

Training/Consultation Assistance For Teachers

How-to-guide For Service Learning

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is more than just volunteering. If young people collect trash from a local river, they are providing a service to the community as volunteers. If young people collect trash from a local river, then analyze what they found so they can share the results with residents of the community along with suggestions for reducing pollution, they are engaging in service learning.

Through service learning youth are providing an important service to the community AND, learning about water quality and laboratory analysis, developing an understanding of pollution issues, learning to interpret science issues and practicing communications skills by presenting their results to the community. They may also reflect on their personal and career interests in science, the environment, public policy or other related areas.

Thus, service learning combines SERVICE with LEARNING in intentional ways.

How can Service Learning benefit my Students?

A growing body of research recognizes 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 in school** – Service learning engages youth 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 youth the responsibility to identify and meet pressing needs, service learning builds civic skills and commitment that last a lifetime.
- **Strengthen Community Partnerships** – Service learning brings youth into the community, and the community into lives of youth. In this way, youth develop a sense of belonging and responsibility, and communities view youth as valuable assets.

What are the elements of an effective Service Learning project or program?

The Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network have identified eight critical elements of effective service learning projects and programs. These elements include:

1. **Community Need/Voice** – If we are to solve problems in communities and provide authentic learning opportunities for young people we must make sure we are actively engaging the community in identifying their needs.
2. **Learning Objectives** – Essential to service learning is understanding what young people are expected to learn through their service. Developing learning objectives provides an opportunity to identify what young people will learn on a personal, social and intellectual level.
3. **Youth Voice & Planning** – Listening to and engaging young people in the planning process provides more ownership and learning opportunities for participants.
4. **Orientation and Training** – Young people must understand the organization, issues and skills required to provide effective service and to maximize learning.
5. **Action** – The actual service experience itself requires much planning and thinking. There are many logistics that are important to ensuring a meaningful experience, including age appropriateness, transportation, supervision and risk management.
6. **Reflection** – Reflection is a process where young people use critical thinking skills in order to learn from their service experience. This process helps young people grow on a personal, social and intellectual level.
7. **Evaluation** – Evaluation provides an opportunity to assess the process (what did we do well, what could we have done better) and the impact (how have young people and the community changed).
8. **Celebration & Recognition** – When young people provide valuable service to the community their efforts need to be recognized and celebrated. This reinforces the value and their connection to what they accomplished.

How do I get Service Learning started in my classroom/group?

Assess what needs *ALREADY* exist within your community. A great way to find out where your community could use help is by either contacting the Youth Programs Manager at the Volunteer Center in Waukesha County (262) 547-8459 or by visiting the website www.volunteerwaukesha.com.

1. **Evaluate what the availability of your group is and if there are limitations** (such as transportation issues) that would prohibit your group from participating in a particular service project.
2. **Pick age appropriate projects for your group.** Developing age appropriate service activities will ensure that they and the agency they are serving receive the most out of their experience.
**See pages 4 & 5 for additional information.*

For additional information or resources, contact the Volunteer Center, a division of the United Way in Waukesha County:

Youth Programs Manager: Nicole Blemberg
 tel: (262) 547-8459
niki@unitedwaywaukesha.org

1717 Paramount Drive
 Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186

What is and is not an age appropriate service project for K-5th grade students?

Is Age Appropriate

Is Not Age Appropriate

Participating in an environmentally conscious project, like a river or bike trail clean up	Testing water samples from a local lake or river and documenting the findings for the community
Making placemats for a soup kitchen or homeless shelter	Volunteering in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter
Read-a-thon projects, where students read to younger kids	Organizing a phonics fair to help improve reading skills
Initiating a liter patrol at school during lunch or recess	Starting a recycling program for the entire school
Collecting used books for a shelter for homeless children	Writing letters to corporations asking for donations for a shelter for homeless shelter
Performing plays and skits depicting community problems and their solutions	Holding a youth summit to dialogue about problems in the community and possible solutions
Visiting senior citizens who live in a nearby home	Collecting and writing personal or community oral histories by interviewing senior citizens

What is and is not an age appropriate service project for 6th-8th grade students?

Is Age Appropriate

Is Not Age Appropriate

Youth Action Councils, where they design service activities for other young people in their school or community	Self directed and self guided Youth Actions Councils without adult supervision
Helping food banks with inventory	Delivering meals to homebound residents without adult supervision
Participating in a community clean up	Building a playground in an underprivileged neighborhood
Volunteering at a soup kitchen, nursing home, or day care center	Making placemats for soup kitchens, nursing homes, or day care centers
Starting a conflict resolution program	Starting a peer counseling program
Tutoring elementary students after school	Tutoring youth in juvenile justice centers
Planting a garden at a homeless shelter	Renovating a homeless shelter

What is and is not an age appropriate service project for 9th-12th grade students?

Is Age Appropriate

Is Not Age Appropriate

Cleaning a polluted lake or river	Making posters about pollution
Researching general information on political platforms and distributing it to peers	Developing a political candidate's talking points for a debate
Making a panel for the AIDS Quilt and give awareness presentations	Facilitating an AIDS support group
Helping design a playground in an underprivileged neighborhood	Building a playground in an underprivileged neighborhood without adult supervision
Holding a forum about racism to find possible community solutions	Organizing and facilitating a weekend diversity retreat
Working as aids in group homes for adults with disabilities	Making holiday decorations to be used in a group home for adults with disabilities
Setting up a peer counseling program	Providing therapy for drug or alcohol addicted peers