

PROJECT IDEAS



One of the many benefits of service learning is that students can select a project that is meaningful to them while helping them (and you) meet curricular objectives. Service projects can be as diverse as the students in your school and as unique as your community. Before students select their project, they should ask themselves if it is important to them, if it is an authentic need in the community, and if it is feasible. To help in this process, we have listed 50 project ideas in the list below. Each project can meet multiple curriculum areas and easily can be tailored to specific ability levels and ages.

Animals

- Work at or raise money for a shelter
- Match animals in shelters with families
- Care for a neighbor's pet
- Write to companies protesting animal testing
- Make and sell identification tags for dogs and cats
- Organize a lost animal search group

Children

- Read to or tutor younger children
- Organize a mitten drive for needy children
- Visit sick children
- Organize a book drive to give books to children
- Organize afterschool activities for latchkey kids

Citizenship

- Organize a voter registration drive
- Support an important piece of legislation
- Organize a community poison control campaign

Community Development

- Mow an elderly neighbor's lawn
- Renovate an abandoned house
- Beautify a playground
- Clean up a stream bed
- Paint and repair the homes of senior citizens or low-income residents
- Start a petition for necessary traffic signals
- Make your neighborhood safer
- Paint over graffiti

Elderly

- Read to the elderly
- Shop for the elderly
- Do odd jobs for the elderly



- Organize an “adoption” program for lonely elders
- Teach computer skills to the elderly
- Lead an exercise program for the elderly
- Rake leaves or shovel snow for the elderly

Environment

- Clean up litter at school or in the neighborhood
- Organize a recycling drive
- Plant trees
- Raise money to improve a playground or park, or to repair a sidewalk
- Grow a school garden
- Help a community that has been impacted by a natural disaster

Health/Safety

- Create a presentation for how to handle health or crime emergencies
- Set up prevention groups to patrol neighborhoods
- Coordinate an afterschool hotline
- Organize a bike, rollerblade, scooter, or car seat safety demonstration
- Develop and teach a babysitting course
- Organize a community health fair

Homeless

- Collect food, toiletries, or clothing for the homeless
- Work at a soup kitchen
- Collect and distribute blankets
- Collect toys for shelters

Diversity

- Organize ethnic awareness days
- Tutor people whose second language is English
- Encourage sites around town to become wheelchair accessible
- Help people with special needs
- Develop a peer conflict mediation program

GETTING PARENTS INVOLVED

There are several reasons to get parents involved in the service learning process. Studies have shown that parental involvement in a child's schoolwork can be an important part of his or her success at school. Parents may be able to provide information about community needs and potential service opportunities. And parents may be needed to provide transportation to get their children to and from their places of service.

Parents can provide:

- Encouragement
- Assistance
- Transportation
- Knowledge
- Resources
- Leadership
- Ideas

In return, you and the students should provide to them:

- Frequent communication
- Resources and direction
- Flexibility (parents likely will need to juggle this with many other commitments)
- Opportunities that meet their interests and skills
- Recognition for their efforts

You may want to consider the following steps to encourage parental involvement:

1. Educate parents early on about service learning, its benefits, and why their children will be participating. Assume that parents know nothing about service learning. This communication can take place in a letter, a parent meeting, or on a website. Communication should be a two way process and it should be ongoing.
2. Survey parents to find out what they know, what they're good at, and what their interests are.
3. Give parents a role where they can be successful.
4. Recognize parents for their efforts.

GETTING THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

In order for the service learning process to be successful, you and your students must make connections with many in the community: local government, local businesses, nonprofit groups, service organizations, the media, and other local groups and agencies. These organizations can provide critical information on authentic community needs, service opportunities, funds, meeting space – and whatever else your students might need to help solve the problem they have chosen to address.

You can also rely on these groups for information, for advice, to get the word out, or as classroom presenters.



The good news is that there are dozens of individuals, groups, and organizations right in your own community that can help you as you begin and manage your service learning process.

You may be asking yourself where to begin to identify these community stakeholders. Following is a list of ideas:

1. Survey parents to find out what they do, what they know, and who they know.
2. Brainstorm with students and other faculty for ideas of community leaders and organizations.
3. Utilize anyone within the school district that may have community ties. Some districts have a community service liaison; others have a service learning liaison.
4. Go to a community resource guide, the library, the Chamber of Commerce, or even the phone book to generate a list of possible community partners.

Successful partnerships are built on open communication and by meeting the needs of all partners. Some potential partners may be hesitant about working with young people; others may be eager but unsure about where to start. You may want to begin the dialogue through a letter or meeting. Share the goals and benefits of service learning for students and for those in the community. Learn more about their needs and goals. And work together to create a successful, long-lasting partnership.

A checklist for successful community partnerships can be found at <http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/15/>.

WEB resources

Resource List

Prepared by Renee Mende, Librarian, National Service Learning Clearinghouse

A Multimedia Resource for Inclusive Community Service

National Service Inclusion Project

<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/web.php?page=multimedia>

Supporting efforts by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to increase the participation of people with disabilities in national service programs. Part documentary and part training tool.

Learn and Serve America Program Directory

<http://www.servicelearning.org/article/archive/45/>

Directory of service learning programs.

Special Education Initiative

Pennsylvania Service Learning Alliance

<http://www.pitt.edu/~psla/PSLA/SpecialEducation.html>

New PSALA initiative called "Service-Learning: A Roadmap for Special Education." Aims to provide special education teachers with training and technical assistance so that service learning can be incorporated into the Individual Education Plan (IEP) of special education students in Pennsylvania.



Special Education Service Internships

<http://www.ipsl.org/programs/specialed.html>

The International Partnership for Service Learning and the CEC Division of International Special Education and Services have joined to offer study abroad combined with service internships in settings serving individuals with special needs.

Special Olympics Get Into It (“SO Get Into It”)

www.specialolympics.org/getintoit/

Teaches young people about developmental disabilities and promotes inclusion, tolerance, and respect. This free curriculum helps general education students learn about those who are different but can inspire the world with the lesson that we all have gifts to contribute, no matter our limitations. The lessons also support and align with academic standards, youth and character development, service learning, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Yes I Can: a Social Inclusion Curriculum for Students with and without Disabilities, Institute on Community Integration.

<http://ici.umn.edu/yesican/>

Designed for educators in junior and senior high school settings, the curriculum contains 20 lessons, presented in an instructor’s guide.

articles and other resources available online

Constitutional Rights Foundation. “**Service Learning and Special Education**”, Service Learning Network, v.9(2), Winter 2002. Online: http://www.crf-usa.org/network/net9_2.htm

Looks at schools and community groups that are applying service learning to special populations.

Kleinert, H. and Owens, J. “**Inclusive Service Learning**”, No Date.

Online: <http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/kypslp/ServiceLearningPP4-24-03.pdf>

Powerpoint slideshow from the University of Kentucky Peer Service Learning Project that explains how to develop and implement an inclusive service learning program for youth with disabilities.

Moraes, R. “**Outdoor Programs: Using Service Learning as an Educational Tool**”, National Center on Accessibility, No Date. Online: <http://www.ncaonline.org/ncpad/service.shtml>

Presents examples of how outdoor programs can use service learning to benefit students with emotional and behavioral problems.

Morales, W. “**Project SUCCESS: Service-Learning and Students with Disabilities**”, The Tutor, Spring, 1999. Online: <http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/spr1999/art3.html>

Multi-state, community and school-based service learning program that pairs school-aged students into two-

person service teams, one youth with a disability and one youth without a disability.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Institute on Community Integration.

“**Including Service Learning and SSI Work Incentives in Transition Planning**”, 2002.



Online: http://www.ncset.org/teleconferences/transcripts/2002_10.asp

Transcript of NCSET teleconference call held on October 16, 2002 discussing the use of service learning as a tool in transition planning and IEPs for disabled individuals.

Research: “**Accessing the General Curriculum in Inclusive School and Community Settings**”, Council of Exceptional Children. Online: <http://www.cec.sped.org/osep/database/detailView.html?masterID=174>
University of Illinois, Champaign research project beginning 10/2001 ending 9/2005.

Contact Project Director Stacy Dymond sdymond@uiuc.edu for more information.

Research project description that explains the infusion of a service learning component within each of the selected courses so that students apply knowledge from the general curriculum to real life issues in school and community settings. An existing service learning course will be redesigned to include students with severe disabilities and will serve as a capstone experience during the senior year that links to students’ career interests.

Roufs, A. “**FAQ: Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Learning**”, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2000. Online: <http://csf.colorado.edu/forums/service-learning/feb00/msg00123.html>

Includes Web-based resources, papers, articles, and organizations related to service learning and individuals with disabilities. Many resources listed here overlap with this bibliography.

Shoultz, B., Miller, E.E., & Ness, J. “**Impact: Feature Issue on Volunteerism by Persons with Developmental Disabilities**”, Impact, 14(2), Fall 2001. Online: <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/142/>

Features articles on volunteerism and service by those with developmental disabilities. Includes a short piece on service learning, including some example activities.

West Virginia Department of Education. “**West Virginia’s Service-Learning Lesson Plans for K-12 Challenged Students**”, 2000. Online: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/lessons/sllessonplans.pdf>

Includes nearly 75 examples of service learning lesson plans for K-12 challenged students.

Wetmiller, C. “**Students with Disabilities and the Juvenile Justice System: Can Service-Learning Play a Role?**” Keeping in PACE/Special Ed Update, v.3(5), May 2003.

Online: http://www.imakenews.com/psla/e_article000148810.cfm

Describes research findings that support the idea that service learning can play a positive role in shaping the personal development of youth and helping youth make positive social decisions.

Zimmerle, M. “**Service-Learning and Accessibility: A Two-Fold Approach**”, PSLA Special Ed Update, v.2(5), 2002, Online: http://www.imakenews.com/psla/e_article000094247.cfm

Explains how all students, disabled or not, have the opportunity to help the community at large and each other through service. Web page includes several project ideas.

Zimmerle, M. “**Meeting ‘Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’ Standards with Service-Learning**”, PSLA Special Ed Update, v.2(5), 2002. Online:

http://www.imakenews.com/psla/e_article000094219.cfm

Illustrates how service learning allows students to simultaneously meet academic, nonacademic and transition requirements in the classroom while remaining on the general curriculum track. The PSLA’s Special Education Initiative can help special ed teachers discover, explore and utilize service learning tools for the classroom. For



more information, please visit their website <http://www.pitt.edu/~psla/PSLA/SpecialEducation.html> or contact them at psla@pitt.edu.

PRINT resources

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Print and Other Resources

Abernathy, T. and Obenchain, K. **“Student Ownership of Service-Learning Projects: Including Ourselves in Our Community”**, *Intervention in School and Clinic*, v.37(2), 86-95, 2001.

Details a five-phase construction plan designed to guide students through the process of planning service learning projects, with students responsible for all steps and the teacher assuming the role of facilitator and guide. Service learning projects are encouraged as a means of including students with disabilities in their community while building academic skills and assuming personal responsibility.

Bright, E. **“The Lamberton Project: A Secondary Program Using Experiential Learning”**, Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, 1986.

Incorporates meaningful jobs within the school, on school grounds, and within the community. Components include a classroom store, practical reading lessons involving shopping lists and form completions, walking field trips, overnight trips, and activities using the telephone. The development of good work habits is stressed. Students are placed in community job training sites and their performance is monitored. Program involvement is specified in the Individualized Education Program. ERIC NO: ED269915

Brill, Cathy L. **“The Effects of Participation in Service-Learning on Adolescents with Disabilities”**, *Journal of Adolescence*, v.17(4), 369-80, Aug 1994.

Examines the effects of active participation in service learning on adolescents with disabilities. Implications for school inclusion of students with disabilities are addressed and recommendations for areas of future study are made.

Frey, L. **“Abundant Beautification: An Effective Service-Learning Project for Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders”**, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, v.35(5), 66-75, May/June 2003.

Discusses the efficacy of service learning for students with emotional or behavioral disorders.

Gent, P. and Gurecka, L. **“Service Learning: A Creative Strategy for Inclusive Classrooms”**, *The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, v.23(3), 261-271, Fall 1998.

Illustrates how service learning not only offers an alternative to traditional classroom teaching methods, but also a vehicle to provide inclusive community based instruction, to promote the development of communities, and to provide functional skills in training. This paper defines service learning and its components while also discussing applicability of service learning for all students.



Hampshire Educational Collaborative. **“From You Can’t to You Can: Service Learning for Students with Disabilities”** [video], Fall 2002.

<http://www.collaborative.org/CSL-DisabilitiesOutreachVideo.html>

Short video presentation designed to inspire support for service learning projects that use an inclusion model, in which special education students and regular education students work side-by-side.

Ioele, M. & Dolan, A. **“Teaching Courage: Service Learning at Pathway School”**, Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems, v3(1), 20-23, Fall 1992.

Describes successful service club programs serving adolescent boys with social, emotional, and learning problems who reside at Philadelphia’s Pathway School. Considers strengths and weaknesses; power and helplessness; worthiness and worthlessness; and giving and dependency. Provides examples from programs and their participants.

Karayan, S. and Gathercoal, P. **“Service-Learning: Empowering Students with Special Needs”**, Academic Exchange, v.7(2), 151-157, Summer 2003.

Demonstrates that service learning pedagogy can be used to transform the traditional “deficit” model into a “reciprocal empowerment” model. Shows how service learning can provide opportunities for all students to become contributors, problem solvers, and partners in improving communities.

Maryland Student Service Alliance. **“Special Education Service Learning Guide”**, 1993.

Introduces service learning as a method of teaching citizenship, instilling a service ethic, and helping students acquire skills. The fundamentals of an effective program -- preparation, action, reflection, and celebration -- are explained.

Muncie Southside High School. **“I Can Work Program”**, Muncie, Indiana, 1999.

Available from the NSLC Library: http://www.servicelearning.org/wg_php/library/index.php?library_id=279
Includes project description, outline, and plan, and a list of the ways the project support service learning.

Muscott, H. **“A Review and Analysis of Service-Learning Programs Involving Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disorders”**, Education and Treatment of Children, v.23(3), 346-368, August 2000.
Provides a review and critical analysis of 11 service learning programs with children and adolescents with E/BD.

Muscott, H. **“An introduction to service-learning for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: Answers to frequently asked questions”**, *Beyond Behavior*, v.10(3), 8-15, Spring 2001.
Acquaints practitioners with the practice of service learning as a method for enhancing the curriculum and meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of students with challenging behavior.

National Helper’s Network. **“Students with Special Needs Prove They Can Serve Too”**, Community Youth Roles, v.5(1), Winter 1998-1999.

Describes the efforts of New Jersey middle school teacher Peter Jennings, who has been integrating community service with special education for four years. Projects have included literacy, quilting, and intergenerational activities.



Winson, L. **“Leadership for Empowerment Program Curriculum. An All Inclusive Service Learning Program for Junior High Youth”**, 1994.

From the Leadership for Empowerment Program, Ridgedale YMCA, 12301 Ridgedale Dr, Minnetonka MN 55305; Phone: 612-544-7708.

Curriculum encourages self-determination among youth of varying abilities to become full contributing members in their community. Each chapter is written with class to class instructions including, the goals, materials required, lesson, and reflection.

Yoder, D., Retish, E., & Wade, R. **“Service Learning: Meeting Student and Community Needs”**, Teaching Exceptional Children, v.28, 14-18, 1996.

Program in which 12 seventh- and eighth-grade students with learning disabilities and/or culturally diverse backgrounds participated with nondisabled peers in service learning.