

WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Service-learning is a method of teaching and learning that connects classroom lessons with meaningful service to the community.

Integrated into the academic curriculum, service-learning helps students and schools meet academic goals. Service-learning enables young people to apply their knowledge in support of their neighbors and community, even as they gain knowledge and skills from meeting real community needs. Students build character and become active citizens as they work with others in their school or community to create service projects in areas like education, public safety, and the environment.

Service-learning can be applied across all subjects and grade levels – from kindergarten through college – and can involve a single student or group of students, a classroom, or an entire school. For example: one student may serve at a local food pantry while studying the roots of poverty; a science class may clean-up a local streambed while analyzing water samples; and an entire school may adopt a service-learning curriculum focused on community health. Whatever the focus, service-learning benefits the school, community, and the students.

“I’m applying concepts in a unique and concrete way.”



Chris Percopo
College Student

In my management class last semester, I worked on a strategic analysis for a local hunger agency. Instead of just turning in a paper at the end of the semester, my project group created a manual to assist the agency with its fundraising efforts.

Service-learning has helped me understand how I can use my academic learning to improve my community, and has also given me confidence that a lot of students don't have. I realize I have valuable skills to contribute to any organization, and I'm on my way to a career I find meaningful.

“By engaging students in the world beyond the classroom, service-learning opens new doors and brings learning to life.”



Janice Steinberg
Teacher

As an educator, I'm constantly challenged to approach academic lessons in a way that will engage students and connect their learning to the world beyond the classroom.

For me, service-learning is a teaching strategy that does just that.

I have seen so many positive results through service-learning. I have seen student attendance soar. I have seen grades improve. And I have seen students break through barriers and realize their ability to make a difference.

Whether students are tutoring youth, serving at a local shelter or clinic, or working to make a community safer,

they're addressing social issues and making academic connections first-hand. They're connecting with each other and the community, and realizing their roles and responsibilities as citizens.



Service-learning is a tool for every teacher – the possibilities are endless! Look to your students for ideas and to your community for resources. By providing opportunities for youth to explore their world and make decisions, we're creating lifelong learners and strong citizens.

SERVICE-LEARNING WORKS!

Service-learning helps students build academic skills while strengthening communities through service. A growing body of research recognizes the benefits of service-learning as an effective strategy to:

● Improve Academic Achievement

When explicitly tied to academic standards and learning objectives, service-learning positively impacts student outcomes on measures of academic achievement, including standardized test scores.

● Increase Student Engagement

Service-learning engages students by helping them make critical connections between classroom lessons and real-world applications.

● Improve Social Behavior

Service-learning participants are less likely to engage in risky behavior, and more likely to build social skills like communication, teamwork, and problem solving.

● Build Civic Skills

By giving students the responsibility to identify and meet pressing needs, service-learning builds civic skills and commitment in young people that last a lifetime.

● Strengthen Community Partnerships

Service-learning brings students into the community, and the community into schools. In this way, students develop a sense of belonging and responsibility, and communities view youth as valuable assets.

“Service-learning creates an environment for success.”



Ernest Johnson
Guidance Counselor

Service-learning creates an environment where every student can succeed. As an educator, I see students who struggle in a traditional classroom “turn on” in a service-

learning setting. By encouraging them to apply their interests, knowledge, and skills in new ways, service-learning opens new doors for students to show what they know and can do.

In our school, service-learning began with a single class. Today, every student participates in service-learning projects. As a result, we’ve seen student engagement increase, standardized test scores increase, improved student attendance, decreased student violence, and more. The best thing – students want to come to school. They’re thinking critically about the next step in their lives and making the connection between academics and future success.

In addition, the response we’ve seen in the community – from parents, businesses and local organizations – has been tremendous. These students will stay involved in their communities for years to come.

“I know that what I’m learning matters.”



Mina Cha
High School Student

Service-learning projects have helped me see how the skills I’m learning in school – like research, organization, and teamwork – apply to real life.

As part of my American History class, we’re restoring a house that was built in the 1790s and now serves as a youth hostel for students and community groups. Together we researched the history of the house, calculated a budget for supplies, and partnered with local businesses and experts. While we’re helping to preserve an important community meeting place, we’re digging into research and learning about history in a hands-on way.

