

# From English Learners to English Users: Supporting Communication Skills through Project-based Service Learning



**Presenters:**

**Amie VanHorn-Gabel,  
Livonia Public Schools, MI, USA  
Silvija Marniković, ELTAM**

# Community Is at the Heart of Project-based Service-Learning



**Community  
Engaged  
Learning**

# Service-Learning Overview

## Reciprocity

Fosters mutual beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources of its stakeholders.

## Meaningful

Employs community-based, service-focused experiences to meet course objectives, cultivate agency and a global mindset.

## Structured

Engages participants in developing, sharing, and critically reflecting on theoretical objectives and practical experience.

“The main purpose of SLSA is to help create authentic, synergic spaces wherein program goals are collectively pursued in ways that honor and privilege the host community while contributing to the growth of all involved.”

(Tomaš, Van Horn-Gabel & Marniković, 2020).

# Our Study Abroad Service-Learning Project

Ulcinj, Montenegro  
Summer 2018 and 2019

**Who?** Eastern Michigan University (EMU) TESOL professor and pre- and in-service teachers; EFL learners, educators, and families from the host community.

**What?** Community-Engaged/Service-Learning Study Abroad (CESA) program, designed to support pre- and in-service teachers and local EFL students at a two-week language institute.

**Where?** The Eastern Michigan University campus and the primary school Marko Nukulovic, in Ulcinj, Montenegro.

# Why?



## Teacher Preparation:

- Master oral language pedagogy in TESOL
- Include experiential learning in teaching
- Expand intercultural competence
- Increased confidence in teaching
- Enrich professional development opportunities
- Allow pre- and in-service teachers to earn course credits Listening and Speaking Methods and Cultural Issues



# Why?

## Community Focus:

- An affordable English learning program led by NESTs
- Expand intercultural communication in a tourist-oriented community
- The want for improved visibility of the school
- Opportunity for professional development workshops for (E)FL teachers



# Project-Based Learning Components

## Team Building

- Create classroom rules together - *while trust may take time to develop, respect must be present.*
- Encourage to look to one another for ideas, support and feedback.
- Model cooperative and collaborative behaviors.





# Team Building Samples

18<sup>th</sup> June, 2018  
Doohko Strugar

## Summer School CONTRACT

Day 1-8:30

Lessons each day: Each day → Mon 25<sup>th</sup> June - Fri 29<sup>th</sup> June

Lesson 1: 9:00-10:15  
Break: 15 minutes

Lesson 2: 10:30-11:50 (or 11:45)

To bring:

- 1) sandwich (bratwich/water)
- 2) notebook
  - pen/pencil
  - eraser
  - coloured pencils/crayons/200 bp pen

Don't bring: food or drinks, mobile phone

Discipline and communication:

- You aren't allowed:
  - to use mobile phones (unless you're teachers/teachers tell you what number of information)
  - to speak loudly/communicate
  - to fight or shove anybody
  - to write or draw on walls

Respect the rules!  
You'll be expelled from the course if you don't respect the rules!

Use indicated:

- embrace your English
- communicate with your organizers
- don't touch or move anybody's materials
- don't be afraid of making mistakes/being nervous → that's the spirit of learning
- communicate as much as possible during the course!
- take the opportunity
- see the "big picture"
- enjoy the day!

Certification → at the end of the course

## Learning Goal: Where are we?

1. 😞
2. 😬
3. 😊
4. 😎

What do you mean?

Can you repeat?

I understand.

I don't understand.

# Team-Building



# Project-Based Learning Components

## Project Design

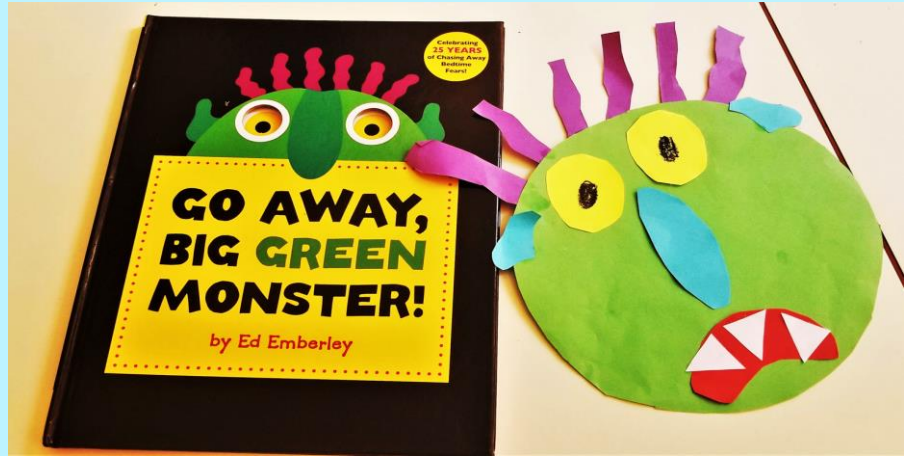
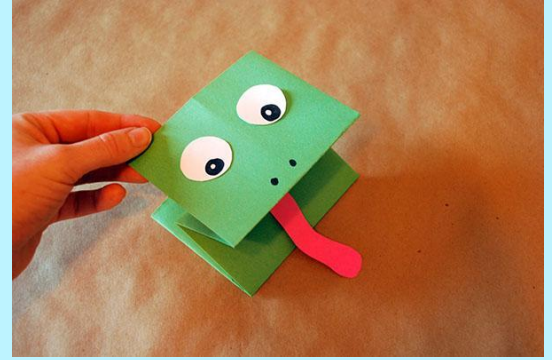
- Students voice and choice - projects involve real-world context and speak to personal concerns and interests
- Foster critical thinking, creative problem solving and agency
- Backward planning: the final goal and how will we get there
- Project Materials: No tools, no craft
- Investigate, plan, take action, reflect/evaluate
- Bring the project back to your community

# Games and Songs



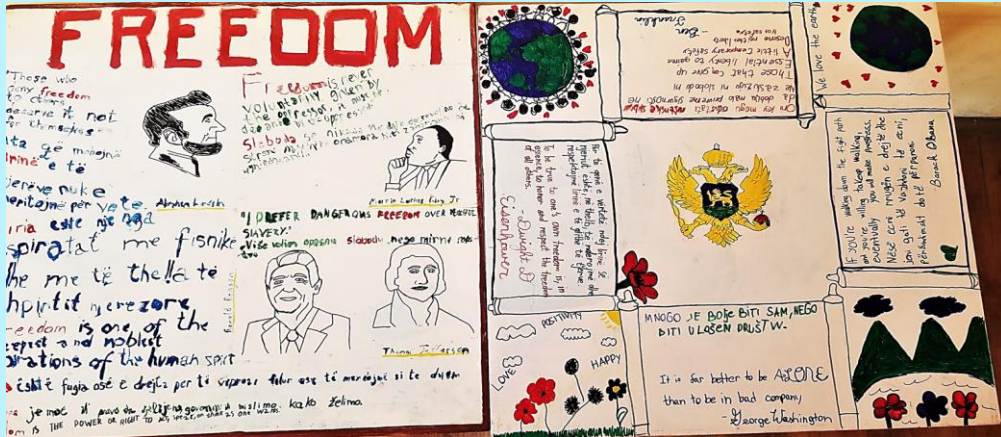
# Go Away Big Green Monster

- 1st and 2nd grade students
- Colors, body parts, size, shapes, emotions and animals vocabulary
- Talking (and writing) about emotions
- TPR, memorizing, repetition



# Freedom - Eternal Inspiration

- 3rd and 4th grade students
- Workshops on the topics of: national symbols, their origin and symbolism, ways of earning one's freedom, democracy, elections, famous proverbs and quotes about freedom.
- Paint and write national symbols and quotes on two tables, in their 1st language(s) and English.



# Everyday Heroes

- Talking and writing about things that make them feel needed, important and powerful: hobbies, interests, everyday acts of kindness, pets, volunteering, friendship
- Making posters and videos with their stories
- Writing and acting out a play about how children can be everyday heroes



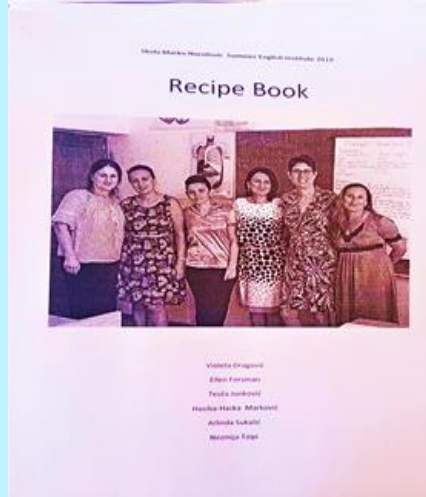
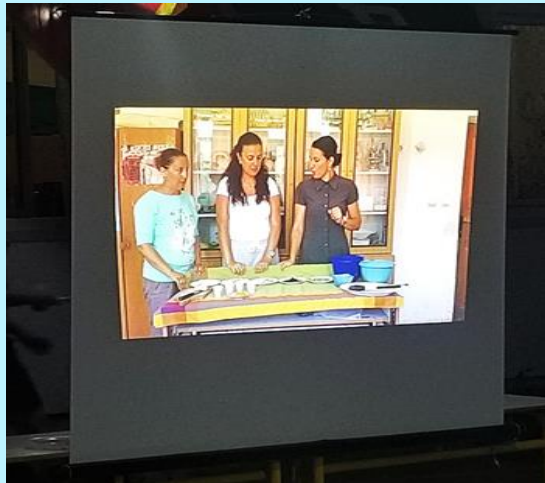






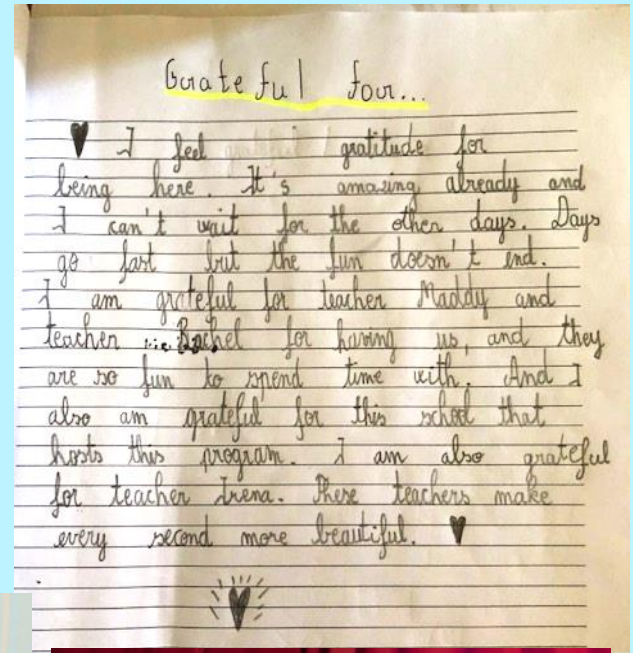
# Recipe book

- Adult learners group
- Collecting and writing recipes of traditional Montenegrin, Albanian and American dishes
- Making a recipe book
- Creating a cooking video



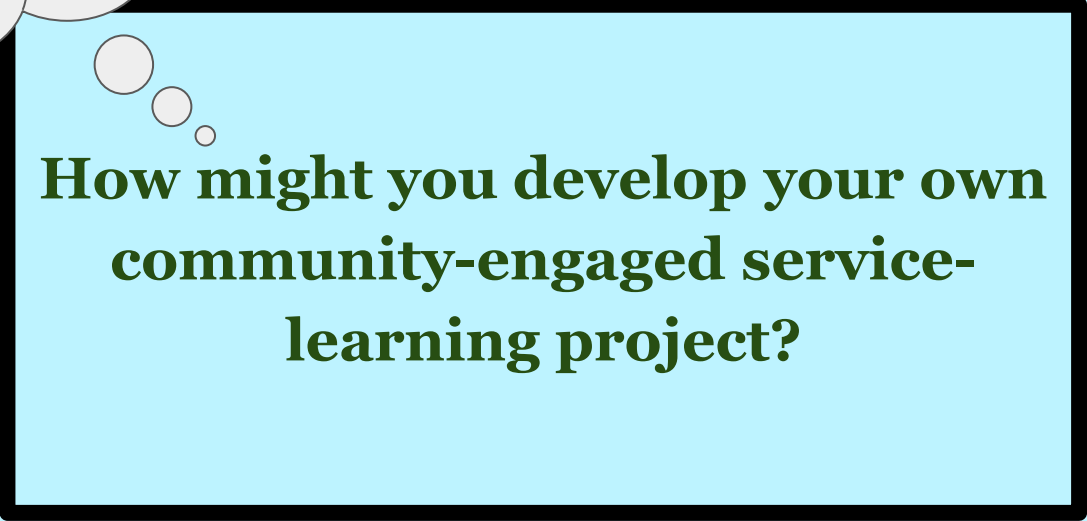
## Benefits for Students

- They began to see themselves more as English users rather than English learners
- Improved communication confidence and learning independence
- Team- and community-building skills
- Heightened commitment to civic engagement





**Stop and Think...**



**How might you develop your own  
community-engaged service-  
learning project?**

# Principles for Developing Community-Engaged Programs

**Principle 1:** Agree on goals, roles, and outcomes

**Principle 2:** Share power, ownership, and resources

**Principle 3:** Prioritize open communication, facilitate rich interactions

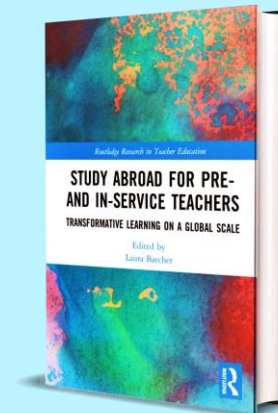
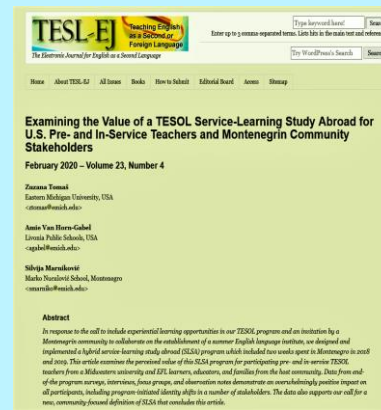
**Principle 4:** Work collaboratively to monitor and evaluate the project

**Principle 5:** Value trust, respectful relationships, and commitment to sustainability

(Tomaš, Van Horn-Gabel, & Marniković, 2020b).

# References

- Tomaš, Z., Van Horn-Gabel, A., & Marniković, S. (2020a). Examining the value of a TESOL service-learning study abroad for U.S. pre-and in-service teachers and Montenegrin community stakeholders. *TESL-EJ*, 23 (4). Retrieved from <http://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej92/a6.pdf>
- Tomaš, Z., Van Horn-Gabel, A., & Marniković, S. (2020b). Thinking locally in a global context: Principles for designing a shared community-engaged study abroad program, pp.213-224. In *Study abroad for pre- and in-service teachers: Transformative learning on a global scale*. Routledge, NY.





“Nobody can discover the world  
for somebody else. Only when  
we discover it for ourselves  
does it become common  
ground and a common bond  
and we cease to be alone.”

– Wendell Berry

