



Service Learning

Service learning is an educational method where students learn and develop by engaging in action service that meets the needs of a community. Service experiences are coordinated with a community service program or school, as well as the community. It includes structured time for youth to reflect on their service experience and influences lifelong learning.

Service learning is a four-stage process: preparation, action, reflection, and celebration.

Elements of Service Learning

Community Need

- The service learning projects meets a genuine community need. More information can be found in *“Identifying a 4-H Service Project”* (Toolkit 29).
- The collaboration includes multiple partners who benefit from the project.

Youth Voice

- Youth assume active leadership roles in choosing and planning the service project.
- Youth plan and implement the reflection, evaluation, and celebration.
- Youth take on roles and tasks that are age appropriate.

Planning

- An understanding of service learning is developed. A sample *“4-H Service Learning Planning Guide”* is available to assist in the planning process. (Toolkit 30)
- Project planning includes training, team building, and project orientation.

Integrated Learning

- The service learning project has clearly articulated knowledge, skill, or value goals that arise from the curriculum.
- Skills learned in the community setting are integrated back into the curriculum.

Meaningful Service

- Both the youth and the community achieve significant benefits.
- Youth understand how they can impact their community as a result of the service learning project.

Reflection

- Opportunities for youth to reflect should occur before, during, and after the service learning project. The reflection should connect the service experience with the curriculum. Sample *“4-H Reflection Activities”* are available (Toolkit 31).

- Youth will employ critical thinking skills that will help them grow on a personal, social, and intellectual level.

Evaluation

- All partners, especially youth, should measure progress toward the learning and the service goals throughout the project.

Celebration

- An opportunity for all partners to be recognized for their accomplishments should be included. This also serves as closure for the project.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you think you will do and what impact do you think you will have?
2. What needs did/does/will your project help fill?
3. What are the causes of those needs?
4. How do people contribute to this problem? How do we help to solve it?
5. What expectations do you have about your service experience?
6. Did anything surprise you? If so, what?
7. What did you do today that made you feel that you made a difference? Why?
8. Did anything happen that made you feel uncomfortable? If so, what and why do you think it made you feel this way?
9. What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in service to others?
10. How does your understanding of the community change as a result of your participation in this project?
11. How can you continue your involvement with this group or social issue?

12. How can you educate others or raise awareness about this group or social issue?
13. What are the most difficult and most satisfying parts of the service you are performing? Why?
14. What do you think is your most valued contribution to the project?
15. Is there a person or activity you find interesting or challenging in your project?
16. How do you see your role with this project? How does that compare with how others may see your role?
17. Have you learned from any disappointments or successes from your project?
18. Has there been a problem situation that you want to discuss with your teacher?
19. How is your service relevant to what you are learning in class?

Activities by Themes

Animals

- Work at or raise money for a shelter.
- Match animals in shelters with families.
- Care for a neighbor's pet.
- Write to companies protesting animal testing.
- Make and sell identification tags for dogs and cats.
- Organize a lost animal search group.

Children

- Read to or tutor younger children.
- Organize a mitten drive for needy children.
- Visit sick children.
- Organize a book drive to give books to children.
- Organize after school activities for latchkey kids.

Citizenship

- Organize a voter registration drive.
- Support an important piece of legislation.
- Organize a community poison control campaign.

Community Development

- Mow an elderly neighbor's lawn.
- Renovate an abandoned house.
- Beautify a playground.
- Clean up a stream bed.
- Paint and repair the homes of senior citizens or low-income residents.
- Start a petition for necessary traffic signals.
- Make your neighborhood safer.
- Paint over graffiti.

Elderly

- Read to the elderly.
- Shop for the elderly.
- Do odd jobs for the elderly.
- Organize an "adoption" program for lonely elders.
- Teach computer skills to the elderly.
- Lead an exercise program for the elderly.
- Rake leaves or shovel snow for the elderly.

Environment

- Clean up litter at school or in the neighborhood.
- Organize a recycling drive.
- Plant trees.
- Raise money to improve a playground or park, or to repair a sidewalk.
- Grow a school garden.
- Help a community that has been impacted by a natural disaster.

Health/Safety

- Create a presentation for how to handle health or crime emergencies.
- Set up prevention groups to patrol neighborhoods.
- Coordinate an after school hotline.
- Organize a bike, rollerblade, scooter, or car seat safety demonstration.
- Develop and teach a babysitting course.
- Organize a community health fair.

Homeless

- Collect food, toiletries, or clothing for the homeless.
- Work at a soup kitchen.
- Collect and distribute blankets.
- Collect toys for shelters.

Diversity

- Organize ethnic awareness days.
- Tutor people whose second language is English.
- Encourage sites around town to become wheelchair accessible.
- Help people with special needs.
- Develop a peer conflict mediation program.

