

## Service Learning Illustration 1

# STUDENT REFINES HER SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS



## Self-assessment and critical analysis

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Throughout her many past service-project experiences and the *self-assessment and critical analysis* component of her capstone preparation (see pages 15–21 in the Career Education 10-12 Guide for more information about the components of capstone), the student shared her interest in leadership and social activism. Additionally, the student was inspired by the learning she had pursued through Social Justice 12. Not yet sure about her next steps for post-graduation, the student did know that she would like to continue helping others in some way. Under the guidance of her Career-Life Connections (CLC) teacher-mentor, she decided on *service learning* for her capstone *process and representation* component as a means to further refine her social activism and leadership skills.



## Process and representation

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Learning focus: Refining transferable social activism and leadership skills

Service focus: Women and children's safety and well-being

### Context

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The student was in grade 12 at a small secondary school in a rural town in interior B.C. During her middle years, the student began to recognize the diversity in economic and family backgrounds of her friendship groups, noticing differing life struggles and challenges. In her secondary years, she became more informed about social justice issues through volunteerism in local social programs that responded to the needs of individuals and families, including the annual community winter clothing drive, the shoes donation drive for their sister school in India, and the bake sale fundraisers for the local food bank organized by the Leadership Club. Recently the student had seen an article in the paper focused on the women's shelter and its need for donations of personal supplies for families staying there. Building on her volunteer and fundraising experiences, the student decided to refine her social activism skills by leading and organizing an event to raise funds for the purchase of personal hygiene items, bedding, children's clothing, and toys for the shelter.

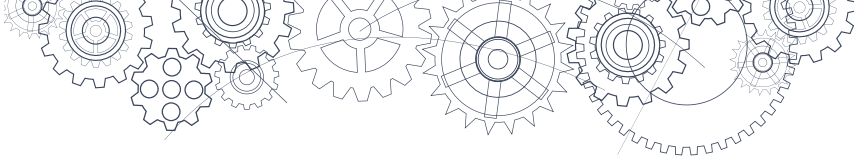
### Connections

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#### Curricular or domain connections

Career Education – Assessing personal transferable skills, and identifying strengths and those skills that require further refinement; Collaborating with teacher-mentor; Cultivating community relationships to support plans for post-graduation; Reflecting on learning experiences and personal development in the Core Competencies; Preparing for next steps in personal lifelong learning journey



Social Justice 12 – Exploring the complexity of social justice issues in Canada and impacts on individuals and families, pursuing a social justice initiative in service of individuals and families

Student Leadership – Working on and fundraising for projects that benefit local community and charities, organizing other volunteers, coordinating with community partners and services

### **Community connections**

School community

Municipality

Local social assistance programs

### **Connections to First Peoples Principles of Learning**

*Learning involves patience and time:* The student appreciated how meaningful change can take time, as she reflected on challenges faced throughout the process

*Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational:* The student learned how important it is to connect with and include others, as a leader of a service initiative; She reflected on how to create a positive environment for service, in spite of the negative feelings that can arise for volunteers when working on social justice causes that seem daunting

### **Core Competencies connections**

Communicating – Connecting and engaging with others; Focusing on intent and purpose;

Acquiring and presenting information

Collaborating – Working collectively; Supporting group interactions; Determining common purposes

Critical and Reflective Thinking – Designing and developing; Reflecting and assessing

Positive Personal and Cultural Identity – Recognizing personal values and choices; Identifying personal strengths and abilities

Social Awareness and Responsibility – Contributing to community and caring for the environment; Building relationships; Resolving problems

## **Service learning process**

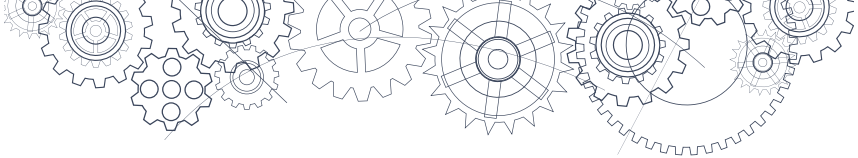
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### **Understand and interpret context**

The student contacted the person in charge of the women's shelter to discuss her wish to raise funds to support their needs, and discovered that their current greatest need was for children's clothing, toys, and food items. The shelter staff were enthusiastic about the student's idea, but they explained that for confidentiality reasons the student would not be able to visit the shelter. Any communication must take place through the manager, and by phone. The shelter manager agreed to advise the student and provide feedback throughout the process.

### **Plan and apply**

- The student chose a tentative date for the fundraising event, in consultation with the principal, and recruited student volunteers to help with canvassing prior to the event, and on the day.

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- With no start-up funds, the student canvassed local businesses for donations to sell at the fundraiser, and was able to secure free printing services for posters to advertise the event throughout the community, free ad space in the local newspaper, and a free space to hold the event. She had permission to use the school gym, but felt that the other space would be more central in order to access the broader community.
  - The student designed an ad for the paper, incorporating information and facts supplied by the shelter, and sent it in for publication. She also arranged colour printing of 50 posters.
  - The student arranged to have tables for the event, and organized volunteers to set them up.
  - Eighty items were donated from local businesses for the auction, and the student was able to use the school's printer to develop the requisite auction sheets.
  - The principal offered to house the donated items in a secure place at the school and reached out to the staff for teacher-volunteers to help with supervision at the event. The student then arranged for transportation of all items to and from the auction venue, as well as a plan to donate any remaining items that were not claimed by the end of the claim period.
  - The student developed a plan to distribute items and collect funds once the silent auction was complete, using student volunteers as well as teacher-supervisors and parents/guardians.
  - The student worked to build engagement and momentum among her volunteer team by sharing some of the stories about families who had used the shelter that had been communicated to her by the manager of the shelter (while ensuring confidentiality). She explained how having the supplies that the auction would generate would have an immediate impact. She was pleased by the volunteer team's overall enthusiasm, including the fact that some of the student volunteers decided to also host a tea and bake sale in conjunction with the auction, with all proceeds going to the shelter.

### **Implement**

- Two weeks prior to the auction, after obtaining permissions, the volunteer team posted the information posters in highly visible places. The ad was published in the paper.
- On the morning of the event, the student and her volunteers, accompanied by teacher-supervisors and parents/guardians, set up the community space, including the donated items with their accompanying silent auction sheets and the tea/bake sale table. A large sign was set up outside the venue to draw people in.
- Within three hours, all silent auction items had bids that met their reserve amounts and were considered sold.
- The student and the volunteer team then separated the auction items into lots, and collaborated with teacher-supervisors and parents/guardians to contact all winners, collect proceeds, and arrange for items to be picked up.



## **Analyze and evaluate**

- After the event, the student connected with the shelter manager to share how much was raised and to ask for suggestions on what specific types of items would most support current shelter residents.
- Although the fundraising event was a success, the student realized that, unfortunately, the donated items that the shelter most needed were consumables and would only be of short-term benefit to the shelter residents. She struggled with how to continue supporting this cause. The student decided to set up a donation jar, with the agreement of the office staff at the school, to be used for ongoing support to the shelter. In addition, she decided to continue her contact with the shelter manager post-graduation to coordinate the distribution of any funds collected through the school office.

## **Communicate**

- The student shared the thank-you letter from the shelter with her team of student volunteers. The letter outlined how the women and children were living a little more comfortably, even while being displaced during a time of stress, because of their gifted items.
- The student wrote and distributed thank-you letters, detailing the results of the auction and how proceeds were used for the shelter, to all businesses and community partners that had provided donations and support for the event.
- An article was written in the local community newspaper, highlighting this student initiative that benefited a local community need and acknowledging the efforts of the volunteers.
- The student chose to write about the experience for a personal essay assignment in English Studies 12. In it she discussed her developing competence and her commitment to continuing to be a social activist and leader.

## **Teaching and mentoring tips**

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- For this type of service learning, recognition of and commitment to confidentiality and sensitivity to the plight of others are crucial. The CLC teacher-mentor may need to connect with community partners (in this case, the shelter manager) to determine guidelines for communications and the sharing of information with both the student and other student volunteers.
- For any students who may be triggered by the sensitive nature of social justice and service learning topics, strategies to cope with negative and/or trauma-related emotions should be in place. Connect with appropriate staff (e.g., the principal, school counsellors) and/or refer to related district/school policies.
- Consider providing and/or co-constructing a form letter for students to use when they communicate with community partners and services to legitimize their requests for donations and support.
- Ensure students know about how service learning can be used for post-secondary entrance applications and scholarships, as well as for resumés and digital profiles when seeking employment.



## Additional resources

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- School counsellors and Youth and Family workers
- Local advocacy groups and service providers
- Victims services through local police agencies

## Formative assessment

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- The CLC teacher-mentor provided all students with a general capstone components assessment rubric at the outset and used it to frame mentoring conversations and student reflections about their experiences. In addition, the teacher-mentor guided students to talk about progress on their personal learning goals during check-in conversations.
- The student worked closely with the shelter manager and received regular input and feedback while planning the event. This community advisor also agreed to fill out a descriptive feedback assessment form developed by the CLC teacher-mentor. The teacher-mentor had provided the feedback form in advance and also included an introductory letter to assist the advisor in framing feedback for the student.
- The student asked a few of the partnering businesses to complete a checklist of competencies she displayed during the event planning; two businesses also agreed to include written reference letters acknowledging her efforts. She planned to use these to support various applications as part of her post-graduation plans.
- The student decided to use her personal essay from English Studies 12 as a demonstration of learning in CLC, including an accompanying self-assessment of her Core Competencies development.



## Showcase and celebrate

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In this school community, the approximately 150 graduates presented their learning journey and next steps for post-graduation to an audience of school staff, students, and invited community guests. The students were divided into groups based on their capstone focus and/or topic(s), and the community guests were assigned to the groups respectively. Students presented in classrooms throughout the school, with each student given approximately 15 to 20 minutes, and were encouraged to include learnings from the capstone process, such as their challenges, successes, and growth in Core Competency development. As a contributory aspect of the overall CLC evaluation for capstone, supervisory teachers on the day of the presentation completed a rubric the CLC teacher-mentor supplied that requested descriptive feedback on what the students had shared for self-reflection, personal learning, and plans for next steps for post-graduation. The CLC teacher-mentor then used these completed rubrics to help inform one-to-one discussions with students as they co-constructed the student's marks together, based on all aspects of the *process and representation* of capstone.

## STUDENT FURTHER DEVELOPS HER CONFIDENCE AND SHARES HER MINDFULNESS KNOWLEDGE WITH PEERS



### Self-assessment and critical analysis

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Throughout her mentoring conversations with the Career-Life Connections (CLC) teacher-mentor and the *self-assessment and critical analysis* component of her capstone preparation (see pages 15–21 in the Career Education 10-12 Guide for more information about the components of capstone), the student frequently spoke about the significant benefits that mindfulness practices were having on her ability to deal with stress and anxiety. As this topic seemed to be of particular interest to the student, her teacher-mentor suggested she might like to think about how she could use this learning as a strength to draw on for her capstone *process and representation* component.



### Process and representation

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Learning focus: Developing confidence in presenting to small groups of peers

Service focus: Mindfulness and well-being

#### Context

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In order to further develop her confidence in presenting in small group settings, the student decided to connect her knowledge of mindfulness practices and mental health experiences to the *service learning* process by working with interested peers. After being introduced to mindfulness practices in small group workshops led by the school counsellor, the student found that these really did help her cope with everyday stresses and alleviated some of her anxiety symptoms. The counsellor supported her interest in sharing this knowledge with peers and collaborated with the student on how to share her personal stories about struggles with anxiety in a personally safe manner. The counsellor also helped the student describe and model the mindfulness practices that were working for her. The student led several sessions during a series of Mental Health Week workshops they co-designed for younger Grade 9 and 10 students who were struggling to cope with stressors. The counsellor prepared the student for this leadership opportunity by sharing tips on how to lead the mindfulness sessions. They also role-played extensively before the sessions, and the counsellor agreed to be available during sessions to provide extra emotional support for both the student and the younger student participants when and if needed.

#### Connections

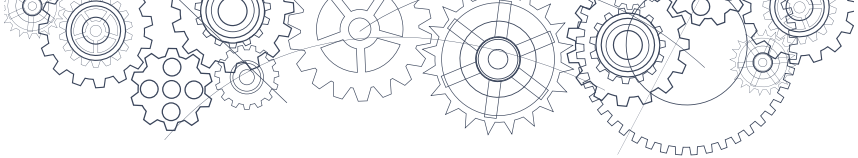
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#### Curricular or domain connections

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personal development in the Core Competencies; Preparing for next steps in personal lifelong learning journey

Physical and Health Education Mental Health and Well-Being – Evaluate and explain strategies for promoting mental well-being; Create and evaluate strategies for managing physical, emotional, and social changes during puberty and adolescence; Develop skills for maintaining healthy relationships and responding to interpersonal conflict

### **Community connections**

School community

Community wellness centre

### **Connections to First Peoples Principles of Learning**

*Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational:* The student was able to reflect on her own personal struggles, appreciate the support of her school counsellor and the practice of mindfulness strategies, and then pay these gifts forward by sharing with others

*Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors:* The student recognized the importance of mindfulness practices to her own well-being, and that the primary purpose of learning is for well-being; She chose to help others with similar struggles to learn how to manage their own stress, and to promote their own well-being

### **Core Competencies connections**

Communicating – Connecting and engaging with others; Acquiring and presenting information

Collaborating – Working collectively; Supporting group interactions

Critical and Reflective Thinking – Designing and developing; Reflecting and assessing

Positive Personal and Cultural Identity – Identifying personal strengths and abilities

Personal Awareness and Responsibility – Well-being; Self-Regulation

Social Awareness and Responsibility – Contributing to community and caring for the environment

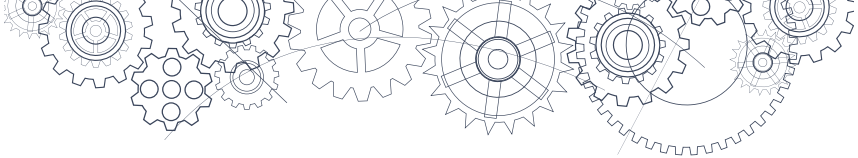
## **Service learning process**

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### **Understand and interpret context**

The student identified the community as being Grade 9 and 10 students who were feeling stressed and overwhelmed and/or needed a break from stressors (e.g., test-taking, noisy and busy environments, difficulties at home), based on generalized feedback received from the counsellor. The student then developed and focused on the following inquiry questions to frame her reflections:

- How can taking time out of the school day to practice mindfulness help decrease student stress and provide a greater sense of well-being?
- Throughout this process, in what ways have my experiences helped to build my confidence in speaking to small groups?



Through online research and connecting with a school community member who taught/practiced mindfulness, the student learned about ways to facilitate small groups and to share mindfulness techniques with her peers during Mental Health Week.

### **Plan and apply**

The student researched various resources online about mindfulness and teens, including breathing techniques and quick and easy-to-use mindfulness activities.

She also collaborated with the school counsellor to plan workshop sessions, coordinate classroom space, and schedule time slots for sessions. Once she was clear on what she was going to present, she shared her plans with the counsellor, and together they role-played her plan to lead and guide the workshops. Both the counsellor and the student agreed to offer these sessions during Mental Health Week.

The student advertised her sessions by designing and posting flyers throughout the school. The counsellor agreed to recommend the sessions to students who might benefit from them, and also shared information with teachers at the next staff meeting in case they knew of students who might like to join in. Closer to Mental Health Week, the student also arranged for announcements about the series to be read over the PA and posted on the school website.

### **Implement**

During the sessions offered throughout Mental Health Week, the student shared her personal experiences and knowledge, and led peers through the steps of a four-part breathing method as well as other mindfulness activities. She created a quiet and supportive space for the sessions by playing calming background music, dimming the lights, and seating participants in a circle. At the end of the session, the student requested that her peer participants give anonymous feedback about their experience in the workshop sessions by filling out exit survey cards that they left in the drop-box at the door.

### **Analyze and evaluate**

The student reviewed the feedback on the exit survey cards in collaboration with the school counsellor. Together they synthesized the main themes to share with her CLC teacher-mentor and to include as part of her capstone showcase presentation.

### **Communicate**

With her CLC teacher-mentor and class, the student shared the synthesis of participant feedback that she and the school counsellor had prepared. She also shared insights from her reflections on developing her confidence. She expressed personal satisfaction with her progress and the session results, and decided to include these and some of her mindfulness practices knowledge as part of her final capstone presentation.

## **Teaching and mentoring tips**

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When working with sensitive topics related to mental health, it is important to anticipate and mitigate potential emotional triggers for some students. In this case, the school counsellor played a key role in both supporting the student in her capstone work and supervising and being readily available to student participants during the mindfulness session times.





## Additional resources

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- [Mental Health Week](#)
- [Teen Mental Health](#)
- [Mindful Breathing \(Mental well-being\)](#)
- [Mindfulness for Teens](#)
- [Mindful Schools](#)

## Formative assessment

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- In this CLC class, students co-create a self-assessment rubric with their teacher-mentor, based on some general criteria related to capstone processes, as well as specific criteria related to each of their personal learning goal(s). In this case, the criteria were related to the process the student underwent during her service learning, and to the student's goal of developing confidence in presenting to small groups of peers.
- All students reflected on their progress with learning goals, including successes and challenges, at least once weekly in a journal format. They used the journal entries to help identify some key insights about themselves and their plans for post-graduation to share during their school's capstone showcase week.
- The student had requested that peer participants complete exit surveys to provide her with feedback about the mindfulness sessions. To help frame this type of survey in a strengths-based, constructive, and respectful way, it is recommended that the teacher-mentor support students in developing peer assessment tools.



## Showcase and celebrate

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During the school's Capstone Presentation Week, the student described how her service learning experience influenced her learning journey and Core Competency development. The student also shared the participant feedback from the sessions, including what worked well and what she might try differently next time. As a demonstration, she led the audience through a breathing activity that she had tried with participants during the sessions.

The student presented to a small panel that included some of her peers, the CLC teacher-mentor, the school counsellor, and other interested teachers. The student decided to invite some of her elementary school teachers, two of whom were able to attend and who shared how impressed they were with her increased confidence as a young adult.