

The Difference between Service-Learning and Community Service

Although they may seem similar, service-learning and community service are different concepts. Both emphasize developing civic responsibility, meeting authentic community needs, and creating strong collaborations with the community. Both value students' personal, social, career and ethical growth.

However, there are a few significant differences:

- ✓ Service-learning is an instructional strategy; a way of teaching classroom content. Community service does not emphasize school curriculum.
- ✓ Service-learning uses reflection as a means for interpreting experiences. Community service does not require reflection.
- ✓ Service-learning, because it is integrated with school curriculum, can take place during the school day, and on the school campus. Community service often must take place outside of the school day, and off campus.
- ✓ Community service is often quantified by having students serve a designated number of hours. Service-learning, because it takes place both within and outside of the classroom, emphasizes "service experiences" as opposed to hours.
- ✓ Community service often involves students, as individuals, serving in local non-profit agencies. Service-learning lends itself towards full class group projects.

Example of community service:

Students take a field trip to pick up trash, bottles and cans along the banks of a river. They do this once in the fall and once in the spring.

Example of service-learning:

Students discover that a local river is degraded. While connecting their project to relevant curriculum, students and teachers work with an environmental group to design the project. They conduct water quality tests and research possible contamination sources. Students analyze data and present their findings to local officials. The environmental group then uses this data for watershed programs.