

# Introduction to Service-Learning

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## What is Service-Learning?

- Service-learning is a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens. (CCPH Website)

## Service-Learning

- Strives to balance service and learning objectives
- Addresses community concerns and broad determinants of health
- Integrates community partners
- Emphasizes reciprocal learning - traditional definitions of "faculty," "teacher" and "learner" are intentionally blurred

## Service-Learning (cont'd)

- Emphasizes reflective practice - fosters critical thinking and self-awareness
  - Integrates reflection at all stages of learning
- Develops citizenship skills and focuses on achieving social change
  - Provision of health services is not often the most important factor; students place their roles as health professionals and citizens in a larger societal context

## Service-Learning (cont'd)

- Focus is on partnerships
- Quality of service-learning opportunities develop and evolve over time

## What Distinguished Service-Learning from Other Forms of Experiential Education?



Furco, Service-Learning.  
1996

## Distinguishing service-learning with other types of experiential learning (CCPH, 1999)

	Community Service	Academic Learning	Purposeful Civic learning
Clinical Training	May	Yes	Generally Not
Volunteer Work	Yes	No	No
Internship	May	Yes	No
Service- learning	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Points of Departure: SL and Clinical Education

- Balance between service and learning
- Integral involvement of community partners
- Emphasizes :
  - Importance of addressing community-identified concerns and broad determinants of health
  - Strength/asset-based approach
  - Reciprocal learning
  - Reflective practice
  - Developing citizenship skills and achieving social change

# Components of Service-Learning



Yoder, A Framework for Service-Learning. 2006

## Evidence: HPSISN

- Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation (HPSISN) Program, 1994-98
  - Three-year grants to 17 health professions schools
  - Program goals:
    - Strengthen partnerships between health professions schools and communities
    - Address unmet community needs
    - Instill ethic of community service and social responsibility in health professions schools, students and faculty
    - Equip next generation of health professionals with community-oriented competencies necessary to practice in a changing health care environment.

## HPSISN Partnership Focus

- School-based health education
- Health promotion and disease prevention
  - Teenage pregnancy
  - Domestic violence
  - Oral health
- Worksite-based health education
- Companionship
- Case management
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Rural access to care

## Findings: Students

- Transformational learning experiences
  - Clarification of values, sense of self
- Taken more seriously when it's required
- Greater gains when non-clinical:
  - Awareness of determinants of health
  - Sensitivity to diversity
  - Knowledge of health policy issues
  - Leadership development

## Findings: Community Partners

- Service, economic and social benefits
- ↑ awareness of institutional assets/limitations
- High value placed on relationship with faculty
- Eager to be seen as teachers and experts
  - Campus involvement limited
- Benefits of SL outweighed the burdens
- Concerns re: communication, logistics, needs-based and expert approaches

## Findings: Faculty

- Stronger relationships associated with:
  - Joint planning
  - Partners being offered specific and active roles
  - Genuine sense of reciprocity
  - Student preparation and orientation
  - Single point of contact
  - Consistent, accessible communication

## Findings: Institutional Capacity

- Link to mission and strategic goals
- Clear definition of service-learning
- Supportive leadership at all levels
- Effective institutional structures and policy
- Investment in faculty development
- Integration of SL into existing courses
- Long-term community relationships
- Ongoing assessment and improvement

## Lessons Learned

- Service learning is powerful pedagogy
- SL can contribute to competencies needed for health professions practice
- SL can benefit students, faculty, the community and community-university relationships
- Community can be effective educators
- Community assets are often overlooked
- SL requires schools to give up “control”

## References

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- Eyler J, Giles D, Stenson C, Gray C. At a Glance: What We Know about the Effects of Service-Learning 1993-2000. Third Edition. Corporation for National Service.
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- Yoder K. A Framework for Service-Learning in Dental Education. *Journal of Dental Education* 2006;70(2):115-122.
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<http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/servicelearningres.html>