

Service-Learning Overview

Definition

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (Learn and Serve America National Service Learning Clearinghouse).

While Dewey (1933) championed experiential learning, he noted that experience itself is not always educative. He argued that if not reflected upon, any experience could be virtually meaningless.

The same can be applied to service-learning. The experience itself will not always deliver benefits; it is the combination with thoughtful reflection and analysis that does so.

Service-Learning Examples at ESU

Major projects:

- ✓ Students in Math 425 Introduction to Mathematical Modeling developed a cost/benefit analysis for using solar energy to heat hot water in three campus buildings.
- ✓ Students in SOSW 373 partnered with a community agency to develop a program for their constituents.
- ✓ Students in DMET 262 Education Communications and Technology tutored students at a local elementary school using iPads and apps for literacy instruction.

Small projects:

- ✓ Students in Math 101 Excursions in Mathematics wrote instructions that Institutional Research can use to generate a report for an outside agency.
- ✓ Students in DMET 160 Introduction to Multimedia participated in the coats for kids collection run by the residence halls. Students donated two coats and designed cards in Photoshop.

Steps in creating a service-learning experience

- Identify a community need.
- Identify a community partner.
- Integrate the community need into the course.
- Assign the service-learning project, including reflection. Reflection may be keeping a journal, a summary paper, etc.
- Monitor student progress on the service-learning project as appropriate.

Ideas for Possible small service-learning projects

Collections – must be integrated with a course topic. For example, include a unit on hunger in America, Pennsylvania, or East Stroudsburg, then, sponsor a collection for a local food bank.

Use events on Campus - Teach a lesson on suicide prevention and then have students participate in the walk held in the spring. Possibly have them interview participants to see why they're walking. Other similar events would work as well.

Put on a program at a local elementary school, nursing home, VFW, American Legion, etc