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Introduction: What are the 4Cs?

The "4Cs" of deeper learning lie within a set of broader skills first identified by the National Education Association in 2002 as being critical to employability in the 21st century. While the "three Rs" of a classic skills-oriented education program still lay a solid foundation, today's rapidly-evolving world demands a well-developed array of abilities to guarantee future success. Among the top of these skills lie the "4Cs", which have been recognized by the NEA as critical to any education program in the 21st century. Confirming that study, a Forbes survey emphasized the dramatic rise of each of the 4Cs among skills desired by businesses since 1999 as compared to those same businesses in 1970. We can no longer afford to consider the 4Cs as just an option when it comes to enacting education programs in the 21st century.

"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet."

Karl Fisch and Scott McLeod, *Shift Happens*
Incorporating the 4Cs into a service-learning project

The IPARD/C model of service-learning:

Investigation: Youth learn to utilize problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Planning and preparation: Where young people harness creative and innovative abilities.

Action! Youth learn to collaborate with their peers en route to completing the service-learning project.

Reflecting: Evaluating and improving upon a youth-led service-learning project.

Demonstration and Celebration: A way for youth to communicate the mission of the project to others.

Service-learning and the 4Cs

Service activities provide an excellent opportunity to integrate the 4Cs in order to achieve meaningful youth service. In this resource, you will find a number of examples of how you can implement the 4Cs into your service activities to benefit youth in your community. Commonly, career counselors recommend that youth volunteer to gain more experience, responsibility, and skills that transfer into the working world. When properly integrated, the 4Cs can complement traditional school subjects as well as community service.

While every phase of a service learning project will draw upon most of the critical employability skills, each point in the IPARD/C model offers a unique opportunity to more deeply expand upon one of the 4Cs. Leaders of a project should try to incorporate each stage of IPARD/C for a complete and meaningful service project. Furthermore, by emphasizing each skill of the 4Cs at the appropriate stage, youth service becomes a powerful tool to develop abilities needed in college and career.
Investigation: Utilizing critical thinking and problem solving skills to begin the service project.

What is Critical Thinking?
A successful service-learning project depends heavily on the ability of youth to think critically and solve new and diverse problems during the investigative phase. Without it, projects lose steam and young people lose motivation. **Critical thinking** is defined as the ability to reason effectively, use systems thinking to analyze how parts of a whole interact, make judgment decisions using evidence, and solve different kinds of unfamiliar problems.

**Critical Thinking in a Service Project**
Rather than dictating who or how youth will serve, instead, make sure to emphasize the variety of options available and what the pros and cons of each option are. Adults involved in a youth-led service project should try to serve in an advisory role as much as possible. By taking ownership over the project and issue, youth will demonstrate why it is so important to address, why they care about the issue, and how they can take action. While youth may easily become enamored with broad topics, encourage them to start small and be specific whenever possible. According to Carol Ferguson from Postcrashers, adults should, "try to strengthen confidence in this stage of the project, as youth aren't expert critical thinkers overnight."

"As an advisor, it's best to be okay with the grey and murky! Ideas might not become solidified in young minds as quickly as in adults."

-Renee Anderson, Minnesota Alliance with Youth

SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH
Several of the GYSD 2015 participants at the United Way of Greater Toledo identified hunger in their community as a worthwhile and important issue to combat for their project. However, as hunger is a broad topic to tackle, critical thinking was needed to engineer a project which would have a large impact, while using limited funding and with the available materials. During GYSD, some of the youth (pictured above) illustrated the daily hunger-related issues facing some of Toledo's residents on paper plates. Pictures of these plates were collected and sent to the Governor of Ohio. Their efforts were eventually recognized in a proclamation by the Ohio Governor to the United Way.
Planning and Preparation: Harnessing creative and innovative abilities in a service-learning project

What is meant by creativity?

If our youth leave school without the ability to create and innovate, they will be unprepared for the challenges of society and the workforce. Creativity and innovation are defined as abilities needed to create new and worthwhile ideas, while elaborating, refining, analyzing, and evaluating original ideas to improve and maximize their impact. Simply put, creativity and innovation encourage originality, new ideas, and new ways of doing things.

Creativity in a service project

A 2004 study found that developing creative thinking skills in realistic situations is the most likely scenario through which a young person develops creative skills. Therefore, throughout the planning and execution of service in your community, youth can develop creativity skills by brainstorming new ways to change the status quo on social issues in their community. Creativity and innovation skills can be developed by youth throughout the life cycle of a service project whenever they are given the opportunity to develop original thoughts and then reform their ideas into action. If youth seem stuck in brainstorming creative ideas, Quintin Bauer from SOLVE recommends showing them completed projects of similar scope to help spur breakthrough ideas. Subdividing workload among different groups in a service project can also promote new and creative ideas, as smaller voices will be heard more readily in groups of fewer individuals.
Action! Collaborating with peers to complete the service-learning project

What does it mean for youth to collaborate?
As the world continues to grow more globalized, collaboration is no longer just an option. Fifty years ago, much work was accomplished by individuals. Now, most significant work is accomplished in teams whose members work in various locations. Furthermore, the ability to collaborate is a requirement for success largely due to advances in technology and increasing globalization. Collaboration is defined as the ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams while exercising flexibility and willingness to compromise. Collaboration also includes the ability to assume shared responsibility of collaborative work and the capacity to value the work of others.

Collaboration in a Service Project
Whether youth are volunteering in their own community or across the globe, oftentimes they have a unique opportunity to work alongside people from different backgrounds who have their own experiences to share. Subdividing youth into different committees with distinct objectives will encourage youth to collaborate when re-integrating to complete their project.

Q: HOW CAN YOUTH LEAD CHANGE?
A: THROUGH A S A P!

Helping peers, adults, and your community be informed about and understand important issues in order to change behaviors.

Taking actions that directly address a human, community, or environmental need.

Using young voices and joining others to promote solutions that change policies and laws.

Giving and generating funds and in-kind resources to meet an important social need.

“Under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them.” -James Surowiecki
Reflection: Assessing the impact of a project on self, others, and the community

Why is reflection so important?

Reflection is a continual process present in all phases of a service-learning project and, as such, the reflection process will incorporate each of the 4Cs. Recent research by the Harvard Business School reflects the long-held belief that learning is best accomplished through reflection. Thus, reflection at each part of the service-learning process is critical to bolster development of the 4Cs. Even after a service event, youth can develop critical thinking skills by thinking about how the project related to them, their community, and their future. Reflection prompts creative processes in young minds to improve upon the project in the future and requires communication to convey those thoughts to others to achieve project goals.

"We do not learn from experience ... we learn from reflecting on experience."
- American education reformer John Dewey

WATCH:
Youth in Oswego, Illinois published a video on YouTube as a way to reflect on their GYSD project.
Demonstrating the goals of a project to others and celebrating youth service through communication.

What is Communication?
As we move further into the 21st century, the amount of communication present in our lives will only continue to increase. Communication is defined as the ability to clearly articulate thought and ideas using oral, written, and non-verbal skills while also listening effectively by deciphering meaning. Youth in the 21st century will need to utilize multiple mediums of technology to convey thoughts as well as understand messages communicated by others.

Communication in a service project
Throughout the life cycle of a service project, communication is essential for all parties involved including project managers, volunteers, and the population being served. In a service project, communication is critical for volunteers to work together to achieve a common goal. Often, youth will hone communication skills by inviting others to join them in service through social media or in person. After a project has completed, youth can easily find ways to communicate their project and its aims to their peers. This can be done through small, individual efforts or through larger, organization-wide celebrations of multiple projects and their participants. Through communication, a service project can display its achievements to youth and adults alike and inspire other individuals to serve through future opportunities.

HOW DO OUR EXPERTS DEMONSTRATE AND CELEBRATE?

United Way of Greater Toledo: Youth asked for recognition by the city council of their service project efforts in the official minutes.

Milwaukee Non-profit Center: Participants in Global Youth Service Day will receive t-shirts to demonstrate that they were part of a massive youth-led service accomplishment.

Minnesota Alliance with Youth: Leaders of several exemplary projects (pictured above) were asked to create presentations and speak at the Alliance's Minnesota Youth Council.
Extending the 4Cs

The 4Cs are readily developed through a service learning project, but to cement these skills within our youth, we must be ready to make the application of the 4Cs part of an ongoing process. Extending a service learning project offers many points at which youth can continue to utilize the 4Cs.

Let YSA help prolong a service-learning project...

For another day:
MLK Day of Service
9/11 Day of Service
Global Youth Service Day

For a whole month:
Classrooms with a Cause

For an entire semester (or longer):
Semester of Service
What do the 4Cs mean to you: a youth perspective

How did one of the 4Cs help your project?

"Collaboration truly is the key to success. I've discovered that it's virtually impossible to succeed by yourself because everybody possesses their own unique set of strengths. By recognizing the fact that a community is infinitely more powerful than an individual, we were able to accomplish so much more than we ever could have alone."

-Josh Kaplan, Founder of GOALS

Above: Youth participating in a GOALS event, a unified soccer program for young people with intellectual disabilities.

Tweet @YouthService your thoughts on the 4Cs!

When I started @SHIFTScoliosis we simply had bumper stickers with drawings on them. Creativity allowed us to grow and expand rapidly! #gysd

8:32 PM - 19 Nov 2015

Retweets 2 Likes 3

-By communicating and sharing ideas I was able to...

...expand my program even further. I met with the K-8 STEM Coordinator for Pitt County. He witnessed firsthand the success of the existing schools in the program and has acted as an ambassador to expand the River Guardians Water project helping to identify teachers and schools that could benefit and also maximize participation."

-Jaein Yoon, River Guardians Water Project
YSA's Lead Agencies are the leaders of Global Youth Service Day in their communities across the United States. As a youth-serving organization, they are responsible for engaging hundreds to thousands of young people in a GYSD event every year through their coalition of local partners. Incorporated in this resource was their shared experience with implementing the 4Cs in service activities. Their input offers an invaluable perspective for both YSA and the broader Global Youth Service Network.

YSA is always interested in hearing about new and creative ways in which your organization implements the 4Cs of employment skills into service-learning programming. If you want to share your expertise, please don't hesitate to contact YSA. This resource is intended to be a working document which grows with the shared practices of our lead agencies.

Email the partnerships team at outreach@ysa.org with any additional information from your organization.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

National Research Council
"Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century"

National Education Association
"An Educator’s Guide to the “Four Cs”

Youth Service America
"The 4Cs and College and Career Readiness"

"STEMester of Service - Career and Workplace Readiness Skills"

SPECIAL THANKS:
Andrew Speidell - Georgetown University
Renee Anderson - Minnesota Alliance with Youth
Quintin Bauer - SOLVE Oregon
Amy Davidson - Volunteer Macon
Grace Martin and Amanda Howard - United Way of Greater Toledo
Jess Tabbutt - Non-profit Center of Milwaukee
Rebecca Haavik - Duluth YMCA

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