

WASSW 2025 Fall Conference

Building Connections Through Service-Learning

Experiences and Practice

Jacob Campbell, Ph.D. LICSW at Heritage University

Agenda

- Introduce myself and the topic of service-learning
- Review some of the literature related to service-learning
- Share an example of school-based implementation
- Provide some tips for implementation

Learning Objectives

- **Define service learning as an intervention for students.**
- **Identify the benefits of service learning as a strategy for professional growth.**
- **Reflect on strategies for implementing service learning and how they can be applied to their school setting**

Speaker Introduction

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University

Previous Program Social Worker in
Special Education Classroom at Pasco
School District



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In your personal, professional, or educational pursuits, what are examples of things that have helped you learn?

Consider:

- There are lots of ways to think about learning.
- Single/few-word answers work best for a word cloud.
- You can submit multiple answers.

Service as a Core Value in our Practice

Reflection on our Code of Ethics

Value: Service

Ethical Principle: Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems

Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values, and skills to help people in need and to address social problems. Social workers are encouraged to volunteer some portion of their professional skills with no expectation of significant financial return (pro bono service).

(National Association of Social Workers, 2021)

Paired Discussion Activity

- When you think about the description of service in our code of ethics, what stands out to you?
- How has your understanding of service changed from when you entered the profession to now?
- What are examples of how you find service being embedded in your practice?

What is Service-Learning

Distinct from volunteerism, community service, experiential learning, field education and other similar and related activities

- Service learning is a form of community service that integrates learning objectives and is implemented as part of a curriculum.
- The implementation of service-learning should provide students with opportunities to draw lessons from activities that address real community needs.
- It should be organized around critical analysis and reflection on the activities completed during the service-learning activities.

(Spring et al., 2008)

Service-Learning Standards

In K-12 Settings

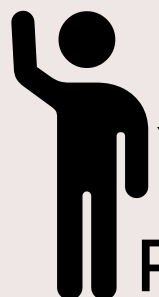
following some of these standards was associated with better outcomes for students

(Celio et al., 2011)



Actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities

Meaningful Service



Youth Voice

Provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults

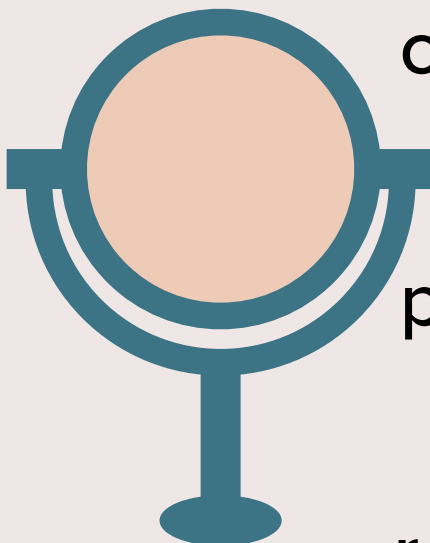


Link to Curriculum

Intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards

Duration & Intensity

Sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes

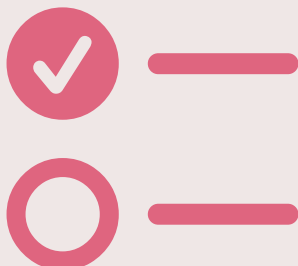


Incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society

Reflection

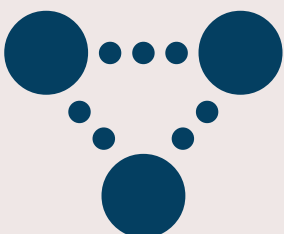
Progress Monitoring

Engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability



Diversity

Promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants



Partnerships

Partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs

Positive Effects Associated

with Students Participating in Service-Learning

- Enhance students' self-esteem and self-concept, and other attitudes to self.
- Impact students' attitudes towards their community, where they show greater sensitivity, interest, and commitment to their communities.
- Develop social skills, including problem-solving, communication, and leadership abilities.
- Increase academic achievement and a positive attitude towards school and learning.

There is a lack of large-scale randomized trials, and much of the research conducted has been qualitative. According to Filges et al. (2022), the evidence on the effectiveness of service-learning on students' academic success, personal and social skills, and risk behavior remains inconclusive.

Prevalence of Community Service and Service-Learning in Schools Across America

Historical Context

- National momentum for service and civic engagement grew through landmark programs including the Civilian Conservation Corps (1933), Peace Corps (1961), and AmeriCorps (1993).
- Service-learning evolved as an educational method beginning in the 1970s, formalized through research-based standards and federal support.
- In 2008, data showed that a significant number of schools either recognized or assisted in organizing participation in community service activities, respectively, at 68% and 58% of all schools.
- Only about 24% of all schools report engaging in the more specific activities of service-learning.

(Spring et al., 2008)

EXAMPLE OF

Service- Learning in Practice



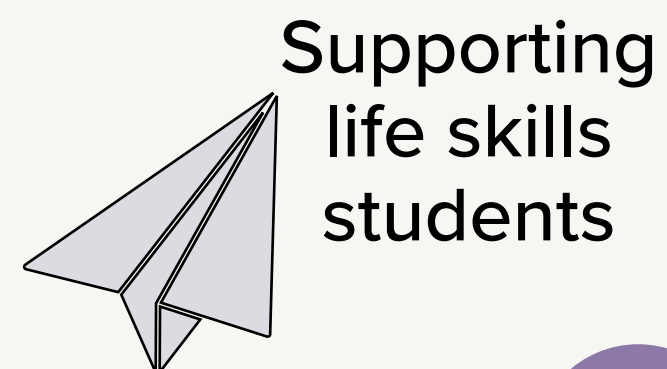
- Special education program serving students with emotional and behavioral disabilities
- Secondary programs for middle school and high school
- Engaged in service activities internally and externally, and included general education peers
- Reflective discussion about the experienced



Organizing school recycling and weekly recycling pick-up as a club



Bringing and helping give out food for mobile food bank



Supporting life skills students



Collecting supplies from school community for food bank and animal shelter



Hanging awareness campaign posters around the school with the behavior interventionist

Giving out donuts to teachers



Internal School Service-Learning Activities

Various Activities Around Campus

External Service-Learning Activities

Various Activities In Our Community

- Union Gospel Mission
- Salvation Army
- 2nd Harvest Food Bank
- Tri-Cities Animal Shelter
- Community Mobile Food Distribution Events
- Nursing Home

Tips for Implementation

Things to Keep in Mind

- Dream big and be organized.
- Make plans to address potential challenges, especially when working with high-needs populations.
- Bring support and use your team effectively.
- Use a diverse set of students to participate.
- Be a judicious user of resources and look for additional related learning opportunities.
- Consider also doing additional activities that are strictly service learning.
- Make partnerships in the school and the community.
- Share about the experience with your school and community.

Dream Together

Share your
ideas in
small groups
around you

How could you
implement some
service learning
projects in your own
school?

Questions?

Feel free to connect
with me. Find me at
<https://vsp.ink/hub>

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References

- Celio, C. I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 34(2), 164-181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105382591103400205>
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