

Service-Learning and Community Service Clubs in Schools*

The promotion of experiential learning began as early as the mid-1900s. Current educational trends are expanding the move to a more hands-on approach to learning. This includes an increasing emphasis on service-oriented activity (e.g., service-learning, community service clubs, and service-based internship programs). As described below, Furco (1996) differentiated such activity in terms of their focus, educational purpose and level of integration into curriculum, and the nature and beneficiary of the service. He also noted differences in whether participation was voluntary.

1. **Service-learning**

Focus: to provide meaningful service and enhance classroom learning

Educational purpose: increase academic achievement and enhance intellectual and civic engagement (full integration into curriculum)

Intended beneficiary: both the recipient of service and provider of service (student) equally

Nature of service: based on academic/course-related topics

2. **Community Service**

Focus: to provide meaningful service to the community

Educational purpose: moral, personal and social growth and development (as opposed to service-learning, has no formal integration into curriculum)

Intended beneficiary: the recipient of service

Nature of service: based on students' own interests and motivation

3. **Internship**

Focus: learning skills through firsthand experience

Educational purpose: professional career development and preparation (supplemental to curriculum)

Intended beneficiary: the provider of service (student)

Nature of service: based on particular career/industry

Service Learning

At its core, service learning involves incorporating structured, authentic, hands-on service experiences into formal education. This is contrasted with services that have no *structured* educational connection. As a formal educational activity, it is not voluntary.

Service-learning is arguably the most prevalent type of service program implemented in schools in the U.S.A. Research on service-learning suggests a variety of positive benefits for students' social and personal development (e.g., civic engagement, academic outcomes). For example, at middle and high school levels, service-learning is reported as a strategy for enhancing engagement and reducing misbehavior, especially among students deemed at risk and/or economically disadvantaged (Billig, 2000; Scales et al., 2006).

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Service-learning programs may be part of a school's core curriculum – included in at least one subject area (e.g., Social Studies, Science, English) at one grade. Typically, service-learning requirements involve a mandated number of hours outside of the classroom and/or participation in a certain number of courses. Some schools require special projects, such as a senior capstone or character education project or activities organized by student and community-based groups. A service learning experience may be a requirement for graduation.

For more on service learning, see *Service Learning in Schools*
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/service.pdf>

Community Service Clubs

As with service-learning programs, community service clubs are seen as contributing to students' civic engagement and social, personal, and moral development, but the main objective is providing services that benefits others. Beneficiaries of community service clubs can be individuals, groups (e.g., those living in poverty, the homeless, immigrants), and the environment (i.e., helping with recycling, neighborhood clean-ups).

While service-learning programs and community service clubs both have formal structures, community service clubs are unique in that they unite students with similar interests in voluntary, extracurricular activity that can provide opportunities for learning and development. (They may offer volunteers incentives to complete a set amount of hours.) Service activities are done at a student's leisure.

Although community service clubs are mainly student-run, they often are youth versions of existing nonprofit organizations. Adult advisors typically guide and mentor club members. Popular high school community service clubs such as Key Club, UNICEF and Interact Club typically raise funds for charitable causes (e.g., organizations that fight hunger within the community or internationally).

In general, schools treat community service clubs as enrichment opportunities (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018). They are seen as natural ways to provide leadership development opportunities, enhance social and emotional development, and promote development of positive societal and personal values and skills (e.g., inclusiveness, self-evaluation, communication skills).

For more on community service clubs, see
30 High School Clubs You Can Start Now
<https://blog.collegevine.com/30-high-school-clubs-you-can-start-now/>

Internships

While internships have a long history, the increasing focus on career and technical education is generating new programs in high schools. The trend is away from a service orientation to an emphasis on career preparation. In 2018, there were 585,000 apprentices nationwide, an increase of 56 percent since 2013 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). High school apprentices are a small, but growing fraction of that number.

Washington State offers a current example of the trend to expand high school apprenticeships. *Career Connect Washington* is a state program designed to start students on their careers by combining school and work experience. To expand the number of young apprentices, the legislature allocated \$25 million over the next two years (as part of the state's Workforce Education Investment Act). In 2019, about 120 Washington high-school juniors and seniors will simultaneously earn a paycheck, work experience, and high school and college credit. They will work at local companies and learn career skills during high school.

For more on apprenticeships, see
High School Apprenticeships: A Guide For Starting Successful Programs
https://careertech.org/resource/high_school_apprenticeships_guide

Concluding Comments

Advocates for the service-oriented programs and internships view such activities as ways to bolster a wide range of 21st century skills, interests, attitudes, behaviors (e.g., enhance students' civic and career-related knowledge, sense of responsibility, personal well-being). For those especially concerned with matters related to engaging and re-engaging students in school learning and reducing problem behaviors, such activity is seen as especially promising.

Researchers and policy makers are still coming to grips with all this, and the ongoing challenges of implementation and sustainability are many. Given the sparse resources allocated for schools, appropriate priority setting requires answers about the political and societal implications related to what students are learning from these experiences.

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A Few Recent Videos from the 2012 Conference: *Beyond the Borders: The Future of Service-Learning*.

>*Global Citizenship and the Democratic Practice of Service-Learning*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PClz1Y0lqWA&list=PL29937F0E1677177C&index=1>

>*Educating Globally Competent Citizens Through International Service-Learning*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuvI3yTF8f0&list=PL29937F0E1677177C&index=2>

>*Uniting Online Education with Service-Learning*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXir0prOUbU&index=4&list=PL29937F0E1677177C>