Building a robust, critical service learning program in your AISA-member school

The Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA) has been **committed to service learning** for many years. As a framework and pedagogy for cultivating active global citizenship, community engagement and deep learning, **service learning continues to be part of AISA's strategic plan and vision for all member schools**.

This tool is designed to help you assess where your school is, right now, concerning service learning best practices. It is also designed to help you **create goals** and move your program forward so you have a clear sense of what it might look like to build a **robust, multi-layered, all-school critical service learning program**.

AISA offers many additional resources to support you in your service learning work:

1) We have a **Service Learning Program Coordinator**, LeeAnne Lavender, to help facilitate professional learning (PL) and dialogue throughout the region. Please connect with LeeAnne at llavender@aisa.or.ke.

2) We have an **AISA Service Learning Design Team** composed of experienced service learning educators from a variety of AISA schools. This team meets regularly to plan professional learning, gather data from AISA schools, support a student design team to amplify student leadership in the region, and curate and share stories about service learning from AISA-member schools.

3) We design and offer regular **professional learning** (PL) opportunities for service learning including PL sessions at **AISA-GISS** every year (AISA's Global Issues Service Summit), the annual AISA educators' conference in October, and a variety of online webinars and courses. We also facilitate regular online meetings for our **Service Learning Practice Group** each year and offer an online service learning forum with regular posts.

4) We design and create a variety of resources on our website to support service learning. This includes our **service learning stories** page (featuring a variety of service learning examples and case studies) and a **resource bank**. We also regularly feature **articles and videos** about service learning on our website and our social media channels.

We invite you to use this tool to assess what you are doing to **support active global citizenship through service learning at your school**. When you've completed your self-assessment, consider how you can **grow your practices and program** so you can continuously build impactful and purposeful learning experiences and community engagement for your students.

If you have questions about how to use this tool, please contact LeeAnne at llavender@aisa.or.ke. She would be happy to coach you through maximizing the use of this AISA Service Learning Self-Assessment Tool in your classroom or school.

What is Service Learning?

Service learning is an established research-based pedagogy for teaching and learning that has been implemented for decades in universities and schools all over the world. Successful service learning programs are **embedded within the curriculum** and, based on this integration, can extend opportunities for additional service engagement beyond the curriculum, too.

Service learning involves **teaching and learning that connects academics, personal growth, and civic responsibility with positive and meaningful action in the community (local and/or global)**. Service learning engages students in developing new skills and knowledge through integrated connections to the academic curriculum and opportunities to apply their knowledge in new and purposeful ways.

AISA Service Learning Core Values:

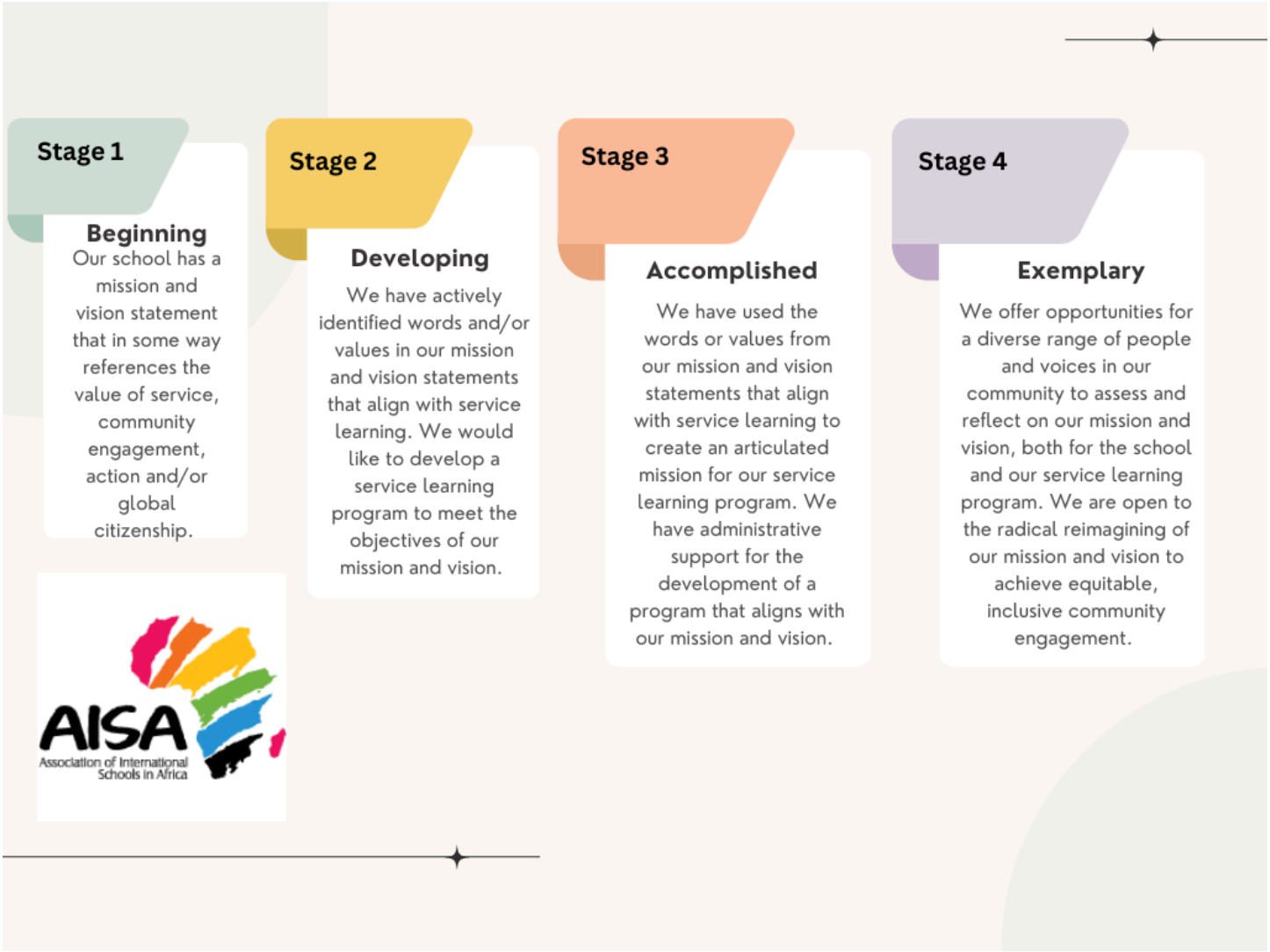
• Service has deeper meaning and impact when integrated into the curriculum.
• Meaningful service is achieved through the five stages of service learning: Investigation, Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration. These stages may be naturally present in an inquiry-based approach or in a design cycle.
• We learn from, and are enriched by, the perspectives of others.
• We have a responsibility to the communities in which we live.
• Meaningful service is best achieved through sustained reciprocal partnerships.
• Leadership, teamwork, communication, deep listening, and inclusion are fundamental for successful and critical service learning experiences.

Left: the Five Stages of Service Learning from Cathryn Berger Kaye's *The Complete Guide to Service Learnin*g. Right: Kath Murdoch's Inquiry Cycle. When planning curriculum and designing units of study for learners of all ages, these cycles align in powerful ways.

A note about the stages in this self-assessment tool: each level builds upon the levels preceding it, so there is an assumption that a school achieving level 3 in any benchmark would also have achieved levels 2 and 1. If you find you have reached targets in any benchmark in varied stages, note which benchmarks you have achieved and which you have not. This will help as you create goals to develop your service learning programs and experiences.

Service Learning Benchmark #1: Mission and Vision

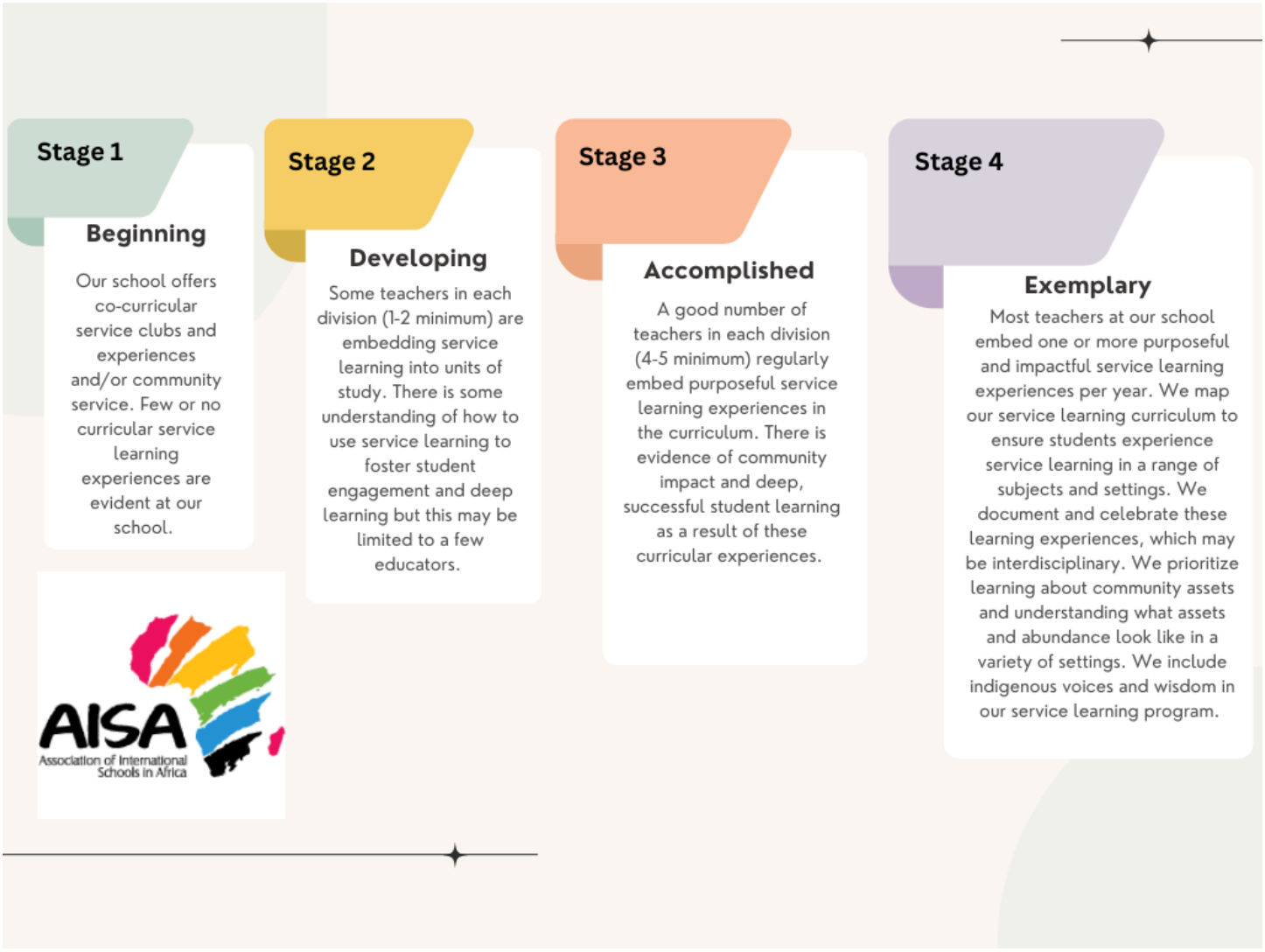
Aligning your school's mission and vision with service learning is foundational and allows you to begin articulating why service learning is key to achieving your school's goals. Consider links between service learning and your school's student learner outcomes, the IB Learner Profile (if applicable) and any other guiding mission and vision statements, as well. Service learning can be a tangible and powerful way to bring your mission and vision to life, and your service learning stories can serve as excellent data for accreditation processes.



Service Learning Benchmark #2: Curricular Integration

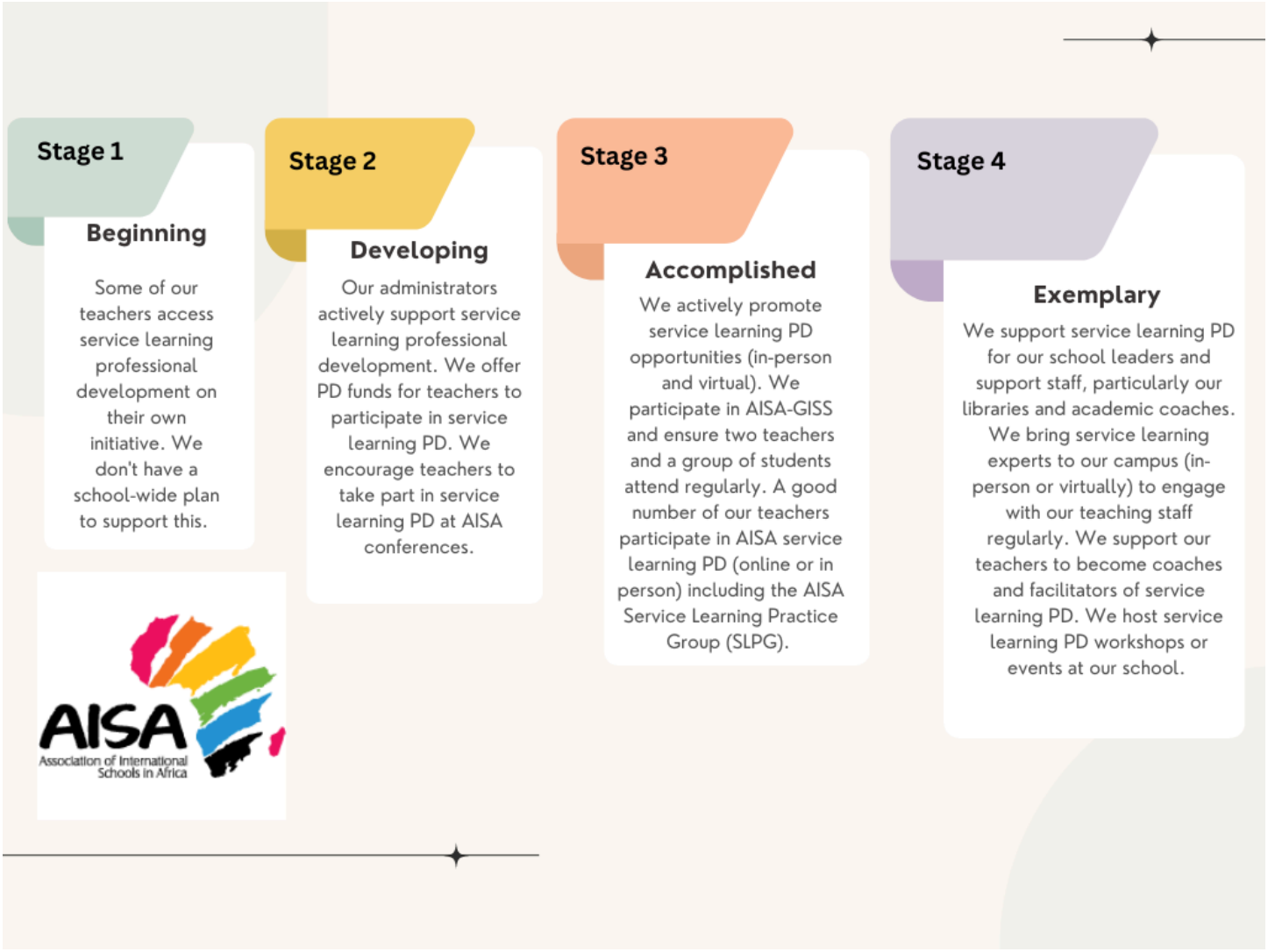
Community service and service learning are two different things. Community service and co-curricular service clubs can be wonderful ways of offering students opportunities to engage in direct service with community partners, and in some schools the principles of service learning may even be used to guide co-curricular service. While this may be appropriate and meaningful, this type of service falls outside the boundaries of what defines true service learning.

Authentic service learning is embedded into your school's PreK-12 curricular program. It can be mapped throughout the curriculum so you can see a student's service learning journey from its beginning (Pre-K or K) to the end (grade 12 and graduation). Students should have a wide variety of service learning experiences in several disciplines and academic settings to engage with civic readiness, global citizenship, advocacy, purposeful community engagement, and the application of academic knowledge and skills in real world contexts, leveraging community assets and addressing any needs identified in collaboration with partners.



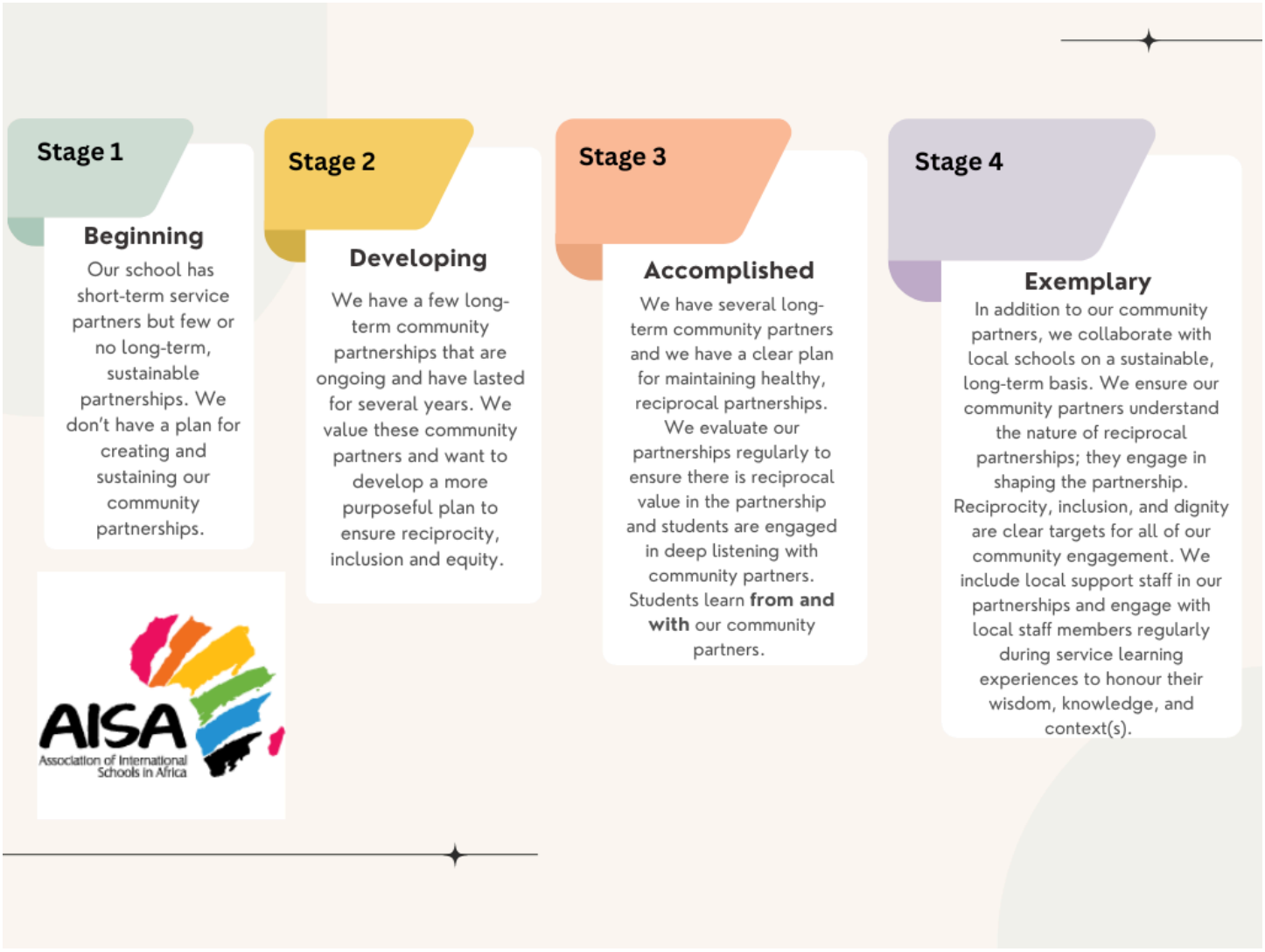
Service Learning Benchmark #3: Professional Learning

Professional learning can take many forms including on-site workshops or conferences (at your school or another school or learning site), online courses, webinars or workshops, as well as one-on-one or small group coaching. AISA also offers open access to a Service Learning Practice Group that meets online several times each year for peer learning and networking, along with an online community of practice with interactive functionality to facilitate professional learning about service learning.



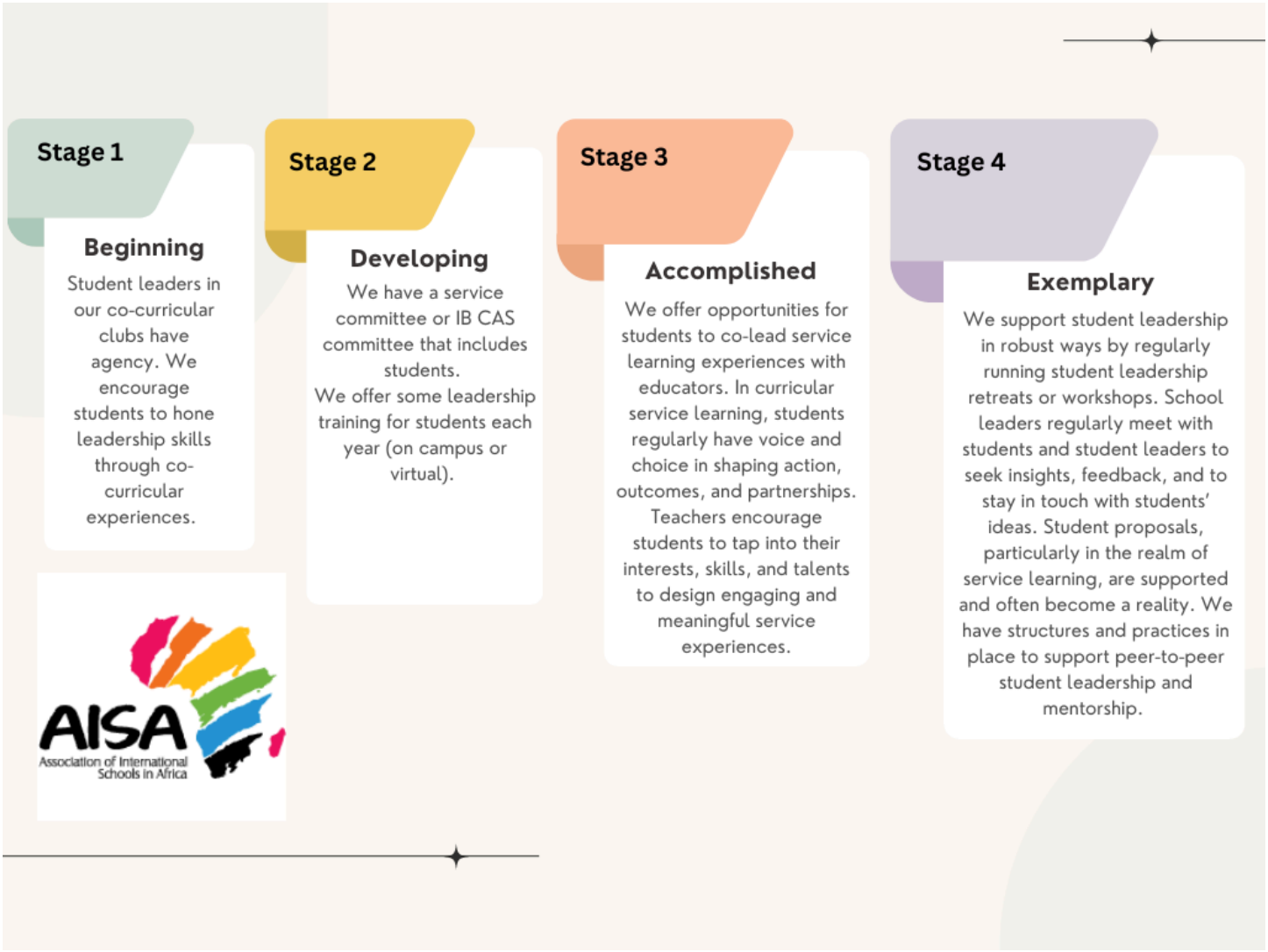
Service Learning Benchmark #4: Community Engagement & Partnerships

Community partnerships and engagement are key components of a school's purposeful service learning program; community partners play an essential role in fostering intercultural understanding, inclusion, belonging, and equity. Our partnerships also shine a spotlight on how essential it is to avoid mindsets of saviourism and “helping” in service experiences, and how the language we use can shape service mindsets for all stakeholders. Your school’s DEIJ/DEIB values and initiatives may intersect with service learning in purposeful ways.



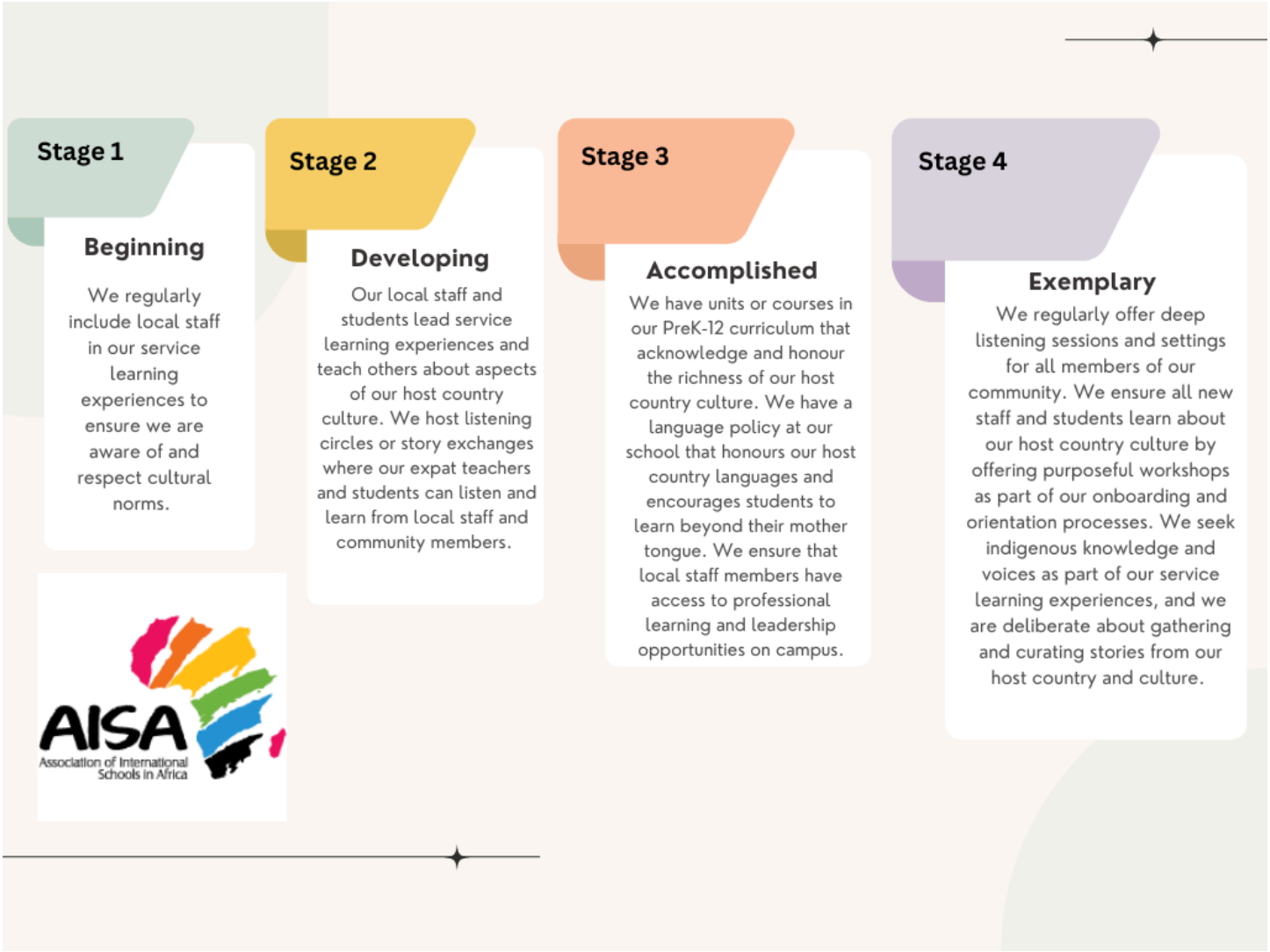
Service Learning Benchmark #5: Student Leadership

Student leadership and agency are key ingredients of successful service learning programs and experiences. When students are equipped to apply academic knowledge and skills to community assets and needs and/or local and global issues, they can design increasingly sophisticated and impactful service learning experiences and partnerships. Honouring student voice and choice allows students to take a leadership role in planning and executing purposeful informed and responsible action.



Service Learning Benchmark #6: Host Country Appreciation

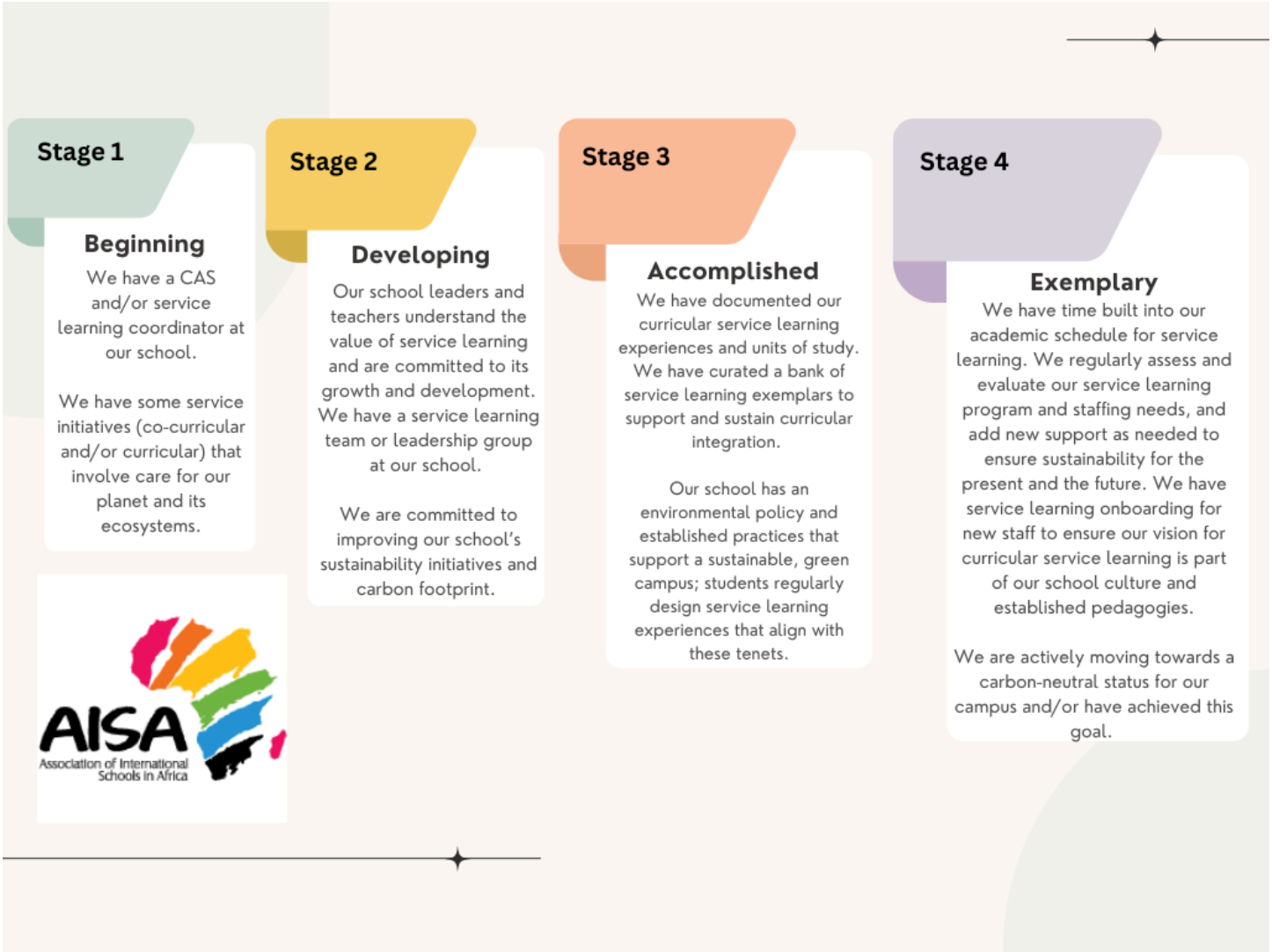
Our schools are set in unique places that intersect culture, history, and contemporary values. The ways in which we appreciate and honour our host countries in our service learning experiences are key to purposeful and impactful engagement, learning, personal growth, and reflection.



Service Learning Benchmark #7: Sustainability

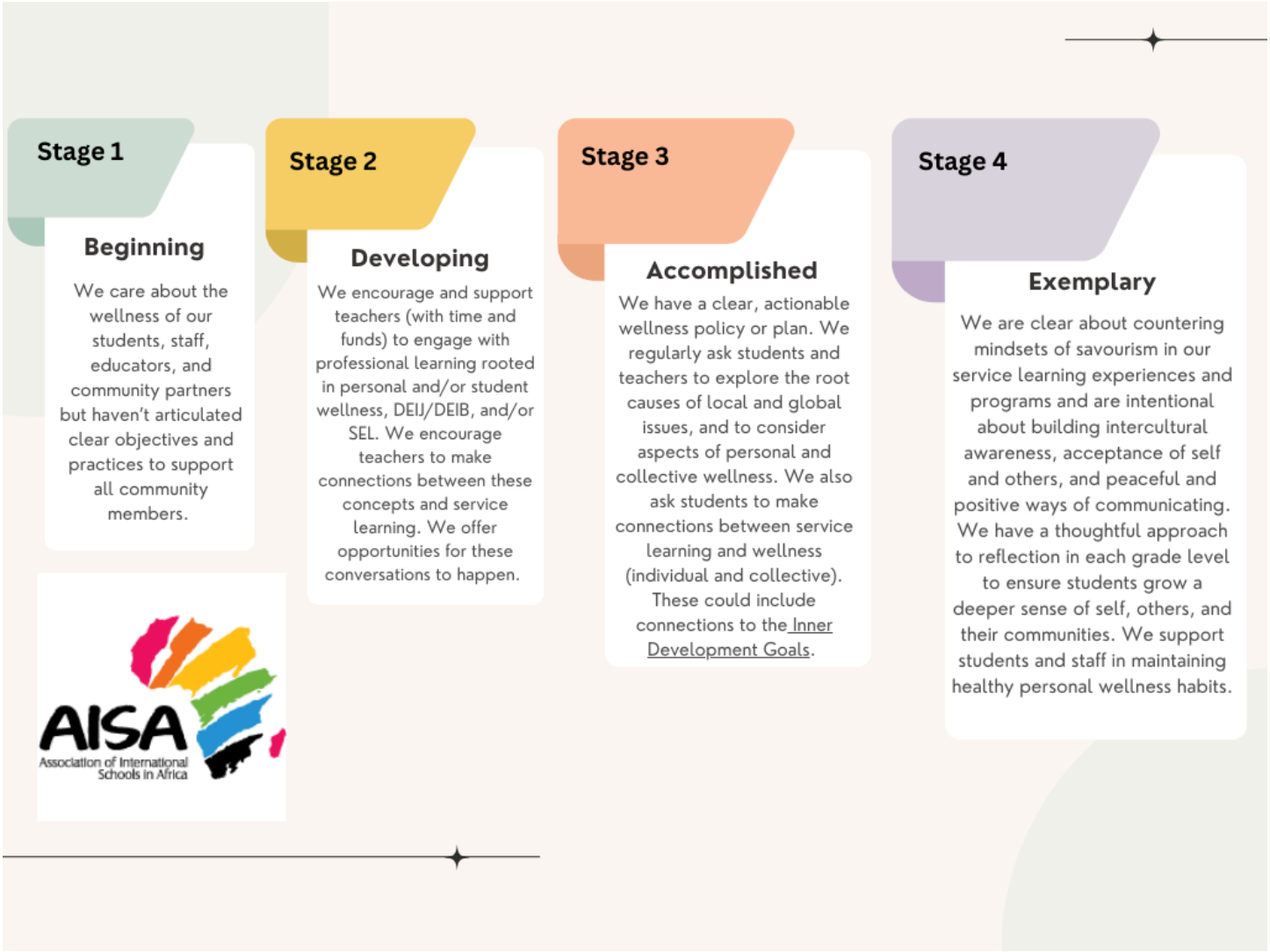
This benchmark encompasses two aspects of sustainability in relation to service learning:

1) **Environmental/planetary sustainability** is often connected to service learning because of the many ways in which our students can advocate for and create positive change related to our school's environmental practices and carbon footprint.
2) **Programmatic sustainability**: well-established service learning programs have systems in place to ensure sustainability over time; as international teachers and students move from one school to another, structures maintain a robust, rooted, and long-term service learning program built on a foundation of critical global citizenship aims and mindsets. As a result, service learning is foundational to the school culture and ethos.



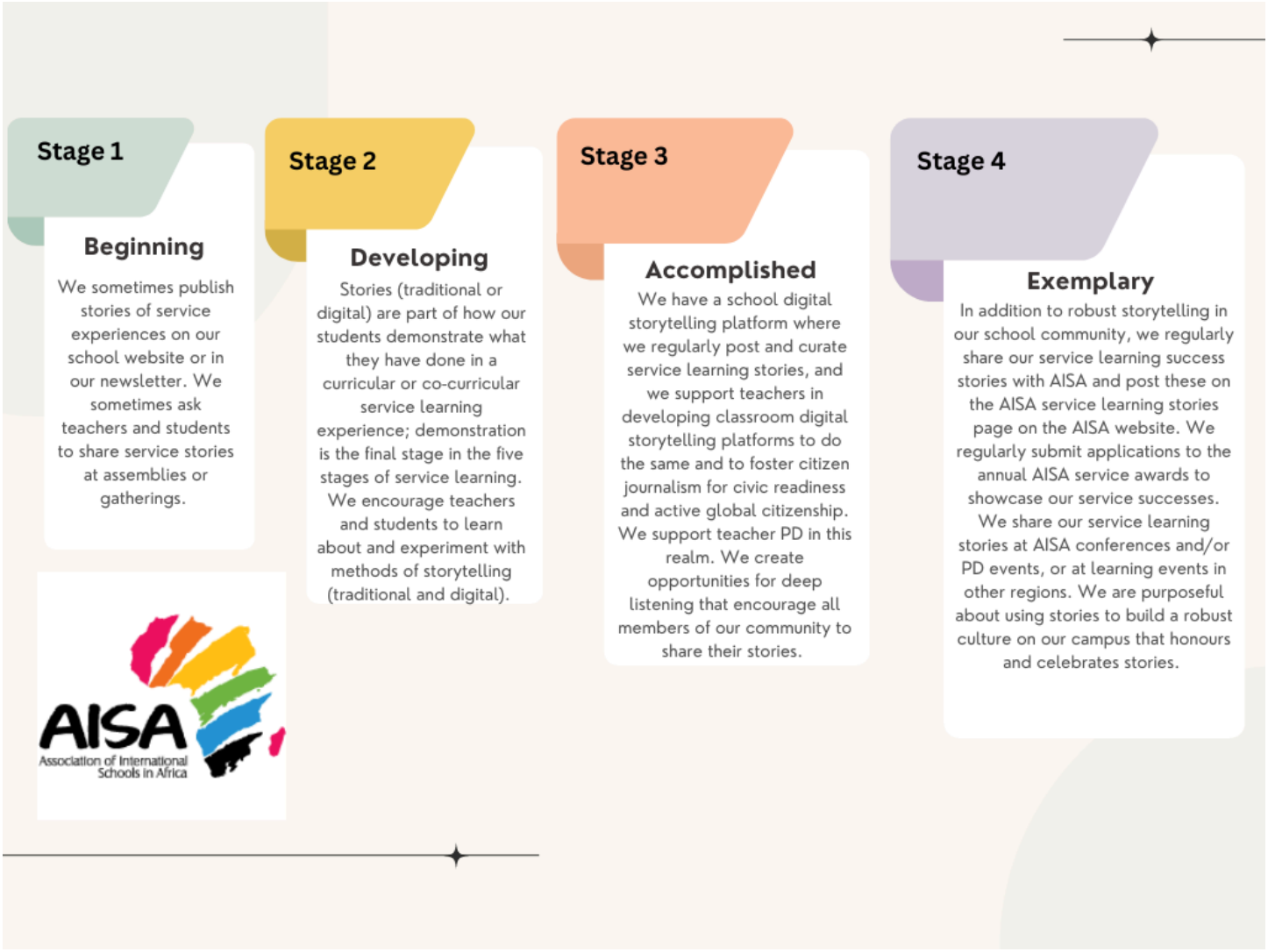
Service Learning Benchmark #8: Wellness

Several aspects of individual and collective wellness are connected to curricular service learning. As identified in the Triple Well-Being framework, care for self, others and the planet acts like a tripod in supporting service learning and active global citizenship. Our DEIJ/DEIB and social and emotional learning (SEL) policies and practices may intersect with these aspects of service learning.



Service Learning Benchmark #9: Storytelling

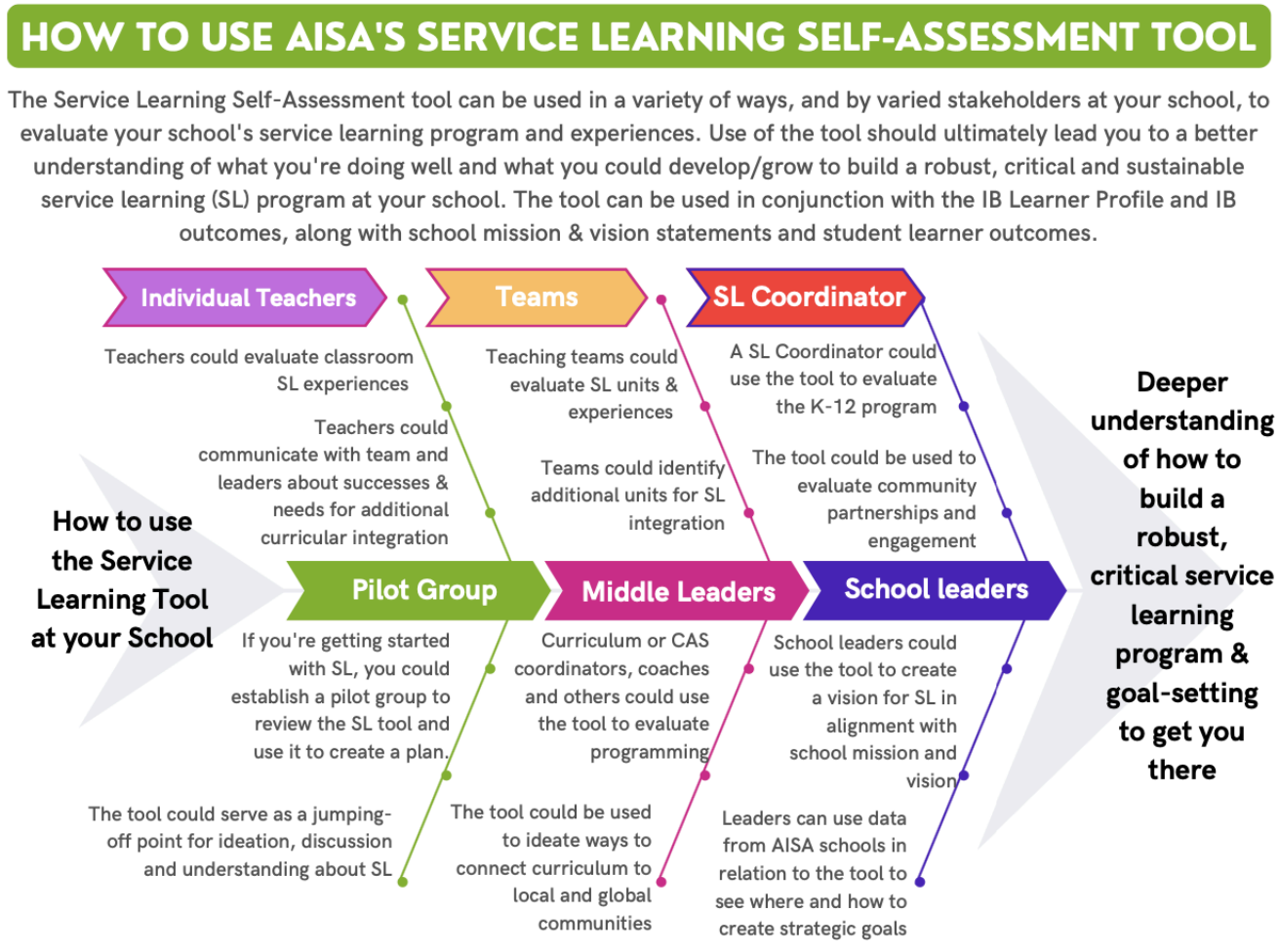
Capturing, sharing, and curating our service learning stories is key to building intercultural understanding and meaningful community engagement in our schools, as well as celebrating successes and positive impact.



What next?

After assessing each benchmark in this document, you may see areas of potential growth for your school's service learning program.

Consider having conversations at your school to align your mission and vision with the principles of critical service learning and global citizenship education, and consider how this tool can guide strategic planning and/or goal-setting for your school.

Contact AISA Service Learning Program Coordinator LeeAnne Lavender at llavender@aisa.or.ke if you would like to explore how to make a plan to grow and develop a robust, purposeful, and impactful service learning program at your school.

The infographic below may help guide your use of this AISA Service Learning Self-Assessment Tool at your school.