

SERVICE LEARNING

Definition

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Rationale

Service learning is a concept that requires educators to recognize the capacity students have for curiosity, playfulness, open mindedness, flexibility, humor, sincerity, creativity, enthusiasm, and compassion uniquely qualifies them to address many critical unmet needs in society. Instead of viewing students as passive recipients of education, service learning suggests that they be viewed as competent, capable producers, and willing contributors.

Students can make a difference and, in doing so, grow and learn. Their dedication to making a contribution to their communities and to the world is the foundation of service learning. From this foundation, high-quality service learning programs are built upon two complimentary goals:

- Service learning incorporates the academics and engages students in significant, genuine service to their schools, community and environment.
- Service learning must give students the opportunity to learn through reflection on the experience of serving others.

Recent findings show that students learn best when they apply their knowledge by observing and working with experts while performing real tasks; this underlines the importance of the service learning focusing on real-life contexts. In the process of applying knowledge, it becomes more valuable and interesting. Students grow in their understanding of how their skills and knowledge may be directly applied to solve problems in the adult world they soon will enter.

Therefore, service learning should provide work-based learning experiences that

- Link service and academic learning

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- Meet community needs
- Provide concrete opportunities for young people to learn new skills and to think critically in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence
- Are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community
- Are integrated into each student's curriculum and career interest
- Involve preparation for, reflection on, and celebration of service
- Provide structured time for each student to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity
- Involve students in planning from the earliest stages
- Provide opportunities for students to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities
- Enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom
- Help foster development of a sense of caring for others

Steps in Planning and Implementing a Service Learning Program/Project

1. Selection of Teacher/Coordinator
2. Planning Phase
 - a. Determine who needs help in your community by
 - 1) Conducting a survey
 - 2) Inviting community agency representatives in for consultation
 - 3) Reading local newspapers
 - b. Elicit personal vision—how would students like the world to be different?
 - 1) Create personal world visions
 - 2) Create a community/school vision
 - c. Collaborate with people in existing programs who share similar values
 - d. Build on student expertise
 - e. Focus on key public issues
3. Implementation Phase
 - a. Decide on a service learning activity/project
 - b. Collaborate with service recipients and/or the teacher/coordinator
 - c. Train students and in-service staff who will be involved in the project
 - d. Complete service learning project
 - e. Provide structured opportunities for reflection after service learning experience through discussion, reading, and/or writing
 - f. Provide a means of celebrating the completion of the service learning project where special recognition may be given to the participants—students, staff, and service recipients.

Career and Technical Student Organizations

Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) offer comprehensive events and projects based on the occupational goals of their student membership. These organizations provide an excellent avenue for implementing service learning

opportunities. Each organization follows specific competitive event guidelines for both individual and team service learning projects.

For more information regarding career and technical student organizations and service learning opportunities, contact the following state advisors:

Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) Reeca Carver	502/564-3775
FFA Matt Chaliff	502/564-3775
Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Steve Small	502/564-3775 502/564-3775
Future Leaders of Marketing, Management and Entrepreneurship Gary Colvin	502/564-3775
Health Occupations Student Association (HOSA) Elizabeth Bullock	502/564-2326
Technology Student Association (TSA) Henry Lacy	502/564-3472
Skills USA Steve Phillippi	502/564-4286

Legal Issues

705 KAR 4:231, Section 9 General program standards for secondary career and technical programs. (See Appendix B, Resources.)

As best practice, policy statement(s) regarding off-campus experiences for work-based learning should be components of the curriculum outlined by the School Based Decision Making Council (SBDM).

Professional Staff Criteria

The coordination of the service learning program/project may be done by a parent, community organization, or a non-school person. However, there is added strength in having a teacher, counselor, or administrator monitoring and coordinating the effort. If credits toward graduation are going to be awarded, it is critical that the coordinator hold a valid teaching certificate. Responsibilities of the teacher/coordinator(s) include, but are not limited to the following:

- Developing and monitoring the program/project
- Assisting classroom teachers who are interested in infusing service learning into their core curriculum
- Serving as a coach
- Providing resources and models for interested teachers
- Monitoring the results of projects
- Sharing successes
- Communicating community needs
- Serving as community liaison

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- Visiting other programs
- Addressing concerns of the community and school
- Interfacing with students
- Arranging for orientations and ongoing training for service learning participants

Work-Based Learning Plan/Agreement

The Work-Based Learning Plan/Agreement (See Appendix A, *Forms*) for service learning would include the standards, expectations, and responsibilities agreed upon by the student, teacher/ coordinator(s), school, service recipient(s), and parent/guardian. In many cases, it may be in the form of a permission slip.

Funding Needs

The following funding needs must be considered:

1. Training and informing administrators to be knowledgeable and supportive leaders and spokespersons of service learning
2. The teacher/coordinator position
3. Staff time to
 - a. Learn about service learning through attending conferences
 - b. Participate in training and follow-up workshops
 - c. Meet and discuss service learning with other staff members
 - d. Participate in peer coaching
 - e. Visit with community partners to develop working relationships
4. Transportation for students to service learning sites
5. Service learning materials
6. Carrying out service projects
7. Materials and activities for marketing the program

Glossary

Community service is volunteer work done in the community.

Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Service recipient is the person(s) or organization(s) receiving the benefits of service learning.

Volunteerism is the theory, act, or practice of being a volunteer to perform some service or work of your own free will and without pay.

Work-based experiences are experiences gained in a work or work-type environment connected to a student's career major/cluster and integrated with the academic curriculum.

Resources

Community Education Directors in local school districts with Community Education Projects

www.Learnandserve.org – Learn and Serve America--A program of the corporation for National and Community Service. Learn and Serve America provides direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community groups and higher education institutions to facilitate training, research, and recognition programs.

www.Nationalservice.org – Corporation for National & Community service. This organization provides grants and training to develop and expand volunteer organizations.

www.servicelearning.org -- National Service Learning Clearing House (NSLC) operates American's premier website supporting the service learning efforts of schools, higher education institutions, communities, and tribal nations. The website offers timely information and relevant resources, thousands of free on-line resources, and is the nation's largest library of service learning materials.

http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/service_learning/overview.htm

This website provides a complete overview of service learning, resources and model programs.