for service-learning both for themselves and for their students, they are motivated then to share this method with other teachers. This sharing of successful service-learning experiences reinforces the importance of teachers connecting with other teachers. These teachers found service-learning to be so purposeful, helpful, and meaningful, it was as if they *had* to share it with other teachers—a service in and of itself to other colleagues.

Experienced teachers who have felt this affirmation and impact from other people are anxious to give advice and suggestions to those teachers interested in implementing service-learning. It is important for them to do so both personally and professionally. Since these teachers have experienced the benefits of service-learning for themselves and for their students, they are energized promoters for service-learning and consider it a privilege to spread the word about this teaching method to motivate more teachers to implement service-learning for their

students—helping other teachers and students find passion and purpose in serving their communities.

Nancy worked hard to convince her teaching partner that service-learning was an effective way to teach and helped her find literature that fit with her students' Habitat for Humanity project, helping her make a more obvious connection between service and learning.

*"I keep trying to get her to do more literature, because I am saying 'You know you could,' but now she finally got a book that talks about people being without homes, so she is coming along."*

Nancy is not alone. Every other teacher interviewed expressed the importance of motivating other teachers to implement service-learning, being driven to expand service-learning implementation in their schools, their district, and beyond. Even as a new teacher in his building, Andy is motivating his team teacher to implement service-learning in her classroom.

*"I am looking forward to getting more involved from what we have done this year with the South African visitors, and she [the team teacher] wants to be a part of it too because she hasn't really seen anything [service-learning done before]. I mean, she knows community service, but the word 'service-learning,' is not something that she has been in touch with."*

When state standards for her content area were revised to include service-learning as a requirement, Jill was motivated to share with other teachers around the state through workshops and conferences.

*"People panicked when they realized service-learning was going to be tied to funding, so we did some workshops. [A teaching colleague] and I presented our "Walk With Me*

[Alzheimer's project] *thing to FCS groups...mainly through State Conferences with Family and Consumer Sciences or career education conferences.*"

Jill also presented workshops at the district level as well, finding this important because as experienced service-learning teachers retired or left the district, she wanted the new teachers to become familiar with service-learning so the program would not decline.

*"We are doing that because there are so many [personnel] transitions and we don't want to lose...the service-learning focus."*

Teachers implementing service-learning are also asked by teachers from other districts for information or advice about their service-learning projects. Nancy said,

*"Teachers from other districts want to try this"*

and Nancy is eager to share her expertise.

Teachers implementing service-learning also enjoy sharing their expertise in service-learning with teacher education students at local universities, and find this experience personally rewarding as well. Nancy explained that she has

*"gone down to campus and talked to the graduate students in their social studies methods class and said, 'This is how you set it up,'...so we are able to give those kids [college students in teacher education programs] a glimpse of what it's like and that's a really neat part for us to be able to do that too. There is a supervisor there who is the head of these students who has encouraged us to come down and do that."*

Several of these teachers have also taught graduate-level workshops. Andy eagerly accepted the challenge of teaching a graduate workshop and describes the experience.

*"They [university representatives] approached me with some of the experience that I had previously, and it is something I jumped on right away...just trying to encourage people*

*to get out there and do something, especially when some of the tougher inner city schools ...it might be an avenue to get these kids to cooperate with you and to develop that rapport.”*

When motivating others, teachers have to work to change the mentality of other teachers and administrators in order to convince them to attempt this type of teaching method. During Andy’s preparations for his South Africa assembly, he talked to his principal:

*“Yeah, Channel 4 might be here...we’re going to do it [the assembly] out here [at the school]. Andy’s principal replied, “Parents are here?”*

*“Yeah, Andy replied, “Set up some chairs.”*

Andy continues,

*“Just trying to change the mentality. They say one thing, and we do this...I mean they had no kind of idea [how big this could be].”*

Erin found it personally valuable to be a mentor for other teachers and to motivate them to implement service-learning.

*“I would say I definitely have had an impact on my co-teacher, the English teacher, because once I told her what we were doing, she said, ‘Oh gosh, we’ve got to get this going in our American Studies Class.’”*

The activities in Erin’s classroom also intrigued the teacher in the classroom next door.

*“My next door neighbor always comes in, ‘What are you doing now? I always see you bounding around. Your kids are always involved in something that looks interesting.’ You know here and there we share, and then we had an opportunity, because we were at that conference, we shared what we were doing because we had a follow-up session and people were kind of interested.”*

To be a mentor, Erin got support from her own mentor, a college professor for her master's degree program. Erin summarized the advice she received:

*“It’s okay...No one’s doing it, but if you start it, it will catch on....If you’re doing something good and you know it’s good, just do it and if there’s good results people will catch on and they’ll start doing it.”*

Erin took her mentor's encouragement to heart and even as a young teacher, served as a mentor and role model for other teachers in her building. Bonnie is a formal mentor for a younger teacher in her building, participating through a mentoring program in her district and connected to state teacher licensure requirements. Her recommendation to teachers new to service-learning is to

*“start small and let it grow as your comfort level increases.”*

Bonnie also works to lead by example:

*“If you build it, they will come. If you try it, you will do it again. If you try it, you will appreciate the value of it in ways that you didn’t anticipate.”*

It is important to get teachers to just simply try service-learning and see the benefits for themselves. Andy said,

*“If they jump on board, they do, and if not, you just keep going and they’ll see....Our [Andy and his team teacher] mentality was, ‘If they’re not jumping on board, we’ll do it and they’ll regret not jumping on the ship.’ So you do what you can do, but you are trying to really focus on the kids.”*

One way other teachers get involved is when the initiating teacher simply needs help, because the work can sometimes be overwhelming. For Kim's project another teacher took over

coordination of a group of students. Her program expanded from four classes to eight, so she needed help from other teachers to manage the project.

*“He [the other American history teacher] truly enjoyed it. A couple of times I got so tired of doing all of the running around. He said, ‘I can do this on my own.’ And he got down there and he remembered everything, to even taking serving spoons. He was able to pick up and kind of coordinate for his group.”*

Once new teachers begin to implement service-learning, they come to veteran teachers for support. Kim recalls,

*“They would come to me and ask, ‘Well, what about this, what about that, transportation?’”*

*Summary: Resonation in the Hearts of Teachers*

From answering such detail questions to thinking deeply about service-learning, a major motivating factor for implementing service-learning is the importance of a personal, meaningful connection to the importance of service. Teachers who implement service-learning believe that caring and making a difference in the world can be purposefully taught, both to students in their classrooms and to their colleagues next door or across the country. They have experienced the benefits of service first-hand, by being students of the topic through professional development opportunities. They, in turn, mentor and motivate others to participate with their students as well. It is such an important message for them, it is written on their hearts.

### Theme Three: The Right Fit with Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Style

Because their beliefs about service-learning are so strong and do resound in the hearts of teachers, another motivating factor is the level to which service-learning fits both with teachers’

personal philosophies and also with their teaching styles. The teachers interviewed explained how their hands-on, student-centered style and their philosophies regarding the importance of serving the community and making the world a better place create an opportune situation for service-learning to be implemented. Service-learning was a perfect match for the manifestation of these beliefs about service.

### *The Right Fit for a Teacher's Philosophy*

When speaking about service-learning, teachers refer to similar beliefs about teaching that relate to each teacher's individual teaching philosophy. Their teaching philosophies include the importance of educating children to be functioning members of society, to help them find purpose and meaning in their lives, and to demonstrate the importance of helping and serving others.

Teachers share a universal philosophical commitment to connecting their students and their community. They see it as their responsibility to create that link between learning and purpose, between students and society. Service-learning is a tangible extension and manifestation of each teacher's philosophy. Service-learning is more than just a teaching strategy. It reaches to the core of why these teachers want to be teachers. Kim explains,

*"We have to realize our children are changing, our society is changing, so we have to keep up with it. Service-learning is part of it. Kids have to learn, we as human beings have to learn to give and share with one another. And what better way to do it than with service-learning?"*

Teachers expressed a deep, personal internal motivation to implement service-learning. Bonnie concurs that

*“Service-learning to me just makes sense. I’m sorry, I don’t see what the fuss is about. I don’t see why anybody would make negative connotations. Just service is important. You need to think of others.”*

Nancy was clear in her feelings about the importance of providing service-learning opportunities:

*“I know it’s right. I know it’s right.”*

Nancy had difficulty articulating her motivation, but did say,

*“Just because I thought that we COULD do it and that we SHOULD be doing it.”*

Also evident was the fact that teachers want their students to have a sense of passion and purpose. Nancy expresses her teaching philosophy this way:

*“I think what I hope is that kids come out of fifth grade after they have been in my room with a sense of purpose, not only for themselves—I want them to feel good about themselves, but I hope they will remember.”*

Jill concurs when describing her teaching philosophy.

*“It has got to be purposeful; I want them to find something that ties into their gifts, their talents, what they are interested in, what they are passionate about, tie it into the real world...find a way to improve the situation—tying it all together so it is meaningful in their lives.”*

There is a deep philosophical passion and purpose for service-learning for these teachers. I believe that if service-learning were removed from their classrooms, they would experience a deep void in their passion for teaching as a whole.

Because I believe students should make a difference in their world, service-learning is a great fit for my philosophy also. I believe we should give our time, talents, and treasures to help others. To be able to spread this philosophy to my students through service-learning was very

valuable. I saw my students find that they had a purpose and develop their own philosophies of service through these projects. Service-learning helped make my work as a teacher more meaningful. The other teachers in this study shared similar beliefs as part of their teaching philosophies. Thus, when these teachers were introduced to service-learning as a teaching method, there was a definite fit.

*The Right Fit with Personal Teaching Style*

Not only does service-learning need to be compatible with a teacher's philosophy, it must also fit the teacher's style. These teachers believe in facilitating learning and providing hands-on, authentic learning opportunities for their students. Flexibility and active learning are key qualities as well. Erin explains that she is more of a

*“guide in the classroom, guiding them to discover the knowledge themselves.”*

She wants to put her students in the position to

*“let them discover the stuff on their own.”*

Andy's style is more of a facilitator in the classroom, providing opportunities for student discovery, hands-on learning in the classroom, and incorporating authentic assessment during and after the project. Erin also believes her students need to be immersed in their learning in order to clearly understand the concepts. Service-learning provides that opportunity. Similarly, Nancy defines her teaching style as,

*“Flexible, spur of the moment, like ‘Okay, we can do this.’ One thing leads to another and I guess standing in front of a classroom the light bulb goes on and you think, ‘Hey, I can...oh, this would be great.’ And then we go that direction and going where I feel the kids need to go.”*

In Bonnie's case, she, too, has a flexible teaching style.

*"Learning can be group learning, it can be spontaneous, but the learning is deliberate."*

In addition to flexibility, another important element in teaching style is the belief in the importance of strong, personal rapport with students. Andy believes incorporating service-learning projects into his curriculum creates a more trusting environment for his classroom,

*"They really trust me....I think it is because of these projects that we do earlier that help out with that rapport."*

Other key teaching style characteristics for teachers implementing service learning included being organized, and being willing to be uncertain about the end result when entering into a project. The teachers also have to be willing to be learners themselves. With Project Citizen in Andy's classroom,

*"...it was kind of learning and finding out things together with the program...I don't know all the answers myself. It is really when they have to choose their problem; they have to investigate certain things. I am learning along with them as well—taking a back seat and getting your knees dirty and working with them one-on-one and as groups."*

Service-learning fit my own personal teaching style because through implementation I was able to let students be in charge of their own learning, to get students out of the building and learn from the world, and to guide them in these actions. This type of hands-on learning along with my own facilitation of content and reflection was a perfect fit for my teaching style. I believe that when a person has an opportunity to reflect on an experience, it has greater meaning. By guiding students through preparation, implementation, and reflection, I am happy as a teacher because this type of teaching is the right fit for my teaching style.

*Summary: The Right Fit with Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Style*

The teachers' key words they used to describe their service-learning experiences summarize their thoughts; speak to their deep, personal beliefs, and explain and how they act on these beliefs in their classrooms. The teachers' own words describe The Right Fit between service-learning and their own teaching philosophies and styles:

Jill: *"motivational,...rejuvenating,...purposeful,...habit of the heart."*

Nancy: *"gratifying,...expect the unexpected,...heartwarming,...self-satisfaction,...all the stars are in the right place."*

Andy: *"It benefits school, teachers, and community."*

Bonnie: *"meaningful,...important,...enlightening,...relevant,...an opportunity,...memorable,...exciting,...enriching,...significant,...magical,...incredible,...worthwhile,...valuable,...valid."*

Kim: *"worthwhile,...educational,...motivational,...cooperation,...emotional."*

Erin: *"necessary,...learning-by-doing."*

Marjori: *"meaningful work,...connection to the curriculum,...motivational,...fun,... exciting,...purposeful."*

CHAPTER XII. AMALGAMATION: THE ESSENCE OF THE SERVICE-LEARNING  
EXPERIENCE FROM THE K-12 TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

(GUIDING QUESTION ONE)

Implementing service-learning is a moving, personal experience for teachers. Teachers find meaningful connections to many different people through the experience. Because it is such an authentic learning experience, it is memorable. Both students and teachers learn, and they remember. They learn about their communities and the needs of the people in those communities. They learn about themselves and how they can help others who are in need. They learn important skills that are part of their grade-level expectations, such as reading, writing, problem-solving, decision-making, leadership, economics concepts, math skills, citizenship concepts, and many more. They learn these concepts and they remember them because they are able to apply them in meaningful settings while making a difference in the world.

Teachers who implement successful service-learning projects know and understand and implement the basic components of service-learning: partnering with community, connection to academics, and reflection. They take these three components seriously, making every effort to be sure that the community partnerships are appropriate for their students and their developmental levels. They communicate with the community partners and include them in the planning and acts of service. They also understand the importance of the public relations benefits of service-learning at the district level. Teachers are also serious about making clear connections to the academic curriculum. Teachers who successfully implement service-learning can articulate exactly what standards in their curriculum the students are learning. They are purposeful in their connections of service to learning, especially through preparation and reflection. The teachers use reflection to give students the opportunity to articulate what they

have learned and to put meaning to their service experience. It is through reflection, typically, though not always, in written form, that students explain what they have learned both personally and academically through service.

Teachers are also cognizant of the four phases of service-learning: preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration/celebration. They are planful in each of these four phases and know that true service-learning has not occurred unless attention is paid to each of these areas. Less formality is placed on demonstration/celebration, but is included at least informally at the end of every project. Teachers can also articulate what steps they take in their classrooms to have students participate in each of these four phases. They understand the concept of service-learning and use it to their advantage in the classroom to teach students in a meaningful, purposeful, meaningful way.

Teachers who implement service-learning are not only comfortable with the concept, but are energized by this teaching method. They are motivated by the energy of their students, by parents, by administrators, by other teachers, and by members of the community. They receive positive feedback from all of these constituencies. It is a teaching method that allows them to teach in a style in which they are comfortable. These teachers can be learning facilitators, guiding the students to learn and to apply their knowledge. They can allow for flexibility in their classrooms and for student-led decision-making. Service-learning works for their style of student-centered learning. Because implementing service-learning is such a positive teaching experience, teachers are motivated to encourage and motivate other teachers to implement service-learning.

Teachers who implement service-learning find that it is a good fit for their teaching philosophies. These teachers believe their jobs are more than just to teach students content.

They believe they are teaching for the greater good; that they are producing the future leaders of the world who must know about important issues and develop confidence and skills in solving them. They know in their hearts that service is an integral part of a democracy, and that citizens of a democracy must work together to make the world a better place. It is a deep, philosophical drive that keeps these teachers going, even when there are no funds for a bus for the field trip.

Finally, implementing service-learning from a K-12 teacher's perspective is an extension of who these teachers are at their cores. Service-learning is a logical manifestation of the beliefs they hold in their hearts, beliefs about the importance of service that were planted when they were young and that have continued throughout adulthood. These teachers eagerly take advantage of professional development opportunities to gain the skills to match their internal desire to implement service and authentic learning in their classrooms. These professional development opportunities range from one-day workshops to graduate-level courses. Teachers are able to meet other professionals who have the same beliefs and concerns, and they are further energized and motivated by sharing ideas with these colleagues.

Once teachers have successfully implemented service-learning and have seen the benefits, both personal and academic, for their students as well as themselves, they are further motivated and driven to share their expertise with others. This is another opportunity for these teachers to serve their colleagues—to motivate them to implement service-learning, thus further contributing to the greater good. Service-learning is a gratifying experience for teachers because it encapsulates what these teachers believe to be important: to help students learn in an authentic setting, where their learning and actions make a difference in the world, thus creating the learning and serving adults who will lead in the near future.

## CHAPTER XIII. EXPLORATION OF THE REMAINING GUIDING QUESTIONS

The interviews with the co-researchers revealed interesting information in answer to the guiding questions of this study. The first guiding question, “*How do teachers understand and describe their experiences in implementing service-learning projects?*” was answered in Chapter 12 and serves as the essence of the service-learning experience from the K-12 teacher’s point-of-view. The following guiding questions, the responses of the co-researchers and relevant citations from previous research are included in this chapter.

### Guiding Question 2

#### *What Motivates Teachers to Initiate Service-Learning Experiences for Their Students?*

Teachers are initially motivated by several different factors to implement service-learning projects. Those motivators include other people, the curriculum, a community connection, professional development experiences, and available funding. In addition, there are other motivating factors that encourage the teacher to continue to implement service-learning projects in their classrooms, including the excitement of the service itself, the positive personal and academic growth witnessed in students, and the involvement in mentoring and motivating others to implement service-learning projects.

As is corroborated in the emergent themes of this study, the findings in this study further concur with other research that states that teachers are motivated by other teachers, administrators, and other mentors to implement that very first service-learning project (Ammon, 2002; McKay & Rozee, 2004; Palmer, 2004). Teachers received support from teaching colleagues, district leaders, parents, community members, and the students themselves. Jill explained,

*“Having a colleague in another building to help. Having those people like [three different administrators] just really letting me know that I could do this and supporting me along the way.”*

Mentors also play an important role in convincing others that service-learning is a good idea (Palmer, 2004). Mentors may be college professors, teaching colleagues, administrators, parents, community members, or the students themselves.

Second, teachers are motivated by the opportunity to modify their curriculum. When teachers were introduced to service-learning they took advantage of the opportunity to enhance and energize their curriculum. Jill explained,

*“It was energizing right away. I used to dread those action projects.”*

Abes, et al., (2002) reported similar results with regard to faculty, indicating that increased student understanding as the most important factor that motivated the implementation of service-learning.

A third source of initial motivation is seeing and understanding the various needs in the community. When teachers saw issues that fit with their curriculum, they seized the opportunity to implement service-learning as an authentic learning experience for their students, connecting the curriculum to current community events. McKay and Rozee (2004) reported similar findings when they explained that faculty were motivated by opportunities for their students to apply their learning to the community-at-large.

Fourth, teachers are motivated by graduate coursework and professional development workshops focusing on service-learning. Every teacher interviewed had participated in some sort of professional development program regarding service-learning prior to implementing it in the classroom. Through these professional development experiences, the teachers learned about

successful projects and heard first-hand about the student benefits as a result of service-learning. Sustainability of service-learning for a school district relies heavily on professional development opportunities for its teachers (Billig & Klute, 2002; Pontbriand, 2003).

Finally, teachers can be initially motivated by receiving grant money to implement projects. With support from district and building leaders, teachers applied for and received grants. Tied to those grants was the necessity to infuse service-learning into the curriculum. Once the grants were received, the projects began. For service-learning to be successful a district must provide appropriate financial support, whether through budget line-items or through grants (Ammon et al., 2002; Palmer, 2004).

There is a difference in the motivating factors for K-12 teachers who are implementing service-learning projects for the first time versus teachers who need motivation to sustain their service-learning projects. In the implementation stage, it is the importance of connections with administrators and other teachers who serve as the strongest motivators. A personal approach from either of these groups is highly effective in motivating teachers to implement a service-learning project for the first time. Another important motivator is the ease with which teachers see service-learning projects fitting with their teaching philosophies and teaching styles.

Once teachers have implemented their projects, those who are motivated to sustain them are more motivated by their connections with the students and their positive responses to the projects and also by the community connections that have been made through the projects. Once teachers have established projects, they are more likely to continue them because they do see that their personal needs are being met and that they find more meaning in their teaching through service-learning implementation.

There are other motivating factors that play a role in continuing or sustaining that project, or beginning a new project, including seeing all the components of service-learning work together to create a meaningful teaching event, to see personal and academic growth in students, and finally to have the opportunity to motivate and teach others about service-learning.

First, the service-learning project itself can be a motivator. Teachers are motivated to continue service-learning work when they see all the pieces of the program fit together, when all the components for a successful service-learning project are present. Nancy was thrilled when she realized,

*“I had the funds. I had the opportunity. I had the support. I had all the key components and I had an idea on what a project should look like. It has far exceeded what I thought it would be. And I keep getting enough feedback from former students and from parents who say, ‘You know, that was just so wonderful.’”*

Ammon (2002) and Palmer (2004), also indicated that service-learning keeps exhausted teachers going. Jill questioned her energy level for service, but continued that

*“the fact that they [the students] come back and they are doing this and it is going well, and I’m like, ‘Wow, I’ll keep doing this even when I am really tired at the end of the day.’”*

Second teaches are also motivated to continue service-learning when they see changes in the lives of children (Eyler & Giles, 2002; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000; Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). Nancy stated,

*“You make a difference in their lives and it empowers them. That empowerment*

*and self-confidence, and especially for the child who isn't strong academically, but has other gifts and talents, and seeing that child blossom in a setting that had they not been in they wouldn't have encountered that self-confidence."*

The main motivation is brought to an individual student level. Teachers teach large groups of students, from 20-30 students at an elementary level to over 100 in high school. Teachers are motivated by the changes they see in individual students experience academic and personal growth, such as learning that their students are involved in service outside of the classroom. Jill and Kim were both motivated by the growth in the numbers of students who joined the service clubs at the middle school and high school levels and on their own time as well. Seeing students incorporate the act of service into their personal lives outside of school is a motivation for teachers to implement service-learning and to continue to implement service-learning. Jill expressed,

*"Just seeing kids that really do incorporate it into their life, you know, here [pointing to her heart], and now seeing them come with it too."*

Teachers find motivation in witnessing student improvement in writing, problem-solving, communicating, and connecting curricular information to community events.

Third, teachers find motivation to continue service-learning projects when they have the opportunities to teach other teachers about service-learning (Abes, et al., 2002; McKay & Rozee, 2004; Palmer, 2004). Jill says,

*"A lot of people understand it [service-learning] in this district and this district really focuses on it and so it motivates me to keep going."*

Once teachers implement that initial service-learning project, teachers are motivated to continue to implement service-learning by their own success with prior service-learning

experiences, and combine that personal satisfaction with evidence of student achievement. Andy says it is

*“Just seeing the student successes. That’s what keeps me doing it really.”*

Nancy expresses this thought to explain how her participation as a teacher implementing service-learning enables her to sustain her efforts:

*“It just touches your heart, it touches the residents’ [of the retirement center] hearts, it is like a magic that happens between them and you think, ‘How could I not do this?’”*

### Guiding Question 3

*What Benefits, if Any, Do Teachers Derive from Their Service-Learning Experiences?*

Teachers identify many personal and professional benefits from their implementation of service-learning in their classrooms. Many of those benefits are similar to the initial and sustaining motivating factors for teachers. When these teachers were motivated, they found that personally and professionally beneficial. Again, many of the benefits for teachers come from connections made with other teachers, students, administrators, and community members. Such benefits include finding gratification, being energized, and having a direct impact on students’ learning.

Service-learning is gratifying for teachers and helps bring meaning and purpose to teaching. Bonnie was thrilled by her service-learning experience.

*“It was so exciting. Just wonderful. So rewarding. So fun. I mean I think at that point [when the class was selling their Buckeye products at the college campus] the children did not realize how much we had learned from the entire experience. It was just wonderful.”*

Nancy explains the personal benefits of service-learning, even when faced with dissent among her staff.

*“You know I think it has given me a real purpose and a real, ‘I’m going to do this my way,’ kind of thing because I am so proud of the kids and because I see the benefits, I am willing to say, ‘I don’t care.’ At first I was more sensitive to people because I want to make people happy—that is my personality....Initially when there were people on staff who weren’t very happy with some of this attention, the kids going to this conference, and doing that, I got to the point where, ‘You know, I know this is important. I know this is changing kids. I am just going to do it....’ It gives them a purpose. It gives me a purpose and so it works.”*

In terms of teachers reaping the benefits of student involvement in service-learning, teachers appreciate the fact that service-learning helps students think more deeply. Palmer (2004) also found that service-learning helped students think about current, worldly events. Kim explains,

*“I mean, they start thinking....If I can just start it, then I have done my job.”*

The teachers benefit because the students are self-motivated when participating in service-learning projects. Andy says,

*“It has helped me motivate kids more doing these types of projects.”*

Teachers also enjoy seeing the difference service-learning makes in the level of empathy of their students. Bonnie reflected,

*“I guess I’ve seen an evolution of understanding that really doing good is a good feeling and it’s a good thing to do. That’s been important. That would be my bestest*

*moment....But seeing the learning and service and the giving and the joy of the receivers and appreciation. That's a real gift."*

Kim concurs,

*"So you just never know how you are going to touch them. You really don't. You just don't."*

McKay and Rozee (2004) explained that higher education faculty benefited from implementing service-learning because of the ability to teach values and citizenship through service. Similarly, Erin was concerned about the level of empathy in her social studies students. She was pleased with the response of her students when they concluded their teaching of parts of the Constitution to students with learning disabilities.

*"It was just rewarding to see them actually, you know, enjoy the project. And then to see for some of the kids, click. Sometimes as a social studies teacher there are topics we talk about and I get frustrated because I say, 'How do you teach kids empathy? How do you teach them to empathize with another country? How do you get them to understand?' So that was rewarding—to see them actually, you know, interact with the kids [with learning disabilities] and find out, 'Wow! These are real people.' So that was probably the best thing."*

Teachers benefit from service-learning activities because they build a rapport and a trust with their students that can carry over into other subject areas. Andy explains,

*"They really trust me, especially when it comes to other areas of study that we need to go over. They are more willing to listen and to learn and to follow what I am doing."*

Nancy was pleased that her students came back even after graduating in high school to talk about their projects.

*“You know it is really gratifying to see that kids still remember doing this.”*

Teachers enjoy learning that students continue their service into later grades and into later years in life. Kim explains,

*“They began to go [to other homeless shelters] after they got in high school; they started branching out and doing some service-learning at a higher level, which is positive.”*

Along with students, teachers also benefit from the relationships they develop with their colleagues, administrators, community members, parents (Ammon, 2002; McKay & Rozee, 2004; Palmer, 2004). Kim listed the relationships she established through her service-learning experiences:

*“The relationships I have developed in the program with the [homeless shelter],... with the students outside the classroom, even though it was still a learning experience; the relationship that I developed with the parents in dealing with the program and helping them see things....the relationships...that developed among the colleagues of wanting to go help at the shelter were all great relationships.”*

As another personal benefit, service-learning keeps teachers going, even when they are exhausted and lacking motivation. Jill realizes this about herself when she says,

*“‘Wow, I’m going to keep doing this,’ even when I am really tired at the end of the day.”*

Nancy agrees, that implementing service-learning tiring, but is also rewarding.

*“I’ve got the formula. I know all the pieces that have to go together to make it work. So exhaustion on my part, you know, because it does wear me down....It’s a lot of hard work, but I think the benefits are so exceptional, and it changes the kids.”*

Finally, teachers benefit because they learn new information to which they would not otherwise be exposed. Service-learning promotes authentic life-long learning for teachers that

they, in turn, model for their students. For example, Kim learned more about homeless issues and eventually served on the board of directors for the shelter. Jill learned about the needs of a veterinarian for wild birds in Alaska, and Bonnie learned about feral cats running wild in the State House. In addition to making teaching more fulfilling, service-learning makes teaching interesting and fun.

#### Guiding Question 4

*What, if any, Academic Student Benefits Do Teachers Perceive Resulting From Service-Learning Experiences?*

Teachers identify many academic benefits for students through participation in service-learning. Some benefits are directly related to understanding course content; some benefits relate to skills learned that can be applied to any area of the curriculum and in life; some benefits relate to general student motivation to succeed academically.

Teachers indicate increased student motivation when involved in service-learning (Ammon, 2002). Jill reflects on academic benefits through increased motivation:

*“I think about the academic benefit in my class, and there are some kids that are not motivated to do some of the other activities that we do, but they will do this project if we can hook them. It saves them academically because it’s a big project...It gets them excited....There are some specific students, the first time I have seen them motivated.”*

Students also show improvement in organizational skills. For their trips to the retirement center, Nancy says her students

*“are planning and they want to organize things.”*

Service-learning provides opportunities for authentic assessment of student knowledge.

Erin expresses,

*“I told the kids, too, there are lots of ways I could test you on the knowledge. I could have just given you a paper/pencil test, but now you got to create something that someone else could enjoy at the same time that you were showing me that you knew the stuff, and so I think they enjoyed that.”*

Teachers did comment on the difficulty in tracking actual academic process. Jill related that it was difficult to track changes in overall academic achievement

*“throughout the whole big picture of school because it is such a short time that they are here in middle school.”*

Nancy concurs that academic achievement is

*“hard for me to pinpoint...but I know that nobody ever wants to be absent on the day we go to the nursing home...attendance is good. They know they are going to get to share in an opportunity. They know they are going to be writing. They know that they are going to do the pictures. All of those things are important to them, but could I measure it? I don't know. Probably not.”*

Even with difficulties in measuring specific academic achievement, each teacher did specifically comment on how service-learning had a positive influence on students' writing, especially when students wrote about their service-learning experiences. This academic benefit was also pointed out by Wurr (2002). Nancy commented that she sees improvement in their writing because

*“They have a purpose for writing.”*

Andy concurred,

*“Whether it’s a service-learning project or any type of hands-on project that we do, it seems as though the kids’ writing is much better than just me teaching or something, or you know, back to more lecture to try to get through something.”*

In applying for grants, Andy submitted writing samples to the committee so they could see the improvements. Bonnie also saw gains in writing:

*“I would say probably the component of writing is tremendous when those kids start thinking about it.”*

In addition, service-learning is an excellent way to teach citizenship and democracy (McKay & Rozee, 2004). By serving their communities, students are participating as good citizens and contributing to democracy. Jill shares her perspective of the United States as a participatory democracy:

*“That’s the way it works and when it’s not working maybe that’s an issue we need to look how we are handling that. What happens when citizens are not actively participating in their communities?”*

Finally, in terms of academic student benefits, students also learn reading, writing, music, art, and performance skills and technology integration—use of PowerPoint, the digital camera, and other skills through service. Students in Nancy’s Grandpals Project worked with the art and music teachers to prepare for their visits to the retirement center. The students prepared digital media presentations as part of their culminating demonstration/celebration of the project.

## Guiding Question 5

*What, if any, Personal Student Benefits Do Teachers Perceive Resulting from Service-Learning Experiences?*

Through service-learning, students discover their internal gifts and talents. They are put in situations in which they would not typically find themselves and they grow from those experiences. They learn things about themselves that they might not typically discover in a normal school setting.

Teachers see growth in students' self-esteem (Aquila & Dodd, 2003; Eyer & Giles, 1999). Andy explained,

*"I think every child changes with every project that you do, especially when service is involved."*

Each teacher named specific students who had grown and changed because of their involvement in service-learning, from Andy's shy, quiet student who performed an original song at the school's Civil War Day, to another quiet student who blossomed when Andy appointed him emcee of the school assembly on South Africa. Erin enjoyed hearing her students discover their own strengths. When one group performed a song they had written about the Constitution, they said,

*"Oh, hey, we were pretty creative."*

Andy agreed that students gained confidence.

*"It was effective. The kids felt in control and proud of their work and their display boards."*

Nancy observed,

*“Their self-confidence benefits. We can do something that we felt was really going to be hard....I know it changes the kids....“It [service] really does make a difference. And they make a difference. And they know that. And they grow in their self-confidence with that....The smiles on their faces...the kids know....It empowers them. That’s a really important thing.”*

Students gain confidence to speak up in class. Jill said,

*“We were doing this giant brainstorming thing and the excitement was in some of those classes really high, but I truly, for the first time, heard some students speak.”*

They also receive a self-esteem boost when they receive compliments from adults who have been affected by their service and see themselves as valuable resources in their communities (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Search Institute, 2000). A school secretary wrote a letter to Nancy’s class thanking them for the difference they made in her mother’s life. Nancy paraphrased the letter:

*“‘You were wonderful. You really helped my mother.’ When kids have adults telling them that they made a difference, and then at the same time all the materials came out [Everyday People Make a Difference student and teacher guides], they got kids thinking about how they could make a difference even when they are nine and ten [years old].”*

In addition to positive gains in self-esteem, students learn the joy of giving. Bonnie expresses her perspective.

*“We have talked a lot about a lot of times it’s the giver who really gets the most as opposed to the receiver. Although we all like to have presents, we all like to open up packages...but giving is such a good, good feeling and giving without strings attached is an even better feeling. I have seen growth in children in that department...I view service-*

*learning as a marvelous, authentic opportunity for children to learn to do and to learn and to give to others, namely their community, families, their school, everything.”*

Kids know when they have made a difference and share that joy of giving in their reflections (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Nancy paraphrased from a student’s journal entry:

*“She wrote about changing lives. ‘I have made a difference in my Grandpa’s life because she has no one to talk to during the day....I like the way she talks to me about anything and the way she looks up from her wheelchair when I walk in the door.’”*

Finally, students find meaning in their learning (Brandeis University, 1999). Andy explains about letting go and giving more autonomy to his students.

*“That’s the one thing I have learned about service-learning...is to really let them [the students] take ownership of the project, because it is meaningful for me, but it is more meaningful if you let them do things.”*

#### Guiding Question 6

*What Role Does Administrative Leadership Play in Aiding Teachers in Sustaining Service-Learning Experiences for Their Students?*

Teachers unanimously indicated that support from school district administrators was a significant factor in their motivation and success in implementing service-learning. Having a personal connection with one or more administrators greatly benefited teachers who were implementing service-learning, and those relationships encouraged the teachers to sustain their projects. Pontbriand (2003) concurred that successful service-learning programs had a strong commitment from district-level administrators.

There are many different ways for administrators to show their commitment to teachers, including support during service implementation, positive feedback and motivation, professional

development opportunities, philosophical support for experiential learning, flexibility in schedules, and funding for projects and the materials necessary to support those projects. Kim relates the importance of administrative support for service-learning implementation:

*“The number one support I had was the administration. In this building, I can say the support was tremendous. The higher administration in the district, the superintendent...found several times out of his busy schedule to join us at the Open Shelter and worked with us....I will never forget that man in his nice pants and tie...in the floor with the kids when they were matching shoes and sizes.”*

Positive feedback and encouragement from administrators is an important motivator for teachers (Billig & Klute, 2002). Nancy appreciated the positive comments she received from administrators in the district. When administrators reward teacher behavior with increased funding, and/or paid visits to conference, teachers are even more motivated.

*“They seemed to sense and recognize that this was the whole [service-learning program] deal; this was what it should look like, and they kept telling me that—rewarding me with perks and trips and you know, so that was great....People were saying, ‘You’re doing a great thing, here’s some money. Keep doing it.’”*

When administrators reach out to teachers and provide professional development opportunities for them, teachers and their students benefit (Pontbriand, 2003). Kim became initially motivated to implement service-learning because a district administrator distributed a flier about an introductory workshop and Kim attended. Teachers gladly take advantage of meaningful professional development opportunities that are provided and promoted by administrators. Nancy recalls,

*“I had a lot of training. I was lucky that I got to go to conferences...going to the National Service-Learning Conference was a big help to me, and we went to the State Conference and people were starting to do it [service-learning]. I remember in San Jose there were a couple of sessions that were with truly outstanding people tying in literature....They brought books they would show me and I am like, ‘Oh, I love literature. This is perfect. I can do this.’”*

Teachers need philosophical support for hands-on activities such as service-learning (Ammon, 2002), especially in the face of increasing state-mandated standardized testing. Andy explains,

*“While I believe that there is more gotten out of something, a situation where there’s service-learning, I have state standards...to contend with and especially in American History you have to get so much content in and I am constantly weighing, ‘Okay, is this going to be a big enough lesson to put off teaching this chunk of content?’”*

It is important for administrators to be both philosophically and logistically supportive of teachers (Pontbriand, 2003). Teachers need flexibility in the school day schedule to incorporate service-learning projects and time to collaborate and plan service-learning projects. Some students at the high school and middle school level must miss other classes in order to have time for field trips. At the elementary level, teachers need support for changing schedules with art, music, and physical education teachers. Teachers appreciate and benefit from time provided by the district for planning. Erin discussed her appreciation,

*“We sat down and our district is so nice, they gave us a day to plan for next year, to just sit down and plan.”*

It is helpful for a teacher to be able to contact an administrator, discuss his or her ideas, and have the administrator help with the logistics such as taking care of the initial contacts, finding funding, and arranging for transportation if necessary. These acts are tremendous time-savers for teachers. Jill explains that

*“the funding support was there. There was already grant writing going on district-wide; suggestions for who to contact or how to do this—people to call if we needed something. All I had to do was get on the phone and call [the career education coordinator] and she’d get the right person or find a way to fund it....That was easy!”*

Administrators have also helped with the logistics of providing publicity for service-learning activities. This included district-wide publications within the district, or facilitating media relations with community media.

Teachers understood that it was important to administration to relate their service activities to the standards. According to Andy,

*“Relating to the curriculum...if you want to get permission to do things that is always the first thing they are asking, ‘Is it related to the standards?’ Integrating with as many subjects as possible, you get that thematic aspect, making sure it has a kind of a sense of responsibility, civic responsibility, where the kids are doing something for the community.”*

Funding is one of the most important areas of administrator support (Billig, 2002). District administrators provided funds for bus tickets downtown, transportation, conference attendance costs, professional development time, materials, and many other supportive gestures. Most teachers said they could find ways to complete projects if funding was cut, but teachers definitely appreciated the financial support they received. Bonnie described money as the

*“bottom line with everything.”*

Related to funding, administrators also supported teachers through providing materials to facilitate infusing service-learning into the classroom. Using the *Everyday People Make a Difference* materials, Andy commented,

*“The kids are finishing up the Everyday People Make a Difference [student guides] and we are to the point where we are going to identify a problem in the community.”*

Teachers can be tremendously personally motivated to implement service-learning in their classrooms, but if they are not supported by their district leaders, too many roadblocks can discourage even the most highly motivated teacher. Teachers cannot implement and sustain service-learning projects alone. It takes strong, purposeful district leaders to provide the support necessary for teachers to successfully implement service-learning in the K-12 classroom.

## CHAPTER XIV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERS, TEACHERS, AND RESEARCHERS

As a result of this study, I learned about many areas of support that district leaders can provide to more readily motivate teachers to incorporate service-learning. These recommendations clearly reflect the three major themes of this study: Connections, Resonation in the Hearts of Teachers, and The Right Fit with Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Style. Recommendations for school district personnel include providing professional development opportunities, administrative support, funding, and encouragement. These categories of recommendations are important for district leaders and for teachers implementing or wishing to implement service-learning in their classrooms. Through implementing these recommendations, I believe teachers will have the support and motivation necessary for successful, sustainable service-learning programs. This chapter concludes with further recommendations for research in this area of study.

### Professional Development

It is beneficial for leaders to arrange purposeful collaboration opportunities teaching combinations so that teachers implementing service-learning can effectively coordinate with, mentor, and motivate other teachers to participate. Such an approach uses the expertise of teachers in the district to teach others formally through inservices and conferences, and informally through teaming by putting “service-learning teacher leaders” in informal leadership positions to influence other teachers.

Administrators can be proactive in sending these teacher leaders to conferences to learn more and return to teach other teachers in the district. Nancy appreciated

*“the opportunity to talk and learn from people who are doing service-learning”*

at state and national conferences. It is also powerful to involve students in those conferences, not only for the students to have opportunities to process, reflect upon, and share their accomplishments with adults, but also for other teachers to hear directly from students about the impact service-learning has had on their lives. This further motivates teachers to implement service-learning.

Many states require a formal mentor-mentee relationship for first-year teachers in order for them to receive their teaching licenses. When administrators recruit and assign mentors, they should consciously recruit teachers who have implemented service-learning, so those teachers can have a positive influence on younger teachers and can model the infusion of service-learning in the classroom for novice teachers.

It is important to clearly, eagerly, and personally communicate professional development opportunities such as workshops and graduate courses on service-learning being offered in and around the district. When administrators personally invite and recruit teachers to attend conferences and other professional development workshops, teachers are more likely to be motivated to attend. District leaders could also provide experiential, hands-on professional development for its own teachers. Once teachers have personally experienced service-learning for themselves, they are much more likely to implement it. The summer provides an excellent opportunity for in-depth, experiential professional development opportunities for teachers.

Another important role for district administrators is to organize and promote district forums for teachers to gather to talk about service-learning issues. As Erin expressed,

*“That’s what I’ve often wished for, especially after I got one project under my belt.*

*Wow, this is so great. I’d really like to learn more about it.”*

Organizing round-table dialogues among teachers in a district or between two or more districts provides teachers with valuable opportunities to learn from each other.

Administrators can also connect with university faculty to provide travel and education opportunities for teachers while they learn about service-learning techniques and strategies.

There is also a possibility for grant participation to arise from these relationships.

Administrators can also take the lead in being attentive to cutting-edge service-learning reports and exemplary programs that are promoted through national and state service-learning organizations such as Learn-and-Serve America and the Corporation for National Service. When they learn about helpful, important information, they should pass that information along to their teachers.

#### Administrative Leadership

District leaders can facilitate communication between teachers and community members. District administrators could forge the way for teachers to make community connections by communicating with community members about the concept of service-learning and opening the doors for teachers to implement projects. District leaders can communicate to businesses and local agencies the capabilities of students, so when teachers call, community members can trust that students can complete tasks the teacher is requesting, with the business as a partner. Kim discussed the difficulty of the cold-call from the teacher to a community agency:

*“After all, you are two strangers who are coming together with an idea. You are...about to invade their organization, their world, with depending on what grade level of kids you are going with. People out in the business world are not accustomed to children. They are very, very hesitant about giving kids chances, and you’ve got to give kids chances.*”

*The business world is very difficult. They just don't look at things in a humanistic way. It's black and white. You know, WE are teachers, we look at it globally."*

This communication could be enhanced by the creation of a district-wide community contact bank for use by teachers and community members and agencies.

Teachers need time. They also need to be compensated for their time. Administrators can provide time for teachers to do the planning required for service-learning implementation. This time can be in the form of professional development days during the school year, scheduling team teachers with common planning time throughout the school year, and providing cross-grade level and cross-district opportunities for teachers to communicate.

It is also important to maintain and ensure continuity of district leadership responsibilities regarding service-learning supervision and assistance for teachers, especially when personnel and job descriptions at the district administrative level change. It is important to keep responsibility for service-learning consistent and to communicate changes in administrative responsibilities to teachers, so they will readily know whom to contact for help and support. In addition, formalized communication of district administrator responsibilities to all new teacher hires in the district helps facilitate transitions and continuity of programs. New teachers will especially benefit from knowing whom to contact at the district office for support for service-learning.

Creating a District Service Board to help establish and maintain connections between the school district and the community will not only serve the school district, but the community as well. Inviting parents to serve on the board is helpful because they have a great deal of influence and connections in the community. Quite often parents *are* the influence and connections. Including students on such a board would give student voice and opinion to district-level service-

learning discussions. In this role, students could practice the leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills they are learning in their service-learning programs.

For students to experience the benefits of service-learning at every grade level, K-12, district leaders could promote a continuous, developmentally appropriate K-12 service-learning program. As Nancy describes,

*“It [service-learning activities in elementary school] builds a foundation, and gives them the scaffolding for experiences later.”*

Bonnie also is a true proponent of K-12 service-learning programs.

*“It is a valuable experience. I can’t imagine why it wouldn’t become a part of school at every level. Every level. And the older you get the more you can do and the more elaborate, the more meaningful, the more effective it can be. I would like to think it would be.”*

By implementing a K-12 program, the administration helps create a district culture with service-learning at its core. Students come to expect to play a valuable role in making a difference in their communities every year—quite a powerful lesson. District leaders can help businesses and service agencies see the benefits of service-learning, not only for the students but for their organizations as well.

Administrative support for measuring academic achievement because of service-learning experiences is a key component to future success. Administrators can identify and help implement research methods to determine just what academic benefits students are receiving from participation in service-learning. Designing such assessments is time-consuming and for accuracy and reliability, requires an expertise in the areas of research and assessment. Administrators could collaborate with university faculty to facilitate this type of measurement.

These assessments would also serve the district well in public relations efforts to express student academic achievement to the community, while at the same time providing documented evidence of the benefits of service-learning. This data would also be compelling for future service-learning grant applications.

Administrators can take the lead in helping to identify possible curricular connections between standards and service-learning and making suggestions to teachers. Showing a link between administrators overseeing service-learning and those coordinating the district's curricular program would set a tone for the district that there are definite academic goals that can be met through service-learning. Administrators can find and communicate those academic connections, or provide opportunities for teachers to come together to create the links between service and curriculum. Once teachers see the number of academic goals that can be met through service-learning, the more motivated they would be to participate.

Administrators can also help by publicizing service-learning events and promoting public relations opportunities. A district leader can serve as a liaison between the teachers and the media by alerting the media to cover special service-learning events.

### Funding

It is important for district leaders to provide funding for service-learning projects. This funding can take on a variety of forms, from creating specific budget line-items to securing gift-in-kind from the community. District administrators can take a leadership role in seeking out and applying for service-learning grants to provide funding for teachers to implement their plans. Teachers rarely have the connections to be informed about grant possibilities, or the time or expertise to successfully apply for and receive grants. Communicating grant application

opportunities and actually writing the applications can be extremely helpful for teachers working to implement service-learning.

It is sometimes necessary for administrators to be creative in funding lines in the district budget. They can work with teachers to think creatively about how to fund projects and find local business partners who could help finance projects in return for public relations opportunities. Of utmost importance would be forging partnerships with businesses that could provide or fund transportation for service-learning activities. Funding and helping arrange for student transportation is one of the most difficult and frustrating roadblocks for teachers to overcome when working to implement service-learning in their classrooms.

Administrators need to stay abreast of legislative service-learning initiatives and funding resources at the state and national levels. Administrators need to communicate with senators and representatives at the state and national levels regarding the need for service-learning funding. It is also important to inform teachers of the power of their voices. Facilitating a letter-writing campaign that could be easily accessible through the internet is one easy way to help teachers speak up in state and national government regarding service-learning

Administrators can provide materials for teachers and classrooms such as *Everyday People Make a Difference* and *Project Citizen* to help teachers plan, initiate, and implement service-learning projects. Once materials have been purchased, it is imperative that teachers are provided the opportunity for professional development and training in the use of those programs. Andy would have found this type of training helpful because

*“It [Project Citizen] was kind of thrown at me. I was the only one doing it. I wasn’t sure exactly what it was. I wasn’t necessarily properly trained. I guess there were some sessions you could go to on that, so I was kind of all by myself with that program.”*

## Encouragement and Support

Public recognition of great effort and accomplishment not only encourages those who are being recognized but also motivates others to get involved. Administrators need to recognize teachers for their extra work, extra effort, and extra time to provide service-learning opportunities for their students and they also need to recognize outstanding community partners and give them some public recognition for their contributions. Students, too, should be recognized for their participation in service-learning. Through student and community recognition, districts are afforded another opportunity to get more parents involved and connected with schools. Year-end demonstrations/celebrations are excellent opportunities to recognize accomplishments and make a powerful statement regarding the meaning of service-learning for teachers, students, parents, and community.

Administrators cannot forget the importance of connecting with the students themselves. Not only is monetary and emotional support important, but the physical presence of an administrator during a project is a tremendous motivator for both teachers and students. Teachers truly believe they have district support when administrators come to their classes and their service sites. This is powerful role modeling for the students.

It is also important for administrators to listen to the students reflect on their experiences. A district administrator took time to come out and interview Nancy's students, and Nancy recalls,

*"It was great because he sits there and takes notes, you know, and he always wears a tie. And asks them for their opinion. And here's an adult that they assume is an important person because of his demeanor and he is telling that they just do wonderful stuff and it is*

*really neat because that just reinforces that they are doing something special. And they are....So having an audience to share this with validates what they are doing.”*

Leaders can raise awareness and provide support for teachers by bringing experienced service-learning practitioners to the district to work with teachers. These visiting teachers can share their stories and can give hands-on, individualized recommendations to teachers who are or would like to implement service-learning.

#### Summary of Recommendations to District Leaders and Teachers

Service-learning is a classroom-based activity, but in order for it to be successful and sustained, district leaders must take responsibility for various facets of the program. Financial support, leadership, and awareness of the needs of teachers implementing service-learning can not only encourage those teachers who are already participating in service-learning, but can also motivate more teachers to become involved. In order for students to benefit from service-learning activities, teachers must understand, believe in, and implement the program. District leaders can provide a variety of opportunities for teachers to learn about service-learning and can motivate teachers to implement service-learning in their classrooms.

While professional development, administrative leadership, funding, and support and encouragement are all important aspects of service-learning motivation and sustainability, these are not enough. It is the teachers who must choose to take advantage of these many and various opportunities to learn about service-learning programs and make the decision to get involved in order to make a difference in the lives of their students through this program.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

There are several important next steps for researchers regarding teacher motivation to implement service-learning projects, including quantitative and qualitative research techniques.

1. Using the themes for teacher motivation established in this study, create a quantitative survey to distribute to a diverse population of teachers who have implemented service-learning to find out if these themes ring true for a larger sample size.
2. Replicate this survey at the college level to determine if similar themes serve as motivators for faculty as well as K-12 teachers. Similar research has been conducted by Hammond (1994), Abes, et al. (2002), and McKay and Rozee (2004), but the emergent themes were different.
3. Design and implement a professional development opportunity for teachers that include programs and activities that reflect the three themes discussed in this study. Perform pre-and post-test assessments to see if educating teachers using these themes increases their motivation to implement service-learning.
4. Design student achievement assessments for written curriculum that teachers use (*Everyday People Make a Difference* and *Project Citizen*) to measure student achievement and teacher motivation when using these materials.

### Summary

Prior to conducting this study, I expected to learn the essence of the K-12 teacher's experience when implementing service-learning. I especially wanted to focus on the factors that motivated teachers to implement service-learning projects for the first time. Three key areas were revealed with regard to the implementation of service-learning. First, teachers need to connect with people, the community, and the curriculum when implementing service-learning. Second, service-learning must resonate in the heart of the teacher, reaching a deep, personal, heart-felt desire to serve and to make the world a better place through service. Third, service-learning must provide the right fit with a teacher's teaching philosophy and teaching style. It is

important to note that none of these three major themes can exist alone. There is a cyclical nature to the implementation of service-learning leading to increased motivation for teachers to continue such projects with their students. Once a teacher connects with his or her students and other teachers through the curriculum to meet the needs of the community, it becomes evident that service-learning incorporates a strategy that reflects both a teaching philosophy and a teaching style that is comfortable and meaningful. That teacher is then motivated to get other teachers involved in implementing service-learning.

By identifying and explaining these major themes, it is my hope that I have provided a roadmap to help teachers and administrators make service-learning systemic and sustainable, enabling more teachers to have greater impact on the lives of their students.

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APPENDIX A

PRE-INTERVIEW REFLECTION FORM

Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (H)

\_\_\_\_\_ (O)

\_\_\_\_\_ (C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (F)

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed 30 minutes prior to interview:

1. What is my physical condition right now?
2. What is my emotional condition right now?
3. What is my prior experience with this co-researcher?
4. What are my best hopes for this interview?
5. What are my worst fears for this interview?
6. What specific information do I believe this co-researcher will describe in the interview?
7. Set cell phone timer for 10 minutes to relax and mentally prepare for the interview. What thoughts surfaced during this quiet time?
8. State positive affirmation: *I will listen attentively. I will strive to understand the truth about what \_\_\_\_\_(insert name of co-researcher) is saying. I will learn from this interview. I will suspend judgment. I will enjoy this process.*

**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**  
**MARJORI KREBS**  
**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH**

1. Establish contact with participant.

Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (H)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (O)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (C)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (F)

2. Set up meeting date, time, and place.

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

3. One week prior to interview, mail or fax (circle one) interview questions to participant.

4. Two days prior to interview, confirm time and location with participant.

5. Materials to bring:

- a. \_\_\_ Interview Questions (2 copies)
- b. \_\_\_ Tape Recorder
- c. \_\_\_ Blank Cassette Tapes (4)
- d. \_\_\_ Extra Batteries (4)
- e. \_\_\_ Electrical Cord
- f. \_\_\_ Writing pen (3)
- g. \_\_\_ Thank you gift
- h. \_\_\_ Watch with large numbers
- i. \_\_\_ Bottles of Water (4)
- j. \_\_\_ Ice chest
- k. \_\_\_ Notepad
- l. \_\_\_ Participant Consent Form (2 copies)
- m. \_\_\_ Pre-Interview Reflection Form
- n. \_\_\_ Mileage and expense logs
- o. \_\_\_ Proposal
- p. \_\_\_ Dissertation Journal

6. Arrive at site 40 minutes prior to interview start time.

7. Find quiet location for Pre-Interview Reflection session and complete Pre-Interview Reflection Form.
8. Set up tape recorder. Test.
9. Greet Participant upon arrival.
10. Settle into taping setting.
11. Script to begin Interview:

*This is Marjori Krebs, researcher, and I am interviewing \_\_\_\_\_ on this date,  
\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.*

*Please read and sign the participant permission form.*

*Will you verbally confirm that you have signed the participant permission form?*

*Do you agree to be audio taped for the purposes of this interview?*

*I will now rewind the audio tape and check that both voices can be clearly heard.*

*(Rewind both cassette tape to check for clarity.)*

*We will now begin our interview. I would first like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I have several questions for you that you have had the opportunity to review prior to this interview. I anticipate that this interview will last approximately 2 hours.*

*Let's begin!*

12. Turn to scripted interview questions and begin interview session.

**APPENDIX C**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**  
**MARJORI KREBS**  
**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH**

1. Establish contact with participant.

Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (H)

\_\_\_\_\_ (O)

\_\_\_\_\_ (C)

\_\_\_\_\_ (F)

2. Set up meeting date, time, and place.

Location of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

3. Scripted interview permission form reviewed and signed.

4. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Background Information

1. Where do you teach?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What grade and subject area do you teach?
4. Have you taught in other schools, in other grades, or other subject areas?
5. How would you describe your typical teaching style and philosophy?

Service-Learning: General Information

6. How would you define service-learning?
7. What would you say are the key components in implementing service-learning?
8. Did you personally participate in service or volunteerism as a student? Now?
9. Did you participate in service or volunteerism with your family?
10. What differences, if any, do you see between service-learning, community service, and volunteerism?

Personal Service-Learning Experiences as a Teacher:

11. Thinking back over the last 2 years, would you describe 1 or 2 of your most successful service-learning experiences students have participated in as members of your class?

*Student Benefits:*

12. Did or do you see any direct benefits to students who participated in service-learning?  
If so, what are they?
13. What, if any, academic student achievement did you observe?
14. What, if any content standards were you able to meet when implementing service-learning?
15. Can you recall any particular students in whom you saw changes? If so, what changes did you see?
16. Did you see any changes in yourself as a teacher when you implemented service-learning? If so, how so?

*Support/Sustainability:*

17. In thinking about past projects, what support did you have?
18. What support would you describe as being “critical?”
19. What there any other kind of support you could have benefited from? If so, what?
20. Did you face funding issues? If so, how did you handle these issues? Were you a part of any grants?
21. What roadblocks did you face?

*First Service-Learning Experience:*

22. What do you remember about your first experience of incorporating service-learning in your class?
23. What motivated you to implement that first project?  
--colleagues, community need, community partnership,
24. Did you have a mentor as you implemented service-learning? What was helpful about that situation?
25. Do you believe you have had an impact on any other teachers to motivate them to implement service-learning?

*Overall Comments:*

26. Have you shared your experiences with any other teachers?
23. Do you see service-learning as a part of overall school reform? How so?
24. Have you taken any classes or workshops that have taught you about service-learning? If so, what were they?
25. If so, did you receive course credit, a stipend, CEUs, or other incentives?
26. What advice would you give someone who was considering implementing a service-learning project in his or her classroom?
27. In looking back over your experience in implementing service-learning, what parts have been the most rewarding for you?
28. Would you change anything?
29. What 3-5 words would you use to describe service-learning?
30. Any final thoughts?

**APPENDIX D**  
**POST-INTERVIEW REFLECTION FORM**  
**MARJORI KREBS**  
**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESEARCH**

Contact Information:

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you again for your time in participating as a co-researcher in my doctoral dissertation research. As we discussed at the close of your interview, the following questions are for your reflective comments regarding the interview process. Would you please answer the following questions openly and honestly?

Upon completion, please return this form in the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed. Feel free to answer on this page, on the back, or on a separate page.

1. What was your initial response to the interview process? Were you physically comfortable during the interview? Did you feel comfortable in answering the questions asked?
  
2. Is there any other information that you would like to share with me that you did not have an opportunity to share during the interview?
  
3. If you thought of other information to answer question 2, why do you think this information occurred to you after the interview? Did something occur to make you think of this information?
  
4. Do you have any other documentation or “artifacts” for me to use during my research?
  
5. Do you have any other comments or questions for me?

Thank you for your participation.



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## APPENDIX E

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Investigator:** Marjori Krebs

**Phone:** 419-352-5452

**Project Title:** Service-Learning: Motivations for K-12 Teachers

You have been invited to participate in a study designed to explore with you why you began service-learning in your classroom. I am particularly interested in hearing about your reasons for beginning service-learning and your thoughts and motivations as the project continued. I will include quotations and themes from this interview in my dissertation. Participation is strictly voluntary.

If you choose to participate, I would like to interview you today for approximately 2 hours to talk to you about your experiences.

The information obtained from this study will be kept confidential and will only be reported in statistical and/or qualitative analyses with no specific connections made to you. All participant names, as well as any names mentioned during the interviews, will be changed to pseudonyms for the purposes of data summary, analysis, and presentation. All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet accessible only to me.

There are no foreseeable risks involved with your participation in this study. Your decision whether to participate or not will not interfere with your future relations with Bowling Green State University, your school district, or any other organization. You are free to withdraw from the experiment at any time without penalty; additionally, the investigator may choose to cancel your participation at any time.

Do you have any questions? (Please circle one):    YES        NO

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the investigator at the above phone number, or by e-mail at [mkrebs@bgsu.edu](mailto:mkrebs@bgsu.edu) or in writing on the back of this form. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Judy Jackson May by phone (419-372-7373) or by e-mail ([judyjac@bgsu.edu](mailto:judyjac@bgsu.edu)). You may also contact the chair of the Bowling Green Human Subjects Review Board, at 419-372-7716 or at [hsrb@bgsu.edu](mailto:hsrb@bgsu.edu). Do not sign this sheet until these questions have been addressed to your satisfaction. Please retain a copy of this form (two have been provided) for your records.

**YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE, AND BASED ON THE FACT THAT ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED TO YOUR SATISFACTION. FURTHER, YOU AGREE TO ALLOW OUR DISCUSSIONS TO BE AUDIOTAPED.**

**I AGREE            DO NOT AGREE**  
(Please circle one)

to be audio taped and to release this data for  
for research purposes.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Choice of Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_