What Is Service Learning?

Service Learning is hands-on education

High quality service learning integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and build stronger communities. Young people want to be involved in their community and show other community members their abilities, values and skills. Service learning projects that take place during afterschool and summer programs provide ideal opportunities for this engagement.

Service learning can extend classroom instruction with hands-on activities that help students master core learning objectives, apply what they have learned to real life problems, and stay interested in school. In fact, many older students who were at risk of not completing their education report that service learning projects connected their classroom studies to the world beyond school and helped motivate them to graduate.

Service Learning Projects Reward Everyone

The entire community gains from students and educators engaging in service learning projects. Authentic service learning projects can:

- ✓ Promote critical thinking skills

- ✓ Support social, emotional and cognitive learning and development

- ✓ Address genuine community needs

- ✓ Promote teamwork and citizenship, are cooperative rather than competitive

- ✓ Offer positive, meaningful and real opportunities to the participants

- ✓ Increase student attendance

- ✓ Strengthen academic performance

- ✓ Aid in the development of personal and social responsibility

- ✓ Highlight the connection between lessons learned in school and real world problems

- ✓ Engage students at all learning levels, not just enrichment for high achievers.

Characteristics of Quality Service Learning Projects

1 Engage youth voice

Student participants are valued as key partners and are actively involved in every step of the project

2 Integrate learning experiences

Service supports curriculum objectives, the curriculum supports the service projects

3 Provide meaningful community collaboration

Projects bring together students, teachers and community partners to plan, design and implement a meaningful service project that meets a community need

4 Promote civic responsibility

Young people learn that their research and action can have a positive effect on their community and that their efforts matter

5 Provide opportunities for reflection

Projects include time for individual and group reflect where participants draw links between social and personal aspects of the project

6 Evaluation for growth

Projects have an evaluation component that measures progress toward the learning and service goals and uses the information to improve future projects

View additional afterschool resources at the Nebraska Community Learning Center Network website:
www.NebraskaCLCNetwork.org

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