

## **The Essential Elements of Service-Learning**

### **Integrated Learning**

Students learn skills and content through varied modalities; the service informs the content, and the content informs the service.

### **Meeting Genuine Needs**

Students identify and learn about a recognized community need. Student actions are valued by the community and have real consequences while offering opportunities to apply newly acquired academic skills and knowledge.

### **Youth Voice and Choice**

Students experience significant age-appropriate challenges involving tasks that require thinking, initiative, and problem solving as they demonstrate responsibility and decision making in an environment safe enough to allow them to make mistakes and to succeed.

### **Collaborative Efforts**

Students participate in the development of partnerships and share responsibility with community members, parents, organizations, and other students. These relationships afford opportunities to interact with people of diverse backgrounds and experience, resulting in mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation.

### **Reciprocity**

Student benefits evolve through mutual teaching and learning, action, or influence, between all participants in the learning and service experience; this reciprocity extends to relationships between institutions as well as relationships between people.

### **Systematic Reflection**

Students put cognitive and affective aspects of experience into the larger contexts of self, the community, and the world. Reflection may occur before, during, and after service and involves various approaches and strategies; adults provide feedback.

### **Civic Responsibility**

When young people have a role in improving society, working for social justice, and caring for the environment, then they truly understand the concept of democracy. Students recognize how participation and the ability to respond to authentic needs improves the quality of life in the community, which may lead to a lifelong ethic of service and civic engagement.

Excerpted from *The Complete Guide to Service-Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, and Social Action* by Cathryn Berger Kay, M.A., 2004. Used with permission of Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 1-866-703-7322; [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com). All rights reserved.