

Service Learning

Schools and teachers are increasingly using service learning, a form of experiential education that integrates community service into the academic curricula. The real world becomes the textbook, and students study the social issues in the community through actual exposure and experience. It takes learning beyond the classroom, and brings service to a whole new level.

Students at Horace Mann Academic Middle School learned about the U.S. Constitution while tutoring adults studying for the U.S. Citizenship exam. And, in the process of planning their ideal city, elementary students at San Francisco Community designed a wheelchair ramp for their school.

Organized service learning projects of schools and youth organizations are:

- designed to meet actual community needs.
- coordinated in collaboration with schools and the community.
- planned with significant input from the involved youth.
- integrated into each young person's academic curriculum.
- structured with time to think, talk, and write about the service activity.
- created to foster the development of a sense of concern for others.
- evaluated by all parties involved: youth, teachers, and community agency.

Service learning, however, is not limited to schools. Youth development organizations, corporations, and volunteer programs at nonprofit organizations are using service learning as a strategy for making service a powerful learning experience for all members of the community.

For more information on developing service learning projects please contact:

Volunteer Center of San Francisco, Youth Empowerment Program

The Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) believes young people have the capacity to be powerful and contributing community members. It develops partnerships and collaborations that foster youth leadership through service learning and community involvement, working with a network of over 350 community based organizations that work with youth volunteers. You can contact YEP at:

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