

What is Service Learning?

Service learning is a teaching tool that ties academic curriculum to a service project that both reinforces and expands students' learning. It is aimed at creating experiential education for young people so that they can connect the learning to their own lives and provide a benefit to the local or global community. The three major elements that define service learning are:

- Students, teachers and community partners **develop learning objectives** that meet educational standards and address the change in knowledge, skills and attitudes they expect to see as a result of the service project
- The project **addresses a real community need** and is linked to learning objectives
- Students have an opportunity to **reflect** on and learn from their project before, during and after their service

Service learning is distinct from community service or volunteerism in that it is directly tied to curriculum, identifies goals and objectives, and meets educational standards. Reflection is an important component of service learning, as students seek to understand their experience and the curriculum while drawing connections and conclusions.

There are many ways to incorporate service-learning into your existing curriculum. Here is a list of abstracts of a number of actual projects completed by pre-service and student teachers during the past few years:

Physical education classes developed their athletic skills while hosting basketball games for local charities. The students played a team from the local firemen and police. Normal non-participants were encouraged to join and as a result contributed to the needs of the community.

Junior and senior English students tutored and acted as guides in the school library.

Social studies students researched the needs of the community and made this information available to the agencies of the community.

English students used their after school time to help younger students improve their reading skills. These same students spent time in a local senior center helping improve the literacy skills of the senior citizens as well.

Journalism students researched the needs of the community's non-profit organizations and prepared and distributed publicity announcements for them.

German students tutored 4th and 5th grade students in German.

History students visited local seniors to learn about the 20th century events on a first hand basis and to provide a youthful interaction with them.

Computer science students volunteered their time to teach adults and other students computer skills.

As part of a school wide "silent sustained reading" program students gathered pledges from family, friends, teachers, etc. for each book they read. For each two dollars raised World Book Encyclopedia contributes one dollar toward the cost of a new set of encyclopedias and other educational books. The students thus were able to contribute to their private school's library resources while reading for their reading program.

Students in wood shop made wooden toys and donated them to a local establishment for disadvantaged and ill children. Student's hand delivered their finished product to the children served by the agency or at the local hospital.

Students in biology planted seedlings on the school grounds to serve as a wind break, to beautify the school grounds and to serve as habitat for the local small birds.

Students, as part of an environmental studies unit, cleaned a local park and developed a recycling plan for the material normally discarded in the park.

Biology classes, working under the direction of the city developed and carried out a city wide tree survey. The results of the survey were to be used by the city to plan future planting and tree care schedules.

Math students build a miniature golf course to scale and designed a tournament where students paid to play with the proceeds going to a local charity the course was then donated to the local senior citizens organization.

Social studies students researched the history of various substance abuse organizations and helped them prepare and distribute relevant posters and information.

Math students collected trash and sorted it for recycling. They then compared the cost of recycling versus the cost of not recycling and the impact it would have on the local community.

Social studies students explored the possibility of a classroom exchange with a classroom in their sister city in Japan. Their research was used by the city council to help plan the exchange day ceremonies.

Social Studies students researched the agricultural and restaurant surpluses in the local community and acted as the liaison for having the surpluses sent to homeless shelters.

Students in biology learn about and promote organ donor program in the local community.

Student in chemistry cleared an area of trash then analyzed the different materials and the quantity of material to find the best and most efficient way to recycle.

Journalism class helped local charity group design posters and other forms of advertising to get their message out to the community. Some of the members of the class went further and helped the agency actually produce and distribute the materials generated.

Home and family living class sponsored a food drive and explained the need for the food to all of the other high school students.

Health students volunteered their time helping in a neighbor nursing home.

Advanced Placement Chemistry class demonstrated science projects to five second grade classrooms.

Earth science students learned how to do water and soil testing and then shared their knowledge with a local group of farmers.

Earth science classes spent one hour each day for one week helping seniors with yard work, winterizing their homes and taking care of their property.

Earth science students study of pollution included picking up trash, noting the types that exist in their community and provided this information to the city sanitation department.

An earth science class organized and supervised a used motor oil drive. The oil was then recycled through a participating agency.

Art classes set up an Empty Bowls Project selling their bowls to raise money to help fund the local food for friends program.

Physical education classes sponsored a Lift-a-thon where they demonstrated proper weight lifting techniques and in the process raised money for new equipment for their weight room.

The band played at the dedication of a local Vietnam Memorial. The band prepared and performed arrangements of the "Star Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful" and a medley of armed services songs.

History students created a local newspaper from a specific time period of history and presented it in an elementary class, a middle school class and left it in the public library for the community to see.

Law class researched problems that teenagers faced and then designed and completed a poster that gave information about the problem and how to avoid it. The posters were then placed in the halls and classrooms of the building for the rest of the school to use.

After a number of household accidents had been reported in a local paper a high school health class designed a set of appropriate safety tips and duplicated them on the back of grocery bags and returned the bags to the store to be used to pack groceries. By this means the safety tips were distributed throughout the community.

A government class researched and designed a place mat that contained voting information and a brief sketch of the local candidates. They contacted the local fast food restaurants and these mats were used in place of the "usual" mats until after the election was completed.

Advanced German students located and visited elderly German speaking members of the community. They spent time with these seniors speaking German and providing companionship to them.

Math students designed and created math related career posters and presented these posters to middle school math classes.

Spanish students tutor elementary and middle school native Spanish speakers with their English.

A health class devised a list of contents for a proper first aid kit. The class was divided into 4 groups with each group responsible for collecting items for their kit in a "scavenger hunt" type of process. The completed kits were then donated to the local chapter of the Red Cross.

English students visited the local senior citizens center on a regular basis where they read to the seniors that requested it. They also wrote letters and provided companionship.

A consumer economics class developed an advertising promotion for the neighborhood store near the school and helped the owner evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign.

Advanced placement German wrote short books for children and then read their own creations to the elementary children who were taking German.