

Preface

Service learning develops people and builds stronger communities.

Service learning is an education method which links meaningful student community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility.

Service learning can be used to promote standards, skills, and social values in education. It complements initiatives to promote effective education and community partnerships in schools, colleges and universities throughout the UK.

Service learning treats young people as a resource to their communities.

This Guide provides an introduction to the philosophy, principles and practice of service learning. It draws on work done in the USA and the UK. We welcome comments that will help us to improve it.

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Definition of Service Learning

Service learning is an education method which links meaningful student community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility.

Service learning:

- offers concrete opportunities for young people to learn new skills, think critically, and test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence
- is incremental, and progresses from one year to the next
- is appropriate for use with all students and in all curricular areas
- is integral to the taught and whole curriculum (and not a bolt-on activity)
- provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on what they have learned from the experience
- is accredited and celebrated
- responds to a wide range of needs in the school, college, university and wider community

Service Learning Activities

There can be as many service learning activities as there are needs in the community and opportunities in the school, college and university. Typically projects involve peer learning, community service, work on the environment, intergenerational projects and initiatives to develop communities through the arts, sciences and sport.

Benefits to Students, Schools, Colleges and Universities

Service learning offers students the opportunity for:

Intellectual Growth: Community Service Learning gives students the skills to:

- acquire new knowledge and concepts
- apply their knowledge critically
- develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- reflect on their experiences

Personal Growth: Students undertaking service learning develop:

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| • self-confidence and self-esteem | • ability to take risks and accept challenges |
| • self understanding | • a sense of useful purpose |
| • a sense of identity | • positive personal values and beliefs |
| • independence and autonomy | • responsibility for one's self and one's actions |
| • openness to new experiences and roles | |

Social Growth: Service Learning develops students'

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| • communication skills | backgrounds |
| • leadership skills | • ability to work with others |
| • ability to work with others | • a sense of caring for others |
| • acceptance and awareness of others from different cultures and | • a sense of belonging |
| | • peer group affiliation |

Quality Practice

The following check list has been distilled from experience in the United States and the UK.

Does your service learning programme:

- Strengthen service and academic learning through integrating the work within the mainstream taught and whole curriculum ? (Service learning cannot usually be delivered as a bolt-on to existing activities.)
- Feature in your Development Plan and publicity?
- Provide concrete opportunities for young people to increase their knowledge, learn new skills, think critically and to test new roles in an environment that encourages risk-taking and rewards competence?
- Involve students in planning the project?
- Involve students in preparation and reflection?
- Offer students skilled guidance and support?
- Recognise the students' achievements?
- Offer a meaningful contribution to the community?
- Develop purposeful partnerships with the community and others involved in the project?
- Provide staff and tutors with the appropriate training and professional development to promote effective service learning activities?

The Service Learning Process

Learning through community service usually involves a four step process:

Preparation: This consists of learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. Students must understand the purpose of the project, what is expected of them as well as what they can expect to gain from the work. This includes:

- identifying and analysing the challenge
- selecting and planning the project
- training and orientation

Action: The project itself must:

- be meaningful
- have academic integrity
- be supervised well
- provide for student ownership
- be developmentally appropriate

Reflection: Reflection enables the students to think critically about their service experience. They can reflect through:

- discussion
- reading
- writing
- developing a portfolio

Celebration: This is an occasion to recognise what the students have achieved. It may include media coverage, a special event, the award of certificates or other ways of marking the end of the project.

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CSV and Service Learning

CSV Education is part of CSV (Community Service Volunteers) which creates opportunities for people to play an active part in the life of their community through volunteering, the media, training and education.

Our Mission

Our mission is to promote and support Community Service Learning in schools, colleges and universities throughout the UK.

Our Objectives

- Every pupil and student to undertake a minimum of 10 hours service learning each year
- Every school, college and university to include service learning in its development plan and activity

To achieve our objectives we aim to provide:

- educators with materials, training and support for service learning
- policy makers, opinion formers and practitioners with evidence of the benefits of service

Our Programme

In higher education we support service learning through CSV Working Together, and we manage the UK's largest student tutoring initiative, CSV Learning Together. In schools our work includes two flagship initiatives on service learning: Barclays New Futures and, in association with other organisations, Changemakers. CSV is also promoting community volunteers in schools and service learning initiatives with local government. We are in partnership with the Pennsylvania Institute for Environmental and Service Learning.

