



## Review of *Partnerships for Service-Learning: Impacts on Communities and Students.*

Kelshaw, T., Lazarus, F., Minier, J., & Associates. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 2009. 336 pages.

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Educators eagerly implement service-learning initiatives with the best of intentions and high hopes for success of their service-learning projects. However, as the old saying goes, good intentions do not the way to success pave. Instead, much deliberate, careful and multifaceted planning must be done. Service-learning, by its very nature, involves the coming together of diverse individuals and groups, bringing differing needs, resources and expectations to the shared purpose of learning. Success relies upon the strength of the partnerships that are developed between all involved. Educators embarking on the journey of developing and implementing service-learning partnerships will be aided and supported by the rich, informative cases shared in *Partnerships for Service Learning*. In this text, the authors and associates weave detailed examples of successful partnerships into a guidebook for practitioners both new to and experienced in service-learning.

With combined experience in service-learning and community development spanning more than three decades, the text authors are strong voices for carefully crafting and intentionally planning service-learning initiatives. Associate authors who contributed cases come from a variety of educational and community backgrounds. Together, the authors and associates are a powerful chorus of voices speaking to the importance of reciprocity, partnerships and collaborative engagement for successful service-learning. By drawing from professional experiences, their text illuminates the need to extend service-learning initiatives beyond projects solely developed by a classroom instructor into collaborative partnerships with

communities. This extension, according to the authors, helps develop partnerships that use resources of the students, the community and the learning institution to maximize student learning while addressing community need.

Reciprocity is a foundational underpinning of service-learning partnerships. However, much prior service-learning scholarship has focused on how to develop initiatives that align with curriculum requirements (Zlotkowski, 1998) and how to assess student learning outcomes, with much less focus on the process for establishing strong reciprocal relationships. Eyer and Giles (1999) seminal research on the learning outcomes of service-learning discerned that only a limited relationship existed between student perceptions that their service-learning met a significant community need and other learning outcomes. Even more concerning, a negative relationship emerged between students' perceptions of the importance of their work for the community and their perceptions of the course as intellectually stimulating. These points highlight the need for intentional, collaborative planning between educators and community partners for reciprocal, strong service-learning partnerships. However, few texts explain how to develop service-learning partnerships with embedded reciprocity. This text helps bridge this gap in the literature.

The book is divided into two primary sections, with the first focused on processes and outcomes in a community setting and the second focused on teaching and learning from a pedagogical perspective. Part I explores service-learning partnerships in community contexts. Five cases highlight processes and outcomes of service-learning that promote and support collaborative relationships with community partners. Of particular importance to readers, the cases also explore the process for identifying and sharing resources between and among partners. Case one serves to introduce an innovative program of multileveled service-learning. University students who are pre-service teachers worked with high school students to develop and implement service-learning initiatives in high school. This case highlights the critical imperative of developing the initiative together with joint training, implementation and sharing of results. The authors of this case developed a very useful chart specifying the stages of creating service-learning partnerships with P-12 schools. In contrast, the authors of the second case shared some challenges practitioners face when implementing collaborative partnerships. The authors' practical suggestions help normalize some difficulties we all face when trying to develop comprehensive, collaborative partnerships, they also provide ways to overcome these challenges. The third case explored a university-public library partnership from conception to implementation and provided explicit examples of resource identification and sharing. Two more cases in this section elegantly shift the focus from process and outcomes toward pedagogy. Case four explores action research to evaluate service-learning partnerships and then using the research results to improve teaching and collaborations. The final case emphasizes the power of context in shaping and developing service-learning partnerships. By focusing on context to structure pedagogy in culturally responsive ways, this case reinforces the importance of process and context on teaching and learning for social change and gender equity.

Part II presents four cases focused on teaching and learning through pedagogical partnerships. The cases in this section also explore how pedagogy can transform communities. This approach allowed the authors to explore critical pedagogical elements necessary for student curriculum and academic outcomes while maintaining their focus on embedding reciprocity into service-learning partnerships. The first case shared in this section delves into an exploration of the use of service-learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields to promote civic responsibility and to increase cultural competence. In the second case two associate authors communicate a process for ensuring accountability within collaborative partnerships using action research. By sharing both the university faculty and collaborating teacher's perspectives, this case provides powerful insights into the pedagogical impact of collaborative, reciprocal service-learning partnerships. The third case presents a process for promoting the civic development of high school students through teaching in service-learning partnerships. The final case concludes the text by conveying a theory of program evaluation to assess the learning outcomes of students participating in collaborative service-learning partnerships.

Within each case shared, the focus is on the primary importance of partnership and learning with community partners as opposed to solely providing a service to community partners. By both the structure of the text and the cases included, the authors repeatedly emphasize collaborative, reciprocal partnerships as critical and fundamental for success with service-learning.

This text, like many service-learning texts, is most appropriate for educators implementing service-learning initiatives in post-secondary education settings. However, the collaborations of PK-12 educators, community partners, university faculty and graduate students in writing cases, make this text a useful tool for community partners seeking to develop and/or strengthen service-learning partnerships. The stress on reciprocity and collaborative pedagogical partnerships situates this text as an important scholarly contribution to the field of service-learning.

The authors and their contributing associates have a rich history of engagement in service-learning and community development. Case studies from their experiences illuminate processes necessary to develop partnerships that promote reflective learning through strong collaboration with community partners. Consequently, the authors and their associates provide helpful examples for others to embed reciprocity and reflection firmly into the bedrock of their own service-learning partnerships.

The authors intentionally set out to create a text that promoted greater cognizance of the need for thoughtful planning of service-learning partnerships that was "at once readably anecdotal, substantively rigorous, and critically reflective" (page xiii). In my opinion, they have achieved their goal beautifully. I found the text to be all they had hoped-- and would encourage university faculty, as well as community partners, to use this text to strengthen and improve existing partnerships or to guide new ones.

## References

Eyler, J. & Giles, Jr., D. E. (1999). *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Zlotkowski, E. (Ed.). (1998). *Successful Service-learning Programs: New Models of Excellence in Higher Education*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.