

Nuts and Bolts of Service-Learning

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SERVICE LEARNING DEFINITION

In *Service Learning in Higher Education* (B. Jacoby, Ed.)

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning.

Traditional Teaching vs. Service Learning

- The professor is the expert
- Success is determined by the amount of facts and theoretical understanding acquired by the student
- The professor is an expert on certain things, but the community also possesses expertise which is valuable to students' intellectual growth. This is not only evident "in the field" but is also realized through the invitation of community leaders to be guest lecturers in class or to provide need training/orientation to the community.
- Success is determined by both the intellectual growth of the student as well as the production of valued outcomes in the community, the creation of a genuine partnership between the community and the university, as well as student personal growth such as greater sensitivity to diversity and increased civic engagement

Traditional Teaching vs. Service Learning

- Learning occurs in the classroom and through assigned reading
- The professor is in control of the course. He or she sets the pace, writes the syllabus, and guides the learning process.
- Learning occurs in the classroom, through assigned reading, through interaction and dialogue with other people, through experience, and through structured reflection.
- No one person is in total control of the course. Community members, students, and the faculty all share ownership for course construction and the learning process. The syllabus is not set in stone at the beginning of the course, but rather may have to be revised and modified based on what occurs “in the field.”

Wingspread Principles of Good Practice for Service and Learning

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

*Principles of Good Practice for
Combining Service and Learning.*

Johnson Foundation.

www.johnsonfdn.org/principles.htm

Principles of Good Practice in Service Learning

Mintz, S.D. & Hesser, G. (1996). Principles of Good Practice in Service-Learning. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Ed.), *Service Learning in Higher Education, Concepts and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

1. An effective program engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.

- *Are students and community members involved in defining the common good?*
- *Does the definition of the common good include empowerment of individuals and communities and the sharing of power and resources?*
- *Do the actions taken enhance the capacities of students and communities to be active agents in shaping their own futures?*

2. An effective program provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.

- *Are faculty and community members as well as students involved in critical reflection?*
- *Does reflection address the unequal distribution of power and resources among the partners, as well as the root causes of this inequality?*
- *Are there opportunities for shared reflection among the partners?*

3. An effective program articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.

- *Are students and community members along with service-learning educators, equal partners in setting the goals?*
- *Do the learning and service goals encourage the enhancement of the capacities of all involved?*
- *Do the goals include providing community access to the resources of the college or university?*

4. An effective program allows for those with needs to define those needs.

- *Do all partners – the academy, students, and the community – have the opportunity to define their needs?*
- *How can the process of defining needs become a learning opportunity for all involved?*
- *How does attention to reciprocity shift the focus from needs and deficiencies to needs and capacities?*

5. An effective program clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.

- *Do the assigned responsibilities draw from and enhance the strengths and capacities of each partner?*
- *How do we ensure that the community's responsibilities involve engagement in the students' learning and development?*
- *What structures have been established for the initial and ongoing clarification of both learning and service goals for all partners?*

6. An effective program, matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.

- *What can the tracking of changing circumstances teach all partners about the large societal issues that affect the need for service?*
- *How can the academy, students, and the community work together continually to assess service needs and how well they are being met?*

7. An effective program expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.

- *Are the partners effectively using all the means at their disposal to ensure the sustainability of the partnership?*
- *Are the partners giving each other access to appropriate resources that augment their capacities to learn and serve one another well into the future?*

8. An effective program includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.

- *Are training, supervision, monitoring, support recognition, and evaluation designed to accommodate diverse backgrounds, orientations, and styles?*
- *Are these differences considered assets rather than problems?*

9. An effective program ensures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved.

- *Does the program encourage participation of individuals with a variety of schedules?*
- *Do program organizers view participants' varied schedules as an asset and not a liability?*
- *Does the program address the differences between the academic calendar and the community's calendar?*

10. An effective program is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations.

- *Does program diversity extend to persons of various ages, socioeconomic levels, sexual orientation, and physical and mental abilities, as well as race and gender?*
- *How effectively does the program employ the assets of its diverse participants to meet its service and learning goals.*

Two Questions to Ask

(Edward Zlotkowski, Bentley College)

- What are the goals of your course?
- How could service help you to achieve them?

Alternative Questions to Ask

- What are the needs of the community?
- What community???
- How can I leverage the resources of my institution (human, intellectual, physical, political, etc.) to address these needs?

Defining Community

- Questions to ask
 - Is this a traditional social service agency or a grassroots community-based organization?
 - Are decisions made and/or implemented primarily by paid staff or by volunteers?
 - Is leadership reflective of the beneficiaries of the organization, whether it is the larger community or a specific group of people?

Defining Community

- Questions to ask (cont'd)
 - Does this organization or group have the capacity to work with my students?
 - Does this organization have 501(c)3 status?
 - Is the organization place-based or people-based in terms of its focus?
 - Does this group engage in advocacy and/or community organizing?
 - Who funds this organization?

4 C's :Principles of Reflection

- Continuous
- Connected
- Challenging
- Conceptualized

From Eyler, J., Giles, D., & Schmiede, A. (1996). A Practitioner's Guide To Reflection in Service-Learning. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Continuous Reflection

- Throughout the service experience.
- Incorporated within various educational experiences.
- “Preparation” reflection is important to ready the student for the service experience.
- Reflection as the service occurs serves as formative information for project improvement and personal growth.

Connected Reflection

- Links service to the intellectual and academic pursuits of the students.
- Helps to build integration of service to life and career.
- Interconnects all service experiences across a persons life.

Contextualized Reflection

- Reflection appropriate to the setting and context of the course and service experience.
- Designing service reflection with community partners builds additional interconnection and sharing.

Challenging Reflection

- Challenge students to engage issues in a more critical way.
- Pushing students to think in new ways, to develop alternative explanations for experiences and observations, and to question their original perceptions of events and issues.

Additional Resources

- Campus Compact. (2004). *Essential Resources*.
- Campus Compact. (2003). *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit*. (2nd Ed.).
- Eyler, J. & Giles, D. (1999). *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Heffernan, K. (2001). *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction*. Campus Compact.

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