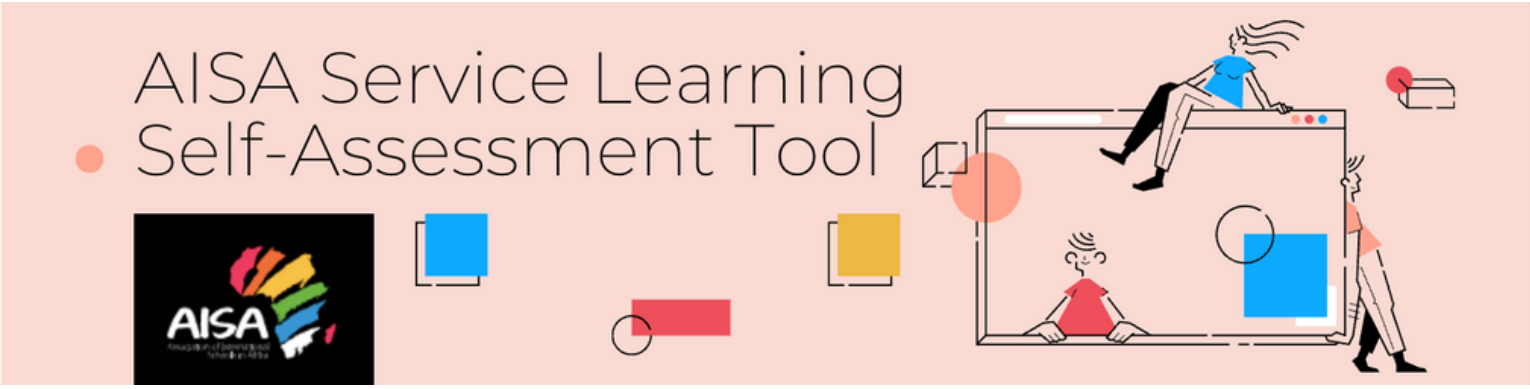

Building a robust, critical service learning program in your AISA-member school

The Association of International Schools in Africa (AISA) has been **committed to service learning** for many years. As a tool and framework 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 you school is, right now, in relation to best practices connected with service learning. 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 **multi-layered, 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 design and offer regular **professional learning** 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 several online meetings for our **Service Learning Practice Group** each year and offer an online service learning forum with regular posts and links.

3) 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 agency in the region, and curate and share stories about service learning throughout the region.

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 on our social media channels (including our AISA Service Learning LinkedIn page).

We invite you to use this tool to assess what you are doing right now to **support active global citizenship through service learning at your school**. When you've completed your 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 meet with you on Zoom to coach you through maximizing the use of this Service Learning Self-Assessment Tool.

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.

Service learning involves **teaching and learning that connects academics, personal growth and civic responsibility with positive and meaningful action in the community**. 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:

• Students 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
• Service has deeper meaning and consequences when integrated into curriculum
• Meaningful service is achieved through the five stages of service learning: Investigation, Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration
• Leadership, teamwork, communication and deep listening, and inclusion are fundamental for successful service experiences

The 5-stage service learning cycle from Cathryn Berger Kaye's *The Complete Guide to Service Learning.*

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 multiple 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.

Stage 1

Beginning

Our school has a mission and vision statement that in some way references the value of service, community engagement and/or global citizenship.

Stage 2

Developing

We have actively identified words and/or values in our mission and vision statements that align with service learning. We would like to develop a service learning program to meet the objectives of our mission and vision.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We have used the words or values from our mission and vision statements that align with service learning to create an articulated mission for our service learning program. We have administrative support for the development of a program that aligns with our mission and vision.

Stage 4

Exemplary

We offer opportunities for a diverse range of people and voices in our community to assess and reflect on our mission and vision, both for the school and our service learning program. We are open to the radical reimagining of our mission and vision to achieve equitable, inclusive community engagement.

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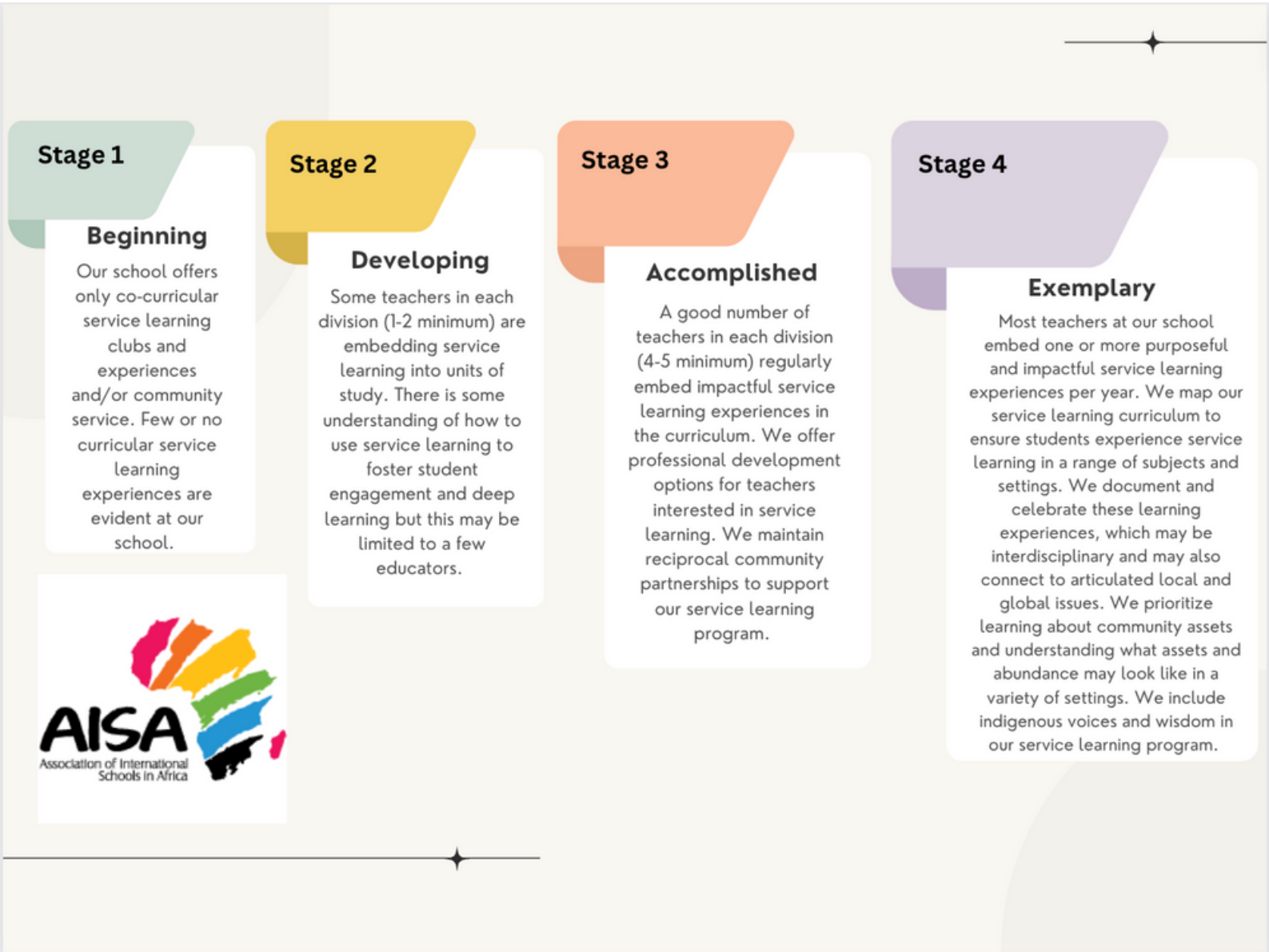
Service Learning Benchmark #2: Curricular Integration

Community service and service learning are two different things. Community service and co-curricular service clubs can be wonderful ways of offering students an opportunity 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. This may be appropriate and meaningful in some contexts, but this type of service falls outside the borders of what defines service learning.

Service learning is embedded into your school's K-12 curricular program and in a robust model, 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 a number of disciplines and academic settings to engage with civic readiness, global citizenship, advocacy, purposeful community engagement and the transfer of academic knowledge and skills to community assets and needs.



Service Learning Benchmark #3: Professional Development

Professional development can take many forms including on-site workshops or conferences (at your school or at another school or learning site), online courses, webinars or workshops, and one-on-one or small group coaching.

Stage 1

Beginning

Some of our teachers access service learning professional development but mostly on their own initiative. We don't have a school-wide plan to support this.

Stage 2

Developing

Our administrators actively support service learning professional development. We offer PD funds for teachers to register for service learning PD.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We encourage our teachers to engage in service learning PD by funding PD and actively promoting service learning PD opportunities (in-person and virtual). We participate in AISA-GISS and ensure 2 teachers and a group of students attend on a regular basis. A good number of our teachers participate in AISA service learning PD when available.

Stage 4

Exemplary

We support service learning PD for our school leaders and support staff, particularly our libraries and academic coaches. We bring service learning experts on campus to engage with our teaching staff on an annual or bi-annual basis. We equip and support our own teachers to become coaches and facilitators of service learning PD.

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Service Learning Benchmark #4: Community Engagement

Community partnerships and engagement are a key part of a school's purposeful service learning program as community partners are essential for meaningful action as well as for intercultural understanding, deep listening and mindsets for critical service learning.

Stage 1

Beginning

Our school has temporary or short-term service partners but there is no plan to develop long-term, sustainable partnerships.

Stage 2

Developing

We have a few long-term community partnerships that are ongoing and have lasted for several years. We value these community partners and want to develop a more purposeful plan to engage in a more reciprocal way.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We have several long-term community partners and we have a clear plan for maintaining healthy, reciprocal partnerships. We evaluate our partnerships regularly to ensure there is reciprocal value in the partnership and students are engaged in deep listening with community partners. Students learn **from and with** our community partners.

Stage 4

Exemplary

We collaborate with local schools on a sustainable, long-term basis and we offer training to our community partners so they understand the nature of reciprocal partnerships and how they can have an active voice in shaping our partnership. Reciprocity, inclusion and dignity are clear targets for our community engagement. We include local support staff in our partnerships and engage with these staff members regularly to ensure their voices are heard and valued.

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Service Learning Benchmark #5: Student Leadership

Student leadership and agency is a key benchmark of established and successful service learning programs. As we equip students to apply academic knowledge and skills to community assets and needs, we should honour student voice and choice and allow students to take a leadership role in planning and doing purposeful service learning.

Stage 1

Beginning

Student leaders in our co-curricular clubs have agency. We encourage students to hone leadership skills through co-curricular experiences.

Stage 2

Developing

We have a service committee or IB CAS committee that includes student leaders. We offer some leadership training for students on campus each year.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We offer opportunities for students to co-lead committees and working groups at our school alongside educators. We regularly ask for student input and ideation around major school initiatives. In the service learning that is embedded in our curriculum, students regularly have voice and choice in shaping what type of action they engage in.

Stage 4

Exemplary

We support student leadership in robust ways by running student leadership retreats or similar opportunities. School leaders include students in almost all committees and decision-making groups at the school. Student ideas are supported and often become reality. We have alumni connections and support for leadership training/mentorship.

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Service Learning Benchmark #6: Host Country Appreciation

Our schools are set in unique places that intersect culture, history and contemporary values. The way our service learning programs appreciate and honour host countries is key to purposeful and impactful experiences.

Stage 1

Beginning

We regularly include local staff in our service learning experiences to ensure we are aware of and respect cultural norms.

Stage 2

Developing

Our local staff and students lead service learning experiences and teach others about aspects of our host country culture. We regularly host listening circles or story exchanges where our expat teachers and students can listen and learn from local people.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We have equity and inclusion policies articulated at our school that apply to our service learning program. We have courses in our curriculum that acknowledge and honour the richness of our host country culture. We have a language policy at our school that honours our host country languages and encourages students to learn beyond their mother tongue.

Stage 4

Exemplary

We regularly offer deep listening sessions and settings for all members of our community. We ensure that all new staff and students learn about our host country culture by offering purposeful workshops as part of our onboarding and orientation processes. We seek indigenous knowledge and voices as part of our service learning experiences, and we are deliberate about gathering and curating stories from our host country and culture.

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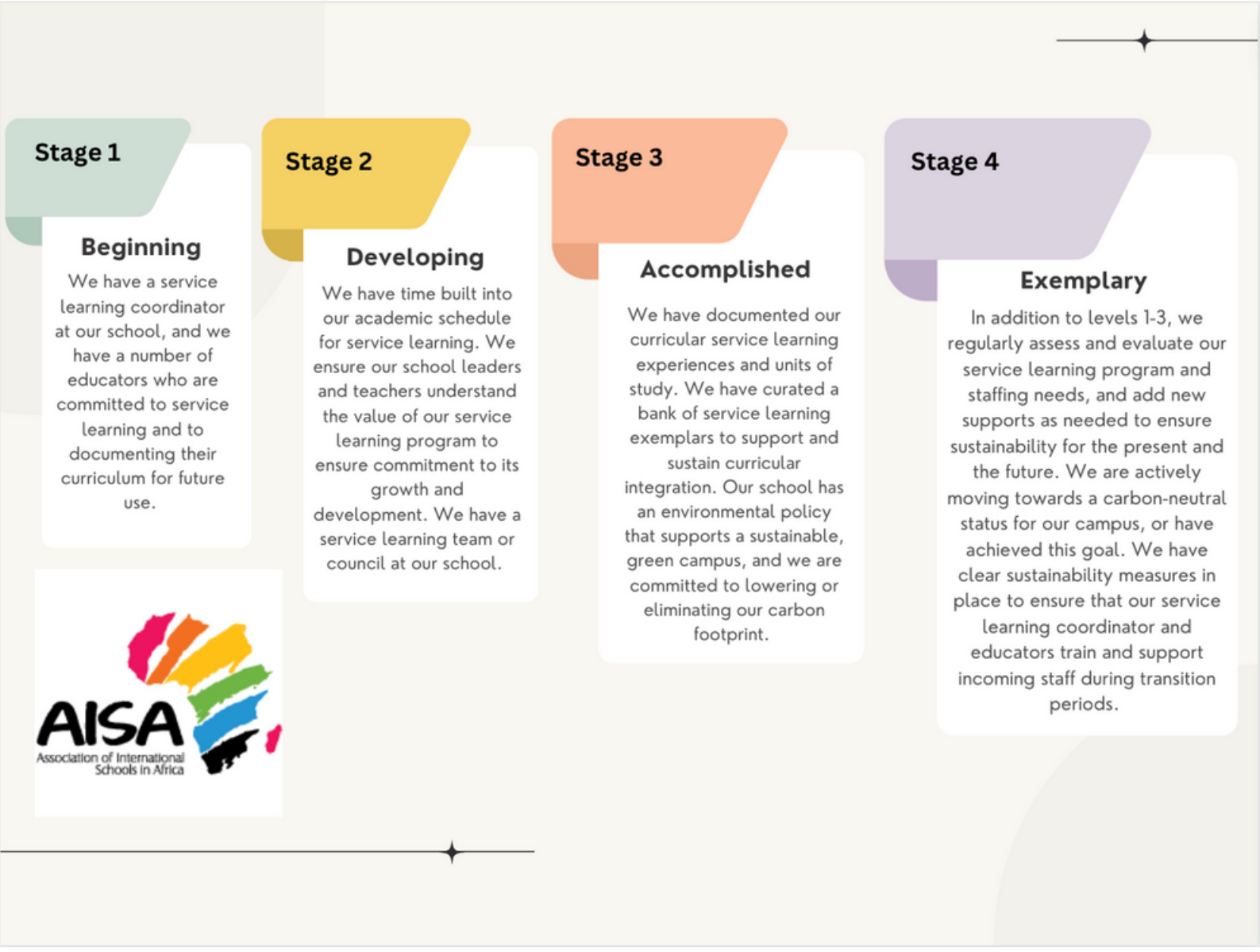
Service Learning Benchmark #7: Sustainability

Sustainability initiatives on our campuses are often connected to service learning because of the many ways in which our students can advocate for and create change related to our school's environmental practices and carbon footprint. Established service learning programs also have systems in place to ensure sustainability; as teachers and students move from one school to another, we aim to ensure our programs have deep roots and are an indelible part of our school's culture and practice.



Service Learning Benchmark #8: DEIJ Connections

Schools are creating and developing policies and practices around diversity, equity, inclusion and justice/belonging (DEIJ, DEIB or JEDI), there are clear intersections with this work and service learning.

Stage 1

Beginning

We have begun to create DEIJ/DEIB/JEDI policies at our school and we can see connections and intersections with service learning.

Stage 2

Developing

We encourage and support teachers (with time and funds) to engage with professional learning connected to DEIJ/DEIB/JEDI. We ask teachers to make connections between these realms and service learning. We offer opportunities for these conversations to happen.

Stage 3

Accomplished

We have clear, actionable DEIJ/DEIB/JEDI policies and practices and we have identified intersections between these and service learning. We regularly ask students and teachers to explore root causes of DEIJ/DEIB/JEDI issues. We also ask students to make connections between these areas and wellness (individual and collective). This could include connections to the Inner Development Goals.

Stage 4

Exemplary

Our service learning program has become an engine for the E and J in our DEIJ/JEDI initiatives. We are clear about countering mindsets of savourism and we have created a cohesive model where our community partnerships and service learning experiences provide our students and teachers with regular and meaningful ways of building intercultural awareness, global competencies, inclusion, acceptance of self and others, and peaceful and positive ways of communicating.

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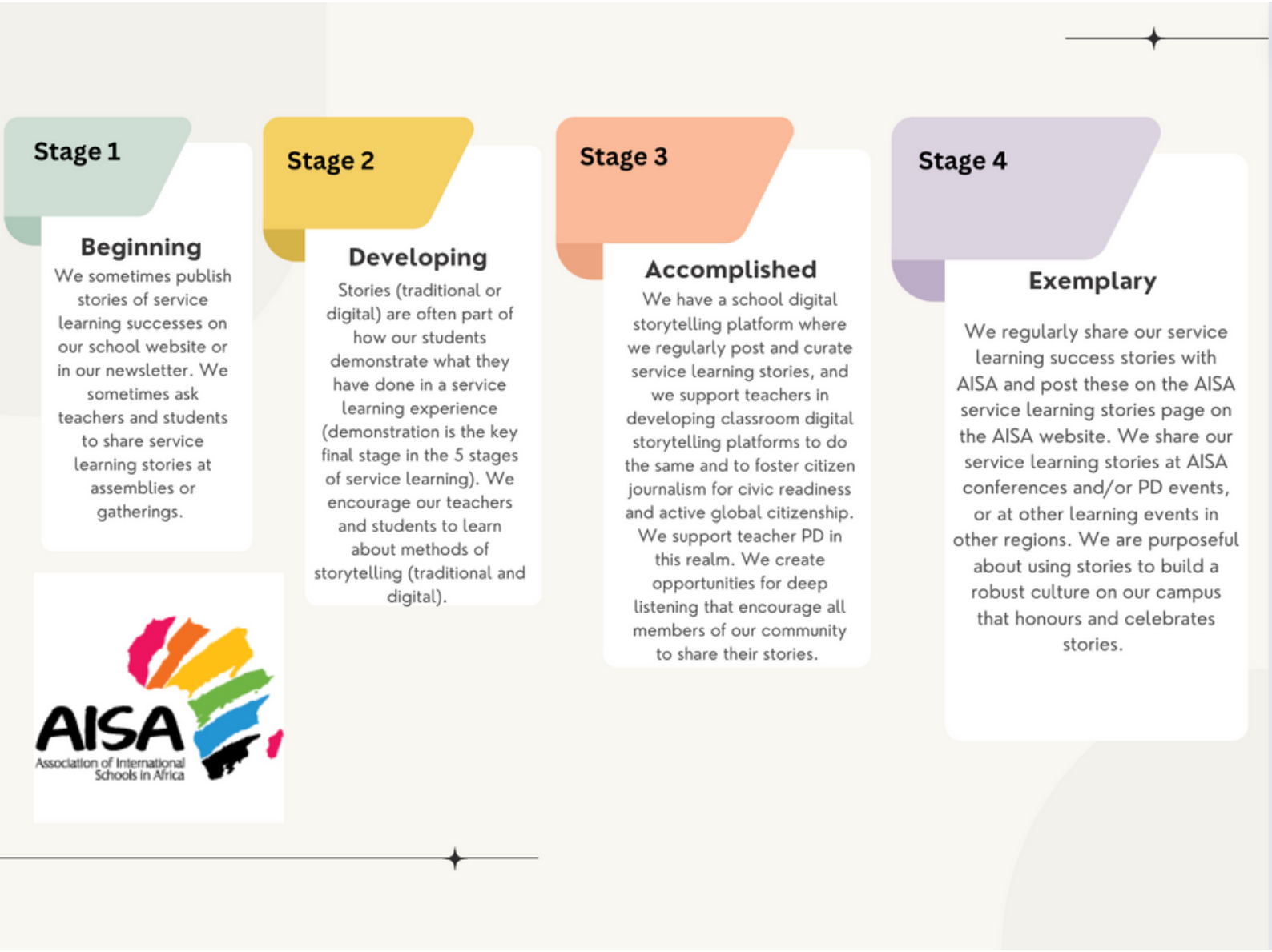
Service Learning Benchmark #9: Storytelling

Capturing, sharing and curating our service learning stories is key to building cultures of service on our campuses and of celebrating successes and positive impact.



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.