The S.E.R.V.E. Model
Five Steps to Effective Service-Learning

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address unmet human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning. As you plan, implement, reflect, evaluate and celebrate, the SERVE model is an excellent tool to ensure that all service-learning components are met.

Select a Service...

Find a community organization that exhibits a real need for service is a key step in the service-learning model. Ask yourself as you are deciding on your project whether your efforts truly reflect and meet community unmet needs. Be sure that as you are planning your service you are designing it around the needs of the organization, student learning outcomes and clarify the steps you will be taking to make sure your project is challenging and engaging to the students and the community.

Educate and Inform...

Become familiar with the social issue, the organization in which you will serve, and any sort of training that is involved in your service project. Obtain any information that may be helpful regarding the site, the training sessions offered, the individuals being served, and the responsibilities involved. Find out how to perform the actual service, the purpose of the service, who and where the group will be performing the service, and any other related issues about the service. Research regarding the cause and effects of the need and/or social issue are also applicable here.

Respond to Need...

In other words: Action! Follow through on your planning and training, and make sure that your service is making a meaningful impact on all individuals involved – both the community and the service-learners. Ensure that this is time well spent on making a difference in the world.

Value Significance and Reflect...

There are numerous ways to actively and personally reflect on the completed service. Problem solving, journaling, integrated learning, and discussions are only a few, but what is most important is that the service-learning is able to apply the service in a broader perspective. As you reflect, address and clarify issues related to the service, and attempt to integrate the service-learning within the lives of the service-learners. It is important to take time and give all individuals a chance to think about and discuss the completed service project.

Evaluate and Celebrate...

Evaluation and celebration of the service is an important step in the service-learning model. Surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups are tools that can be used to collect, analyze, and evaluate service-learning activities. Additionally, an effective celebration will allow further community building and reflection among service-learners, as well as motivate students to continue their service. Find a way to recognize participants and allow time for them to evaluate the experience. Some celebration ideas include community events, awards, certificates, letters, gifts, or media coverage.