

# Service-Learning in Upper Elementary: Implications for Writing Instruction

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## Abstract

Service-learning is an approach to instruction that offers the unique connection of community engagement with academic aims. In this case study, I partnered with an educator to gain understanding of writing instruction embedded in service-learning to address the problem of diminished engagement as upper elementary students transition to junior high school. A postcritical orientation to literacy underpins this work, inviting an expanded view of participants and the productions of their encounters, with a focus on opportunities for relationship building in writing instruction. I collected data through semi-structured interviews with the teacher, conversations from shared readings, observations during in-class and online instruction, and artefact analysis. I used thematic analysis to identify findings related to the design and facilitation of writing instruction through service learning, rhizoanalysis to locate salient assemblages, and writing as an analytical process. The findings of the study reveal that: service-learning provides possibilities for many forms and modes of writing, connecting service-learning with writing instruction can highlight student learning needs and service-learning can support feedback cycles to improve writing. Additional findings include mappings and descriptions of salient assemblages and their productions, while instances of social change described as becomings are included as findings connected to postcritical literacy. I provide practical considerations for educators and avenues for future research. This study provides insight to educators in the field, school leaders, curriculum designers, and pre-service teacher education programs.

**Keywords:** Case study, community, post critical, relationships, social change