

Bring Learning to Life Video Transcript– 8:22

All across America in thousands of schools, service learning is changing the way communities think about education.

The great thing about service learning is it gives you this opportunity to go out into the world and do things hands on. It's that moment that the light bulb comes on and everything just connects.

Service learning is a teaching strategy, it is a tool, it helps educators become better teachers.

Service learning is a teaching method that links community service to the classroom.

Students work together on community service projects that help teach everything to science and math to writing and history.

When children are engaged in service learning projects it helps to tie the basic components of academics with real life experiences.

These projects meet real needs in the community and research shows that service learning engages students improves critical thinking and teaches the important of team work and communication.

So it takes the learning kids are doing in school and their body of knowledge and their ability to think analytically and to apply that to a problem in the community.

By engaging students in the world beyond the classroom, service learning opens new doors and brings learning to life. Service learning builds enthusiasm for academics by putting students in charge of their own learning.

Mrs. Counter's class has chosen to study the issue of wheelchair accessibility. They go out and they do neighborhood walks, they map what they do on an accessibility map and then they move from there to contacting people who can help to get places that are not accessible become accessible.

There are a lot of ways that our service learning project directly ties into the curriculum. We are really doing a lot of work with mathematics right now, so the math really ties in with drawing a scale and working with ratios and fractions and things like that. They do oral presentations they do a lot of writing and reflections and that really ties in with all of the literacy foundation blocks they need to excel. It's exciting it's alive, it's meaningful. When students are feeling part of the learning process and not an object of the learning process, then they can truly be engaged.

Whether it is studying social studies, math, science or language arts, service learning challenges students to demonstrate what they've learned by applying it to new situations. As part of their history class, students are restoring an historic house that now serves as a youth hostel.

There were 5 out of 10 youth hostels that were shut down and so we thought that preserving at least one would could benefit our community.

When students came to us last year they wanted to renovate the hostel, we decided that we would do some historical research for the property itself.

Students studied history by creating a timeline for the house. While we worked on the timeline we filled in with world events in US history.

Service learning definitely does impact academic performance. When they bring it back to the classroom. Not only are they meeting the standard but they are interested in what they are doing, what a great opportunity for these kids to get to touch living history.

We did our timeline during class and after school we visited the site and took notes on the site, what needs to be done, the painting, the new roof we are doing. We started out with one grant which helped out a lot.

That project included skills in math to calculate for instance shingles on a roof.

We are going to use a trigonometric ratio that describes this angle. I'm calling that Theta right now because in mathematics it's often referred to by its Greek letter.

We figure everything out using math. Math is the key to everything.

Before service learning I was just an ordinary student causing mischief during class. After service learning started I got so involved in it, I started paying attention more, and picked up my grades.

Service learning works. I've seen the impact it has had on the community and most importantly on the children.

Our schools has improved dramatically in terms of the SAT, in terms of the total school scores on proficiency assessments.

Our benefit has been tremendous in terms of scholarships, in terms of increased academic achievement, in terms of increased attendance rate.

I also see a big difference in student citizenship skills, and I think the relationships that I see developing between students and teachers.

Service learning definitely brings learning to life for students because they are not stationary. They are in the real world. They're doing things, they're moving about, they're engaged, they're problem solving.

Service learning also strengthens ties between schools and the community.

Here at Globalrate, we help teacher seniors to help themselves on their computer, to be able to access the internet, to be able to write up a letter if they want to.

Many patrons who come in here, who have never even used the computer before, so if we could have high school kids here to help with the basic computer questions, that would be a lot of help for the patrons.

Boy, I need a lot of help. Um, I don't know word, I don't know how to make things bold. Tom really knows his stuff, he helps me so much and ya know, he is so knowledgeable.

It's a good feeling to help people out, I mean a lot of elderly people come in and say my son gave me a computer and I don't know what to do with it. At school I take a web design class. Last week there was this woman who came in and her job wasn't doing so well and she asked me if there was some way she could use the internet to help her job out. I said "yeah, you could make your own webpage". My skills learned in that classroom helped me to help her.

It has been a great experience all around. The students have benefited because they have been able to apply the knowledge they learned in the classroom. They also are getting a great opportunity to interact with the public. The staff has benefited and the patrons have had a great benefit because their need is being met.

It gives you a good feeling to be able to know you are needed somewhere.

Service learning works. Today more than 30% of K-12 public schools engage students in service learning and the numbers are growing. I think the principals have an obligation to look at service learning as a way of improving their schools. I can guarantee that a service learning program will help.

Service learning is something that evolves. It's not hard to do. Every community has the American Red Cross, Lions clubs, and Rotary clubs. There are many many resources out there. Other teachers are great resources, the Higher Eds in the community.

You can get started with the simplest engagement day. Just get involved with Martin Luther King Day of service or make a difference day, and see how the kids respond and when you see that spark, of excitement in kids then you know that this is something really good for your school.

The benefits are tangible, they're real, and they're measurable if you are looking at standards. It really is a win-win for everybody.

Learn and Serve America is a program of the federal agency the Corporation for National and Community Service, the largest funder of service learning in the country. Learn and service America provides grants, technical assistance, and other resources.

It is the best thing in the school. Academics will remain forever, students will read, students will do math problems. This is really about how we can help students develop.

I think that schools that are considering it, need to do it. Because not only does it help academically, but it gives a better sense of citizenship, what it's like to go into the community and help and make a difference.

A reason to learn, and a way to learn that makes us life-long learners. That's service learning.

To find out more about service learning and how to get your school involved, visit learningandserve.gov.