

## FOUR CORNERS

### Purpose

- To gain understanding of the five stages of service learning
- To collaborate in developing ideas and analyzing social issues and their underlying causes
- To distinguish between different types of action

### Materials

Teacher sample of Four Corners  
easel paper  
markers, one per student  
sticky notes, about 6 per person

**Time** 60 minutes

### Terms

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| • investigation | • demonstration |
| • preparation   | • advocacy      |
| • action        | • research      |
| • reflection    | • disruption    |

### Background

During Four Corners, participants experience the five stages of service learning process with emphasis on investigation, preparation, and action. Through guided prompts and a sequence of group interactions, these concepts become avenues for discovery. Paramount is offering minimal directions and reliance on teamwork and interactions within and between groups for interpretation, planning and doing assigned tasks. Once familiar with Four Corners, elements can be customized for a variety of learning opportunities. What results is a visual mandala of a service learning process and concept that can certainly lead to continued preparation and implementation. This lesson introduces aspects of considerations when taking action:

1. Echoes of Our Action—applying gained knowledge to ourselves, within school, extended into the community, and global connections. Often participants are ready to apply action towards others; self-awareness and growth is a significant aspect of service learning.
2. Ethics of Our Action—considerations of whether the service is kind, helpful, compassionate, and/or disruptive.

In the world of online e-commerce, innovators are looking for ways to disrupt business as usual. This offers a new context for educators who often align disruption as an undesirable behavior. However, recently, the term is getting a makeover within education as something we are looking for to make a sustainable shift in how we think about situations and conditions.

### Opening

- Participants stand and find partners; as an option partners can be assigned or randomly paired as they enter the room. Two pairs combine to form a group of four (odd numbers may require a group of five). These small groups gather around an easel paper, each person having a marker

**21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SKILLS of Critical and Inventive Thinking, Communication and Information Access, Civic Literacy are developed along with Core Values as students:**

- apply interests, skills and talents to needs
- extend ideas
- collaborate
- organize ideas
- analyze terms
- conceptualize understanding
- solve problems
- transfer ideas
- incorporate change as a constructive concept

and a pen. This is their Four Corners Group. Relate how in many cultures the number “four” has significance as representing the “whole.” There are expressions like “the four corners of the earth,” and we have four directions—north, south, east, and west. This idea of “four corners” will set a direction for understanding the service learning process.

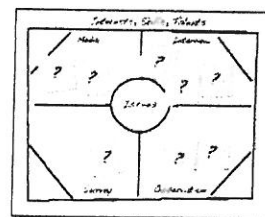
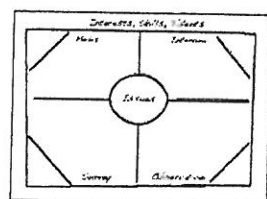
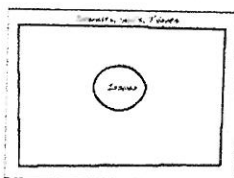
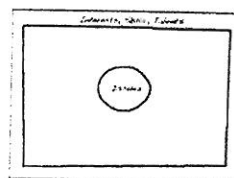
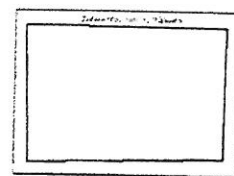
## Process

A Teacher sample of Four Corners is

**Note:** Anytime during this process pause to ask, What is this process like? What have you discovered? What skills are you using? What have you learned?

## The Stages of Service Learning: Investigation

- Use an easel paper as a model. Draw a frame on the easel paper. In the group of four, pairs interview each other and represent within the frame, their interests, skills and talents. The term “represent” is used intentionally so the option of words or images are up to the individual. Allow four minutes.
- Place a circle in the middle of the paper. Inside the circle, the group collectively lists all causes or issues of concern (hunger, pollution, cyberbullying). Allow three minutes. Then circle one item as the topic for this experience.
- Using sticky notes, each person writes two to four questions regarding the topic, one question per sticky note. Allow a few minutes. Students sort and categorize the questions; sometimes priorities and categories emerge. Additional questions can be added.
- Add eight additional lines to the inside section of the frame: four corners, and two vertical and two horizontal lines from the center circle. On the model to demonstrate for the participants, write in small print the words Media, Interview, Survey, and Observation where shown. Have the participants place the questions in the action research modality (may be more than one) best suited for obtaining answers. Then allow fifteen minutes (adjust as needed) for participants to conduct the action research, for example, they can use whatever is available—books, newspapers, or internet; interviews can be conducted by interrupting others (participants and adults—you may ask for others to stop in) to ask questions, create a three-question opinion or fact finding survey and ask class members or others, and do observation as they can. Allowing participants to be inventive with fewer directions works well. Participants document findings on their paper (sticky notes, whatever means they can).
- Allow several minutes for the groups to share their findings with each other and then ask the entire class, What happened? What did we do? What did we learn about the process of action research? How can this inform what we do in service? Were any needs emerging? How can we apply this approach outside the classroom?



## The Stages of Service Learning: Preparation

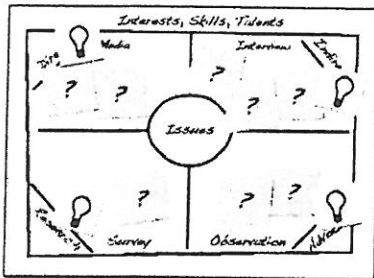
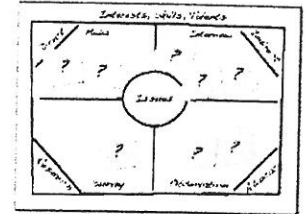
- Option: For five minutes, have participants consider what knowledge and skills will be needed to

be better prepared for taking action. These can be noted on sticky notes or in any other ingenious way, or . . .

- Option: For a few minutes, generate ideas as a class for knowledge and skills needed. Common skills and knowledge may be needed even if diverse topics are selected.

### The Stages of Service Learning: Action

- On their paper, in the corners, write (upper left) Direct, (upper right) Indirect, (lower left) Advocacy, and (lower right) Research. Participants generate ideas of service for each category based on what they have discovered so far. Explain that this requires reasoned judgment since they will need to authenticate the need especially with any potential



partners before confirming their action.

**Note:** Remind participants to reference and incorporate their interests, skills, and talents as they determine ideas for action.

- As a group, participants add two more considerations to their ideas for action, again using sticky notes. Determine which of these actions can be applied to Self (their own behavior), School (impact in knowledge or behaviors), Community (outside the school setting), and the World (for example through extended partnerships or media).
- Next, note which of these actions are kind, helpful, compassionate, or disruptive. To clarify the term disruptive in this context, see Background.
- Allow four minutes for participants, in their groups, to prepare an elevator pitch that summarizes their identified need and approach to action. Reference the document *What's Your Elevator Speech?* Deliver the speeches.

### Closing

- Vary the closing as is appropriate. This could include:
  - A museum walk to see all the group work.
  - Discussions of putting their ideas into action.
  - Determining what needs to be learned and what skills need to be acquired moving forward.
- Reference *The Five Stages of Service Learning: A Dynamic Process* to review what participants experienced. Ask participants for any new insights and understandings about how the service learning process works and can be beneficial to all involved.

### Follow-up

- Participants may want to repeat this process or lead it with teachers or participants.
- The easel papers created can be helpful to show others the dynamics of service learning, in particular, the benefits of incorporating action research into learning.

