



YCS Guide to Add Learning to Service

Service learning integrates community service with active learning about important social issues. Service learning fosters civic engagement, promotes character development, builds self-efficacy, and encourages individuals towards active meaningful service in their communities. Service learning can be applied in a variety of contexts – K-12 education, colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, and faith-based groups. Families can also engage in service-learning activities – to add learning to service.

Service Learning Enhances the Community Service Experience?

Similar to community service, service learning meets authentic community needs and builds an individual's sense of civic engagement. However, service learning adds three elements to the community service experience – at whatever age level is appropriate. 1) An explicit focus on learning about the social issues related to the service experiences (e.g. in addition to donating food to a hunger program, explore some of the reasons why hunger exists). 2) A qualitative focus on the ongoing service experience, beyond tracking hours for a one-time event. 3) Time for reflection and interpretation, whether verbally or through artwork or other expression.

Elements of Service Learning

A meaningful service-learning experience includes as many of the following age-appropriate steps as possible:

- _____ The service activity responds to an authentic community need.
- _____ Youth, as well as adults, participate in service project selection and planning.
- _____ Time is devoted to learning about the issues related to the service experience.
- _____ All service providers engaged in some form of service reflection, either through discussion, journaling (writing, poetry), art, music, or drama.
- _____ All service partners (both service providers and service recipients) benefit from the service experience (reciprocity)

- _____ The service experience honors multiple points of view and encourages participants to identify and understand multiple perspectives and to overcome stereotypes.

- _____ Participants evaluate whether the service-learning experience is meeting, or has meet the intended goals.

- _____ The service experiences include all aspects of project planning, learning, reflection, and evaluation; the service experiences can offer the duration needed to have an impact.