

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

LINKING

TITLE I

Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

&

SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-learning provides thoughtfully organized experiences that integrate students' academic learning with service that meets actual community needs. Service and learning blend in ways that serve and enrich one another.

Service-learning is a method:

- 1 under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;
- 2 that is integrated into students' academic curriculum and provides structured time for a student to think, talk, or write about what they did and saw during the actual service activity;
- 3 that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities;
- 4 that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community, thereby helping to foster the development of a sense of caring for others; and
- 5 that is supported by regular assessment to provide feedback and guide improvement.

How does Title I support service-learning?

Service-learning can be an effective means of meeting the goals of the Title I program, connecting academic learning with the real world, and helping all children meet challenging academic standards. Title I supports service-learning in several ways:

General Provisions

Section 1001 (8) and (9):

This section states that the purpose of Title I programs can be accomplished by “providing children an enriched and accelerated education program, including the use of schoolwide programs or educational services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time” and by “ensuring the access of children to effective, scientifically based instructional strategies and challenging academic content.”

Schoolwide Programs

Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1114, (b) (1) (B):

This section states the eligible Title I schoolwide programs shall include school reform strategies that incorporate “before- and after-school and summer programs and opportunities, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum”; and shall include strategies to address to needs of low-achieving children and those at risk of not meeting the State student academic achievement standards. Strategies including mentoring services and innovative teaching methods that include applied learning, such as service-learning, may be funded under this category.

By linking Title I and service-learning, students in schoolwide or targeted assistance programs will be introduced to concepts and experiences that have the potential to increase their sense of community. They will gain valuable experience to prepare them for the workforce. To achieve these goals, service-learning programs must be designed with high-quality, ensuring that programs feature the components and strategies necessary for outcomes to be maximized. Providing data as evidence of effectiveness will be necessary to sustain the practice of service-learning using Title I funds.

Examples of service-learning models that could be adopted by Title I programs

Elementary School Project:

Larragoite Elementary School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, developed the “Partnerships: Kids Learning Through Community Service Program” for students in grades 3-6. Students participated in projects designed to enhance student leadership and cooperation skills. In the Cooking with Angels Project, third graders studied New Mexico’s geography and agricultural economy, nutrition, and global foods. They prepared and delivered five meals for a meals on wheels program that serves people with terminal illnesses. Fourth grade students prepared lessons and activities in reading and literacy, weather studies, and geology for kindergarteners at the Bilingual Early Childhood Center. Fifth grade students studied the Santa Fe Community Trail System and designed ecological interpretive signs that were placed along the trail. Through these projects students interacted with the public in a self-confident manner; built positive values of self-esteem, responsibility toward community property and nature, self-discipline, respect for others, trust and empathy; were exposed to a wide range of career possibilities; and increased their skills in math, science, literacy, social studies, and art.

Middle School Project:

At Central Park East Secondary School in New York City, students studied the role of community service agencies. Each student completed a project at an agency and wrote a paper describing the agency, its function, its source of funding, clients, staff, and relationship to an important societal function. Community service agency personnel evaluated students’ performance on a four point scale ranging from excellent to less than satisfactory on attendance and punctuality, attitude (e.g., accepts suggestions, shows initiative, exercises good judgment), and performance (e.g., accepts responsibility, progressively requires less supervision, follows directions, completes assigned tasks). The project, along with evaluations from the site coordinators and service coordinators’ participating in seminars, journal entries, motivation, and other factors determined the students’ service-learning course grades.

High School Project:

Students from South River High School in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, took part in a service-learning project that included tree planting, mural painting, creation of an outdoor classroom, and other activities to beautify the school. Teachers used reflections to understand the importance of the activities and the need to connect them explicitly to the curriculum. Through evaluative essays, reflection essays, and letters, students discovered that they enjoyed the teamwork and took pride in improving the appearance of the school. These comments gave the teacher feedback on the success of the activities and how the design of the service-learning program could be improved. Utilizing technology and their knowledge of plants, the students then designed a garden. Once their plants had grown, they presented their project to city government and were given permission to plant their flowers in a local community park.

How do exemplary practices in Title I relate to service-learning?

Service-learning as a strategy for Title I service delivery shows enormous promise based on the research literature on what works for students who are traditionally served. The Title I research literature indicates that children of poverty, like their more advantaged peers, learn best when:

- there are opportunities for them to use their own experiences;
- they experience instruction that highlights meaning and understanding;
- programs recognize that students often learn best by directing their own learning;
- they are engaged in complex thinking;
- they work together on planning;
- action expectations for high performance are uniformly high for all students;
- an assessment informs these students and their families of their progress;
- families and community members are involved;
- programs show respect for students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- instruction is coordinated and/or integrated with regular classroom programs;
- instruction is tied to standards; and
- academic learning time is extended.

Sources:

Barr & Parrett (1995). *Hope At Last for At-Risk Youth*.

Borman, Stringfield, & Slavin (2001). *Title I: Compensatory Education at the Crossroads*.

Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamaguchi (2001). *Teaching Transformed: Achieving Excellence, Fairness, Inclusion, and Harmony*.

These effective practices for schools that serve Title I eligible students are nearly the same as those identified in the school-based service-learning research on effective programs. When Learn and Serve America K-12 projects are designed and implemented using the "Principles for High Quality National Service Programs", these projects:

- use experiential learning to further students' abilities to think clearly and analytically;
- use reflection techniques to help students make meaning of their service experiences;
- build bridges between classroom pedagogy and real life application;
- encourage high expectations and build on students' strengths;
- provide opportunities to acknowledge and build on diversity; and
- involve parents and communities as vital partners in the learning process.

(Corporation for National Service, 1995)

I'm interested ... Now what?

Confirm your eligibility.

For more information on the Title I requirements and applications, check with your local district or state office of education. A service-learning project can be planned either as a schoolwide or targeted assistance program. More information can also be found on the U.S. Department of Education's website, available at: www.ed.gov.

Plan your service-learning project:

Canvass the community to understand needs and willingness;

Develop agreements for student and community participation;

Explain how supervision will take place;

Provide information about liability and how problems will be handled;

Delineate the obligations of each party;

Develop an appropriate service-learning curriculum;

Design student materials and orientation processes;

Train those responsible for implementing the projects;

Connect service-learning to the curriculum through written and oral reflection opportunities; and

Conduct an evaluation to understand the program's effectiveness.