



# *The Future of Service Learning*



[www.SweatMonkey.org](http://www.SweatMonkey.org)

## **SweatMonkey.org® invites students, schools, and community members to identify needs, find opportunities for support, track their efforts, and measure impact and change.**

SweatMonkey.org® is designed to cultivate service learning, community service, and civic engagement by **empowering students to enact change** in their communities. Using dynamic social media tools to connect students with organizations, SweatMonkey.org® provides a searchable database of volunteer and intern opportunities.

### **Students can...**

- track their hours online
- have their hours verified by the organization
- journal about their volunteering experiences

SweatMonkey.org® then generates a “**résumé**” or “**service-learning transcript**” showing all hours they’ve served with various organizations.

### **Instructors and administrators can...**

- assign community service projects, completely eliminating paperwork
- create detailed reports of students' hours volunteered and community involvement
- provide schools and districts with robust data about students' experiences and the impact on local communities

*Soon SweatMonkey.org® will be able to **sync with school record systems** to append service hours to students' academic transcripts.*

In 2007-2008<sup>i</sup>, approximately **14.6 million K-12 students in the U.S.** engaged in community service to fulfill requirements for high school graduation or to be eligible for merit-based scholarships. In Florida, almost 200,000 students complete 60-75 hours (or more) of community service each year, in order to earn Bright Futures Scholarships or CAS hours for IB Diplomas.

Over the past decade, especially within the past few years, the number of college students engaging in **Community Service & Service Learning** has increased dramatically<sup>ii</sup>, as colleges and universities across the nation have implemented new offices and programs to foster student engagement in local communities. **Some colleges now require community service involvement for graduation** and are integrating this information on students' academic transcripts. In fact, recently proposed federal legislation has set a goal for *all high school students to complete 50 hours of community service each year*<sup>iii</sup>, and for *all students to complete 100 hours of service while in college*<sup>iv</sup>.

With literally **millions of youth volunteers** (and hundreds of thousands in Florida), **few resources exist** to find service opportunities, track students' hours, monitor their progress, and measure their impact.

**SweatMonkey.org® was developed to meet this need.**



**Florida Learn & Serve** created a guide<sup>v</sup> outlining the eight “best practices” for Service Learning, developed through extensive research over the past two decades by the National Youth Leadership Council. For the past ten years, Florida Learn & Serve has created a document that identifies, assembles, organizes, and composes examples of the ways that service-learning addresses education standards<sup>vi</sup>.

**SweatMonkey.org® helps instructors and administrators *meet and exceed* these best practices.**

**SweatMonkey.org® is a best practice for schools and school districts.**

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 1) LINK TO CURRICULUM

Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

#### Indicators:

1. Service-learning (SL) has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. SL is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curriculum.
3. SL helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
4. SL that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 2) MEANINGFUL SERVICE

Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

#### Indicators:

1. SL experiences are appropriate to participants' ages and developmental abilities.
2. SL addresses issues that are personally relevant to participants.
3. SL provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. SL encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. SL leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

## **SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- Instructors can create groups for their students, posting assignments and stating their learning goals.
- Institutions that officially adopt SweatMonkey.org® can provide their students with a portal branded to the school.
- SweatMonkey.org® creates service-learning transcripts for students that can be synced with school records systems, append service hours to student transcripts.

## **SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- An easily searchable or browsable database of community service opportunities
- The "Groups" feature allows instructors to post information, helping students understand the issues they are learning about by volunteering.
- Volunteers and community organizations may use a "Community" section of SweatMonkey.org® to post videos and stories about their community service experiences, issue service minded challenges, and fully measure community impact.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 3) YOUTH VOICE

Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences.

#### Indicators:

1. SL engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation process.
2. SL involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the SL experiences.
3. SL involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. SL promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
5. SL involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the SL experience.

## SweatMonkey.org® *meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:*

- SweatMonkey.org® was originally created and designed by a teenager, providing an interactive platform for students to engage in their communities
- Students can dialogue online with other students, as well as instructors and community members, about their service experiences in focus groups, monitored by administrators.
- Students are empowered to find community service experiences that are of interest to them, by searching or browsing in the database of opportunities.
- Students add their hours into an easy-to-use time log, where they can add “Journal” comments (opting to share or keep private) and provide feedback.
- “Service-learning résumé” or “transcript” that tracks and records students’ community service experiences.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 4) REFLECTION

Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about one’s self and one’s relationship to society.

#### Indicators:

1. SL includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants’ knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
2. SL reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
3. SL reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
4. SL reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
5. SL reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their SL experiences so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.

## SweatMonkey.org® *meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:*

- Students can dialogue online with instructors and community members, about their service experiences and reflect on what they’re learning and how it’s impacting them and their community.
- Students can add additional reflections directly to their hours log as “Journal” comments, reflecting on their experiences. They have the option to share these with their instructors/peers or keep them private.
- The database of service opportunities can be browsed based on a wide range of social issues and community needs.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 5) PARTNERSHIPS

Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

#### Indicators:

1. SL involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. SL partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well- informed about activities and progress.
3. SL partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. SL partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. SL partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

**SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- Students, instructors, schools, and local organizations collaborate on SweatMonkey.org® to fulfill the needs of the community.
- Efficient communication: Students, instructors, and community organizations are able to interact in real time or by e-mail, shout-box, or blogging.
- Students and schools that make the biggest impact on their communities (by volunteering the most hours) are recognized through awards and grants.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 6) DIVERSITY

Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.

#### Indicators:

1. SL helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
2. SL helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
3. SL helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
4. SL encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.

**SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- The nature of the Internet fosters interaction regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, appearance, etc. SweatMonkey.org® gives a voice to youth of all backgrounds.
- Students can create their own affinity "Groups" and challenge their peers to service-learning competitions.
- All local nonprofits can post their needs - whether their issues deal with aging, poverty, homelessness, healthcare, etc. This encourages students to learn about diversity in their own communities.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 7) PROGRESS MONITORING

Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

#### Indicators:

1. SL participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the SL experience.
2. SL participants collect evidence of the quality of SL implementation from multiple sources throughout the SL experience.
3. SL participants use evidence to improve SL experiences.
4. SL participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policymakers and education leaders, to deepen SL understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

**SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- Community organizations can rate students on their efforts and give them feedback for improvement.
- Students can get feedback from faculty by posting their résumés for periodic review in the “Groups” feature.
- Volunteers, students, and community organizations may use an upcoming “Community” section to post videos and stories about their experiences and learn about the impact made on the community.

## Service Learning Best Practice:

### 8) DURATION AND INTENSITY

Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

#### Indicators:

1. SL experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. SL is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. SL experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.

**SweatMonkey.org® meets or exceeds this Best Practice in the following ways:**

- Students can choose to continue working with the organizations, beyond the limited scope of the class assignment (or school/scholarship requirement).
- Students may use SweatMonkey.org® as long as they like, perhaps initiating new endeavors to positively impact their community beyond the classroom.
- Ongoing competitions recognize and award students who make positive impacts in their communities.

# SweatMonkey.org® in Action as a Best Practice

## Polk County School District, Florida: [Tracking On-The-Job Training \(OJT\)](#)

*Situation Before:* The Polk County School District lost \$300,000 due to a state audit that found student time cards in complete disarray.

*Situation After:* SweatMonkey.org® drafted and designed a completely online system utilizing the latest Web2.0 technology—a robust platform that included creation of the first electronically encrypted digital signature time card endorsed by Florida Department of Education. A subsequent audit one year later revealed a new paradigm had begun. SweatMonkey.org® had completely streamlined and improved all aspects of the WorkForce Development Program. Since the 2008-2009 school year, there have been 900 active students tracking 320,000 OJT hours in Polk County. Detailed reports of this information are available to administrators and state auditors 24 hours/day, using SweatMonkey.org®.

## All Saints Academy in Winter Haven, Florida: [Community Service hours](#)

*Situation Before:* All Saints had a paper-based hours tracking procedure that made it very labor-intensive for instructors and administrators to access data about their students' involvement (number of hours volunteered, organizations with which they worked, etc.).

*Situation After:* That information is readily available with the click of a mouse. Students now have a one-stop shop for student involvement and community service.

## University of Florida Center for Leadership & Service: [Service Learning](#)

*Situation Before:* Thousands of students at UF were involved in service, as required for courses or student organizations, and many students chose to volunteer on their own. After choosing not to renew a contract with ServiceLearningPro™, a service that was not user-friendly, UF had reverted to paper documentation. Faculty and administrators did not have specific data about student involvement and could only estimate student involvement.

*Situation After:* Faculty and administrators can not only generate detailed reports of students' hours volunteered, the organizations with which they worked, and feedback from the organization about the students' efforts and impact, but this information can be formatted into a "service-learning transcript" to be synced with the student records system and appended to students' academic transcripts. SweatMonkey.org® also provides students with a "service-learning" résumé. Soon, student groups will be able to issue challenges to each other for who can do the most service hours, and can monitor their progress using SweatMonkey.org®. Not only are more students volunteering, exact data about their involvement is readily available to the students themselves as well as faculty and administrators.

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- i [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08\\_1112\\_lsa\\_prevalence.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08_1112_lsa_prevalence.pdf) page 10
  - ii “College student volunteering increased by approximately 20 percent between 2002 and 2005, as students have become involved in helping their communities,”  
[http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role\\_impact/performance\\_research.asp#COLLEGE](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp#COLLEGE)
  - iii “...set a goal that all middle school and high school students engage in 50 hours of community service a year,” <http://change.gov/americaserves/>
  - iv “Require 100 Hours of Service in College: Establish a new American Opportunity Tax Credit worth \$4,000 a year in exchange for 100 hours of public service a year,”  
[http://change.gov/agenda/service\\_agenda/](http://change.gov/agenda/service_agenda/)
  - v <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/resources/SL%20Standards%20for%20SL%20in%20FL.pdf>
  - vi <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/sl/standards.html>

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## Self-Evaluation for Schools

### Service Learning Best Practice #1: **Service is Linked to Curriculum**

Does your school district provide an easy to use platform for instructors to create service-learning projects & assignments and monitor student progress?

### Service Learning Best Practice #2: **Service is Meaningful**

Does your school district help students connect to their communities by giving them a dynamic search tool where they can find service opportunities that are interesting and engaging?

### Service Learning Best Practice #3: **Service Develops Youth Voice**

Does your school district give students an interactive platform where they can share stories about their involvement in their communities and how they have created positive impacts on the lives of others?

### Service Learning Best Practice #4: **Reflection**

Does your school district offer students, instructors, and community organizations a program where they can all join in a discussion of the importance of their service experiences and reflect on how their service connects to large social issues?

### Service Learning Best Practice #5: **Partnerships**

Does your school district offer a simple and efficient way for students, instructors, administrators, schools, and local organizations to collaborate in order to fulfill the needs of the community and enhance the learning of the students?

### Service Learning Best Practice #6: **Diversity**

Does your school district empower youth from all backgrounds, regardless of their gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, appearance, etc. to learn about diversity in their own communities, by connecting through service learning experiences?

### Service Learning Best Practice #7: **Progress Monitoring**

Does your school district provide an easy to use mechanism for students to receive feedback about their progress from both instructors and community organizations to improve their performance and maximize the quality of their impact?

### Service Learning Best Practice #8: **Duration & Intensity**

Does your school district promote ongoing interaction between students and their communities by providing an online service learning tool, available 24/7, where:

- Organizations post opportunities for student volunteers, interns, and workers
- Students search and find interesting opportunities and track their hours with the click of a mouse
- Instructors & Schools easily create reports, measuring impact and positive outcomes