



RONALD LEVESQUE
San Jose City College

Weaving Service-Learning Into the Curriculum

■ **This article recounts the 8-year (1997-2005) history of the Service-Learning Program at San Jose City College, with a particular focus on the key involvement of the ESL Program in the dramatic growth of service-learning there. The author, who has coordinated the program from its inception, and who also teaches ESL, examines various aspects of integrating service-learning into the ESL curriculum, reports on student learning experiences at their preferred sites, and analyzes results of a longitudinal report on student evaluations and on learning outcomes. The Service-Learning Program at San Jose City College may be a model for how effective service-learning can be at enhancing the learning of ESL students and at helping them become involved members of their communities.**

Introduction

In 1996, several instructors and I met with the vice president of Student Services to learn about service-learning at our large Bay Area community college. As we first understood it, we envisioned service-learning as a new pedagogy and a recruitment tool to attract new students to the campus. Later, as our understanding of the approach deepened (through a series of brown-bag discussion lunches), we changed our focus and saw service-learning as a resource *for* the community, in which all the people, skills, and physical and structural assets could be tapped by the

community to help meet its varied challenges. What a better recruitment model it would be for the community college to become not only *of* the community but *in* the community.

This initial group of instructors made a commitment to try to effect this change on our campus and began by persuading the college to develop its own service-learning program starting in Fall 1997. With an approach that has linked support from the administration, classified staff, students, and faculty, we have built up a service-learning program that, as of the end of Fall 2005, had sent nearly 4,000 students out into the community, where they had served about 50,000 hours in 65 community programs. This has happened because the college has made available dedicated office space to the program, provided classified support, and steadily budgeted release time for a faculty member to coordinate the program. Our college district office has also matched the release-time funds, allowing the coordinator more time to manage and develop the program. The Board of Governors has made service-learning a priority in the district, and the union has been able to negotiate professional growth credit for faculty who participate in service-learning.

As service-learning coordinator, ESL instructor, and advocate of service-learning, I was determined that our ESL students would have the opportunity to participate, even if they came only from my own classes. Fortunately, 25 of my fellow ESL instructors have followed suit and offered service-learning in 94 total classes between Fall 1997 and Fall 2005. The enthusiasm of ESL students and their instructors has been a major force in the institutionalization of the Service-Learning Program at our college.

This article will detail the nature of this participation of the ESL Program in service-learning at our community college and will present the views of students and faculty about their experiences. It will discuss the successes and challenges of integrating service-learning projects in curriculum in the hope of inspiring readers to seriously consider adding the powerful teaching/learning

tool of service-learning to their professional “bag of tricks.”

Why Service-Learning and ESL?

A logical connection for service-learning on our campus was with the ESL Program, the largest program on campus. Out of a campus enrollment of 12,000 students each 16-week semester, 1,400 register for ESL. The curriculum encompasses six levels and three main required tracks—writing/grammar, reading, and listening/speaking. Numerous optional courses are available, and the program is augmented by a strong language laboratory/computer center, which handles more than 1,300 ESL students each semester. The classes are taught by 13 full-time and 27 adjunct faculty.

Before 1997 there was no service-learning in the ESL Program. As in many ESL classrooms, any application of English skills to “experience” had usually been in the form of role-playing, dialoguing, conversing, game-playing, and contact assignments. Contact assignments were the main vehicle with which to have students apply their budding English knowledge outside the classroom. For example, students could explore the community and report back to the class about library hours, movie shows, business hours, and so forth, and at more advanced levels they could interview civil servants or conduct polls about the public’s views on controversial issues such as abortion laws. While there is some value to such experiential learning activities, I hungered to engage intermediate-level students in “deeper” and more significant communicative activities, ones in which they would have a genuine and personal interest and which would be highly interactive and real. At the same time, I wanted these mostly immigrant students to acquire a fuller view of our community and encourage them to find their role in it. In a democracy, the citizens need to know the dominant language and feel confident to participate, to contribute, and to bring attention to their needs (Licht, Maher, & Webber, 2004).

My nascent interest in bringing service-learning to my college and my desire to engage ESL students in meaningful communicative learning activities coalesced at the powerful 1996 Institute for Integrating Service with Academic Study, sponsored by California Campus Compact (a state program of a national organization that promotes civic engagement by higher education through its integration into teaching and research) and attended by our “brown-bag pioneers” from the campus. A persuasive presenter taught that students who make classroom presentations for a university speech class perform at a higher level when their topic is directly related to a service experience. They have done their “research” in person and are naturally more reflective and more composed to make a presentation. In contrast, students whose topic is centered on an issue in a distant land will often focus on memorizing information, will give a detached analysis, and be more nervous. I concluded that such an approach could be applied in our ESL program. The next semester a colleague and I offered the first service-learning projects to our intermediate listening/speaking classes, in which students make oral presentations.

The steady growth of the service-learning approach in the ESL Program has largely been achieved by instructors who dared to experiment beyond their tried-and-true methods to provide more learning opportunities for students. In Spring 2001, one faculty member gave her reasons for offering service-learning: “It provides excellent opportunities for ESL students to *use* English in real and useful ways. It provides some variety for them so that they’re not just using ‘classroom’ English.” Others were motivated by the idea of community service and a desire to empower students. Of service-learning, another faculty member stated, “It builds students’ confidence in using English and points out the need for them to keep learning. It is so invaluable in teaching students to work in the community and introducing the idea of community involvement to them.” Semester after semester, additional teachers, especially in the

intermediate-level listening and speaking classes, offered service-learning for similar reasons. What facilitated this development was the existence of a viable program that could provide instructors, many of them adjunct, the support to revise curriculum, an existing network of community partnerships in which students could serve, and a clear process to make it all happen.

How the Program Works

The matching of students with community partners is a fairly straightforward process. About 65 community partnerships have been established and each partner sets the terms by which it will receive student volunteers and they will perform their service projects. Depending on the nature of their focus and their setup, programs may be totally flexible or have strict requirements (see Table 1). For example, Sacred Heart Community Service has no minimum or maximum number of hours and a student may serve 1 or 8 hours on 1 weekday in the Food Pantry and Clothing Closet. Yet its after-school tutoring requires a semester-long commitment. Both the Children's Discovery Museum and the Child Abuse Prevention Center require a 6-month commitment. Some schools ask for a 2-hour-a-week commitment for 10 weeks. Some programs are available daily, while others offer weekday hours only. In addition to information about hours, the partner information page will indicate if training is required, if a fingerprint or a tuberculosis test result must be submitted, and any other special requests. This descriptive page is available in the program office as well as on our program Web site (www.sjcc.edu/slp).

Setting up a service project through the Service-Learning Program today consists of a defined process that students follow. After being referred by the instructor, who should initially have clearly explained why and how the service project is to be done, students review descriptions of community-based programs in the office or online. Once they choose a community program, they fill out

an application and sign an insurance waiver for the college. Next, they arrange a visit to the chosen site, and if that site accepts them, they together complete a contract that includes a description of their service work, their schedule, the number of hours they commit to, and their expected learning outcomes for the project. The college instructor will review this contract and sign it to give approval. The instructor can ask for changes in the contract if the described project does not meet the objectives of the course. The student and the site director also sign the contract. Once these steps have been completed, the students begin their projects. They must keep a record of their hours on a special sheet of paper, which they submit upon completion of their projects as verification. At the end of the semester, students complete an evaluation of their entire experience. Students who serve 10 or more hours are recognized with a certificate of commendation signed by the college president.

ESL students follow the same process that all students do. While no partnerships have been established with only ESL students in mind, I have always discussed the fact that some of our volunteers are ESL students with partnering sites. One very pleasant learning experience to have come out of this is that, contrary to my initial misgivings about how effective ESL students could be because of their limited English skills, partners have expressed great excitement at having ESL students serve in their programs. In our diverse, polyglot community in the San Jose area, where more than 100 languages are spoken, (Santa Clara County, 2000, p. 177), our multilingual students prove to be great resources indeed. However, several community sites are restricted to more advanced ESL students because of the nature of the service, such as docent work at the Tech Museum of Innovation. Experience has taught us, and our partners have told us, that in some community programs, the training is too advanced for intermediate-level ESL students.

The sign-up process in itself has proven to be an excellent and sometimes challenging

experience for students with limited English skills. Our program issues a detailed information sheet listing the steps of the process, and ideally instructors may review this in class. In the program office, students must use communicative skills to research their project and complete the accompanying forms and then to contact the community agency. Some students will require more assistance and the staff is sensitive to the special needs of ESL students.

Where Students Serve

If numbers do tell the tale, ESL students have been able to participate very successfully in the Service-Learning Program. From Fall 1997 through Fall 2005, 17 semesters, excluding summers, approximately 937 ESL students have done service projects. This is 24% of the entire group of 3,978 students on campus who have participated in service-learning. And ESL students have served about 10,000 hours, one fifth of the 50,000 hours put in by all students.

A recent review of the records of 896 ESL students (those indicating site names) depicts the pattern of the particular sites they have selected for their projects, shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Where ESL Students Completed
Service-Learning Projects 1997-2005

<i>Programs</i>	<i># of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Immigrant support		
Project SHINE	168	
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education (SIREN)	37	
Sunday Friends	6	
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	1	
Total	212	24%
Programs at SJCC		
Disabled Students Program	73	
Math Lab	44	
Tutoring Center	7	
Community Arts and Lecture Program	4	

<i>Programs</i>	<i># of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Counseling Department	4	
Career/Transfer Center	3	
Art Gallery	2	
Diversity Program	1	
Health Services	1	
Child Development Center	1	
Total	140	15%
Anti-poverty/homelessness		
Sacred Heart Community Service	76	
Emergency Housing Consortium (EHC)	30	
InnVision	7	
San Jose Family Shelter	4	
Health Trust Food Basket	1	
Total	118	13%
Schools		
Sherman Oaks Elementary	31	
Miscellaneous self-chosen schools	26	
Lowell Elementary	15	
Washington Elementary	15	
Erikson Academy	6	
Galarza/Hammer Montessori	6	
Luther Burbank Elementary	5	
Monroe Middle School	4	
Leigh High School	2	
Migrant Education/Alum Rock District	2	
Allen Elementary	1	
Chandler-Tripp	1	
Total	114	13%
Senior programs		
Mission de la Casa	40	
Alzheimer's Activity Center	20	
Winchester Convalescent Hospital	17	
MACSA Adult Day Health Care Center	4	
Total	81	9%
Environmental programs		
Our City Forest	49	
Santa Clara Valley Water District	5	
Habitat for Humanity	4	
Total	58	6%
Miscellaneous self-chosen programs		
Total	45	5%

<i>Programs</i>	<i># of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sports and recreation		
YMCA	22	
MACSA Youth Sports and Recreation	14	
Total	36	4%
After-school tutoring		
Crosscultural Community Services	11	
Vietnamese American Center	8	
American Indian Center	5	
Grail Family Services	1	
Total	25	3%
Museums		
Tech Museum of Innovation	17	
History San Jose	4	
Children's Discovery Museum	2	
Viet Heritage Society	1	
Total	24	3%
Child care/preschool		
Head Start	6	
Perinatal Substance Abuse Program	6	
Rosa Elena Child Care	2	
Estrella Family Services	1	
Family Learning Center	1	
Total	16	2%
Miscellaneous programs		
Resource Area for Teachers (RAFT)	6	
Friends Outside	4	
Project Crackdown	4	
Department of Corrections	2	
Total	16	2%
Medical services		
Hope Rehabilitation	8	
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center	2	
AIDS Resources, Information, and Services (ARIS)	1	
Total	11	1%
Overall	896	100%

Of all these ESL students, 65% have served in four main types of sites. It is interesting that the favored placement of 24% of ESL students involves programs that provide support to immigrants, especially SIREN and Project

SHINE. At SIREN (Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education), bilingual students are much in demand to interact with immigrants in their native languages during such events as Citizenship Day. Also, in Spring 2000, some ESL students volunteered in a countywide research effort leading up to the Summit on Immigrant Needs and Contributions, which took place December 6, 2000. These students were part of a phone-banking project that contacted tens of thousands of immigrants to better understand their needs. For their valuable contribution, the students were acknowledged in the important publication *Bridging Borders in Silicon Valley*, which was the result of a comprehensive research effort to identify the realities of immigrant life in our area (Santa Clara County, 2000, p.10).

Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders, www.projectshine.org) is the most popular service-learning program that the college offers. Since its inception in Fall 2001, 289 students have participated campuswide, and fully 58% of them, 168, have come from ESL classes. Project SHINE is part of a national consortium of campuses in 13 cities, anchored at Temple University in Philadelphia, that was developed to support increased civic engagement by elderly immigrants. In 2001, San Jose City College in partnership with San Jose State University was awarded a \$105,000 grant to bring SHINE to San Jose. The program has become a miniprogram within the overall Service-Learning Program, with its own network of targeted community sites that cater to the needs of older immigrants. Our program is directed by a VISTA member who works with the service-learning coordinator to recruit students and faculty. Students go through a 3-hour tutor-training workshop to become conversation partners and/or classroom assistants who commit to serving 2 hours weekly for 10 weeks. ESL students are well supported in SHINE as to the on-line sign-up process, which includes a pre- and postsurvey and an evaluation, their placement, and follow-up, which includes on-site visits by the VISTA coordinator, who works

closely with site instructors. ESL students in SHINE have rendered a wonderful service and have been largely responsible for the success of SHINE in San Jose.

The great interest by ESL students in immigrant-focused community programs is probably not very surprising. Students may be attracted to help others of their own ethnic background while using their first language, a reassuring prospect for some. Other students who sign up actually ask to work with people of other cultural backgrounds because they want to learn more about them. In SHINE, many students are eager to work with the elderly, who are much respected in their culture. I also think that many of our ESL students are interested in teaching others the same language that both are struggling to master. Since SHINE helps elders prepare to pass the citizenship test, some ESL students want to learn more about the process themselves as they anticipate becoming citizens. Others are new citizens who want to help fellow immigrants through the process.

What ESL students have accomplished in SHINE is a bit of a revelation. After careful assessment of ESL tutors from San Jose City College, we place them in a situation in which the community learners—the elders—have weaker English skills than the tutors. In this way, the tutors from the college are in a position to have a significant impact on the learners. Where possible, we also cross-place students so that the tutors and learners speak different languages. This ensures that most of their 2-hour interaction, either one-on-one tutoring or assisting in an adult education class, will involve as much English as is possible. In some situations, with elders who speak almost no English, a tutor who shares his or her native language is more effective, however. A true benefit is that the college students actually receive as much help with their own English by teaching others. One student stated, “I learned that helping other people in the community help ourselves too because they learn from us and we learn from them” (Spring 2005). Tutoring other ESL learners, in particular elders, can really impress the col-

lege volunteers. In one campus class presentation, a student described how much motivation he had drawn from tutoring an older learner who himself was studying so hard in a night class after having worked all day. Finally, each semester we eagerly await our first SHINE tutor to share the gleeful news that some elder tutee has addressed him or her as “teacher.” In the Fall 2003 evaluation, one student expressed it this way, “Now I feel more confident. I learned how to be a teacher.”

The second most popular service sites for 15% of ESL students are those on campus. Since the campus in itself is a community, it is highly appropriate to have partnerships with interested programs. For many students, serving on or near the campus is often a practical matter because of work schedule or transportation limitations. Many favor the Disabled Students Program (DSP) and the Math Lab. In DSP, each student assists one student with disabilities who is enrolled in an adaptive physical education class as he or she performs various exercises designed to improve physical skills. The class meets in the weight-training room or in the pool. ESL students are paired with students with disabilities who do not speak their native language to promote communication in English. To serve as tutors in the Math Lab, students must have passed certain basic math classes with at least a B grade to be eligible.

Other popular sites are those that deal with poverty and homelessness. Students are attracted in large numbers to Sacred Heart Community Service and to Emergency Housing Consortium (EHC) out of a desire to help and to learn more about these issues. Also, these sites are very flexible and offer students greater ease of completing their hours. EHC, for example, needs volunteers 7 days a week for its food service. Busy students like the option of weekend hours. Although Sacred Heart is generally open during weekdays, in the food and clothing distribution programs, volunteers may serve from 1 to 8 hours a day.

Schools, and especially elementary schools, are very attractive to many ESL students. In general, student volunteers assist a

classroom instructor or may do some one-on-one tutoring. Many love children and this experience has helped them explore a possible career in teaching. Others find that a school is convenient to the campus or to their home. Many of our community college teachers allow students to set up a project at the school of their choice (subject to the approval of that school). Many will ask to serve at the school their children attend, which, of course, is an excellent way for immigrant parents to familiarize themselves with the school system and the teachers and officials with whom they will need to interact on behalf of their own children. For others, the elementary schools offer greater security for their English in that they are more comfortable being around children whose own English skills are elementary. In fact, our program advises students to ask to be placed in a grade where they will be most comfortable according to their language ability.

The remaining 35% of students serve at a variety of sites that include health-care facilities for the elderly, child care, after-school tutoring and recreation, environmental programs, and museums. Two especially popular agencies are Mission de la Casa and Our City Forest. Mission de la Casa is a nursing home where students can serve any day of the week. While there, they interact with the residents, put on entertainment, or assist on field trips. Our City Forest welcomes our students every Saturday morning to help beautify the city, clean the air, and provide shade by planting trees.

The Service-Learning Program is designed to offer students many choices, which allows them to find the area that best links their own personal interests and skills and their class work. Although occasionally an instructor may limit student choices to one or several programs that will best support course objectives, the vast majority of faculty will approve the site selected by the students. This, to me, is very positive in that it promotes more responsible volunteering by the students who have a genuine interest in being at a site, and it empowers the learners to shape the project that best suits their course work.

ESL students have a broad array of possible sites because their main focus is on improving their English communication skills, which can be addressed at any site where they interact regularly with others.

On the whole, our community partners have had few complaints about the ESL students who serve in their programs. In fact, the students make very strong impressions at their sites. The Math Lab on campus has discovered that the tutors often have a strong math background from their studies in their native countries and that they make knowledgeable coaches. Quite a few have been offered employment in the lab. At times, there may be a language problem that hampers the ability of a volunteer to interact effectively on-site. On several occasions I was contacted when the site coordinator did not think the student had strong enough listening and speaking skills to complete the training or to be a docent. In those cases, we were able to find more suitable placements for the students. The most frequent complication that arises is a breakdown in the communication process when students have to make phone calls and leave messages. Messages are often unclear and the site director calls me to determine who might have phoned. Students are encouraged to use e-mail to ensure clearer communication, and teachers are encouraged to use classroom activities and discussion to better prepare students for real-life communication. What better incentive could there be to practice?

Content and Level-Appropriateness of Service-Learning Projects

My initial assumption that service-learning was best suited for no lower than the intermediate-level ESL classes has been upheld through the 17 semesters since its integration into the program. Experience has shown that students in the high-beginning and low-intermediate classes do not have strong enough listening and speaking skills to successfully carry out an individual service project. At these levels, teachers who opt to

involve students in community service projects should design group service activities for the entire class and they should actually direct the activity. To date, no instructor in our program has offered group service projects extensively.

I have found that once students have reached the intermediate level, the vast majority are ready for what I have termed “ultimate” contact assignments, which challenge them to put their English into action in real-world settings outside the class. Service projects work best in listening/speaking classes where each student is required to complete a project. This project requires that students interact at a site to serve clients, reflect on their experiences, and share their stories with classmates. This experience-sharing in class usually is the basis of powerful learning activities because each student is the master of his or her own project, an experience uniquely his or hers, to shape and share and evaluate. Because the class focus is on developing listening and speaking skills, it is natural to ask students to use them to a great degree, and the service projects allow that to happen in a meaningful way. Service projects also work well in pronunciation classes in that students have opportunities to apply the phonetics rules they study, both as speakers and as listeners.

One challenge in the intermediate listening and speaking class that has a required service project is that some continuing students have passed the previous level, but really should not have, or others just barely passed. These students might find it more difficult to set up their project and will need some extra attention from the instructor. But our Service-Learning Program has so many options and our community partners are extremely supportive in such situations. I recall a middle-aged Chinese man who was so glued to his dictionary that he could hardly utter a sentence without pausing to look up a word. Upon learning that he had been a strong swimmer in his youth, I suggested that he do a project in the Disabled Students Program on campus and ask to assist in pool

therapy. He agreed and was paired with a young student whom he helped in the pool. He later reported that he enjoyed the work, but despite his efforts to strike up a conversation with the other student, there never was a response. My student eventually realized that the client was deaf. It so happened that my student had learned sign language in China and he began signing. To his amazement, the younger student responded! In his class report, my student excitedly shared how he had discovered the universality of sign language. With some extra effort, successful projects can be designed for students with different proficiencies and needs.

Service projects can also be used successfully in reading and writing classes. In a writing class, the scope of the service project can be as broad as for a listening/speaking class. The experiences the students have at a community site form the basis of their writing assignments, such as journals, paragraphs, essays, or reports and research papers. Writing teachers who offer service projects hope to motivate students to produce more inspired writing, which can spring from thought-provoking and deeply realized personal experiences.

This is not new to ESL instructors, who have long milked the unique and powerful experiences of our immigrant students to provide a meaningful context for the language-learning process. The service experience for an immigrant provides more immediacy and has a direct impact on his or her acculturation into a new society. Service projects for a reading class may have a narrower focus on literacy. Teaching reading or reading to others can contribute significantly to one's own reading-skill development. In Project SHINE, an ESL tutor who helps a beginning-level learner to read is actually applying what he or she studied in the not-too-distant past. In the Math Lab, ESL students who have a solid math background in their home countries learn to transfer that to the unique vocabulary, structure, and organization of math problems in college textbooks. From the Fall 2005 evaluation, this

student's comment is typical: "I more understood math in English language and after that program I understand that I can teach math." In addition, a service project might support strong themes about which the class is reading, such as a range of social, cultural, or political issues.

Designing a Service-Learning Project

It takes some trial and error to weave service-learning into the fabric of a course without its being an add-on component but being instead a central element of the teaching and learning process, particularly in a class in which it is required. Another key decision to be made is whether to require the project or not. Besides asking all students to complete a project, an instructor could offer it as an option or for extra credit. However, the required project can produce the most effective classroom learning because each student shares his or her experience and perspective, making for interesting and lively sessions that offer instructors many options to ensure critical thinking, perspective, debate, reaction, and problem solving. The optional project must be equivalent to the other choices, which can be difficult. And the range of projects that students will complete, from writing a traditional paper to keeping a journal on a service project to summarizing readings to going to a lab, makes it more difficult to have group reflection. Often the student mostly shares his or her reaction with the instructor alone. The extra-credit service project works best if the instructor ensures that it is reflective, linked to the course objectives, and has clear guidelines for timely start and completion of the project. Short of this, one finds that students may end up doing community service (plain volunteering), and that they do so near the end of the course when they realize they are in danger of failing the class. Such tardy students often choose this extra-credit project more to meet their own needs than to help the community or be open to learning from experience.

In deciding if a project will be done as an optional or a mandatory activity, an instruc-

tor should weigh how many service hours to ask for. It might be easier to require a shorter service project of 5 hours, but what are the expectations for a brief outing versus those for a 10- or 20-hour project? Also, does it matter if students complete their hours in 1 day or 1 week, or would they have a better experience doing a project that involves several hours weekly for 10 or more weeks? The instructor can set the parameters that shape the student project, or the instructor can be totally flexible. But it must be understood that community sites may also have time frames for hosting volunteers that may or may not be more demanding than the instructor's. Students must negotiate and balance the requirements or limits of the instructor and those of the agency. Requiring a 10-hour project is not unreasonable. In fact, a student could easily spend 10 hours at the library writing a paper or essay. Other students spend dozens of hours in labs. A 10-hour project spread out over 6 to 10 weeks can be most easily achieved if the service-learning program offers options for volunteering throughout the week, night and day.

A potential barrier to service projects is the busy lives of our students. Some instructors find it difficult to require evening students to participate if their service options are few. And community college students often have several jobs and a required project may pose a challenge. Yet a student who enrolls in any class can expect some type of project and should allow room in his or her schedule to complete assignments, including service projects. An instructor needs to set a reasonable time frame for the service project and then be flexible about where and how it is completed.

Without reflective activities as part of a service-learning project, students perform regular community service, not service-learning. It is important for an instructor who aims to guide students to link classroom instruction with experiences in the community to craft some type of reflection activities. These should be designed to make the students think critically about what they

encounter while performing service. The ESL instructor wants the students to interact in English but also to learn more about the American culture and about the needs and strengths of the community. For many students, service-learning experiences can lead to “important moments of insight and intellectual and personal transformation” (Eylar, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996, p. vii). The classroom offers a perfect environment to encourage ESL students to share their surprises, their doubts, their questions, their criticism, and their solutions.

An instructor can choose from a range of reflective activities. Journaling, often guided by questions, is the most common and will fit in well in any class. In a listening/speaking class, journals let students organize their thoughts before their end-of-course oral presentations to the class. Essays, paragraphs, and reports are ideal in writing classes, but they can work in any class. Group discussion throughout the semester is very effective because it allows the instructor to assess how the project is going for each student and to help shape the experience as needed.

Some instructors shy away from service projects because (they say) they do not know how to grade them. The project should not be graded on the time spent at the site, but the “deliverable” or reflective product should be graded: the journal, the speech, the essay, the PowerPoint presentation. And the grade should be clearly weighted alongside of the rest of the course grades.

Once the instructor has thought through the project, he or she must explain it clearly to the students, preferably in writing. If a service project is novel to the class, students will need to understand its rationale and purpose and how it is to be completed. If the instructor can clearly express his or her convictions about service-learning, the students are likely to be persuaded.

Results of Student Evaluations

Beginning in Fall 2002, service-learning students at my college were asked to assess

their project experiences at the end of the semester. A one-page form is distributed to instructors, who are asked to have students complete it before the last class meeting and to return it to the coordinator. There are two questions about student background, three questions about project effectiveness, and three questions that assess learning outcomes. Students may also write extended comments, and a sampling of these can be reviewed in Appendix A. Table 2 reports the results of a longitudinal analysis of student responses from Fall 2002 to Fall 2005. There were 296 to 302 responses to the first five questions. However, there are only 139 to 140 responses about three learning outcomes because this section was revised in 2004.

The response analysis by the Office of Research and Planning of our college district is very positive. First, it should be noted that 75% of respondents performed service-learning as a requirement, and that 69% served at least 15 hours a semester. Program effectiveness was rated very high. Analysis shows that 69% find the support of the Service-Learning Program to be moderately or very effective, 79% believe that their instructor integrated their project with the course moderately or very effectively, and 71% claim that their service project enhanced their ability to learn moderately or very effectively. There is a clear pattern of great satisfaction by students with their experiences.

The results of the learning outcome assessment, though using a smaller sample, are very positive: 77% say they are slightly or much more aware of current social issues, 87% state they are slightly or much more motivated to volunteer in the community, and 71% say they are slightly or much more clear about a career direction.

Conclusion

The extended comments in the student evaluations (see Appendix A) provide clear indications that our Service-Learning Program has had an extremely positive influence on our ESL students, both personally

Table 2
ESL Student Evaluations of Service-Learning
Fall 2002 – Fall 2005

Background questions

	<i>1-9 hours</i>	<i>10-14 hours</i>	<i>15-20 hours</i>	<i>21+ hours</i>
How many hours this semester did you spend on your service-learning project? (302 total responses)	8# 3%	85# 28%	144# 48%	65# 21%

	<i>Required</i>	<i>One of several options</i>	<i>Extra credit</i>	<i>Other</i>
How were students in your class involved in service-learning? (296 total responses)	221# 75%	57# 19%	13# 4%	5# 2%

Program effectiveness questions

	<i>Not very effective</i>	<i>Somewhat effective</i>	<i>Moderately effective</i>	<i>Very effective</i>
How effective was the placement and advisement of the Service-Learning Program? (302 total responses)	19# 6%	75# 25%	99# 33%	109# 36%

	<i>Not very effective</i>	<i>Somewhat effective</i>	<i>Moderately effective</i>	<i>Very effective</i>
How effectively did your instructor link your service-learning experience to your coursework? (301 total responses)	11# 4%	51# 17%	104# 34%	135# 45%

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
I was able to learn class material more in-depth because of the service-learning experience. (298 total responses)	17# 6%	69# 23%	120# 40%	92# 31%	

Assessment of learning outcomes (Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Fall 2005)

Based on your service-learning experience, please indicate *how much you have gained (or not)* in these three areas since the beginning of class (put an “x” in the appropriate box).

<i>Learning outcomes</i>	<i>1 Much less</i>	<i>2 Slightly less</i>	<i>3 No change</i>	<i>4 Slightly more</i>	<i>5 Much more</i>
I am more aware (or less) of a broad range of current social issues. (140)	2# 1%	12# 9%	14# 10%	66# 47%	46# 33%
I am more (or less) motivated to volunteer in the community. (139)	2# 1%	5# 4%	10# 7%	52# 37%	70# 50%
I am clearer (or less clear) about my career goal direction. (139)	4# 3%	7# 5%	29# 21%	39# 28%	60# 43%

Note: Percentages are based on the number (#) of individual student responses to each question divided by the total number of responses. Because of rounding, percentages do not add up to 100 in all cases.

and in their formal education. The survey results confirm what my fellow instructors and I have observed through 17 semesters. Service-learning:

- Gives students a boost in confidence at a very crucial point in their language development;
- Motivates students to want to participate in their community;
- Promotes a better understanding of community issues;
- Assures students that they are valuable members of their community;
- Helps students commit to their personal goals, including a career path;
- Makes classroom learning more meaningful and interesting.

The lesson seems obvious: a college that maintains a viable service-learning program invests in its students, its instructors, and its community. For ESL students, who are often newcomers in a community, a service-learning program is an especially powerful vehicle for inclusion and validation.

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I also want to express my gratitude to my fellow ESL instructors, especially Marianne Brems, Alice Gosak, and Norma Welles, who are the reason our students have had highly successful service-learning experiences. Service-learning can happen only if innovative instructors offer it to their students.

Author

Ronald Levesque has been an ESL instructor at San Jose City College since 1988 (full time since 1990), teaching reading, writing, and listening/speaking classes to mostly immigrant students. Since 1997, he has also been the coordinator of the Service-Learning Program. He was a presenter at the 2004 CATESOL State Conference and at the 2004 Faculty of California Community Colleges (FACCC) Faculty Conference. He may be reached at Ronald.levesque@sjcc.edu.

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Appendix A

Learning Outcomes for Service-Learning at SJCC: ESL Student Feedback Fall 2004

Student Comments: *What have you learned from your service-learning experience that will be of most use to you in the future?*

ESL 323 Reading and Vocabulary Development #Surveys 4

1. Communicate with other people, other cultures.
2. I have learned how to explain the vocabulary that help me improving English in the future. I really like when I do service

learning. I will continue to improve my English.

3. How to work in the U.S. community. I have gotten my job experience. A good chance to practice English skills. In my opinion, Service Learning Program is a real way to learn more things.
4. I increased my self-confidence to speak Spanish and I understood the responsibility that each one has to help other people for have a better society.

ESL 322 Paragraph Development

#Surveys 16

1. I learned that I can help a lot to somebody else with my time.
2. I learned the elder people their volunteer for learn English.
3. I learned I am not supposed to give up by things which abtade for temperare because the way to goal is take of time. I really want say thanks for the great job which offered us without showing any tired or boring sign in the class and teach us very motived way.
4. From service learning experiences I've learned that I'll never give up learning English and help other new immigrants with English.
5. I've learned the knowledge of citizenship exam that I need for later on.
7. I had learned teaching and learning process. I learned how to deal with elder people.
8. The experience I learn from service learning It'll help me apply on my job in the future.
9. Only talk more and help the community.
10. I learn how to deal with elderly people.
11. How to help others
14. I've learned about job interview. It'll help me in the future.
15. I can help other people to improve their English.
16. From this service learning I learned that: the education is the key of life.
17. How I can communicate tih people from other cultures.

18. That we need to help more the community and that we should do more social services.

19. I've learned that I can help people teaching them what I know. That's very excited. I think the service learning project is a good way to motivate people to do something to help people at their communities.

ESL 324 Listening and Speaking Skills Development

#Surveys 14

1. I fell proud by my self because I did my service good, I learned a little more about computer, I learned more English.
2. How to teach English and talk in English with people.
3. On my service learning, I'm learned more, because I just don't go to teach. I'm learn also. is really interesting and fun work on education (teach)
4. That if you want to do something, you can do. If you want, you can
5. I learned that I need to be very nice with the people.
6. My experience helped me to interact with more people of all ages & to grow in my skills to become a good instructgor some-day.
7. I had learned some experience how to taking care the elderly people and I am very proud of myself.
8. How to help peole. I fell really good while going to srvie learning. It really helped me a lot.
10. I learned from service learning to (?) different kind of people and different behaviour. I like to meet tha I like to meet that kind of situation.
11. I have learned that we need each other and there is alway an opportunity to feel our selfs more humans. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.
12. I learn many thing. Ex: how to service; the way to talk with older, old person. more practice English; help me don't shy . . etc.
13. I really liked this experience, because the people who I'm helping are happy with me

- and I'm happy helping them, that is why I'm going to keep going.
14. Leadership. Communication with people from other cultures.
 15. More listening and understand (?)

ESL 324 Listening and Speaking Skills Development
#Surveys 5

1. I improved my English. I help my student I

- will work in my community all time.
2. I will understand my children what they want.
3. I've learned something new. I gained more experience. IT helped me set one more time my career.
4. I learned to communicate more with other people.
5. I learn about American education. It is very helpful, people help people and to adapt with a new environment, it is very interesting.