What is service-learning?

Service-learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience that allows students to (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Through service and guided reflection, students learn about themselves and their relationship to the community around them. Service-learning allows students to engage with real-world issues and social problems, and to work with community organizations to become "part of the solution."

Service-learning is an instructional method that combines formal coursework with thoughtfully organized community service experiences. Service-learning addresses community-identified needs while helping students meet academic, social and civic learning goals.

Relevant and Meaningful Service With the Community – there must be service provided in the community that is both relevant and meaningful to all stakeholders.

Enhanced Academic Learning – the addition of relevant and meaningful service with the community must not only serve the community but also enhance student academic learning in the course.

Purposeful Civic Learning – the addition of relevant and meaningful service with the community must not only serve the community and enhance academic learning in the course, but also directly and intentionally prepare students for active civic participation in a diverse democratic society.

Critical Elements: Credit should be given for demonstrated learning, not simply for putting in hours. Structured opportunities must be provided for students to reflect upon their service as it relates to course objectives through reading, writing, and dialogue. Learning is assessed via these academic (reflection) assignments that help connect the service experience with class teaching/learning objectives.
Reasons service-learning has become a powerful movement in K-12 and Higher Education:

- Utilizes “active, hands-on learning” (we remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, AND 90% OF WHAT WE DO AND REFLECT ON = service-learning);
- Fundamental purpose of education is to produce good citizens and ensure that we have a strong democratic society;
- Service-learning prepares students to be more responsible, engaged citizens;
- Students benefit – experience, application of classroom learning, career and major exploration, job and life experience, networking, improved confidence and self esteem, improved critical thinking skills, resume enhancement, improves employability, etc…;
- Makes education more relevant and contributes to improving community and society;
- Makes learning fun.

Questions to consider:

1. Service-learning is a national movement that has been expanding by leaps and bounds in K-12 and higher education. What in your opinion are the most important reasons and are there other reasons than the ones listed above?
2. What are the three fundamental components that make service-learning unique (hint, see page 1)?
3. How is service-learning different from 1) volunteerism, and 2) internships? (hint, which of the three components do they share and which are different)?
4. Why is it important that future teachers (you!) learn about service-learning?
5. How does one become a good citizen – are you born that way or must your education, family, community, etc., help mold you into a good citizen? What do you see as the connection between engaged citizens and democracy?
6. What are the most important potential benefits for students who participate in service-learning?
7. If more teachers and students were involved in service-learning, how would that change education, and how would it change our communities and our society?
8. As a future teacher, what are some ways in which you could use service-learning with your class?

Resources:
- Miami Dade College Center for Community Involvement: [www.mdc.edu/cci](http://www.mdc.edu/cci)
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse: [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)
- Campus Compact: [www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)
“Learning In Deed” Video Assignment

“The state of education is on everyone’s radar...
...everyone is interested in transforming our schools.”

Answer the following questions using the “Learning In Deed” video.

1) “PEOPLE OF THE MISSION”
Horace Mann Academic Middle School, San Francisco Citizens of the Mission District
San Francisco, CA

1. What did the students learn from this project?
2. What subjects (e.g., Art, History, English, etc.) might this project be appropriate for?
3. In what ways was the project important to the community?
4. What impact might this project have on the students who participated?

“People learn best when they do things.”

“Kids aren’t going to pass any test if they are not engaged.”

2) “AN EMERGENCY ROOM MAKEOVER”
Sullivan Elementary School and North Adams Regional Hospital
North Adams, MA

1. What did the students learn from this project?
2. What subjects (e.g., Art, History, English, etc.) might this project be appropriate for?
3. In what ways was the project important to the community?
4. What impact might this project have on the students who participated?

“The kids are excited...”

“Young people are grappling with whether or not they are valued. Do they have a purpose? Is there a place for them in the community?”

3) “LEARNING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER”
Turner Middle School, The Haverford School, and Titicum Wildlife Refuge
Philadelphia, PA

1. What did the students learn from this project?
2. What subjects (e.g., Art, History, English, etc.) might this project be appropriate for?
3. In what ways was the project important to the community?
4. What impact might this project have on the students who participated?

“When students are disengaged they are not learning.”

“...it’s not just different work, it’s better work.”