

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE THROUGH EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE-LEARNING

The New Hampshire Service Learning Assessment Study Group

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Abstract

Challenged to find teachers in New Hampshire who felt confident about assessing what students learn through service, the New Hampshire study group began a dialogue with other groups around the state about assessment. Eventually they initiated case studies at two schools during which they coached four teachers in effective assessment practice. They developed a "Planning and Reflection Tool" that defines "Elements of Student-Centered Instruction and Service-Learning" to help with their coaching process. The case studies they present in this chapter offer a first-hand account of how two teachers' understanding of assessment changed, and what they learned about effective assessment of student learning through service.

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State Context

Service learning is just beginning to take hold in New Hampshire. As a state with a long and strong tradition of local control (and among the least generous states in the US in terms of state funding for schools), new ideas are slow to travel through the state. Teachers and schools are relatively free to try new approaches on an individual basis, but statewide networks to support innovation are relatively rare here.

Like most other states, New Hampshire has developed State Curricular Frameworks in recent years. Although there are recently published Career Development frameworks that address a variety of skills such as decision making and self-management, at the time of this project, the frameworks were exclusively focused on the core academic subject areas of English, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics. Unlike neighboring states whose frameworks included overarching skills or orientations such as civic responsibility and problem solving, New Hampshire's frameworks primarily targeted content and thus did not directly address many of the virtues promoted by service-learning. Educators in New Hampshire are well aware that educational policy making is a politically charged issue and the state frameworks, as well as other school issues, must account for the unique political realities in the "Live Free or Die" state.



IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE THROUGH EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Introduction

After wrestling for some time with service-learning and assessment issues, our New Hampshire Service-Learning Assessment Study Group (NHSLASG) attempted unsuccessfully to find examples of good assessment practice around service-learning in New Hampshire. For the most part, with service-learning just coming into prominence, the complex issues of assessment had not had extensive consideration when we began this project. Rather than simply document what was happening around service learning and assessment in NH, we chose to develop an individual coaching model to help teachers develop and refine their approach to assessment of student learning through service.

We recognized there were two critical factors to the success of service learning and assessment for any teacher. First, there was the level of school and community support for the service-learning approach. Second was the teacher's attitude, experience, and understanding of best practices in service-learning and assessment. To help us and other teachers assess and improve the condition of service-learning and assessment for any individual teacher, we created a Planning and Reflection Tool that asked teachers to consider their own assessment and service-learning practices as well as the school support for service-learning. This tool helped us identify teacher strengths and weaknesses and gave us a starting point for our coaching approach to improving service-learning and assessment practices in the state.

In the end, we chose to focus on four teachers who represented developing skill levels in the assessment of learning through service. Three of these teachers worked at a school in which service-learning is part of a school transformation process that has invigorated the community and motivated student learning. The fourth is highly committed to service-learning but works with little support at her school. Needless to say, the level of school support matters—a lot. In a supportive environment, teachers are free to try new ideas; they learn from each other, and resources are there to make things work. Without these supports, individual teachers can heroically make things happen, but consume tremendous energy trying to make their dreams a reality. Meanwhile, their isolation limits the possibility to learn from sharing successes and failures with others and constrains what can be accomplished.

However, as we hope to show, structures can be developed to help all teachers improve their practice regardless of their school circumstances. Our Planning and Reflection tool, combined with a peer coaching system and support structures such as our State Study Group, have helped

improve the practice of service-learning and assessment in New Hampshire. This chapter shares the learning of two of these teachers.

Two Case Studies: The One-on-One Assessment Coaching Model

Sue's Garden: Working in Isolation to Make Miracles Happen

Sue is a believer in service learning. Her eyes gleam in the early morning sun as she buzzes about her second-graders' school garden. The walls inside her classroom are full of joyous examples of student thinking and learning. Complex maps of students' ideas for the garden's design are on one wall. Self-portraits showing the things children like most about working on the garden are on another. Sue's School Garden Project has been a huge hit with her students and their parents. For two consecutive years, Sue's students have studied about plants and the roles that gardens have played in the lives of people in their town throughout its history. They have carefully located, designed, and planted their garden taking light and the sun's changing shadows into account. They have grown their own vegetables and flowers from seeds that germinated in a large, plastic, soil-filled, swimming pool in their classroom. They have used their plants and flowers to beautify the school and made donations of food from the garden to a local Food Bank.

Still, Sue isn't satisfied because she sees so many more possibilities for learning in this approach. She wants to take her students out into the community. She wants them to have a broader experience than simply planting and tending the garden in the dust of the school yard. She wants them to meet the people who manage and use the Food Bank, to see how it is set up and used by people in the community. She wants them to talk personally to senior citizens about their memories of canning, and victory gardens, and changes in how people get their food. But these options are difficult to access for Sue and her students because her school board recently passed a policy that severely limits all field trips. These trips are viewed as expensive and ancillary to real learning. At Sue's school, teachers and students are expected to be in the classroom, doing "school work": teachers teaching, students learning. The "field trip policy" was established to enforce these "mental models"—this belief system about what teaching and learning means. Changing the board's traditional views about teaching and learning will be difficult, perhaps impossible. For now, Sue's and her students' options are limited by the board's thinking about what it means to learn. It follows then, that educational ideas like "Service Learning," "Experiential Learning," and "Teaching for Understanding" will have little currency at her school.

Sue's garden is an island of light in a gray sea of worksheets, rote learning, and abstraction. Despite the fact that she and several of her colleagues took a service-learning course together three years ago, and

the fact that the school has received grant funding to support service-learning, Sue is the only teacher at her school still using service-learning as a way of bringing engagement, excitement, and purpose to learning. She feels isolated and professionally at risk as she tries to implement her service-learning projects. Yet, year after year, Sue persists. She works to instill a love of learning in each one of her students, hoping that it will not be snuffed out over time by “a system” that promotes a certain set of beliefs about what it means to learn. Sue knows in her heart that her students are learning more through this project than would be possible through a traditional classroom-based approach to teaching, but she doesn’t know how to prove it.

All of her confidence and aplomb were gone as soon as the topic of student assessment was mentioned. “Assessment,” Sue said last fall, “I’m terrible at that part.” Sue is not alone in these feelings about assessment. Over the past three years the NHSLASG has found excellent teachers across the state who lack confidence and skill in the field of student assessment. And it is difficult to support the claim that service-learning works when you can’t really show skeptics the evidence.

One-on-One Assessment Coaching

To learn what works when it comes to helping our fellow teachers gain confidence and skill in the complex fields of service-learning and student assessment, we chose to engage in an individualized assessment coaching pilot project. Sue volunteered to participate along with three teachers from the Stratford Public School in Stratford, New Hampshire. We chose Sue for this pilot because she was obviously committed to using service-learning in her classroom. We also chose her because her school system is not unusual in conservative New Hampshire. Stratford teachers, on the other hand, were selected because Stratford has spent years developing and implementing a highly successful system of student assessment and more recently, has adopted a school-wide (K-12) approach to service-learning. We believe that looking at both schools will help to highlight key elements of effective assessment and the conditions that support wider acceptance of service-learning as pedagogy.

Our coaching process was very informal and consisted of a set of four or five face-to-face conversations over four months, along with e-mail and several phone calls between the teacher and coach. During our initial meetings we talked about some key elements of “educative” assessment (see Stiggins, 1997; and Wiggins, 1998), authentic instruction (see Newmann and Wehledge, 1997) and service learning (see Wade, et. al.,1997). We also created and used a checklist that we called the *Planning and Reflection Tool*. (**Appendix 8A** shows the complete *Tool*, the four parts of which are explained in the course of the chapter.) An important goal of these sessions was to find out what the teachers already understood about service learning and assessment.

Through intermittent conversations, e-mail communication, articles, and discussions of various assessment tools and processes, the teachers had enough information to try out some new approaches to student

assessment as they implemented their service-learning projects in the spring of 1999. While this process is in its very early stages of development, it was clear from this dialogue that in thinking and talking about assessment issues, teachers learned a lot about what could improve their practice. The highlights of their learning are described below.

Sue's Learning

Assessment as an Ongoing Process One of Sue's first discoveries from our conversations was the idea that assessment is a process, not something that just happens after learning is all over. She loved the idea that assessment is not only about grading and therefore it occurs before, during, and after teaching and learning happens.

"I just never thought of it that way, I guess," Sue said. "It's so simple to look at assessment as part of teaching, but that's not what I was taught or what I experienced in school."

Sue was asked to think about what she wanted her students to learn, what she wanted them to really understand when they finished their garden unit. We asked her to consider not just the curriculum content, but what she believed were the most important concepts or skills they could develop. The notion of prioritizing student learning goals and then communicating those goals to her students, right from the start was another new idea for her. She appreciated this idea of "the no surprises...no excuses...approach to learning" (Wiggins) where there are clear, specific, publicly stated, learning targets to guide student work.

Using Assessments to Inform Teaching Sue now looks more critically at the purposes of assessment. She sees the need to change the ways that her school uses standardized tests as an annual ritual for auditing student learning, but then fails to use the information constructively.

"I will never again willingly do an assessment on a child if I am not going to evaluate it (the assessment information) and then use it for my next teaching step. That is so far from what we are taught...we're told to just grade it, and give it back. I never thought so much about how we need to use the information to re-teach."

Through her service learning efforts, Sue has learned the importance of *formative assessment* — using the results of student assessments to inform teaching decisions.

"It's silly, we really need to start changing everything about how schools are run...especially ...when we have to give a test, and no one can tell me why or what we are using it for...I don't have time to be wasting (on tests we don't use) and neither do my kids... To me a short, sweet piece of assessment...one that I can do and use in ten minutes time, is worth more than a reading evaluation or

writing evaluation that's going to take me an hour and that I am not ever going to look at."

Learning Outcomes and Prioritizing As Sue recognized the importance of using assessments to inform practice, it became more clear to her how she needed to identify learning outcomes and prioritize essential skills and knowledge. (Indeed, this work of prioritizing long lists of desired learning results is what most state assessment programs including New Hampshire's have not yet done. Teachers report feeling buried in mountains of learning goals, all of which appear to be of equal importance.) Sue realized that it is up to her and her school to make choices about what the most important concepts and ideas are in a given field of study for their students. It follows that when we narrow the focus of learning to include the most central or important themes or concepts, then we can spend time addressing and assessing students' understanding of the concepts to ensure that all students understand and can apply them. These were empowering new ideas for Sue.

"I love the model of starting with what we want them to know...what do I want them to get out of it? What is the end piece? What is the big picture? That... I will always ask myself from now on. What is the point of this activity or chapter or exercise? What do I want them to walk away with...? What can I teach them that will be worthwhile enough for them to remember? I wish so badly when I was a kid that somebody did that for me."

Using Pretests For Sue, pretests have become valuable to get baseline data on students' prior knowledge. This both informs her teaching practice and allows her to document growth through a learning experience.

"I think that an essential part is finding out where they are...what they know... and where you can go... I need to do more on pre-assessment in general...to me, that's far better teaching. Teachers need to think, 'What do they already know?' I don't want to reinvent the wheel. If they know it, I don't want to teach it to them again. Pre-testing works." (Figure 8-1)

The Importance of Reflection Sue also sees the importance of reflection to help students make cognitive connections. It is clear from research on thinking and the brain that this is a critical element of learning. By linking this reflection process to self-assessment and revision, Sue finds she is able to improve the level of quality of student work.



The garden will be beautiful when we are done. I like the garden because we get to plant the seeds.

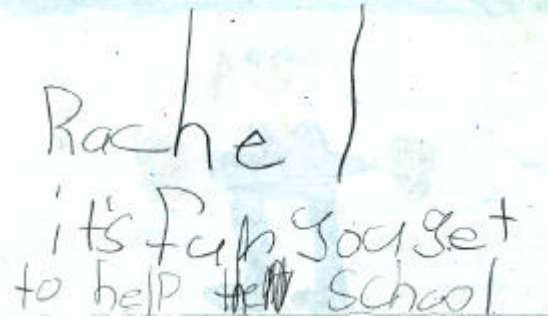
Garden Pre-Test
What do you need to have a good garden site? List 4 things.
What do plants need to grow? List 4 things.
List garden chores that will help the garden be successful (4 things)
How do bees help the garden?
How long will it take for the plants to grow and provide food?
How often should you water the garden?
Why should we pull up the weeds in the garden?
What were gardens used for 100 years ago?
What are they used for now?
List 3 different types of gardens.
What animals might be harmful to a garden?
What animals might be helpful to a garden?

Figure 8-1: Sue's Garden pre-test.

“Reflection... is a key part of assessment ...If kids don’t reflect on what they have done... then a lot of the learning is gone. Little kids can reflect in a lot of ways... through pictures, through writing... we can use whole group reflection....You can teach them that if something doesn’t go right it’s okay....we can fix it. So, reflection really helps them evaluate themselves.”



Observation as Informal Assessment Sue makes a powerful case for the importance of informal assessments, especially observation. This is the essence of *assidere*, the French word meaning *to sit beside* from which the word *assessment* is derived. Sue is discovering the power of “sitting beside” her students as a way of informally, yet deeply, learning about their individual levels of understanding. Observing her students as they studied the bees helped Sue see the power of authentic, formative assessment.



“Assessment doesn’t have to be written ...Working in the garden two days ago, I was astounded to hear kids talking about why they have to pull up the weeds, and why the other kids shouldn’t be afraid of the bees... because they were just doing their job pollinating, so that more flowers can grow. One student actually said, ‘Of course we want more bees to come when the pumpkins grow, because otherwise the pumpkins won’t be there if the bees don’t pollinate the flowers.’

I could evaluate their learning right there in the garden, and I said to myself, ‘I don’t really need to do more work on why we need bees in our garden...They knew why they should be there and they knew why we should have flowers in our garden...not only to make the school pretty but because they really were going to help us attract bees.’



To hear them use the language and to observe them doing their work is a great way to evaluate them...Just be a good observer and you will know what they have learned.”

Amanda wrote: “I like gardening because it shares food.”

Planning & Reflection Tool: The Assessment Process

The Planning and Reflection Tool helped Sue to reflect upon her understanding and use of assessment (Figure 8-2). She felt very good about the progress she has made on improving her assessment practices as a result of the coaching experience.

Part II: Assessment Elements

Never Sometimes Routinely The assessment strategy has these characteristics:

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------|---|-------|---|---|
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | a. An obvious, overriding purpose for the work exists. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | b. Specific learning goals/targets are effectively communicated to students. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | c. Acceptable standards of quality work provided or jointly designed. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | d. Student understanding of goals and expectations for quality is checked . |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | e. Pre-instructional assessment of students' prior knowledge adjusts teaching |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | f. There is a direct audience for the work. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | g. Learning activities produce evidence of understanding, knowledge, or skill. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | h. Continuous feedback for purposes of assessment is offered. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | i. Learning is exhibited in a real-world context. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | j. Performance is judged by local experts and/or real-world standards of quality. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | k. Multiple sources of evidence of learning are gathered and judged for final evaluation. |
| 1 | ----- | 2 | ----- | 3 | l. Reflection is used throughout the learning process. |

Figure 8-2: Sue's response to Part II of the Planning and Evaluation Tool.

Her future assessment goals are to continue to work on providing more opportunities for the public to serve as an audience for student work, and to create more opportunities for her students to exhibit their learning in a real-world context. She believes these strategies will accomplish two important things. By involving more community members and parents in her classroom assessment practices, she believes that her students will take their learning even more seriously and become more focused on demonstrating that they have met their learning goals. Secondly, she hopes that the parents and community members themselves will begin to gain better understanding of the excitement and learning that service-learning can generate in a school if she involves them more in the process of assessing student's work and learning.

This veteran teacher has created a learning community within her classroom where students work together, enjoy each other, and accomplish a great deal. Besides the garden, Sue's students developed the school's first student newspaper. As Sue continues to apply some of her new thinking about student assessment, she may well be able to "prove" that they are learning much more than "the basics." Over the past two years, her principal has openly supported the garden and the school newspaper and has been enthusiastic about all of the work she is doing in her classroom. Increasingly, he has been asking Sue to speak out at teacher's meetings about her work with students and service-learning. Given the support of this key administrator, there is even greater potential that, together, Sue and her principal will be able to change some of the current thinking about student assessment and service-learning in their school and community.

The Stratford Public School: A School-Wide Focus on Student Learning

One hundred and sixty miles north at the Stratford K-12 Public School, the school's letterhead reads, "Stratford K-12 Public School, where children and their learning come first." In this rural, isolated, little community, service-learning is becoming an integral part of that learning. The strong support of the school principal has helped encourage the growth of service-learning in Stratford. Further impetus for service-learning comes from having a finite and focused list of "Exit outcomes for Success" developed through a process that involved hundreds of people in the Stratford community.

This list of student learning competencies or "life-role outcomes" (shown in **Figure 8-3**) is everywhere in evidence at Stratford. It is posted on bulletin boards and walls throughout the school. The eleven Exit Outcomes form the basis for a K-12 student portfolio assessment process that provides evidence of progress toward these goals for every Stratford student. It is clear that these goals for student learning are taken seriously and that they are seen as "targets" for teaching and learning throughout the school system. These targets are the beginning point for effective teaching, learning, and student assessment.

Exit Outcomes for Success

Every student in the Stratford Public School will demonstrate competence in each of the following outcomes. Each student will show that he/she is:

- adaptable to change,
- an effective communicator,
- a creative problem solver,
- an informed decision maker,
- an inventor and producer,
- a responsible contributor to our school and community,
- a self directed learner,
- a creative thinker,
- respectful of differences,
- someone who has acquired a life-long love of learning,

Service-learning Strategies Linked to Exit Outcomes

As teachers watched their students become involved in their service-learning projects, they realized that many or most of these eleven learning outcomes were being addressed as students engaged in service-learning experiences. Service-learning also offered teachers opportunities to collect evidence of their students' learning in each of these areas. As the service-learning projects unfolded, the portfolios became stuffed with a wide variety of indicators of learning. Students reflected on their learning and the impact of their work in the community. Students planned, designed and created products, and improved the quality of these products based on teacher feedback, coaching, and conversations about quality work. The portfolio process eventually became linked to graduation, thus the term Exit Outcomes. There was no question in the minds of both students and teachers that these learning competencies were something to be taken very seriously and service-learning seemed to be a great way to generate skills and authentic, performance-based evidence of them.

As service-learning has become more prevalent at Stratford, teachers have looked for support to improve their assessment practices. With the help of our state study group coaching, several teachers here were able to reflect on their understanding of student assessment. Like Sue, this coaching helped them identify key features of assessment to improve their practice. We look at what one of these teachers learned below.

Lovall's Greenhouse

Lovall is a high school math and physics teacher at Stratford. Some of his students have not had much success in the school's academic programs; many have exhibited challenging behaviors in the past. Lovall had students in his Applied Math class develop a survey of the school's teachers and community members to determine a need upon which he might focus a service-learning project tied to his class. Many expressed the idea that a school greenhouse would be something that lots of classes could use at the school; some thought a greenhouse would be also be an asset for the community. After much deliberation, Lovall's students agreed to build a greenhouse.

This seemed to Lovall like a perfect way to teach students a good many of the math, planning, drawing, and design skills that were part of his curriculum. The Greenhouse Project also offered endless possibilities for students to further enhance and document their learning in each of the eleven exit outcomes (especially *effective communicator, creative problem solver, self-directed learner, responsible contributor to the community*).

Work on the greenhouse began with a design contest calling for student proposal presentations to the class. After much Internet research and an analysis of the pros and cons of wood versus steel frames and plastic versus glass, Lovall and his students discussed the feasibility for each design, and chose one design they felt was most desirable. Then, Lovall told his students that they would have to create a presentation of their final proposal for the school board to get their okay to build the greenhouse on school grounds.

Student-Defined Criteria Lovall had his students generate criteria for an outstanding board presentation before they started planning. "What would we need to do to make an outstanding presentation to the board so that we can get permission to build our greenhouse on school property?" he asked his students. The students decided that a set of posters showing the various elements of their greenhouse would be a good idea for their presentation to the board. They also felt that flip charts showing all their key information would be important. Effective speakers, the students agreed, would need to be selected from the class to take the lead in the presentation. They brainstormed a long list of attributes, discussed what each meant, prioritized them, and generated checklists for their presentation. This was Lovall's first attempt at having students develop quality criteria, so he kept it simple. **Figure 8-4** shows the list the students gave to the board members at their presentation to help the board assess their flipcharts.

Flipchart Checklist/Evaluation				
	1	2	3	4
1) Could you read the words on the pages?				
2) Do you think all the tools that are needed are on the tools list?				
3) Do you think the pages on the flip chart were neat?				
4) Was the flip chart presented well?				
5) Was the presentation colorful?				
6) Did the presentation catch your eye?				
7) Did the flip chart help you understand the presentation better?				
8) Did the flip chart help explain what we are using the greenhouse for?				
9) Did the presenters explain where we are going to get the money?				
10) Did the master plan page give you a picture of how it will look?				

Figure 8-4: The students' checklist to evaluate flipcharts.

Weekly Planning Sheet		Week of _____				
Project Title:	Time Spent in Work Sessions: M T W Th F					Total Time Worked:
Facilitator:						
Documentarian:						
Spokesperson:						
Other:						
Weekly Goals:	Deadline:	Person Responsible:			Completed:	
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
By the end of this week, the following finished products will be turned in for grading:						

Figure 8-5: Lovall's "Weekly Planning Sheet" helped students stay organized and on task.

Although the board did not finally approve the greenhouse, the students did not give up; they approached the owner of a neighboring property and got his permission to build the greenhouse near the school.

Balancing Student Self-Direction with Teacher Input

As the greenhouse project unfolded, Lovall sent an e-mail saying that it was difficult at times to keep students on task, making progress and doing the kind of quality work he had expected. We had a conversation about the teacher's role as facilitator and guide in any service-learning project and how clarifying expectations for quality work was an essential part of both effective teaching and effective assessment. He agreed that he would spend time with the students setting clearer standards of acceptable student performance.

"I was really trying hard to stand back and let it be self-directed," said Lovall. While allowing students the autonomy they need to solve problems independently and to make their own decisions and mistakes, he found that it is also important to balance student voice and choice with clear expectations and accountability for performance. This is difficult for many teachers, but we agreed that this kind of balance was needed. We spoke about the notion that "in a student-centered classroom, everybody's voice gets heard....even the teacher's!"

Providing Tools to Support Learning Finding the right balance between student autonomy, teacher direction, support, and feedback is nearly always a difficult part of the service-learning journey. Lovall provided his students with a Weekly Planning Sheet (**Figure 8-5**, opposite) to help structure their thinking and work on the project. Using this sheet, they set personal goals, developed timelines, and indicated the kinds of products or performances they would complete for each checkpoint. He used this form to provide feedback to students on their progress toward completing the greenhouse or other projects.

Planning and Reflection Tool: Instructional and Service-Learning Elements

When teachers scaffold service-learning strategies into specific steps and align activities with learning goals that culminate in a set of products or performances to show student learning, a complex web of instructional and assessment elements are woven together to create a rich learning experience. Because it can be challenging to keep all these elements in mind simultaneously, we created the Instructional Elements (**Figure 8-6**) and Service-Learning Elements (**Figure 8-7**) checklists as part of the Planning and Reflection Tool to help guide teachers through some key decisions and to clarify the many aspects of this approach to effective student-centered teaching.

Part I: Instructional Elements

Never	Sometimes	Routinely	The instructional strategy:
1-----	2-----	3	a. encourages student autonomy and initiative
1-----	2-----	3	b. uses primary sources, data, manipulative, or interactive materials
1-----	2-----	3	c. asks students to do things like, "apply, analyze, predict, create, design"
1-----	2-----	3	d. allows student interests and choices to drive or alter the focus of learning
1-----	2-----	3	e. asks about student understanding before sharing teacher thoughts, ideas
1-----	2-----	3	f. builds on students' prior knowledge; asks student to build on their answers
1-----	2-----	3	g. provides challenges, asks interesting, open-ended questions so students must really think
1-----	2-----	3	h. provides students with opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns
1-----	2-----	3	i. allows for teacher voice and participation as a partner in the learning process
1-----	2-----	3	j. uses metaphors and images to express or represent key concepts
1-----	2-----	3	k. nurtures students' curiosity

(add up this set of scores) Instructional Sub-total _____

Figure 12-6: The instructional elements encourage experiential learning and student engagement.

Using the Planning and Reflection Tool Lovall's assessment strengths included providing specific learning goals and targets for his students, and using local experts and real world standards to judge students performances. Reflecting on this experience, Lovall identified areas for further growth that included collecting multiple sources of evidence of student learning, and doing better pre-post assessment of student learning. Lovall has begun to think more about how effective assessment practices can strengthen his teaching and student learning. In addition to inspiring his students to complete work that was meaningful to them and the school community, the Greenhouse Project gave Lovall an opportunity to wrestle with many of these assessment issues.

Part III: Service Learning Elements

Never	Sometimes	Routinely	The service-learning strategy:
1-----	2-----	3	a. is designed to facilitate academic learning and citizenship
1-----	2-----	3	b. meets a compelling community need that is of interest to students
1-----	2-----	3	c. provides opportunities to work collaboratively and to think critically
1-----	2-----	3	d. provides opportunities to take on new roles
1-----	2-----	3	e. provides opportunities to take risks
1-----	2-----	3	f. includes adult supervision for students
1-----	2-----	3	g. expects sustained effort, preparation, and independent work
1-----	2-----	3	h. recognizes and celebrates student competencies
1-----	2-----	3	i. includes a final product or service that makes a meaningful contribution to the community
1-----	2-----	3	j. connects the school to partners or sponsoring organizations in new ways

(add up this set of scores) Service Learning Sub-total _____

Figure 8-7: These elements help remind teachers of best practices in service-learning.

Planning and Reflection Tool: Institutional Support

In comparing the experiences of the two teachers in these case studies, we clearly understood the significance of institutional support. The final section of our Planning and Reflection Tool (**Figure 8-8**) asks teachers to think about and evaluate their school and the extent to which it offers them support for doing this kind of teaching and assessment. It also asks them to rate the role they themselves play in their school to advocate for service-learning as a powerful strategy for teaching and learning.

Never			Sometimes			Routinely			At my institution:		
1-----	2-----	3-----	a.	Service-learning is part of the educational mission of the school.							
1-----	2-----	3-----	b.	Support exists among colleagues, and administration for service-learning.							
1-----	2-----	3-----	c.	School policies support implementation of service-learning.							
1-----	2-----	3-----	d.	Resources such as time, transportation, and budget are available to support service-learning.							
1-----	2-----	3-----	e.	I actively advocate for service-learning in my school and or community.							
(add up this set of scores)						Institutional Support Sub-total _____					

Figure 8-8: *These elements help teachers and administrators reflect on the level of support they have achieved for service-learning.*

Case Study Conclusions

Effective student assessment is “educative” assessment. Early assessment decisions help teachers and students identify learning goals and shape their experiences to reach these goals and achieve quality performance. These community service learning experiences, when linked to important, carefully selected learning goals, provide for personally transformative and highly challenging academic learning. This can make rigorous learning more accessible, meaningful, and attainable for all students.

Good assessment practices that inform teaching before, during, and after instruction will change service-learning projects from ones that merely engage students in service, to ones that utilize the power of service to a community in order to provide context, relevance, and personal meaning to the achievement of targeted learning outcomes. In addition to having a profound impact on students, service-learning can help provide rich and concrete evidence of student learning.

The Wrestling Match: New Hampshire's Study Group Story

Imagine the frustration of wrestling not one opponent but several at once. Just as you think you've pinned one down...bingo...there's another one on your back. This scenario bears a striking resemblance to the work that the New Hampshire Service Learning Assessment Study Group (NHSLASG) has done for the past three years.

Our first year "in the ring" consisted of five three-hour evening meetings where we debated such issues as the value of required Community Service and the role of community service as a context for student academic learning and citizenship. Our discussions were interesting, often circular, somewhat ideological, and for most of the group, rather frustrating. But each time we met, we enjoyed hearing one another's perspectives and getting a chance to discuss these issues. Each meeting, things got a little clearer. We read articles and learned from presentations by group members on Service Learning, Multiple Intelligences, Thinking Maps, and performance-based assessment. We were enjoying being a study group.

In year two, in four meetings and an overnight spring retreat, we wrestled with the meaning and nature of student assessment. (In retrospect, we realize that we barely scratched the surface of this complex field.) We talked about testing versus assessment, about criteria, performance assessment, portfolios, checklists, rubrics, state learning frameworks, and how to best use all these tools and processes. We collected piles of sample rubrics. We tried to show how some of these tools were going to be the magic bullets for capturing the learning that we all knew happened through service learning. We thought we might thereby "prove" the value or efficacy of service learning, and that this would help educators justify the time and effort it takes to do service-learning well.

Towards the end of year two, we submitted our pile of assessment tools to the National Service-Learning Study Group. They poured over our state's tools, along with those from other states, and finally concluded, as we had, that assessment tools alone were not going to be much help in our national quest for answers to the problems of effective assessment of learning through service. No single tool seemed capable of capturing student learning. Since these tools could not be used or useful without knowing the project, the students, and the context, it was difficult to appreciate their utility. After this discovery that there may be no easily accessible tool to apply to service-learning, our study group's energy and commitment began to wane. Several study group members changed jobs and moved, several got busy on other projects. In year three, only three members of the starting team returned to the ring for more.

As luck would have it, we hung in there and found that many of the contacts and conversations developed by the NHSLASG in the first two years suddenly began to pay off. Our relations with Campus Compact of New Hampshire, a few other K-12 teachers and administrators, and several faculty from teacher education programs in New Hampshire have jelled into a rather effective statewide service learning assessment partnership

that we are beginning to call the New Hampshire Service Learning Network (NHSLN). Together, we are working as a group of concerned educators committed to moving our state forward in both service-learning and educational assessment. We are excited that this work is just beginning and will last well beyond the life of the federal grant that initially gave us life.

To accomplish the goal of improving professional practice in the fields of assessment and service-learning, we have created a statewide series of professional development forums and assessment resources for Kindergarten through Higher Education (K-H) teachers. We briefly describe some of our recent partnership activities below.

The NH Service Learning Network Over the past year, the partners described above have jointly sponsored three Service Learning and Assessment conferences for New Hampshire educators K- H. The first conference unveiled the results of a study of service-learning in the state, showing that professional development in the area of student assessment was a primary concern.¹ Given the need indicated by our research and the high level of interest in the subject at our first conference, we planned and organized two more professional development workshops on assessment and service-learning in the first half of 1999. Over 120 K-H educators have come together to talk to each other about effective teaching using service-learning, to learn new assessment ideas and practices, to plan new assessment strategies, and to share the challenges all educators face in trying to provide quality assessment on student learning.

Despite positive feedback on these sessions, we understand that one-day workshops alone will not be enough to change assessment practices in our state, although they are a beginning. They can effectively raise teachers' awareness about some new techniques, purposes, and approaches to assessment. They can connect K-12 teachers, college professors, pre-service teachers, and service-learning professionals together in new ways that help them all learn from each other. Hopefully, they will also spark enough interest in the issues of service-learning and assessment so that next year our series of workshops and training will grow further. We plan to offer another series of increasingly complex professional development opportunities next year in hopes that educators, schools, colleges, and teacher education programs throughout the state will begin to make changes in the ways they think about and assess student learning, especially as it relates to service.

Web-Based Graduate Course Another resource that we created in year-three was a three-credit, web-based, graduate course called "Assessment and Student Learning: A Distance Learning and School Leadership Experience." Materials from the assessment trainings, as well as other sources, were pulled together and piloted this semester at New England College in this distance-learning based graduate course. Participants in this graduate course not only learned enough about effective student assessment practices to make changes in their own classroom

¹ If you are interested in the study, contact Campus Compact of New Hampshire, 116 S. River Rd., Bedford, NH 03110-6750.

practices, they are also providing leadership in their schools to facilitate dialogue and learning about better ways to assess student learning. This local leadership component is seen as an essential element of a statewide process of improvement. We learned a great deal through the initial pilot course and plan to make this course and the web site itself available to educators throughout the country in the near future. We hope that the course and web-site will become another avenue for sustained study and implementation of new assessment ideas in New Hampshire. (See us at <http://207.222.163.130/newenglandcollege/>)

Individual Assessment Coaching Lastly, we piloted an Individual Assessment Coaching process this spring, which you read about above. It offers teachers much needed individual support as they work to better understand and implement new service learning and assessment ideas in their classrooms. This one-on-one approach to changing assessment thinking and practice has been a learning experience for all of us who were involved and offers a powerful lens through which to discover more about effective teaching and student assessment.

Wrestling may be a silly metaphor, but to us, it captures the complexity of the work we have been trying to do over the past three years. Our heroes are the committed K-H educators in the New Hampshire Service Learning Assessment Study Group and the New Hampshire Service Learning Network, with whom we have worked to better understand the complex relationships between service and learning. To all of you who have worked with or as part of our various teams, we thank you and wish you well in your continued struggle to improve teaching and learning in New Hampshire. We feel progress is being made toward improving educational experiences for our children thanks to the work of many dedicated New Hampshire educators. Service learning and improved assessment practices are both important contributors to that progress.

Sustaining This Important Work Fortunately, the goal of reforming and improving education through better assessment of learning is not unique to our New Hampshire Study Group or even to the New Hampshire Service Learning Partnership. Through collaboration and consultation with other leadership groups in the state such as those described above, as well as the New Hampshire Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (NHASCD), the Governor's Best Schools Initiative, and others interested in effective schools and teaching, Service Learning and effective student assessment will continue to be addressed as one of our state's top priorities.

The NHASCD recently announced a major initiative for the 1999-2000 school year aimed at improving understanding of student assessment and informing professional practice related to assessment . The NHASCD will host a series of workshops and conferences featuring Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe next year, called Understanding by Design. Members of the New Hampshire Study Group and the Service-Learning Network will be working closely with Dr. Leo Corriveau, President of the NHASCD, to enhance the statewide impact of the NHASCD's efforts. We will make

available the materials and resources described here to New Hampshire educators through these and other organizations.

Our web-based graduate course on student assessment will be available to teachers across the state through New England College in the Fall of 1999. This performance-based course will offer teachers opportunities to develop skills and engage in discourse with other educators who are also interested in learning more about effective assessment practices. The course will include a service learning component and enable professional educators to learn deeply about both assessment and service learning through their leadership and involvement in this course.

Each of these initiatives has been influenced by the work begun three-years ago by the NHSLASG. While we have been somewhat disappointed by our inability to find highly developed models of effective assessments of learning through service already in place in New Hampshire schools, we have had an opportunity to begin a statewide dialogue about the need to improve our base of knowledge and practice in the fields of student assessment and service-learning. Without the support of the National Study Group and the Corporation for National Service, New Hampshire would not be where it is today — poised to move ahead, on a state-wide basis, in our use of effective student assessment strategies to improve and document student learning through service.

Appendix 8A:

**Planning and Reflection Tool:
Elements of Student-Centered Instruction and Service-Learning
W.K. Preble, 1999
New England College**

Teachers can use this tool as a guide to planning service-learning projects or lessons, or to self-assess, reflect on, and modify their service-learning strategies over time. Students may also use this to provide teachers with feedback.

Please indicate the extent to which you provide for each of the elements below.

Part I: Instructional Elements

- | Never | Sometimes | Routinely | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | The instructional strategy: |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | a. encourages student autonomy and initiative |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | b. uses primary sources, data, manipulative, or interactive materials |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | c. asks students to do things like, "apply, analyze, predict, create, design" |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | d. allows student interests and choices to drive or alter the focus of learning |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | e. asks about student understanding before sharing your own thoughts, ideas |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | f. builds on students prior knowledge...asks student to build on their answers |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | g. provides challenges, asks interesting, open-ended questions, students must really think |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | h. provides students with opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | i. allows for teacher voice and participation as a partner in the learning process |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | j. uses metaphors and images to express or represent key concepts |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | k. nurtures students' curiosity |

(Add up this set of scores)

Instructional Sub-total _____/33

Part II: Assessment Elements

- | Never | Sometimes | Routinely | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | The assessment strategy has these characteristics: |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | a. An obvious, overriding purpose for the work exists. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | b. Specific learning goals/targets are effectively communicated to students. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | c. Acceptable standards of quality work are provided or jointly designed. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | d. Student understanding of goals and expectations for quality are checked. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | e. Pre-instructional assessment of students' prior knowledge adjusts teaching. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | f. There is a direct audience for the work. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | g. Learning activities produce evidence of understanding, knowledge, or skill. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | h. Continuous feedback for purposes of improvement is offered. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | i. Learning is exhibited in a real-world context. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | j. Performance is judged by local experts and/or real-world standards of quality. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | k. Multiple sources of evidence of learning is gathered and judged for final evaluation. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | l. Reflection is used throughout the learning process. |

(Add up this set of scores)

Assessment Subtotal _____/36

(over please)

Part III: Service Learning Elements

- | Never | Sometimes | Routinely | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | The service learning strategy: |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | a. is designed to facilitate academic learning and citizenship |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | b. meets a compelling community need that is of interest to students |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | c. provides opportunities to work collaboratively and to think critically |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | d. provides opportunities to take on new roles |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | e. provides opportunities to take risks |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | f. includes adult supervision for students |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | g. expects sustained effort, preparation, and independent work |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | h. recognizes and celebrates student competencies |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | i. includes a final product or service that makes a meaningful contribution to the community |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | j. connects the school to partners or sponsoring organizations in new ways |

(Add up this set of scores)

Service Learning Subtotal _____/30

Part IV: Institutional Support

- | Never | Sometimes | Routinely | |
|--------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | At my institution: |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | a. Service-learning is part of the educational mission of the school. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | b. Support among colleagues, administration for service-learning exists. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | c. School policies support implementation of service-learning. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | d. Resources such as time, transportation, and budgets are available to support service-learning. |
| 1----- | 2----- | 3 | e. I actively advocate for service-learning in my school and or community. |

(Add up this set of scores)

Institutional Support Subtotal _____/15

Using the Data For Professional Improvement

1. In which areas were you (your teacher, or your school) strongest?
2. In which areas were you (your teacher, or your school) least strong?
3. Establish one or two goals for yourself (your teacher, or your school) that will address the each of areas that need improvement.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. Now add up your total scores as a benchmark. Next time you use this tool, add up your score and see how you are improving. Try this two or three times a year. Good luck!

I. Instruction _____ + II. Assessment _____ + III. Service Learning _____ + IV. Inst. Support _____ =

Total Score _____/114 ... this time.

