In 1903, Ellen White wrote: “Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education . . . has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”

Based in part on this statement, Seventh-day Adventist educators have developed a model comprised of these three elements—physical, mental, and spiritual development, often depicted as an equilateral triangle (see Figure 1). To varying degrees, Adventist education systems have endeavored to implement this balanced, whole-person perspective. Could it be, though, that there might be a fourth dimension that is crucial to true education?

The very next sentence in the 1903 passage holds the answer. “[True education] prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” This indicates that there is an added element that is vital for life and learning—one that incorporates time and space, integrates the social arena, and emphasizes service (see Figure 2).

This fourth element is the social dimension, in which service is a key component. Jesus, for example, “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52, NIV 1984). Later, in His ministry, Christ “went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people” (Matthew 4:23, NIV 1984). Here again, we find four facets: teaching, preaching the gospel, healing, and associating with others—in essence, the cognitive, spiritual, physical, and social dimensions. Jesus’ life and ministry are our...
model, and Adventist education has an important role to play in producing Christians whose lives illustrate this integration of faith, learning, and practice.

A Biblical Foundation

The responsibility to serve God and humankind is clearly taught in the Bible. Paul wrote: “Through love, serve one another” (Galatians 5:13, NKJV). This statement depicts service as a way of life. In the eloquent words of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul insists that love must be the motive of service: “If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (vs. 2, NIV 1984). Love, however, must have an object and must produce tangible results. In summarizing the law of God, Christ stated that it involved two cardinal principles: “‘[L]ove the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,’” and “‘[L]ove your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV). Love results in service, oriented first and foremost to God. Joshua, for example, directed the Israelites to “serve Him [the LORD your God] with all your heart” (Joshua 22:5, NKJV). Similarly, Paul admonished the Christian believers to “keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11, NIV).

Love for God also leads directly to serving others, particularly to those in need. Christ instructed His disciples, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you. . . . By this all men will know that you are my disciples: If you love one another” (John 13:34, 35, NKJV). To illustrate His definition of service, Christ told the story of a traveler on the road to Jericho (Luke 10:29-37), which highlighted three basic philosophies of life:

1. The philosophy of the thieves, “I’ll take what you have.”
2. The philosophy of the priest and Levite, “I’ll keep what I have.”
3. The Samaritan’s orientation was outward-looking, other-focused: “I’ll share what I have.” The Samaritan, Jesus said, was the one who truly understood the concept of service and exemplified it in his life.⁷

In addition to passages that emphasize the concept of service (see Figure 4), the Bible also provides tangible examples of what constitutes selfless service. In the Old Testament, for instance, we find the case of Abraham, who refused a reward for having rescued the inhabitants of Sodom (Genesis 14:22-24); the widow of Zarephath, who shared her limited provisions with Elijah (1 Kings 17:12-15); Elisha, who left behind a life of comfort to serve an elderly prophet (2 Kings 2:1-6); and Esther, who risked her own safety to save the lives of others (Esther 4:16). Similarly, in the New Testament, we read of a widow who placed all she had in the temple treasury (Luke 21:4); a young boy who shared his lunch (John 6:8-11); Barnabas, who sold his possessions to support the early church (Acts 4:36-37); and a group of women who followed Jesus and cared for His well-being and that of the disciples (Mark 15:40, 41).

The greatest example of service, however, comes from the life and teachings of Jesus.⁸ On one occasion, the mother of James and John asked Jesus to give her sons eminient positions in His kingdom. Jesus’ response clarified that the highest position is held by one who serves. “‘[W]hoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave’” (Matthew 20:26, 27, NIV 1984).

Jesus also taught by example. In the upper room, He washed His disciples’ feet, performing the work of a servant (John 13:4-17).⁹ The supreme act of service, however, took place on Calvary, where Jesus gave all that He had to save humanity (John 3:16). In Jesus’ own words, “‘The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” (Mark 10:45, NKJV).

The Place of Service Learning

How should we incorporate the fourth dimension in Adventist education? What is the best way to foster the principle of service in all our instructional settings? One approach that has proved effective is service learning. Volunteerism also provides important service opportunities in many educational institutions,¹⁰ but service learning has proved more challenging to implement. Thus, the remainder of this article will focus on this area.

Service learning is a form of educational activity where students apply what they are learning to community problems, seeking to strengthen the community as well as to acquire a deeper understanding for themselves.¹¹ It is a credit-bearing, course-, program-, or discipline-based experience that combines community service with academic instruction and personal development.¹² In essence, service learning is a flexible pedagogy that (1) is organized around clear learning goals, (2) offers service activities that address real community needs, and (3) provides students with opportunities for critical reflection (see Figure 3).
Service learning thus incorporates focused and enhanced academic study, purposeful and relevant practical experience, and meaningful and valued civic engagement (see Figure 4). This enables service learning to add a layer beyond volunteerism and community service, which tend to focus on the recipient and/or a social cause, often with no direct connection to meaningful learning outcomes. It also sets service learning apart from internships and field experiences, which focus mainly on benefits to the learner, particularly in terms of career expectations. Rather than being peripheral or supplemental, service learning is integrated into the core curriculum and closely connected to course content.13

**Ellen White on Service and Learning**

Ellen White urged that service be considered an essential element in Adventist education: “The true object of education is to fit men and women for service.”14 She believed that young people especially should be intentionally prepared for service: “Children . . . should be trained to help in various lines of unselfish service.”15 “Young men and women should be educated for service in the cause of God.”16

This preparation was to be integrated into the educational experience: “Students . . . are not to look forward to a time, after the school term closes, when they will do some large work for God, but should study how, during their student life, to yoke up with Christ in unselfish service for others.”17 These service experiences are to take place both within the school and throughout the broader community.18

Ellen White envisioned, for example, that younger students would serve collaboratively, with their teachers and parents joining them in these endeavors. “Let [the students] organize into bands for Christian service, and the cooperation will prove an assistance and an encouragement. Parents and teachers, by taking an interest in the work of the young people, will be able to give them the benefit of their own larger experience, and can help them to make their efforts effective for good.”20

In sum, Ellen White emphasized that service was a matter of priority. To parents she wrote, “We are under sacred covenant with God to rear our children for His service. To surround them with such influences as shall lead them to choose a life of service, and to give them the training needed, is our first duty.”21 She reminded teachers, “The true teacher . . . cannot be content with imparting to them only technical knowledge, with making them merely clever accountants, skillful artisans, successful tradesmen. It is his ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and up-lifting of society. He desires them, above all else, to learn life’s great lesson of unselfish service.”22

Service is, in fact, a theme that links the school on earth with that of heaven. “In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammeled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found.”23

**Implementing Service Learning**

How does one go about integrating service learning into the educational experience? To implement service learning requires four key components: (1) a community that affords opportunities for service and learning; (2) a teacher who identifies community needs, supervises student efforts, and connects service experiences and teaching objectives through reflection; (3) students who provide a service and learn both content and application; and (4) a supportive school administration. Ideally, the community, or an agency in the community, would also be a partner and not merely a recipient in the service-learning endeavor, as this can help the school to identify community needs and perhaps coordinate projects. In larger educational institutions, there may also be designated service-learning staff, who help link faculty, students, and community within a service-learning paradigm.

The service-learning process involves five main stages: investigation, preparation, action, reflection, and celebration (see Figure 5).25 First, we—as educators, and ideally in collaboration with our students, as feasible—investigate community priorities. This helps ensure that service-learning projects align with community concerns and engage community members as partners. As a result of this research, we develop goals for the project, both in terms of learning and service. Personal growth goals, including relational and spiritual development, can also be identified. The activities in this phase help students to develop communication skills and research techniques, such as gathering and interpreting information, and to prioritize among alternatives.

![Figure 4. Intersecting Components in Service Learning](image-url)
The second stage is to prepare. During this phase, we organize the activity by communicating goals, building partnerships, identifying budgets and timelines, clarifying roles, and distributing tasks. Most importantly, we ensure that students have the necessary understanding, skills, and attitudes to effectively carry out the project. In this stage, we also attend to a variety of logistical matters, such as obtaining supplies, arranging for transportation, and addressing safety and liability concerns. Finally, we develop strategies and rubrics for evaluating the service-learning activity, and decide how to reflect upon and celebrate the outcomes, making sure to gather needed evidence during and after the project. While this stage can be time-consuming, it is vital, as careful preparation is essential to a successful ongoing service-learning project. Furthermore, the activities that take place in this phase help students to develop planning, negotiating, and networking skills.

In the third stage, we act, actually implementing the service-learning activity. During this phase, it is important to create a supportive environment, promote dialogue, provide supervision, and ensure students’ safety. We also make sure that the participants document their experience while it is taking place, as this will provide the basis for reflective analysis and celebration. In addition to enhancing discipline-specific learning and deepening a commitment to service, students in the action stage develop skills needed for leadership, teamwork, and project management.

The fourth phase is a time to reflect, an opportunity to explore the meaning of the experience. This can be done individually and as a group. Reflection can include journaling, debriefing, and group discussions, as well as dialogue with experts and community members. It can summarize findings, connect back to original goals, and identify next steps. The activities in this phase help students develop skills in analysis, problem solving, integrating information, and reaching conclusions.

In the final stage, we celebrate, inviting program participants, partners, and the community at large to recognize and affirm the program’s learning and impact. This demonstration and recognition of results—the telling of the story—may find expression through poetry, music, drawing, and drama; it may involve bulletin boards, Websites, social media sites, articles in the student and alumni publications, community news reports, and multimedia shows. It may culminate in a special event to recognize and express appreciation for the efforts and effect of those involved, perhaps through tangible symbols, certificates, and plaques. Overall, the activities of this phase serve to develop communication skills, to broaden awareness in the community, to set the stage for future action, and to validate the expertise of participants for training other young people in service-learning activities.

**Examples of Service Learning**

Service learning can be effectively integrated into the K-12 curriculum, as well as higher education programs. Here is what some K-12 teachers are doing:

- “I have had students make cards for the elderly in church, in connection with Bible class and worship. They then take the card to church and give it to an elderly person to encourage him or her and show that they care.”
- “We linked P.E. [Physical Education] to a walk-a-thon to raise money to help pay someone’s medical bill.”
- “During writing class, we wrote letters to soldiers in Iraq. On another occasion, we wrote thank-you notes to our school volunteers.”
- “At Thanksgiving time, we had a can drive to replenish the church’s food pantry for the needy. At the time, we were discussing economics in our class.”
- “When we were studying Social Studies and the importance of preserving natural resources, the students helped the community by cleaning up the neighborhood and by collecting recyclables. They also extended this to their English class and wrote newspaper articles about pollution or recycling.”
- “When studying vertebrates in science class, students volunteered at a local animal shelter, working with animals that were abandoned or abused. They then wrote articles or went on the media to make appeals for homes for these animals. In a sense, they became ‘animal activists’ to stop the abuse of God’s creatures.”
- “Students used their fine-arts skills as part of our service-learning program. The drama team and Puppet Ministry brought various plays to children at community centers, other schools, or the less fortunate in nursing homes or hospitals.”

A number of service-learning models have been successfully implemented in higher education. In some institutions, for example, all students complete certain service-learning requirements, such as service-oriented...
1. International Rescue and Relief students from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, provided medical clinics for Miskito Indian villages in Nicaragua during their three-month stay in 2012.

2. Carlos Reyes, a computer-sciences student at Montemorelos University in Mexico, participates in community service on the university’s Day of Kindness and Compassion.

3. Students from Greater New York Academy (New York City) and their sponsor clean up a beach in south Brooklyn after Hurricane Sandy.

4. Juniors and seniors at Calexico Mission School in Calexico, California, take turns each month picking up trash along two miles of Highway 11.

5. A student at Indiana Academy in Cicero, Indiana, volunteers to assist the Birthright Pod, which makes blankets, teddy bears, and other items for women with unplanned pregnancies.
coursework, field activities, and reflections. Programs of study may also include required service-learning courses as part of the student’s major or minor, or the general education curriculum. Sometimes, an extended service-learning field experience serves as a capstone for a department/school’s degree requirements. At the course level, here is a sample of what teachers have been doing:

- **Young Adult Literature:** Students partner with a student in the local school district and read and discuss young adult literature.
- **Human Anatomy:** Students serve at local independent living, assisted-living, and adult daycare centers and observe/analyze the impact of aging.
- **Chemistry:** Students assess and analyze lead content in the paint of older homes; students lead hands-on science projects at middle and high schools.
- **The Exceptional Child:** Students spend time working with children in the local school district special-education program.
- **Christianity and Media:** Students divide into groups based on technical and non-technical skills to create a video documentary of residents at a local health-care facility, which is then given as a gift to the residents’ families.
- **Business:** Students develop business plans for projects to benefit low-income communities.
- **Vocal Pedagogy:** Students offer free voice lessons to a student from the public high school, after which they organize an end-of-semester recital for their students.

**Results of Service Learning**

The results of service learning are significant (Figure 6). In a longitudinal study of college undergraduates, for example, 82 percent reported that the service experience enhanced their understanding of the academic material. Furthermore, service-learning participants were better able to apply class learning to real-world situations.

There were also positive career results. In a sample of “undecided” freshmen, 41 percent of those engaged in service learning during college indicated on a follow-up survey that they now planned to pursue a service-related career, compared to only 18 percent of those who did not participate in service. Additionally, finding a calling or work that is personally satisfying was more likely to be achieved by students who engaged in service-learning experiences.

Overall, participation in service learning showed positive effects on eleven outcome measures:

- Academic performance: GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills
- Leadership: Leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills
- Values: Commitment to activism, promoting racial understanding
- Self-efficacy
- Choice of service career
- Plans to participate in service after college

Perhaps the results of service learning are most clearly reflected in the words of the students themselves: “Through reflecting on my service learning experiences, I developed a deeper understanding of societal issues and the importance of civic engagement. Service-learning has taught me the value of working collaboratively towards a common goal.”

**Figure 6. Benefits of Service Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Students</th>
<th>For Teachers</th>
<th>For Educational Institutions</th>
<th>For the Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enriches personal growth</td>
<td>• Enables teaching outcomes to become more process-oriented</td>
<td>• Supports the mission of the institution</td>
<td>• Introduces innovative programs to address community needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advances intellectual development and academic learning</td>
<td>• Enhances student understanding</td>
<td>• Enriches and enlivens teaching and learning</td>
<td>• Contributes the energy and enthusiasm of young people to meet community needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ignites an awareness of societal issues</td>
<td>• Provides authentic assessment opportunities</td>
<td>• Builds partnerships with the community</td>
<td>• Fosters an ethic of service and civic participation throughout the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develops social responsibility and civic engagement</td>
<td>• Creates new areas of research and scholarship</td>
<td>• Extends campus resources to the community</td>
<td>• Creates potential for additional partnerships and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develops a habit of critical reflection</td>
<td>• Generates opportunities for professional recognition</td>
<td>• Reinforces the value of the “scholarship of engagement”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experiences, I gained intense awareness of myself, the privilege I experience, and the profound injustice lurking in our world.”

“Service has taught me courage, compassion, love, appreciation, teamwork, humility. I have seen hardship and pain and the power that a simple act of kindness holds. And I have been forever changed by the people I have met, worked with, and served.”

“College is not just about the experiences that shape you, but also the way you are able to shape others while you are here. . . . Service has given me the unique and invaluable opportunity to engage in my community, burst the university bubble, and truly make a difference.”

“Service has made me a better person. I am more willing to see other sides of a story, more aware of the great diversity in the world, and more willing to do more for people outside of my immediate community of friends and family.”

“I find that I enjoy living life most when I feel that I am living not just for myself but for other people as well.”

“Service is not just something I do, it is now a part of who I am.”

Ellen White highlights the results of service.38 She notes that service shapes character, develops talent, and provides purpose in life.39 She observes that it deters temptation and offers enduring happiness.40 Most significantly, participation in service deepens one’s relationship with Christ and prepares one for heaven.41

Forward Thinking

What can be done to equip and empower students for a life of service? First, recognize and confirm in your own life that service is an essential dimension of the Christian experience. Sensitize those around you to the biblical foundation and value of service, particularly within the educational setting. Seek innovative and effective avenues of integrating meaningful service with the academic program. Finally, affirm that service is not just a segment of life, but a way of life.

“Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18, NKJV). Throughout Adventist education, let’s break through the confines of a 3D world and enter the fourth dimension! 42

For additional reading, consult the list of Websites online at this address: http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae20137503490.pdf.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. In a similar vein, Ellen White wrote: “What is the essential education for this time? Education means much more than many suppose. True education embraces physical, mental, and moral training, in order that all the powers shall be fitted for the best development, to do service for God and to work for the uplifting of humanity” (Fundamentals of Christian Education [Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publ. Assn., 1923], p. 387).
3. The concept of the enveloping nature of service is embraced by Ellen White: “The powers of the whole being are to be engaged in selfless service. Every talent is to be employed” (Evangelism [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1946], p. 646). “Imbued with the love of Christ, you are to be constrained to perform acts of selfless service until such acts become your life practice” (Counselling on Health [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1951], p. 633). In essence, human beings are gifted for service.
5. Ellen White highlights this concept, “The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men” (Education, p. 16); and “Love and loyalty to Christ are the spring of all true service” (ibid., p. 268).
6. See also 1 Samuel 12:24 and 1 Chronicles 28:9.
7. Martin Luther King, Jr., noted that there is a difference in terms of the question asked: “The first question that the priest asked, the first question the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me? The good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’” (“I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech: The King Center: http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/ive-been-mountaintop-1). Accessed January 9, 2013.
8. Ellen White notes, “Constantly He went about doing good. . . . His life was one of selfless service” (Testimonies for the Church [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948], vol. 9, p. 31); and “With Him love was life, and life was service” (Education, p. 80).
9. “Jesus, the served of all, came to be the servant of all. . . . And those who would partake of His divine attributes, and share with Him the joy of seeing souls redeemed, must follow His example of selfless ministry. All this was comprehended in the words of Jesus, ‘I have given you an example’” (The Desire of Ages [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1940], p. 651).
10. In essence, both volunteerism and service learning are of value and should optimally complement each other on the campus. An academic club, for example, could engage in community-service activities that are connected in some form to the discipline, thus combining features of both volunteerism and service learning.
15. See __________, The Adventist Home (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1952), page 486; and __________, Counselling on Sabbath School Work (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1938), page 129: “Children should be educated in such a way that they may perform selfless acts which heaven will rejoice to see. When the dew of youth is upon them, children should be trained how to do service for Christ.”
their fresh talent, energy, and courage, their quick susceptibilities, are loved of God. . . . They are to be trained, to do missionary work in the surrounding towns and villages. They can form themselves into bands to do Christian help work.”

18. “Cooperation should be the spirit of the schoolroom, the law of its life. . . . Let the older assist the younger, the strong the weak; and, so far as possible, let each be called upon to do something in which he excels. This will encourage self-respect and a desire to be useful” (Education, p. 285). “The Great Teacher cooperates with all the efforts made to relieve suffering humanity. Teach the students to make a practical application of the lessons they have received. As they witness human woe and the deep poverty of those they are trying to help, they will be stirred with compassion. . . . We must now see what can be done to educate the students in practical missionary work” (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1952), p. 106).

19. Adapted from Whitworth University, Center for Service-Learning and Community Engagement: http://www.whitworth.edu/Academic/Programs/ServiceLearning/Faculty.htm. Accessed January 9, 2013.

20. See Education, page 269. Teams are sometimes referred to as SALT (Service and Learning Teams).


22. See Education, pages 29 and 30. Also, “It is not enough to fill the minds of the youth with lessons of deep importance; they must learn to impart what they have received. . . . God bestows His gifts upon us that we may minister to others and thus become like Him. . . . In unselfish service for the blessing of others he [the student] is meeting the high ideal of Christian education” (Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 545).


24. This support includes selling service learning to the entire staff and student body as a core educational component that is vital to the institution’s mission, and providing practical, logistical, and moral support, along with help with problem solving.

25. A more detailed explanation of these stages, developed by the Search Institute and the Interfaith Youth Core, can be found at the “Inspired to Serve” Website: http://www.inspiredtoserve.org. Accessed January 9, 2013.

26. It is mission-critical to deal early on with students’ attitudes toward those they are going to serve, and to help sensitiz e them to other cultures as well as similarities and differences between themselves and others.

27. It may be necessary, as well, to deal with students whose prejudices and/or preconceptions may have been reinforced by their interactions with “the other,” particularly in terms of racism and classism. Preventing the reinforcement of negative attitudes requires careful introduction of the project, as well as debriefing and reflection after the service project is completed.

28. Contributed by Sherril Davis, Keren Tacone, and Karen Taylor. The statement has been minimally edited for style and space constraints. Global Youth Service Day, which takes place each year, typically in the month of April, is an opportunity to participate in an international network dedicated to youth service (Website: http://gysd.org). Accessed January 9, 2013.

29. Coursework may include general-education requirements, such as a Biblical Foundations of Service or Philosophy of Service Learning course, a service fieldwork course, and/or a specified number of credits in courses that carry a “Service Learning” designation. Another approach requires a certain number of hours of service-learning activities each year the student is in residence, with periodic reports and/or reflections (e.g., for each 10 hours of service completed, a two-page reflection paper must be submitted, along with corresponding documentation).


35. Astin, et al., How Service Learning Affects Students, op. cit. Furthermore, in a comparison of service learning and community service not linked to academic learning goals, the effect of service learning was stronger for both writing skills and college GPA. Additionally, students who completed service as part of a course exhibited the most dramatic shifts in career choice, as compared to students who engaged in community service disconnected from their coursework.

36. Astin, et al., How Service Learning Affects Students, op. cit. Further, in a comparison of service learning and community service not linked to academic learning goals, the effect of service learning was stronger for both writing skills and college GPA. Additionally, students who completed service as part of a course exhibited the most dramatic shifts in career choice, as compared to students who engaged in community service disconnected from their coursework.