



*A Service Learning Guide
for Early Learners*

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no one
can do
everything
but everyone
can do
something

At a Glance



Introducing Service Learning



All teachers desire their students to be engaged in experiential learning so that the children can gain much from the intangibles. Teachers can also inculcate and nurture values to enrich students' learning experiences. Service Learning offers an approach for designing learning experiences that would bring these two aspirations for learning and service together.

This Guide is for teachers of children aged 4 to 6 years. It provides insights on what Service Learning is about, and also some ideas to get started.

What is Service Learning?

"Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both."

Porter-Honnet & Poulsen

In Service Learning, there should be an equal emphasis on both learning and service, and an integration of both. Service Learning is a process of involving students in meaningful service activities that integrates reflection to enrich their learning experience.

**Service Learning
helps to cultivate
active citizens &
life-long learners.**

Learning in this case is not only restricted to the domain of social-emotional learning. Ideally, it should be integrated with the other areas of learning for our children, such as aesthetic and creative expression discovery of the world, language and literacy, motor skills development, and numeracy as found in the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) & Early Years Development Frameworks (EYDF). To help plan for Service Learning outcomes, reference can be made to the NEL & EYDF to integrate the areas of learning so that children will have richer experiences.

As for service, it is about making a contribution to the community. The community can range from their class, the school, home, neighbourhood and even wider. For instance, children can help a classmate, do household chores at home, contribute to a charity or advocate for a global concern. When children participate in service activities, they learn the value of making a contribution to the community.

At the closure of a Service Learning journey, a time of reflection together is crucial for consolidating the learning. Having a clear plan for recording the Service Learning journey through photos and artefacts will help in the reflection. Giving the children opportunities to share their Service Learning experience is a fantastic platform for them to feel empowered about their learning.

Teachers should also evaluate each Service Learning so as to grow better both as a class and as a teacher-facilitator. TAs teachers embark on successive Service Learning projects, they can become more competent and skilful at Service Learning.



What are the Benefits?

Service Learning brings together the benefits of experiential learning and values education for our children, through the invaluable joy of both learning and serving.

Through serving, there are many opportunities for our children to grow in their attitudes and values. This Guide, presents the **Willing Hand** (see page 28) as a way to focus on and encourage some very important attitudes and values.

Through Service Learning, the hope is that our young ones, as an Early Learning community, will inspire the larger community to be involved in service activities and be excited about learning.

Over time, as our children experience the relevance of learning in the context of a real world through service activities, Service Learning will hopefully motivate them in their subsequent years as lifelong learners and actively engaged citizens.

How do you Get Started?

You can consider two ways to approach the design of a Service Learning project:

- Starting with a **learning unit**, which may be a theme or a specific topic, you can seek out opportunities to use the learning to be of service to the community.
- Alternatively, you could begin with a **community service or a social cause** and then build rich learning activities from it.

Two ways to start a Service Learning project - with a learning topic or with a service opportunity.



Service Learning is not a replacement for other ways to encourage growth in the social-emotional learning area. In fact, Service Learning projects will complement such efforts. You can begin with projects of smaller scale and explore possibilities of weaving Service Learning into any regular daily activity, or as a special longer-term project for a school year.

What are some Possible Outcomes?

You can set specific outcomes to guide you in designing a Service Learning project. These could be related to some of the learning areas, such as language and literacy or numeracy, not forgetting the special opportunities for development of good attitudes and values.

This Guide will explore a creative, project approach by going through the **Anticipating, Recording and Consolidating (ARC) phases**. It looks at what each phase is about and offers some tools and ideas to kickstart your exciting Service Learning journey.



Phase 1 : Anticipating - Getting Excited



In a Service Learning project, your children can own their learning if you are very deliberate in allowing them to include their inputs along the way. This will make for a more creative, experiential and engaging learning experience for all.

Instead of using rigid plans entirely determined by the teachers, you can consider co-creating the best experiential project-based Service Learning journey together with the children.

Idea-Popping



Like kernels of corn bursting into pop-corn, a divergent process of listing down as many ideas as possible can be done, before selecting what can be used. Children's own ideas are encouraged too.

Consider using Post-Its or its digital equivalent to list the ideas so that they can be clustered and re-organised more easily.

You may start with either a theme, a topic or a service activity. To get ideas popping, you could look through various lenses such as:



- **Learning Areas** from the Nurturing Early Learners Framework: Aesthetic and creative expression, discovery of the world, language and literacy, motor skills development, numeracy, social-emotional aspects

- Activities that would engage the different **senses**: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Consider feelings too.



- Opportunities for **service**. The community for the acts of service could be their classmates, the rest of the centre, the children's own home, the neighbourhood, right up to the nation and even the world. Service could be direct, indirect, or advocacy.

Direct service

- Example: Going to an old folk's home to perform.

Indirect service

- Example: Sale of arts and craft during a fundraising fair for a particular cause (such as SPCA).

Advocacy

- Example: Giving out flyers to the public, or encouraging others to take the zero waste pledge.



- **Resources**: Places, People, Props, Period
 - Props: things and devices which could be used
 - Period: upcoming event or season; pockets and length of time available
 - People: within the centre, parents, experts (not only local ones); consider how ICT can expand the reach to experts
 - Places: within the centre, in the neighbourhood, in the country



The intent is to have as many ideas as possible. After you have generated a good amount of ideas, you can then begin to cluster and organise them so as to select the ones to be used in the project. Finally, you will have to organise the ideas into a learning plan, which includes clear learning objectives.

Generate as many ideas as possible, select some then create learning plan.

As a Service Learning project progresses, you continue to be responsive to the children's reactions and interests to further enrich the learning. Now that you have a rich bank of ideas, it will help you in your responses to the children. Ideas not used can always be "recycled" for the next project.

Sample 1: Idea-Popping **starting with a Topic or Learning Activity**



Learning Area	Senses	Resources	Service Cause or Partner
<p><i>Aesthetic and creative expression</i> Visual art - shades of colours</p> 	<p><i>Sight</i> Arranging shades of colours Jigsaw puzzle with sea or grass</p> <p><i>Sound</i></p> <p><i>Touch</i> Mixing paint for different shades of the same colour</p> <p><i>Smell</i> Arranging items, such as limes or leaves, by different shades of their colours</p> <p><i>Taste</i></p> <p><i>Feeling</i></p>	<p><i>Props</i> Montessori Colour Tablets Acrylic paints Van Gogh's Starry Night</p> <p><i>Period</i> Earth Day (22 Apr)</p> <p><i>People</i> PUB Water Wally (https://www.pub.gov.sg/about/waterwally)</p> <p><i>Places</i> NEWater Centre</p>	<p><i>Direct</i> Paint a mural in the centre</p> <p><i>Indirect</i> Create artwork for fund raising for ...</p> <p><i>Advocacy</i> Earth Day Posters Save Water Campaign Posters</p> 
<p>Potential Service Learning Ideas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create posters to be placed at the toilet using different shades of just one colour, Blue, to promote saving of water. 2. Paint a one-colour mini-mural on a recycling bin for Earth Day. 3. Create cards using artwork to raise funds for ... 			



Sample 2: Idea-Popping **starting with a service partnership**

Service Cause or Partner	Learning Areas	Senses	Resources
<p>Neighbourhood senior centre</p> <p><i>Direct</i> Visit the centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance - Activity - Food - Decorate <p><i>Indirect</i> Fund-raising</p> <p><i>Advocacy</i> Respect for seniors</p>	<p><i>Aesthetic & creative expression</i> Music or songs that seniors like</p> <p><i>Discovery of the world</i> Plants - propagation (Herbs - Mint, etc)</p> <p><i>Language & literacy</i> Greetings and lyrics in Mother Tongue Book: Grandma's Treasures by Jean Sng</p> <p><i>Motor skills development</i> Potting Dancing</p> <p><i>Numeracy</i> Charting plant growth Count beats and steps</p> <p><i>Social-emotional</i> Empathy</p>	<p><i>Sight</i> Photos of grandparents</p> <p><i>Sound</i> Instrument (ukulele) for music seniors like</p> <p><i>Touch</i> Old vinyl records Drying mint leaves</p> <p><i>Smell</i> Smell of mint (medicated oil)</p> <p><i>Taste</i> Food seniors enjoy Food with mint</p> <p><i>Feeling</i> Photos of toddlers in 1930s and 40s.</p>	<p><i>Props</i> CD of oldies Flower pot and soil</p> <p><i>Period</i> 50 Plus Conference</p> <p><i>People</i> Talk to Grandparents/parents about the traditional uses of herbs/mint</p> <p>Senior ukulele group</p> <p><i>Places</i> Community garden</p>
<p>Potential Service Learning Ideas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow pots of mint with the seniors. 2. Sing or dance to music which the seniors enjoy. 3. Read books or eat with the seniors. 4. Create a digital album with the seniors. 			



Heightening Expectation

Enable our children to be excited and to own the Service Learning at the start.

As the Service Learning project is being introduced, it will be helpful to consider how you might get the children onboard and excited by heightening their expectation. With greater ownership from your children, the Service Learning will be so much more engaging, meaningful and memorable.

Here are some ideas that you can consider:

- Bring a curious object related to the Service Learning
- Invite an interesting guest
- Show an intriguing video
- Ask the children a “What if” question
- Tell a story that engages their imagination
- Invite the children to share what they already know and what questions they have about the topic
- Pose a topic-related problem that the children can identify for them to solve





Phase 1 - Anticipating in Summary

Are you excited to get started with Service Learning? When both the children and the teacher are excited at the launch of a Service Learning project, it will be so much more engaging and meaningful for everyone.

You can use **Idea Popping** to gather a rich pool of ideas to draw from not only to design a learning plan but also to help you better respond to the children's ideas as you progress. When you are ready to introduce the project, you can consider ways to Heighten Expectation to garner the children's interest and ownership of the service activity and the learning.

Phase 2 : Recording - Forming Memories

As the Service Learning project progresses, it will be important to make a good record of what the class is doing as this will be especially helpful for reflection and presentation which comes near the end of the Service Learning.

**Clear intentions
help make
recordings more
meaningful and
useful.**

With a clear intention of what you are looking out for, the recording can be more meaningful. When you are clear about the kinds of thinking, attitude and behaviour which you would like to see in your children, you can then be more mindful of opportunities to encourage them.

As you record the children's responses to you, actions they take, conversations they have with each other, and take notes and photos of what the children make (not just the final products), you could use a checklist or a simple rubric to guide you. However, do remember to watch out significant moments which might not be on the list.

These guides could include the cognitive, affective or behavioural aspects. In practice, it is better to start with a shorter list for your first Service Learning project and progressively grow the list.

Children can also participate in the recording process. For instance, they could be given a checklist or rubric, or they could ask to have their work photographed or have their process or responses recorded as videos or audio clips.



To grow as a teacher-facilitator, do record your own experiences and thoughts, too.

Today, the likelihood of using digital technology to make such recordings is high. There are now also many applications online and on tablet devices that can be considered. Some of these are listed on page 31.



This Guide will not elaborate on the Learning Areas in general but will focus more specifically on attitudes and dispositions which Service Learning projects provide. Service Learning projects is also a good platform for encouragement and observation.

Here are two sets of dispositions and attitudes, with samples of checklist and rubrics, which you might wish to consider:

Willing Hand

Willing Hand

attitudes:

courage

trustworthiness

humility

patience

excellence

The *Willing Hand* uses the five fingers to represent 5 attitudes and values that will help the children grow in Service Learning and lay a strong foundation for the years ahead too.

The 5 attitudes and values are courage, trustworthiness, humility, patience and excellence. More details are provided in Annex A on page 28.



As these 5 attitudes and values have also been described in terms of actions, it lends itself well for a checklist. To encourage the mindset of growth, instead of just noting whether the attitude has been observed, you can consider levels of effort and attainment using the symbols shown or something similar.

Sample of **Willing Hand** Checklist which children could also use



For each finger, mark with one of these:



When used with the children, the same checklist can be used on a few occasions and different colours can be used each time. This is a good way to chart development.

In introducing the *Willing Hand* to the children, you could do so one attitude at a time instead of all five at a go. When you do this, our children ought to be able to own a part of the recording by using their own checklist.

PRAISE Learning Disposition

The six PRAISE learning dispositions are positive attitudes and behaviours which you want to see in your children. See Annex B on page 25 for the full list.

You could consider using a simple rubric to help in your observation and recording. A rubric enables you to have a clear understanding of what you are looking for and the different levels of growth and development to expect. Where appropriate, the children can also be involved in creating and using such rubrics.

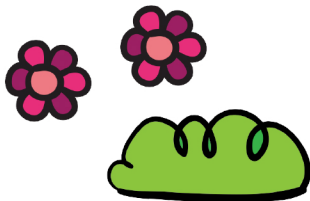
Here is a sample of a PRAISE rubric which you could adapt for your use to guide you in your recording.

**While recording,
a simple rubric
helps clarify
what to look out
for and acts as a
reminder to be
mindful of
development and
growth.**

Sample Rubric using PRAISE Learning Dispositions to guide recording



	Emerging	Developing	Applying
P erseverance	Tries even when it is challenging	Usually does not give up even when it is challenging	Does not give up even when it is challenging
R eflectiveness	Begins to think about his/her experiences to learn when prompted	Have attempted to think about his/her experience to learn	Initiates thinking about his/her experiences to learn.
A ppreciation	Attempts to listen to others and show respect	Is able to listen to others and show respect	Always listens to others and show respect
I ntentiveness	Explores ideas and coming up with more solutions	Able to explore various ideas and come up with more solutions	Regularly explore various ideas and come up with more solutions
S ense of wonder and curiosity	Sometimes asks questions on why things happen and how things work	Often asks questions on why things happen and how things work	Confidently ask questions on why things happen and how things work
E ngagement	Responds well when introduced to new ways to learn	Usually enjoys looking for new ways to learn	Proactively seeks for new ways to learn.





Phase 2 - Recording in Summary

Making meaningful records during the process of a Service Learning project is important. It helps form memories which can help you be more mindful during the project and aid your recollection when you consolidate information at the end of the project.

With clarity of what you are looking out for, as spelt out in your learning objectives, you can make the recording more purposeful and meaningful. In the areas of attitudes and values, you can consider using **Willing Hand** and **PRAISE** to guide you. Among various forms of guides, you can consider using a simple checklist or rubric.

Phase 3: Consolidating - Picking the Fruits

Reflection and presentation help to deepen our learning.

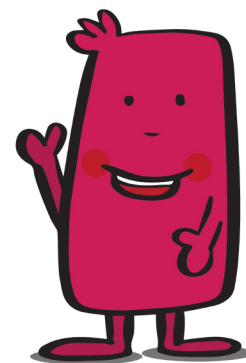
In a typical classroom, we normally focus on the present or the future, and seldom do we look back at the past. However, by thoughtfully reflecting on your journey, you will be better able to identify what you have learnt and hence deepening your learning. Moreover, if you share your learning with others, it will further increase the impact of your learning.

As part of Service Learning, a phase of consolidating through reflection and presentation would be very useful and important. Consolidation should be done by both the children as well as the teachers.

(Guided) Reflection

We do not often remember what we have done with much clarity unless we have intentionally made records. The Recordings done in the earlier phase will be helpful in jolting both the teachers' and the children's memories during the reflection process.

Using the text, photos, videos and artefacts, you can guide the class in thinking through what has been experienced. The focus could be on the aspects of the cognition (head), affection (heart) and behaviour (hand).



As teachers, you would also find that recordings are useful for your own reflection and in the same way, you might also wish to consider the same 3 aspects in your own reflections. An area that is unknowingly neglected is reflecting on one's own experiences. Including the affective aspect will go a long way in energizing yourself and the children.

With the recordings displayed, invite the children to pick what they like or did not like. They can then use these sentence stems to help them think through and articulate their reflection:



- **"I like ... because ...**
 - **I learned (head) ... "**
 - **I felt (heart) ... "**
 - **I did (hand) ... "**



- **"I didn't like ... because ...**

When handling the reflections on what the children did not like, it is crucial to respond with affirmation and to encourage growth. Instead of disapproval, invite the children to consider what they can do differently the next time.

For a class that is new to Service Learning, it would be advisable to begin more simply, for instance talking about what they liked and focusing only on one aspect such as what they did, and then build up the complexity of the process over time.

Younger children could also be invited to draw a picture of what they liked or not like about their Service Learning project after a quick review of the recordings of the project.





For older children who can manage better with writing, they could be given time to write down their reflections.

Whether written or spoken, having the words to phrase our reflection will be helpful. You might wish to consider having a word bank to help the children expand their vocabulary. For instance, for the affective aspect, the word list might include happy, pleased, excited, proud, loved, confident, silly, angry, impatient, nervous, frustrated, and so on.

The *Willing Hand* checklist, on page 24, can also be given to the children for them to use as part of their reflection. After they have given their own score, they can then be invited to talk about why they have given themselves that score.

Similarly, if appropriate for your class, the PRAISE disposition rubric, on page 15, can also be given to the children for them to evaluate themselves or each other.

Presenting

It has been said that the best way to learn is to teach it to someone else. In the process of getting ready to present your Service Learning project, you can further enrich the learning for the children, as well as for yourself as the teacher-facilitator.

The benefits for the listeners of your presentation can also be considered as a form of service, whether as an advocate for the cause that the Service Learning project was about or to help others get excited about the potential of Service Learning.

**Presentation is
beneficial for:
the children,
the teacher-facilitators,
the parents,
our colleagues,
the service partners &
the community at large.**

For the stakeholders, which include parents, the service partner or the community, the presentation will also be a good way to further strengthen your partnership by showing appreciation for their support and also for them to be excited about the learning and growth of our children.

Once again, you can scale the size and scope of the presentation according to the learners, to your experience as a teacher-facilitator of Service Learning and perhaps also to the opportunities available for sharing.

Here are some factors to consider when deciding on your presentation:

Who to involve? The children, the teachers, the service partner, ...



For whom? Parents, the learning centre, the service partner, the neighbourhood, at a global conference, ...

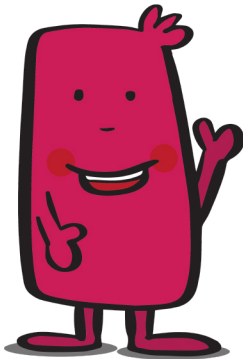
What forms?

1. Create posters
2. Form a paper chain with a different reflection/memory for each link
3. Decorate a noticeboard
4. Design a Powerpoint presentation
5. Compile a timeline, diary, scrapbook or journal
6. Write a blog post or webpage
7. Create a video



8. Publish a (electronic) book, album or newsletter
9. Make a mobile or model
10. Assemble a time capsule
11. Group presentation on stage
12. Station-by-station walk through
13. Perform a skit or song
14. Conduct an interview
15. Run a quiz or a game show
16. (add your ideas to this list)

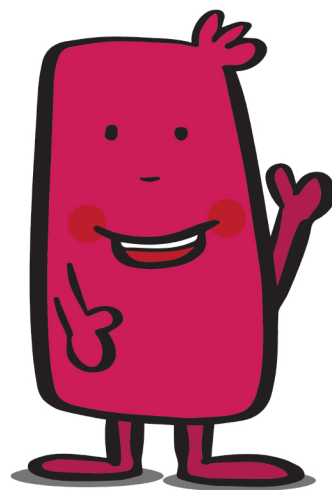
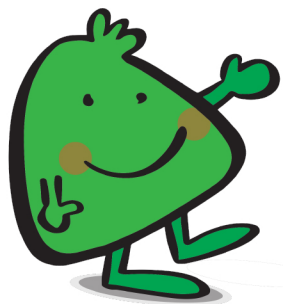
A list of ICT resources which might help with reflection and presentation can be found on page 31.



Phase 3 - Consolidating in Summary

As a Service Learning project to a close, don't miss picking the fruits of our labour. It is a time for consolidating.

Through Guided Reflection, for both the children and teachers, as well as through Presenting, you can learn more and better.



Tips & Tricks

Start

- ★ Make a start
- ★ Start from the heart
- ★ Start with openness and curiosity; expect each Service Learning to be different

Small

- ★ Take baby steps such as starting with a small Service Learning project linked to an existing lesson
- ★ Grow by doing Service Learning often
- ★ Be prepared that it might not work out perfectly each time, and so learn through reflection

Dream

- ★ Keep an eye out for Service Learning project ideas
- ★ Keep a record of ideas; the more the merrier
- ★ Listen to the children; always include their young voices and big dreams

Big

- ★ Role model for the children, and for your colleagues
- ★ Connect with others who are also excited about Service Learning
- ★ Believe that Service Learning will have a lasting impact

Annex A - Willing Hand



The Willing Hand captures attitudes and values which complements the Service Learning experience and will stand our children in good stead for the years ahead of lifelong learning and active engagement with their community.

"I will": These are values and attitudes aimed at getting our children to own. It also speaks of choice and a commitment to put in the effort to grow in these areas.

Pinky

The value of **Courage** to **"believe that I can"**.

Everyone's contribution can make a difference, and we want to make a positive difference for others.

Ring Finger

The value of **Trustworthiness** to **"keep my promise"**.

To say what we mean and mean what we say.

Middle Finger

The value of **Humility** to **"play my part"**.

As a leader to lead & guide others graciously, and as a follower, to help and support the leader.

Index Finger

The value of **Patience** to **"go step-by-step"**.

Not to rush but careful to look at the details and to follow procedures.

Thumb

The value of **Excellence** to **"give my very best"**.

Not settling for mediocrity or doing it just for show.

A sample of a Willing Hand checklist can be found on page 17.

Annex B - PRAISE Learning Disposition

Perseverance

Children with perseverance keep working at a task to complete it. They do not give up even though they find it challenging.

Reflectiveness

Children with the ability to reflect can think about what they have done, seen, heard or felt in their daily experiences. They generate alternative ideas and gain new knowledge.

Appreciation

Children with a sense of appreciation recognise that everyone has different and unique qualities. They listen to the views of others and show respect for them.

Inventiveness

Children who are inventive are flexible in their thinking and can do things in different ways. They explore various ideas and possibilities and generate different solutions to challenges.

Sense of wonder and curiosity

Children with a sense of wonder and curiosity are interested in the world around them. They confidently ask questions on why things happen and how things work. They like to explore and discover new things.

Engagement

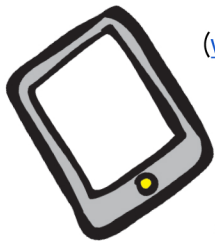
Children who are engaged are immersed in learning and enjoy what they do. They proactively seek new opportunities for learning.

Extracted from Nurturing Early Learners Framework, MOE, Singapore

Resources and Bibliography

1. The Complete Guide to Service Learning by Cathryn Berger Kaye; Free Spirit Publishing
2. Service-Learning Essentials by Barbara Jacoby; Jossey-Bass
3. Service Learning in the PreK-3 Classroom: The What, Why, and How-To Guide for Every Teacher by Vicki E Lake & Ithel Jones; Free Spirit Publishing
4. A Handbook on Service Learning by National Youth Council
5. Nurturing Early Learners Framework by Ministry of Education, Singapore
6. Early Years Development Framework by Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore
7. Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach by Lilian Katz, et al; Praeger
8. Project Approach <http://projectapproach.org>
9. Visible Thinking http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03c_CoreRoutines.html

Some ICT Resources



1. Post-it Plus - a digital version of post-it that allows for brainstorming and organising.

(www.post-it.com/app)

2. TinyTap - a FREE easy to use app for creating interactive, multi-touch album or book. (<http://www.tinytap.it/activities/>)

3. Book Creator - useful app for creating eBooks. (<http://bookcreator.com>)

4. SeeSaw and Three Ring - for creating digital portfolios. (<http://web.seesaw.me>, <https://threering.com>)
5. EduBlogs - easily create and manage student and teacher blogs. (<https://edublogs.org>)
6. Page O Rama - for quickly creating stand alone webpages. (<http://www.pageorama.com>)
7. Canva - a free graphic design and presentation software. Good for posters. (<https://www.canva.com>)



In Service Learning, there is an equal emphasis on both service and learning. Our Early Learners can experience and benefit from Service Learning projects.

In this Guide for teachers of Early Learners, you can learn the key concepts of Service Learning and how the 3 phases of Anticipating, Recording and Consolidating can help you kickstart your Service Learning journey. You will also be introduced to the Willing Hand of good attitudes and values.

As we Start Small and Dream Big in Service Learning, our aspiration is to see our Early Learners grow into active citizens and lifelong learners.