**WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?**

**The following is provided by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (**[**http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning**](http://www.servicelearning.org/what-is-service-learning)**):**

**Service-Learning is** a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Through service-learning, young people—from kindergarteners to college students—use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. They not only learn the practical applications of their studies, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Service-learning can be applied in a wide variety of settings, including schools, universities, and community-based and faith-based organizations. It can involve a group of students, a classroom or an entire school. Students build character and become active participants as they work with others in their school and community to create service projects in areas such as education, public safety, and the environment.

Community members, students, and educators everywhere are discovering that service-learning offers all its participants a chance to take part in the active education of youth while simultaneously addressing the concerns, needs, and hopes of communities.

**What Service-Learning Looks Like**

If school students collect trash out of an urban streambed, they are providing a valued service to the community as volunteers. If school students collect trash from an urban streambed, analyze their findings to determine the possible sources of pollution, and share the results with residents of the neighborhood, they are engaging in service-learning.

In the service-learning example, in addition to providing an important service to the community, students are learning about water quality and laboratory analysis, developing an understanding of pollution issues, and practicing communications skills. They may also reflect on their personal and career interests in science, the environment, public policy or other related areas. Both the students and the community have been involved in a transformative experience.

**Examples of Service-Learning**

**Students in Florida** studied the consequences of natural disasters. The class designed a kit for families to use to collect their important papers in case of evacuation, which students distributed to community members.

* **Students in Pennsylvania** learned about the health consequences of poor nutrition and lack of exercise, and then brought their learning to life by conducting health fairs, creating a healthy cookbook, and opening a fruit and vegetable stand for the school and community.
* **Students in West Virginia** investigated the biological complexity and diversity of wetlands. Learning of the need to eliminate invasive species, they decided to monitor streams and then presented their findings to their Town Council.
* **Students in Michigan** looked for ways to support struggling local non-profit organizations during difficult economic times. Graduate communication students honed their skills while providing a wide variety of public relations services with community partners, including developing press kits and managing event coordination.

Each of the examples above shows how service-learning is integrating meaningful community service with instruction and reflection in order to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen our communities.