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Service Learning Basic Resources

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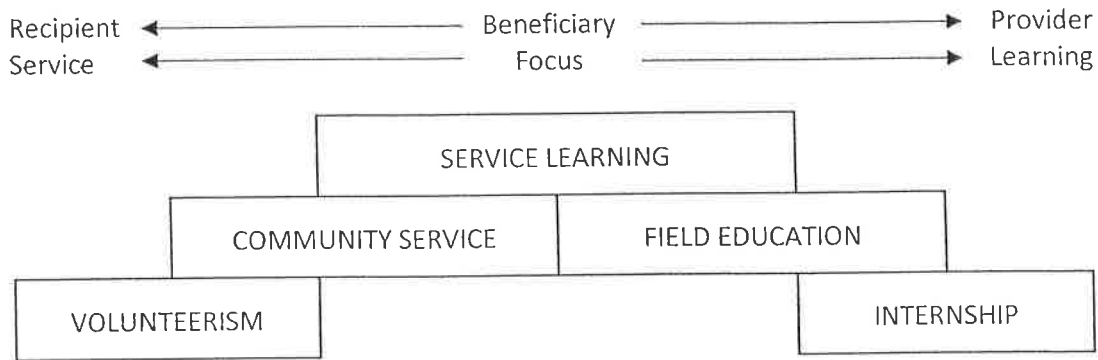
What Is Service Learning?

Definition

Service learning is a teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service-learning programs involve students in organized community service that addresses local needs, while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community.

-Campus Compact National Center for Community Colleges

Distinctions among service programs



As a form of experiential education, service-learning shares similarities with internships, field education, practica, and voluntary service. Furco (1996) places these forms of education on a continuum. At one end of the continuum are internships and practica, with their primary focus on the students' career development. At the other end are volunteer activities, in which the emphasis is on the civic involvement and the services provided to recipients. Furco locates service-learning in the middle of the continuum, and states that it is unique in its "intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring" (1996, p. 5).

Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In Corporation for National Service (Ed.), *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning* (pp. 2-6). Columbia, MD: Cooperative Education Association.

Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning

An effective and sustainable program:

- Engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
- Provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
- Articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
- Allows for those with needs to define those needs.
- Clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
- Matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
- Expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
- Includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
- Insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interest of all involved.
- Is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

Honnet, E. P., & Poulson, S. J. (1989).

Principles of good practice for combining service and learning.
(Wingspread Special Report). Racine, WI: The Johnson Foundation.

Principles of Good Practice in Community Service-Learning Pedagogy

- Academic credit is for learning, not for service.
- Do not compromise academic rigor.
- Set learning goals for students.
- Establish criteria for the selection of community service placements.
- Provide educationally sound mechanisms to harvest the community learning.
- Minimize the distinction between the student's community learning role and the classroom learning role.
- Re-think the faculty instructional role.
- Be prepared for uncertainty and variation in student learning outcomes.
- Maximize the community responsibility orientation of the course.

Howard, J. (Ed.). (1993). Praxis I: A faculty casebook on community service learning.
Ann Arbor, MI: Office of Community Service Learning Press, University of Michigan

The 8 Block Model for Designing & Implementing A Service Learning Project

Information derived from Ed Laine, Bowdoin College. This material is based on information originally written in the [Service Learning in the Geosciences](#) module. Additional information about this method was presented at the [2010 Service Learning workshop](#).

What is the 8-Block Model?

The 8-block model is a useful starting point for designing your service-learning project. The eight areas discussed in this model are shown below as a poster we will call an 8 block. You can create your own 8 block model outline and start filling in the blanks, or alternatively, download an [editable 8 block diagram](#) (Microsoft Word 2007 (.docx) 11kB Jan29 10) to get started. Be prepared to create your model at least twice. As you begin to understand the connections between each block you are going to want to move ideas around or change them. It seems that no one is ever satisfied with their first attempt and also that some blocks are never confidently filled in the first time the exercise or project is used in class. That said, once you have invested in the 8 block process it becomes a visual guide for the implementing the service learning components of your course.

For more information on the 8-block model, visit the [Service Learning program page](#) which contains a [Powerpoint and screencast](#) of Ed Laine's presentation at the workshop.

Block 1 - Project Design

Regardless of the project you choose, it has to be consistent with the learning goals of your class and it has to be something that your students are going to be able to do. Answering some basic questions will get you started with project design.

Some basic questions to get started with project design:

- What are my learning goals for this course?
- Which of these learning goals could be achieved through service learning?
- How ready are the students for the project work?
- What teaching needs to be done?
- How will I manage the logistics?
- How will I assess this work?
- What resources will the students require?

Block 2 - Community Partner Relations

Working with a community partner on a problem that is important to them is very exciting for your class. Careful planning can keep this relationship running smoothly. Discussions and agreements ahead of time should explore several areas.

Some useful considerations for successful partnerships:

- Partner's needs must match your learning goals
- Partner knows and understands your goals
- Roles and responsibilities must be well defined
- Outcomes should be planned and agreed upon, agree upon the deliverable outcomes
- Responsibilities for student supervision must be discussed and clearly understood
- The partner should have a clear idea of the level of student competencies
- If the partner is part of the evaluation process, this should be clearly defined

8 Block Table for Designing an Implementing Service Learning Exercises or Courses

Project Design	Community Partner Relations
Building Community in the Classroom	Building Student Capacity
Problem Statement	Project Management
Assessment of Learning	Reflection and Connections

A poster to guide service learning course design, known as an 8-block model. *Created by Edward Laine.* You can download an [editable 8 block diagram](#) (Microsoft Word 2007 (.docx) 11kB Jan29 10).

- The time frame for completing the work and delivering must be agreed upon
- You should be clear to the partner and they to you about what defines success
- It may be helpful to jointly write a letter of understanding
- The partner should know that you expect; a project statement can help define this

Block 3 - Building Community in the Classroom

Learning how to work effectively in a team is a vocational skill desired by our students. Many service learning exercises and projects lend themselves to teamwork. If your project includes group work, you should include a component of team building in your plan. Your classroom needs to be a safe place where students can take risks. If the project lasts more than several weeks, check in to monitor and sustain good teamwork. If your students are new to group work and service learning, it is important that you explain why and how the class will be different.

Block 4 - Building Student Capacity

To do successful work on their service learning project, students need to learn skills and concepts, the learning goals of your class. You need to decide how to teach these skills and concepts. Traditional methods can work well. Some tips to build student capacity:

- Inventory what skills are already there
- Set realistic goals for what your students can master
- Think of ways to guarantee, or at least promote, success at the start
- Deliver skills and concepts just when they are needed (Visit the [Pedagogy in Action](#) site to learn more about the [Just in Time teaching approach](#))
- Look for new ways for students to demonstrate evidence of their learning (see block 7 and its related links for more information)

Block 5 - Problem Statement

The community partner needs to provide a one-page problem statement on letterhead. This may be jointly written before the semester begins.

Some tips for creating the problem statement:

- The problem should be stated clearly in terms of the class vocabulary
- The statement should solve a problem
- The outcomes should be clear and final deliverables should be agreed upon
- The roles of class and partner should be stated

Block 6 - Project Management

To keep the project running well you have to do lots of work behind the scenes. Much of this is just like you would do for lab or fieldwork. Guide to project management:

- Manage logistics and resources
- Provide appropriate support to build self-efficacy (Learn more about [self-efficacy](#) from the Cutting Edge Affective Domain module.)
- Keep students on track and engaged by monitoring their progress
- Motivate students through ups and downs (See the Cutting Edge web page on [motivating students](#), part of the [Affective Domain](#) module, for more information.)

Block 7 - Assessment of Learning

Assessment is important because it indicates whether or not the project has met your learning goals. Sometimes a quiz or test is appropriate and sometimes a poster or report is just the right tool.

Related Links

From *Pedagogy in Action*:

Example Assessment Strategies

Assessing Project Based Learning

Professional Communications Projects

- Assessments should be appropriate to your institution, department, or school
- Examples include, but are not limited to, exams, quizzes, papers, reflections, portfolios, performances, or exhibitions
- An early quiz may determine whether the students are prepared for the project
- A good assessment clarifies the objectives from the start, sets quality criteria, and provides students with motivation to persevere

Block 8 - Reflection and Connection

Learning done in a community context can be very energizing to your students. With help, they can make connections between the concepts and skills you want to teach and their community and how it functions. They can understand the exciting aspects of geoscience careers much more clearly. You need to take advantage of this through using any one of several reflection tools.

- Debriefings
- Guided writing with questions
- Journals
- Interviews
- Free writing

For more information on the 8-block model, visit the Service Learning program page which contains a [Powerpoint and screencast](#) of Ed Laine's presentation at the workshop.

Seven Elements of High Quality Service-Learning

Integrated Learning

- The service-learning project has clearly articulated knowledge, skill or value goals that arise from broader curriculum goals and outcomes.
- The service informs the academic learning content, and the academic learning content informs the service.
- Life skills learned outside the classroom are integrated back into classroom learning.

High Quality Service

- The service responds to an actual community need that is identified by the community.
- The service is well-organized with on-going communication among the college and the community partner.
- The service is designed to achieve significant benefits for both the students and community.

Student Voice

Students may participate actively in:

- Choosing and planning the service project.
- Planning and implementing the reflection sessions, evaluation, and celebration.

Civic Responsibility

- The service-learning project promotes students' responsibility to care for others and to contribute to their community.
- By participating in the service-learning project, students understand how to transfer their skills to projects outside of a course/campus project.

Collaboration

- The service-learning project is a collaboration among as many of these partners as is feasible: students, community-based organizations staff, faculty, and recipients of service.
- All partners benefit from the project and contribute to its planning, implementation, evaluation and celebration.

Reflection

- Reflection establishes connections between students' service experiences and the academic curriculum.
- Reflection occurs before, during, and after the service-learning project.
- Reflection requires progressively deeper critical thinking, moving from areas of student competency to advanced levels appropriate for the course.

Evaluation

- All the partners, especially students, are involved in evaluating the service-learning project.
- The evaluation seeks to measure progress toward the learning and service goals of the project.