

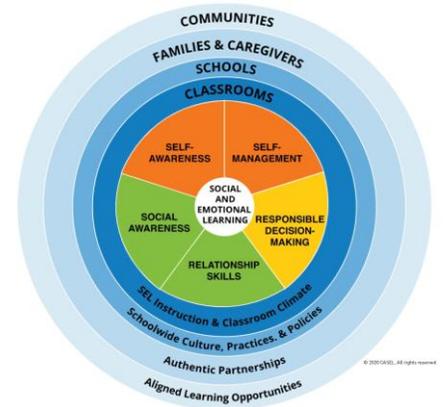


WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

Service Learning is an “*approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.*” (National Youth Leadership Council, 2021)

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING IN SERVICE LEARNING?

- Service learning is an authentic way to put essential social and emotional skills into practice.
- Children and teens can exercise a sense of agency and purpose as they realize they can help their community.
- Children and teens have the chance with caregiver support to put their sense of justice, equity and compassion into action.
- When service is reflected on and tied to the curriculum, it can develop academic skills such as reading, writing, researching, math and social studies.
- Service learning can help a child or teen discover their sense of purpose. Leading a life of purpose is associated with physical health, including better sleep, less chronic pain, and longer living—and with psychological health including hope, happiness and life satisfaction.



WHAT DOES SERVICE LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

Children and teens can engage in service learning in differing ways at each age and stage. Children and teens may show a readiness to engage by:

- noticing problems or people who are in pain or suffering in their community.
- asking questions or wondering about local or world issues in the news.
- showing compassion to anyone they encounter in their daily lives.





HOW CAN PARENTS ENGAGE IN SERVICE LEARNING WITH CHILDREN AND TEENS?

Parents can...

Begin with your child or teen's interests and cares! To get started, at a family dinner ask: *When you look around at our neighborhood, community or city, what challenges do you see? Are there people that feel compelled to help? Are there issues that you feel compelled to address?* Here are just a few examples.

- **Is it caring for the planet?** Learn about climate change and express passion for what aspects of caring for the Earth particularly interest your child. Families can explore ways in which to address the issue like reviewing and upscaling their recycling efforts, monitoring and limiting water or energy consumption or clearing up local parks or natural areas. Does your child love polar bears? Research together ways in which to support the health and well-being of polar bears in the wild.
- **Is it community wellness?** Students may be concerned with elderly, individuals who cannot leave their homes, or babies and young children. Discover together any local nonprofits that are working to address issues related to your child's interest and look for volunteer opportunities. Churches, senior living centers, day care centers, libraries and hospitals may also offer opportunities to learn how they can build meaningful connections. They may write or draw cards, bring food or resource donations, or lead a game or craft activity.
- **Is it providing healthy foods for those who need it?** Ask if local grocery stores or restaurants have any programs or opportunities to share extras with those in your community. Discover what nonprofits in your area are doing this work and ask about volunteer opportunities that may be offered. Most communities have food banks or pantries in which volunteers can donate, stock and serve food.





HOW DOES SERVICE LEARNING CONNECT TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS?

Service learning develops students:

- **Self-awareness:** children and teens begin to explore their passions, agency and purpose as they discover how they want to contribute and that they are able to contribute.
- **Social awareness:** children and teens have the chance to take other's perspectives and empathize with those who they are not typically in contact with and may live very different lives from their own.
- **Self-management:** children and teens can learn to manage themselves appropriately in social contexts different from their own home, neighborhood or school by taking social cues from others and managing emotions.
- **Relationship skills:** children and teens can learn listening skills and ways to communicate effectively and collaborate with others.
- **Responsible decision-making:** children and teens can learn about social responsibility and how community actions have consequences for individuals and families and learn about ways in which they can act as responsible citizens to address community problems.

