

A Brief Step-by-Step Guide to Service Learning

Step One: *Points of Entry*

Select your method for getting started and making curricular connections, beginning with an existing program or activity, content and skills, a theme or unit of study, a student-identified need, or a community-identified need.

Step Two: *Review the K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice*

Familiarize yourself with these eight recommended categories that support best practices for service learning. Referring to this list will give you reminders for what will provide the greatest impact for both learning and civic participation.

Step Three: *Map Out Your Plans*

Identify your curricular objectives. Write out your specific ideas for curricula, community contacts, literature, and each stage (of the five stages) of service learning.

Step Four: *Clarify Partnerships*

Make contacts with any collaborators—teachers, parents, community members, agency representatives, or others—who will participate. Discuss and clarify specific roles and responsibilities for all involved.

Step Five: *Review Plans and Gather Resources*

Review your plans. Gather needed resources, such as books, newspaper articles, Web sites, and reference materials from partner agencies. Schedule any visits, guest speakers, or field trips. Note that these are good tasks for students to take on as they gain skills and experience.

Step Six: *Begin the Process of Service Learning in Action*

Initiate the process of investigation, preparation and planning, action, reflection, and demonstration. Encourage youth voice and choice as you move through the service learning process. Be flexible! Service learning works best when students are able to see their own ideas in action. Continue to look for opportunities for reflection.

Step Seven: *Assess the Service Learning Experience*

Once the demonstration and the closing reflection have been completed, review and assess the learning accomplished, the impact of the service, the planning process, the reciprocal benefits for all involved, and ways to improve for next time. Debrief with all partners.

Benefits of Service Learning

Who benefits from service learning? Students, teachers, the school population as a whole, and the community benefit from well-designed service learning programs. Benefits vary depending on program design and what occurs through preparation, implementation, reflection, and demonstration. These lists have been compiled by school and community stakeholders based on their service learning experiences. While research continues to examine the benefits of service learning, presently service learning is known to promote resilience, empowerment, prosocial behaviors, motivation for learning, and engagement. These are mediators of academic success and help create the conditions for students to do better academically.

Through service learning programs, STUDENTS may:

- increase motivation and desire to learn.
- develop responsibility, think critically, make decisions, and solve problems.
- improve academic knowledge and performance, including writing and communication skills.
- cultivate self-perception.
- develop ability to work well with others.
- experience reciprocity.
- replace stereotypes with respect for others.
- interact with adults who have different roles in society.
- be exposed to career options including those in public service.
- become more knowledgeable about their community and the resources available for themselves and their families.
- experience civic responsibility.
- begin to develop a lifelong commitment to public service and to learning.

Through service learning programs, TEACHERS may:

- observe students' enthusiasm for learning.
- improve communication and understanding among students.
- increase the relevancy of education for students.
- develop curriculum through collaboration with other teachers and community partners.
- learn about many different community organizations and how they serve the populace.
- identify resources to enhance educational opportunities for students.
- bring the classroom and community together.
- feel inspired professionally and personally.
- participate in professional development and become mentors for other teachers.

The Five Stages of Service Learning

Inventory and Investigation

Using interviewing and other means of social analysis, students:

- catalog the interests, skills, and talents of their peers and partners.
- identify a need.
- analyze the underlying problem.
- establish a baseline of the need.
- begin to accumulate partners.

Preparation and Planning

With guidance from their teacher, students:

- draw upon previously acquired skills and knowledge.
- acquire new information through varied, engaging means and methods.
- collaborate with community partners.
- develop a plan that encourages responsibility.
- recognize the integration of service and learning.
- become ready to provide meaningful service.
- articulate roles and responsibilities of all involved.
- define realistic parameters for implementation.

Action

Through direct service, indirect service, research, advocacy, or a combination of these approaches, students take action that:

- has value, purpose, and meaning.
- uses previously learned and newly acquired academic skills and knowledge.
- offers unique learning experiences.
- has real consequences.
- offers a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes, and to succeed.

Reflection

During systematic reflection, the teacher or students guide the process using various modalities, such as role play, discussion, and journal writing. Participating students:

- describe what happened.
- examine the difference made.
- discuss thoughts and feelings.
- place experience in a larger context.
- consider project improvements.
- generate ideas.
- identify questions.
- encourage comments from partners and recipients.
- receive feedback.

Demonstration

Students showcase what and how they have learned, along with demonstrating skills, insights, and outcomes of service provided to an outside group. Students may:

- report to peers, faculty, parents, and/or community members.
- write articles or letters to local newspapers regarding issues of public concern.
- create a publication or Web site that helps others learn from students' experiences.
- make presentations and performances.
- create displays of public art with murals or photography.

K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

Meaningful Service. Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

Students identify, authenticate, and learn about a recognized community need. Student actions are reciprocal, valued by the community, and have real consequences while offering opportunities to apply newly acquired academic skills and knowledge.

Link to Curriculum. Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

The process includes deliberate cross-curricular connections whereby students learn skills and content through varied modalities that meet academic standards, and enables the transference of skills and content to new applications. The content informs the service and the service informs the content.

Reflection. Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.

Students participate in systemic varied processes that integrate empathetic response with cognitive thinking related to social issues and their lives. This affective and cognitive blend deepens the service learning as students apply and transfer new understandings of themselves, others, and the world around them.

Diversity. Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.

Student experience affords opportunities to form multidimensional understanding and varied points of view. This process allows students to gain perspective and develop mutual respect and appreciation for others, while replacing stereotypes with accurate information.

Youth Voice. Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.

Students experience significant age-appropriate challenges involving tasks that require thinking, initiative, and problem solving as they demonstrate responsibility and decision-making in an environment safe enough to allow them to make mistakes and to succeed.

Partnerships. Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

Students participate in the development of reciprocal partnerships and share responsibility with community members, parents, organizations, and other students. These relationships afford opportunities to interact with people of diverse backgrounds and experience, resulting in mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation.

Progress Monitoring. Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

Once students identify and authenticate the need, they use varied methods to observe and track change and improvement as they carry out the service learning process. Advancement toward intended or developing outcomes is examined, along with effectiveness of applied procedures and recognized mutual benefits. Findings are shared with stakeholders.

Duration and Intensity. Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

The length of the experience allows for a complete and thorough process as articulated in the Five Stages of Service Learning, with age-appropriate content, skill development, and depth of material covered.

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Increasing Youth Voice and Choice

Consider:

- How are young people given opportunities to make real choices and what opportunities do they have to express and act on thoughtful choices?
- What practices are already in place, and what will advance us to the next level?

Discuss:

- establishing a service learning vocabulary with students.
- developing authentic ways for students to be creative, have input, make decisions, solve problems, help design service activities based on preparation, and participate in project evaluation.
- developing an age-appropriate sequence for service learning.
- enabling students to experience success and failure—removing the “safety net” of adult intervention.
- encouraging intrinsic value over extrinsic rewards.
- listening to students and creating forums for their concerns, questions, and ideas.
- allowing experienced students to help their teacher and other teachers plan and implement projects.

Getting Ready for Personal Inventory

Every student brings interests, skills, and talents to the class. Your task is to discover what those are by doing a personal inventory. Using the Personal Inventory form, you will interview another student to discover abilities and interests that will be helpful to the group. Complete this form to prepare.

Coming to Terms

What's the difference between these three terms?

Interest:

Skill:

Talent:

Active Listening

List three signs that someone is being a good listener.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List three behaviors to avoid when listening:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Form groups of three. One person speaks about a subject for two minutes, one person listens, and one person observes the listener and notes the following:

- Examples of good listening:

- Ideas for improvement:

Now, switch roles and repeat.

Personal Inventory

Interests, skills, and talents—we all have them. What are they?

Interests are what you think about and what you would like to know more about—for example, outer space, popular music, or a historical event like a world war. Are you interested in animals, movies, mysteries, or visiting faraway places? Do you collect anything?

Skills and talents have to do with things you like to do or that you do easily or well. Do you have an activity you especially like? Do you have a favorite subject in school? Do you sing, play the saxophone, or study ballet? Do you know more than one language? Can you cook? Do you have a garden? Do you prefer to paint pictures or play soccer? Do you have any special computer abilities?

Work with a partner and take turns interviewing each other to identify your interests, skills, and talents and to find out how you have helped and been helped by others. Then, compile a class chart of your findings. This will come in handy on your service learning journey.

Interests: I like to learn and think about . . .

Skills and talents: I can . . .

Being helpful: Describe a time when you helped someone.

Receiving help: Describe a time when someone helped you.

Planning for Service Learning Example: *High School, Literacy*

Grade level(s): 9

Essential Purpose or Question:

How do mentoring relationships help students become more cognizant about their own learning styles?

Content—Learning About:

- Interpersonal relationships
- Civic participation
- Child psychology
- Bookmaking
- Being role models

Service Need:

Reciprocal learning occurs in mentoring relationships between older and younger students with mutual benefits; young children need encouragement to read and write.

Service Idea: Book Buddies

Instruct young children in bookmaking and collaborate on making books for the community.

Investigation of the Need:

Interview a kindergarten teacher about the needed products, interaction with young children, and involving a child development specialist.

Preparation and Planning:

Write reflections on childhood and favorite books; participate in an interactive workshop with a child psychologist about learning styles and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; read children's books; in small groups, discuss methods of working with young children; design lessons reflecting different types of intelligence; reach consensus on theme for the new books ("friendship" is chosen to combat bullying); get resources for bookmaking; learn bookbinding techniques; arrange logistics and transportation.

Action:

Visit a kindergarten class three times: (1) get acquainted with children and read books, (2) discuss book ideas on the theme of friendship and begin story development, and (3) write and illustrate the story. Copies of the books are given to the children, the school, and public libraries.

Reflection Methods:

Write in journals with peer "journal partners" who read entries and respond; teacher also reads and gives feedback weekly. Engage in a class discussion after each visit, using role plays and problem solving. Write reflective essays on how the theory of multiple intelligences applies to daily student life.

Demonstration to Others:

Present the service experience with the kindergartners at the school district service learning committee meeting.

Youth Voice and Choice:

Created plans, found a partner kindergarten classroom, wrote a proposal for a literacy grant, made phone calls, got donations, and designed activities.

Curricular Connections:

☑ *English/Language Arts:*

Write a grant proposal; read and analyze children's books for content, format, and style; write a book; write letters requesting donations and reduced-cost supplies

☑ *Social Studies/History:*

Research child psychology

☑ *Mathematics:*

Manage a budget of funds received from the school and a literacy grant

☑ *Science:*

Study how the brain works with multiple intelligences

☑ *Languages:*

Prepare for working with young bilingual children with assistance from a Spanish language teacher

☑ *Art and Music:*

Art students make presentations on illustration to inform students about various styles; create illustrations with children; bookbinding

☑ *Technology:*

Use computer skills to create a design and template for the book-making process

☐ *Other:*

Skills Being Developed:

- Organization
- Leadership
- Planning
- Writing in different styles—proposals, thank-you letters, stories
- Communication—phone calls for supplies, interaction with elementary teachers, interaction in small planning groups, partnerships with children

Books and Other Media Used:

The Sissy Duckling
Toestomper and the Caterpillars
Margarita y Margaret (bilingual)
La Mariposa
Hey, Little Ant!

Community Partners:

Will Rogers Elementary School
 Kelly Paper Supplies
 School District Service Learning Advisory Committee

Planning for Service Learning

Grade level(s): _____

Essential Purpose or Question:

Content—Learning About:

Service Need:

Service Idea:
Investigation of the Need:
Preparation and Planning:
Action:
Reflection Methods:
Demonstration to Others:

Youth Voice and Choice:

Curricular Connections:

English/Language Arts:

Social Studies/History:

Mathematics:

Science:

Languages:

Art and Music:

Technology:

Other:

Skills Being Developed:

Books and Other Media Used:

Community Partners:

Taking Action

Step 1: Think about the needs in our community. Make a list.

Step 2: Identify what you know.

- Select one community need:
- What is the cause?
- Who is helping?
- What are some ways we can help?

Step 3: Find out more.

- What do we need to know about this community need and who is helping?

- How can we find out?

Step 4: Plan for action.

- To help our community, we will:

- To make this happen, we will take on these responsibilities:

Who	with/what	by/when	Resources needed

Gathering Information About a Community Need

What does your community need? Use the questions in the following four categories as guides for finding out. As a class, you might agree to explore one topic, for example, how kids get along at school, hunger and poverty, or an environmental concern. Or you might decide to learn about general needs at school or in the surrounding area.

Form small groups, with each group focusing on one category and gathering information in a different way.

Finding out about _____

Media

What media (newspapers—including school newspapers, TV stations, radio) in your community might have helpful information? List ways you can work with different media to learn about needs in your community.

Interviews

Think of a person who is knowledgeable about this topic in your area—perhaps someone at school or in a local organization or government office. Write four questions you would ask this person in an interview.

An interview with _____

Questions:

1.

2.

3.

4.



Service Learning Proposal

Students or class: _____

Teacher: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Project name: _____

Need—Why this plan is needed:

Purpose—How this plan will help:

Participation—Who will help and what they will do:

Students: _____

Teachers: _____

Other adults: _____

Organizations or groups: _____

Outcomes—What we expect to happen as a result of our work:

How we will check outcomes—What evidence we will collect and how we will use it:

Resources—What we need to get the job done, such as supplies (itemize on back):

Signatures:

Our Service Plan

Students or Class: _____

Teacher: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Project name: _____

Our idea: _____

This helps others by: _____

Student names and jobs:

My name _____ My job _____

My name _____ My job _____

My name _____ My job _____

Others who will help:

Students: _____

Teachers: _____

Other adults: _____

Organizations: _____

Supplies needed: _____

Our expectations: _____

Signatures:

Assessment for Service Learning: *Part Two*

Service Learning Experience: _____

Identify what methods were used for each stage and whether each standard was present.

Five Stages of Service Learning

Investigation

- Conduct Personal Inventory
- Verify Community Need
- Other:

Preparation and Planning

- Research
- Literature
- Field trips
- Interviews
- Other:

Action

- Direct service
- Indirect service
- Research
- Advocacy

Reflection

- Discussion
- Journals
- Role play
- Other:

Demonstration

- Presentation
- Performance
- Article
- Other:

K–12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

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Link to Curriculum.

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Assessment for Service Learning: *Part One*

Service Learning Experience: _____

Respond to the questions relevant to your service learning activities.

Student Learning

- Were the defined content and skill objectives met?
- Were there any unforeseen outcomes?
- Did students show initiative or develop leadership skills?
- Were students able to reflect and place their experience within the larger context of community or society in general?
- Could students identify both their cognitive and affective growth?

Impact of the Service

- Were students able to explicitly state the need and purpose for their service efforts?
- What contribution was made?
- How did the service help or hinder community improvement efforts?



Student Self-Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Service Learning Experience: _____

Learning

- What information did you learn in preparing to do service?

- What skills did you develop through the activities?

- How did this experience help you better understand ideas or subjects we have been studying?

- Through this service learning experience, what did you learn about:
 - yourself?

 - working with others, including people in your class?

 - your community?

- How will you use what you learned in this experience in different situations?