

Service-learning: Volunteering Transformed into Learning

By adding a few learning strategies to a student's volunteer experience, the benefits are multiplied. Service-learning is a service experience that also results in increased learning. The learning can be related to academic content, social development content, career exploration, or citizenship. More information on the benefits of service-learning are available at the resource links below.

1. Encourage your student to find and participate in a volunteering experience that is of interest to him/her.
2. Use the process to have the student consider individual strengths, talents, interests as they explore places to volunteer.
3. Prior to the student starting a volunteer experience, review the rights and responsibilities of being a volunteer—dependability, learning, asking questions, following directions, etc.
4. During the course of the volunteer experience (assuming it is more than one time) there is an opportunity to ask the student to reflect on any aspects of the experience where you want to reinforce learning, i.e. career-skills being used or learned; personal-social skills needed; frustrations encountered; satisfactions gleaned.
5. If there are extended opportunities to interact with the student about the volunteering experience, additional reflection strategies can be employed with deeper learning about the nature of the cause or issues related to it, impact both personal, organizational, or for society, opportunities for deeper service such as a leader or through a national service position.

Resources: {also see back}

National Service Inclusion Project: Service-Learning and Students with Disabilities

<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=servicelearning>

The National Service Learning Clearinghouse

<http://www.servicelearning.org/what-service-learning>

Developmental Characteristics of Youth: Implications for Experiential Learning

<http://www.experientiallearning.ucdavis.edu/tlhx-ages.shtml>

Service Works!

http://keycenter.unca.edu/sites/keycenter.unca.edu/files/Students_with_disabilities.pdf

Reflection Insights

By Pam and Jim Toole

Three dimension of reflection:

1. The task itself
2. The contexts of the task (social, political, economic, etc.)
3. The issues of the human spirit (questions of purpose, meaning, suffering, hope, friendship, justice, care, responsibility)

Reflection Process:

Before the Service: (reflect on and use prior knowledge and experience to plan)

Focus on issues of interest or community need

Focus on personal strengths, assets that can be contributed

Consider realities of time commitment, transportation, supervision, etc.

During the Service: (find the teachable moments)

Have student share observations and highlights

Ask questions about how this is or is not what he/she expected

Problem solve issues or challenges that arise

Promote thinking about learning objectives such as career exploration, social issues, political or economic situations encountered, skill development

After the Service: (evaluation and future thinking)

Use reflection to evaluate the experience in terms of personal growth, career development, impact on the cause or issue, how can experience be useful in future decision-making

What difference have I really made? What have I learned? How has my view of the world changed? What does this mean for my life? What have I learned about myself, about those I served, and about academic skills/content?