

The Four Stages of Service Learning

Preparation

With guidance from their teacher, students:

- identify a need.
- draw upon previously acquired skills and knowledge.
- acquire new information through a variety of means and methods.
- analyze the underlying problem.
- collaborate with community partners.
- develop a plan that encourages responsibility.
- recognize the integration of service and learning.
- become ready to provide meaningful service.
- define realistic parameters for implementation.

Action

Through direct service, indirect service, research, or advocacy, students take action that:

- has value, purpose, and meaning.
- uses previously learned and newly acquired academic skills and knowledge.
- offers unique learning experiences.
- has real consequences.
- offers a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes, and to succeed.

Reflection

During systematic reflection, the teacher or students guide the process using various modalities, such as role play, discussion, and journal writing. Participating students:

- describe what happened.
- examine the difference it made.
- discuss thoughts and feelings.
- place experience in a larger context.
- consider project improvements.
- generate ideas.
- identify questions.
- receive feedback.

Demonstration

Students demonstrate skills, insights, and outcomes to an outside group. Methods used might include:

- reporting to peers, faculty, parents, and/or community members.
- writing articles or letters to local newspapers regarding issues of public concern.
- Creating visual art forms, such as murals
- creating a publication or Web site that helps others to learn from the students' experiences.
- making presentations and performances,