

# TEN PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

## An Effective and Sustained Program for Combining Service and Learning

**O**n May 10-12, The Johnson Foundation convened a group of 17 leaders of service organizations, schools, universities and national associations to draft a set of "Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning," which would address the critical link between service and learning.

More than 75 organizations from around the country had been involved in this effort for several years under the auspices of the National Society of Internships and Experiential Education. The final group drew extensively from that work in identifying a set of ten key principles that could apply to all levels of service programs—school-based programs for youth, community-based programs, service corps programs, campus-based programs and volunteering in the private sector. The group grounded its Principles in assumptions about American life that it expressed in a preamble (see box).

The ten Principles drafted by the working group address such key components as the worth of the service experience to both the individual doing the service and the constituency receiving the service; the importance of building in structured opportunities for reflecting on the service experience; the need for building service partnerships involving mutual respect and mutual benefit for all involved.

The Johnson Foundation plans to publish the Principles, with amplified descriptions and appropriate examples, for broad distribution to service programs, schools and

national organizations throughout the country in late summer.

The Foundation noted that the Principles are intended to be guidelines only, and to serve as benchmarks by which service programs can examine their mission, goals, activities, and participation to insure that the learning component of the service experience is an integral part of the activity. The writers of the Principles, together with the representatives of the many organizations that contributed to their development, state clearly that they should be used in the context of each local organization's particular needs and purposes.

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*The Johnson Foundation, Inc., is a private operating foundation headquartered in Racine, Wisconsin. The Foundation functions principally as a convenor of educational and international conferences, which, with few exceptions, are held at Wingspread, the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed former home of H.F. Johnson, grandson and founder of S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc. (Johnson Wax). (The following Principles were drafted at Wingspread). The Johnson Foundation operates in several principal program areas including international affairs, education, the family and society.*

## **PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN COMBINING SERVICE AND LEARNING**

### *PREAMBLE*

As a nation founded upon active citizenship and participation in community life, we have always believed that individuals can and should serve. It is crucial that service toward the common good be combined with reflective learning to assure that service programs of high quality can be created and sustained over time, and to help every person appreciate how service can be a significant and ongoing part of life. Service, combined with learning, adds value to each and transforms both. Those who serve and those who are served are thus able to develop the informed judgment, imagination and skills which lead to greater capacity to contribute to the common good.

1. Engages people in responsible and appropriately challenging actions for the common good.
2. Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
3. Acknowledges that those with needs define their needs.
4. Has genuine, active and sustained organizational commitment.
5. Articulates clear service and learning goals for all parties involved.
6. Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
7. Incorporates an ongoing process for matching resources and needs for the mutual benefit of all concerned.
8. Insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate and in the best interests of all involved.
9. Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
10. Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.