

Maryland's 7 Best Practices of Service-Learning



1. Meet a recognized need in the community

Students work to identify pressing community needs and devise and participate in projects that address those needs. The Corporation for National and Community Service categorizes community needs as related to: health, education, environment or public safety. Students might engage in direct, indirect or advocacy projects.

2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning

Service-learning provides an opportunity for classroom knowledge to be applied and tested in real-life settings. Service-learning projects should meet existing course outcomes in an experiential manner. Engaging students in high quality service-learning experiences develops skills such as those evaluated through Maryland's Assessments.

3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience

Through reflection activities in the form of discussions, journaling, performing, writing, etc., students come to more fully understand the connection of their schoolwork to the service work performed. Reflection helps students explore the cycle of: What & Why? So What? Now What?

4. Develop student responsibility

High quality service-learning allows students to take leadership and ownership over the projects performed. Students learn important school, work, and life skills such as working as a team, organizing and scheduling activities, and problem solving when given increased responsibility for the success of projects.

5. Establish community partnerships

Service-learning experiences provide opportunities for students to learn about their communities, explore career possibilities, and work with diverse groups of individuals. Quality projects involve community organizations as partners.

6. Plan ahead for service-learning

As with all effective instruction an action plan must be created which features specific objectives to be achieved through the activity. Service-learning requires teachers, students, and community organizations to carefully plan out projects and work collaboratively.

7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

To effectively engage in a project, students must understand the issue they will be addressing. As part of preparing to engage in service-learning, students are often required to conduct research, read articles, and listen to guest speakers. Students also need to learn project specific skills, as well as explore issues related to citizenship and civic engagement.