Teaching Strategies: Service Learning

- Overview
- Quick Start Guide (101)
- Variations on this Strategy
- Testimonials

Overview

Service learning is a teaching strategy that has two key components: community service and reflection. These components are tied to instruction through the application of class concepts in service to the community at large. According to Felten and Clayton (2011), service-learning experiences should:

- Advance learning goals (academic and civic) and community purposes
- Involve reciprocal collaboration among students, faculty/staff, community members, community organizations, and educational institutions to fulfill shared objectives and build capacity among all partners
- Include critical reflection and assessment processes that are intentionally designed and facilitated to produce and document meaningful learning and service outcomes (p. 76)

The "community" served during the process of service-learning projects or efforts can be a campus, a specific group, a town, or a global community. There are many benefits to service learning for the students, for the faculty, for the campus and for the community. Bandy (2014) lists some of the benefits of service learning for students as:

Learning Outcomes

- Positive impact on students' academic learning
- Improves students' ability to apply what they have learned in "the real world"
- Positive impact on academic outcomes such as demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis, problem-solving, critical thinking, and cognitive development
- Improved ability to understand complexity and ambiguity

Personal Outcomes

- Greater sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, and moral development
- Greater interpersonal development, particularly the ability to work well with others, and build leadership and communication skills

Social Outcomes

- Reduced stereotypes and greater inter-cultural understanding
- Improved social responsibility and citizenship skills

- Greater involvement in community service after graduation

Career Development
- Connections with professionals and community members for learning and career opportunities
- Greater academic learning, leadership skills, and personal efficacy can lead to greater opportunity

Relationship with the Institution
- Stronger relationships with faculty
- Greater satisfaction with college
- Improved graduation rates

Quick Start Guide - 101

Employing this strategy can be rewarding but takes careful planning to give your students the tools they need to plan and execute the project - we have created a planning document that walks you through the steps to creating a service learning project for your course, that can be found here: Service Learning Lesson Plan Template

Variations

This section outlines how you might begin to think about adopting the aforementioned teaching strategy and the tools you might consider employing.

- For examples of how large groups can coordinate service-learning projects, check out these projects from the Sun Devil ROTC battalion in Tempe, Arizona
  - Fall 13 Service Learning Project - Neighborhood Cleanup
  - Spring 14 Service Learning Project - Raise Awareness and Funds for Tillman Foundation
- For planning and collaboration, our enterprise solution, One Drive, can help both you and students stay organized and share documents. For more strategies on using online collaboration tools, check out our 10 Strategies for Engaging Learners with Online Collaboration

In the Library / References

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