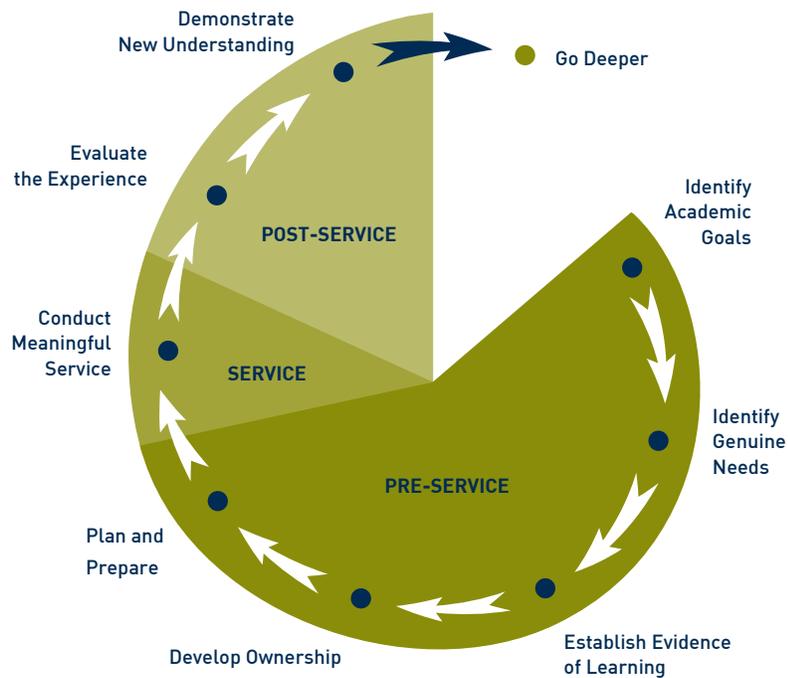


The Service-Learning Cycle



The Service-Learning Cycle

PRE-SERVICE

- 1. Identify academic goals.** Whether you are a service-learning novice or veteran, the inventories and reflective questions in this section guide you in laying the groundwork for effective service-learning. In outlining your academic obligations to your students, youth learning goals, the resources you have available, and potential barriers to overcome, you'll set the stage for what your students will achieve through their service-learning experiences.
- 2. Identify genuine needs.** Community mapping and other processes help young people explore their communities and connect with other people to recognize relevant issues, assess resources, and discover what's important to themselves and their community.
- 3. Establish evidence of learning.** How will you know if students are achieving the learning outcomes that you've identified for their service-learning projects? This is your opportunity to engage students in linking specific academic objectives to their planned service and identifying the actions they will need to take to meet both their service goals and their learning goals.
- 4. Develop ownership.** For a service-learning project to be as successful as possible, service-learning coordinators, classroom teachers, students, and community partners should all have a sense of engagement, investment, and ownership. To develop this, participants evaluate what they bring to the experience and set goals, laying a sustainable foundation on which they can build.
- 5. Plan and prepare.** Using proven methods and tools, teachers and students collect relevant information, develop their project, engage in the necessary training, build vital partnerships, and gather the necessary resources to implement their ideas about how to improve their communities.

SERVICE

- 6. Conduct meaningful service.** Through participating in interesting and engaging service activities that meet classroom objectives while address a genuine need, students are ensured of a meaningful service experience.

POST-SERVICE

- 7. Evaluate the experience.** Students observe the effects of their project on different participants, exchange ideas with peers and community partners, look at the implications of cultural and diversity issues they encountered, and view the project in civic or political terms. Participants analyze their observations to identify the significance of their service experience, comparing their prior knowledge with new understandings of academic content, their own skills and contributions, and the project's impact on the community. Educators and students evaluate how they met academic objectives and service goals.
- 8. Demonstrate new understanding.** Students can reach out to other potential community partners – school boards, parent-teacher organizations, media outlets, legislative bodies – to present findings, share community outcomes, and consider possible next steps. This is another time students can practice the new skills and apply the knowledge they've gained through the experience.
- 9. Go deeper.** Educators, students, and other participants continue to use their new knowledge and skills to make decisions, solve problems, and grow as engaged learners and contributing members of the community. Students come to understand root issues underlying community needs. It is a natural place in the cycle to begin again, with the question, "Given what we learned, now what?"

