

## Core Practice 7

# Incorporating Fieldwork, Experts, and Service Learning

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The EL Education model connects students to the world beyond school through meaningful fieldwork, collaboration with experts, and service learning. In addition to learning from text and classroom-based experiences, students use the natural and social environments of their communities as sites for purposeful fieldwork and service connected to academic work. They collaborate with professional experts and community members with firsthand knowledge of events and issues to ensure accuracy, integrity, and quality in their work.

EL Education differentiates between traditional field trips, in which students are often spectators, and fieldwork, in which students are active investigators, applying the research tools, techniques of inquiry, and standards of presentation used by professionals in the field.

Service learning goes beyond charitable acts, such as cleaning up a city park, and extends also to rigorous academic products that provide a service for the community, such as energy audits of city buildings that help a city save money and reduce its carbon footprint.

Fieldwork, collaboration with experts, and service learning are integral parts of learning expeditions, but they can also be used to enhance published curriculum or as stand-alone structures outside of full learning expeditions.

### A. Planning and Designing Fieldwork

1. Teachers identify and plan for rich fieldwork experiences that have a clear purpose connected to the curriculum. They prepare note-catchers, procedures, or activities that allow students to be researchers, not spectators.
2. When time and resources allow, teachers schedule fieldwork over an extended period of time with several visits to the same site.
3. Teachers instruct students in procedures and skills for fieldwork before setting out or during the first visit. They create a foundation for all students to be engaged and purposeful.
4. As much as possible, teachers design fieldwork experiences based on the authentic research of professionals in the field (e.g., zoologists, historians, anthropologists).
5. Teachers select data collection tools to suit the purpose of the fieldwork. When data are collected, they are analyzed and used back in the classroom to create a product.
6. Teachers structure fieldwork so that it is safe and productive. Teachers preview sites to shape the field experience effectively and ensure accessibility for all students.
7. Leaders and teachers establish written policies and well-documented safety procedures for conducting fieldwork. These include planning for the logistics of transportation, grouping students, and adult supervision.
8. Teachers prepare students to be ambassadors for their

school. Students are courteous, knowledgeable, organized, and helpful during fieldwork experiences.

9. In schools where there are barriers to transporting students off campus, teachers and leaders seek creative options for fieldwork, such as selecting case studies that can be authentically explored through on-campus fieldwork (e.g., bacteria growth in public spaces, invasive species on campus, conducting a schoolwide survey).
10. Whenever possible, teachers look for opportunities to enhance published curricula with fieldwork experiences that deepen learning for students.

### B. Selecting and Engaging with Experts

1. Teachers bring experts from the community into the classroom to collaborate with students on projects, teach them skills from their field, and critique their work using professional standards.
2. Teachers reach out to experts who represent multiple perspectives and backgrounds and can expand students' understanding of the knowledge and skills they are seeking to acquire. Experts may be professionals from a particular discipline or community members with firsthand knowledge of the topic being studied.
3. Teachers prepare experts to work collaboratively with students on projects and/or products. For example, experts may help students critique their work against professional standards.

4. Teachers prepare students to greet experts with courtesy, respect, and background knowledge, with the desire that experts are surprised and delighted by the students' depth of knowledge and preparation.
5. Teachers and students orient experts to the needs of the project and the protocols for class critique.
6. Teachers support students to maintain ongoing relationships with experts. For example, teachers help students take a lead role in communication with experts before (to ensure alignment and focus), during (to keep the collaboration on track), and after (showing appreciation or sharing their work) a visit.

### **C. Designing and Planning Service Learning**

1. Teachers incorporate service learning into projects and lessons not as an afterthought or add-on, but as an integral part of learning.
  - a. Teachers connect service learning to the ethic of kindness and service that is part of school culture.
  - b. Teachers use service as a prime vehicle to teach and take action centered on social justice and to address the challenges and celebrate the assets of living in community.
  - c. Teachers and students research service opportunities to ensure that service learning projects provide a real benefit to the community.
2. Teachers design and plan service learning experiences that go beyond charitable volunteer work to include projects that build important *academic* skills. These experiences help students to see that academic work can be in the service of good for others (e.g., building literacy skills by collaborating with homeless shelter residents to create a guide to free city services).