Service-Learning Symposium

Uniting for Good: A Virtual Gathering

April 22, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. CDT | Online (Virtual)

Full Day Agenda

Time (CDT)	Session
10:00 – 10:45 a.m.	Welcome & Opening Session
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Workshop Block 1
12:00 – 12:45 p.m.	Break & Energizer
12:45 – 1:45 p.m.	Workshop Block 2
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Workshop Block 3
3:15 – 4:00 p.m.	Closing Session

Uniting For Good Opening Session
10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. CDT

Transforming Students and Communities

The Service-Learning Symposium opens with *Uniting for Good*, a dynamic session that brings together educators, youth leaders, nonprofit partners, and community changemakers who share a common belief: when young people are given meaningful opportunities to lead and serve, communities grow stronger.

Participants will hear inspiring stories and insights from leaders in the field who are advancing service-learning in schools and communities across the country. Together, we will reflect on the growing need to create spaces where young people can share their voices, collaborate with others, and take action on issues that matter to them.

At a time when communities face complex challenges, and young people are searching for purpose and belonging, service-learning offers a powerful pathway forward. By connecting academic learning with real-world problem solving, service-learning helps young people develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to contribute to their communities and shape a better future.

Together, we will explore what becomes possible when communities unite around a shared commitment to youth leadership, civic engagement, and the power of learning through service.

Workshop Block 1
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CDT

IGNITE: Launching the Service-Learning and Democracy Framework

Amy Meuers

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)

At a time when young people are navigating complex civic realities, IGNITE is the official launch of NYLC's Service-Learning in Democracy Framework — a bold, research-informed approach designed to equip educators and youth leaders with tools to cultivate civic identity, critical thinking, and collective action. This interactive workshop introduces the core components of the framework and explores how service-learning can serve as a powerful lever for strengthening democratic participation.

Co-presenter: Pam Siebert and Julie Rogers Bascom

Growing Leaders: Youth-Teacher Co-Leadership for Rural Service-Learning and Systems Change

Allyson Morgan

East Jackson High School

This youth–teacher co-led session highlights how a rural school is building a youth-driven service-learning and STEM ecosystem through a USDA grant. Students and teachers share how their Youth Advisory Committee leads needs assessments, designs projects, and collaborates with partners to address food security, environmental stewardship, and STEM access. Attendees engage in a student-facilitated design sprint.

New Era of Youth Service in America

Mike Minks

Youth Service America (YSA)

This session will feature Youth Service America sharing the results of the 2026 Prevalence Survey of Youth Participation in America's K-12 Schools, a panel discussion featuring education leaders representing 2025 National Gold Ribbon School Districts in Service-Learning honorees, an announcement of the K-12 schools being honored as 2026 National Gold Ribbon Schools in Service-Learning, and an opportunity for participants to provide input into YSA's New Era of Youth Service in America national strategy to double youth participation over the next decade. Throughout, we'll highlight strategies and effective practices K-12 schools are using to address the most common barriers to increasing student participation in service and service-learning.

Youth as Solutions: Youth Voice in City Decision-Making

Syed Murtaza-Rose

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)

Move beyond traditional youth engagement and discover what happens when cities truly partner with youth. Hear from three cities across the country that have integrated youth-led teams using the service-learning framework — empowering young people to move from identifying challenges to implementing high-impact community solutions.

Co-presenter: Members of the Youth as Solutions Teams

Engaged, Educated, and Empowered Youth — Human Trafficking and Social Media Safety

Sheila Larang Whittle

Project Protect Our Children

This session equips young people with clear, practical knowledge about human trafficking, warning signs, healthy relationships, online safety, and trusted resources. Attendees also learn about the Youth Action Board — a student-led movement to raise awareness and lead real change in middle and high schools.

International Perspectives on Service-Learning

Luz Avruj

CLAYSS (Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario)

An international perspective on service-learning practices, sharing insights and models from Latin America that connect youth civic action with academic learning and community development across borders.

Workshop Block 2
12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. CDT

Youth-Led Social Action: From Foundations to Systems Change
Amanda LeGrande

Gateway High School

A team of teens from an alternative high school built a student-driven plan to reduce absenteeism. They demonstrate how they defined the problem with student voice, analyzed data, interviewed stakeholders, and co-designed solutions. Participants receive a handbook with ready-to-use templates and leave with the four-step cycle: Define, Delve, Design, and Deliver.

Co-presenter: Kay Augustine

STEM and Service-Learning: Near-Peer Mentorship in Action
Deborah Ivie

Utah State University / Utah 4-H

Follow Utah 4-H STEM and Ag Project Ambassadors through a year-long service-learning process — creating curriculum, training county-based youth leaders in grades 7–12, and leading STEM camps in their own communities. Includes hands-on, youth-created activities for participants.

Mentors: Successes, Failures, and Tools
Emiliana Korin

NYLC Youth Advisory Council

Centering youth voice, this session offers practical and experience-based tools for adults working alongside young people in service-learning spaces. NYLC YAC member Emiliana shares insights from launching a podcast, completing a two-year capstone, and navigating spaces where youth voice is present in theory — but not always in practice.

NeuroPack: Brain-Based Strategies for Youth-Powered Collective Action
Shei Ascencio

NeuroPack

This workshop introduces core principles of Mind, Brain, and Education (MBE) Science — focusing on how dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin shape motivation, belonging, and community behavior. Participants explore a brain-informed action planning model that guides them from insight to implementation, designing student-led initiatives that cultivate kindness, resilience, and systems-level impact.

Co-presenter: Dom Verwey

Workshop Block 3

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. CDT

Empowering Youth: Achieving the State Seal of Civic Engagement Through Service-Learning

Ryan Pinkham

Stockton Unified School District

Discover how Stockton USD leveraged service-learning to help students earn the California State Seal of Civic Engagement. This interactive session equips educators with knowledge and tools to use service-learning as a pathway to the State Seal, with lessons from successfully embedding it district-wide.

Co-presenter:Julie Rogers Bascom

Designing Ethically Responsible Community Research to Support Service Opportunities

Ross Velure Roholt

University of Minnesota

How do we know what a community genuinely needs? This session explores research methods for conducting needs assessments that ensure all stakeholders' voices are heard and ethical standards are followed. Methods range from simple to complex and can work whether you have two hours, two weeks, or more.

Co-presenter: Pam Siebert

Building Leadership in Youth Through Program Jobs

Shira Wolf-Cohen

Innovageous

This interactive workshop explores how classrooms and programs can intentionally design youth roles that mirror real-world responsibilities — giving young people opportunities to practice leadership, receive feedback, and co-own programs alongside adults. Participants leave with strategies to build student agency, ownership, and readiness for life beyond school.

Youth Redefining Civic Engagement Through Technology and Service

Leah Mordehai

VR'ing Democracy

Youth leaders Emily Gorodetskiy and Leah Mordehai explore how technology and service intersect to foster empathy, amplify youth voices, and build more inclusive systems of governance. Topics include VR-based voter education, youth policy engagement, and their co-created AI platform PlainPolicy, which simplifies legislation for everyday citizens.

Co-presenter: Emily Gorodetskiy

Elevating Youth Voice Through Service-Learning: A Pathway to SEL and Civic Engagement

Susan Ward-Roncolli

LAUSD (Retired)

Unleash the power of youth voice and leadership through service-learning! This session explores how engaging young people in solving community problems fosters social-emotional learning, civic engagement, and real-world skills. Discover research-backed strategies to co-create meaningful opportunities that drive lasting impact.

Co-presenter: Feven Tesfaye

Uniting For Good Closing Session
3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. CDT

Youth Voices Leading the Way

What does it look like when young people don't just participate in change but lead it?

To close out Uniting for Good, we pass the mic to the young people at the heart of this work. In this reflective and energizing session, youth from across the country share what they've learned, what they're still working toward, and what they need from the adults and organizations who stand alongside them.

Through storytelling, dialogue, and a collective call to action, this closing session reminds us why we're all here — and challenges us to go back to our communities ready to listen first, and follow their lead.

Presenters: coming soon!