

WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

The following definitions come from the Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (1993).

SERVICE-LEARNING IS A METHOD BY WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN AND DEVELOP THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN A THOUGHTFULLY ORGANIZED SERVICE EXPERIENCE THAT...

Meets actual community needs;

Is coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;

Is integrated into each young person's academic curriculum;

Provides structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity;

Provides young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own community

Enhances what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom; and
Helps foster the development of sense of caring for others.

STANDARDS OF QUALITY FOR SCHOOL-BASED SERVICE-LEARNING

Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.

Service-learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment which encourages risk-taking and rewards competence.

Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service-learning

Students' efforts are recognized by their peers and the community they serve.

Youth are involved in the planning the service-learning experience.

The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.

Effective service-learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.

Service-learning connects school and its community in new and positive ways.

Service-learning is understood and supported as an integral component in the life of the school and community.

Adult guidance and supervision is essential to the success of service-learning.

Pre-service and staff development, which includes the philosophy and methodology of service learning, best ensure program quality and continuity are maintained.

Service-learning 4-point Test

The following “test” may be used to help plan a service-learning project and to assess whether the project contains the four main elements of quality service-learning.

Youth Involvement

Is the service project student-planned and student-run, with the teacher acting as guide rather than leader?

What opportunities exist for students to take leadership roles?

Do students (rather than the teacher) identify community needs and the issue to be addressed?

Community Need

Does the service meet a real community need?

Is the project developed through a legitimate assessment of community assets and needs, including discussion with key community members?

Are local agencies, organizations or community groups partners in identifying the need and developing the project?

Who, besides students, benefits from the service project?

Will the community be a better place because of the project?

Curricular Connection

Is the service activity connected to classroom instruction and learning objectives?

Does the project support Core Curriculum Content Standards?

How are learning outcomes determined?

How do learning outcomes of the project compare with what students would learn in a regular classroom setting?

Can the project involve teachers to collaborate?

Can the project involve teachers from other classrooms, grades, and/or disciplines?

What resources will be needed to support the project (transportation, tools, adult volunteers, etc.)?

Reflection and Evaluation

Are there opportunities for students to talk, write or make presentations on the project before, during, or after it happens?

How are students involved in evaluating the project’s success?

How is success measured?

How will the knowledge gained from this project be used in future planning?

What will you do differently next time?