

# Service Learning Component

## What is service-learning?

Service-learning is a teaching method where guided or classroom learning is deepened through service to others in a process that provides structured time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of the skills and knowledge acquired. Students learn and use **academic skills to become leaders**, perform **needed service** and **increase civic participation**, **reflect on** and **learn** from their experience as they define who they are, and **provide tangible benefits** that serve the community. Students, guided by teachers, are encouraged to take the lead in responding to genuine needs in their school or community. Service-learning brings together the five competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

## How is service-learning different from community service?

Service-learning differs from other forms of community service or volunteering because the **education** of students is always at its **core**. It should be evident that a student is becoming informed and learning about a topic in order to ultimately make a meaningful difference.

An example of a traditional community service project is a canned food drive.

Usually an announcement is made asking students to bring in canned food and put them in a box in the office and then a teacher delivers them to a local food pantry. The “winning” class gets a pizza party for bringing in the most cans. This is not service learning...

A service learning canned food drive would begin with a study of hunger in the community - researching hunger and participating in a simulation about hunger in social studies, examining the impacts of hunger on the mind and body in science class, discussing nutrition and good food choices in PE, looking at the budgeting a family must do in order to eat during math class, and studying and writing stories and poems about hunger in language arts. Then the kids could collect specific types of foods and bring them to a local food pantry on a “service day” in which they would stock shelves and take inventory - making a meaningful contribution to an organization. At NPES we will use our Advisory time to make these curricular connections and to do this work.

## How will we do service-learning at NPES?

1. Students will have choice - when students have a **voice** in choosing and designing a service project, they are **intrinsically more invested** emotionally and intellectually. Projects will utilize student **strengths** and **talents** that aren't always apparent in other facets of the school day.
2. We will involve the community - community can be defined in a variety of ways from relationships **within the school** to the **broader neighborhood** and **city**.

3. Students will gain a deep **knowledge** of a topic - the **learning** piece is what sets service-learning apart from volunteering and what makes for meaningful work. We will make intentional curricular connections in our work.

4. There will be a clear **service** or **action** component at least twice a year -

- Service can take many forms. Examples are below.
  - Direct Service (face-to-face interaction with individuals in need): Tutoring, meeting with elderly, serving to homeless
  - Indirect Service (benefit the community as a whole): Stocking a food pantry, planting at a park
  - Advocacy (create awareness or promote action) : Letter writing, creating PSAs, helping with or participating in a run, teaching others about the topic
  - Research (create surveys, conduct interviews) : Testing water or soil quality, interviewing elderly and sharing

5. A final presentation and **community share event** will culminate the project. Students will demonstrate their **knowledge** and **expertise** acquired which educating the broader school community.

### **What is the process involved with service-learning?**

1. Preparation - this involves students **identifying a real community need**, investigating, researching, and analyzing it, and making a plan for action. This is the **learning** step.

2. Action - students plan for and carry out action that brings together the preparations they have done. This **action component** can fit any or many of the types of service listed above.

3. Reflection - students consider how the experience, knowledge, and skills that they acquired relate to their own lives and communities. Students **ask questions, probe deeper**, and investigate further. They can use a variety of media to express reflection - music, art, writing, speaking...

4. Demonstration - students show what expertise they have gained through an **exhibition** that reaches out to the broader community.

### **What makes service-learning successful?**

1. Integrated Learning - **learning and service are woven together** and reinforce each other, with service informing content and content informing service.

2. Genuine Needs - service address a **need** and students make a real difference.

3. Youth Voice and Choice - students have the opportunity to take initiative, **make decisions**, interact with community representatives, and put their ideas into action.

4. Collaborative Efforts - students participate in the **development of partnerships** and share responsibility with community members, parents, organizations, and other students.

5. Reciprocity - **mutual exchange** of information, ideas, and skills.

6. Civic Responsibility - young people understand **democracy** when they recognize their vital role in improving society , working for social justice, and caring for the environment.