

From Transactional to
Transformational:

Creating Authentic Service-Learning Experiences for Kids

Bonnie Milecki



Prayer



Prayer Before Service

Dear God,

Thank You for this chance to serve. Open my eyes to see others with kindness. Open my heart to love without limits. Help me be Your hands today— gentle, helpful, and full of care. May everything I do bring joy to others and honor to You.

Amen.



About you
About me

Session Goals

- Frame the role of service-learning in faith formation
- Define transactional and transformational
- Define service-learning as different from volunteering
- Discuss the three step cycle of service learning
- Reflect on the impact of child development
- Practical Recommendations



Why Service-Learning?

“Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor... is made concrete in the promotion of justice.”

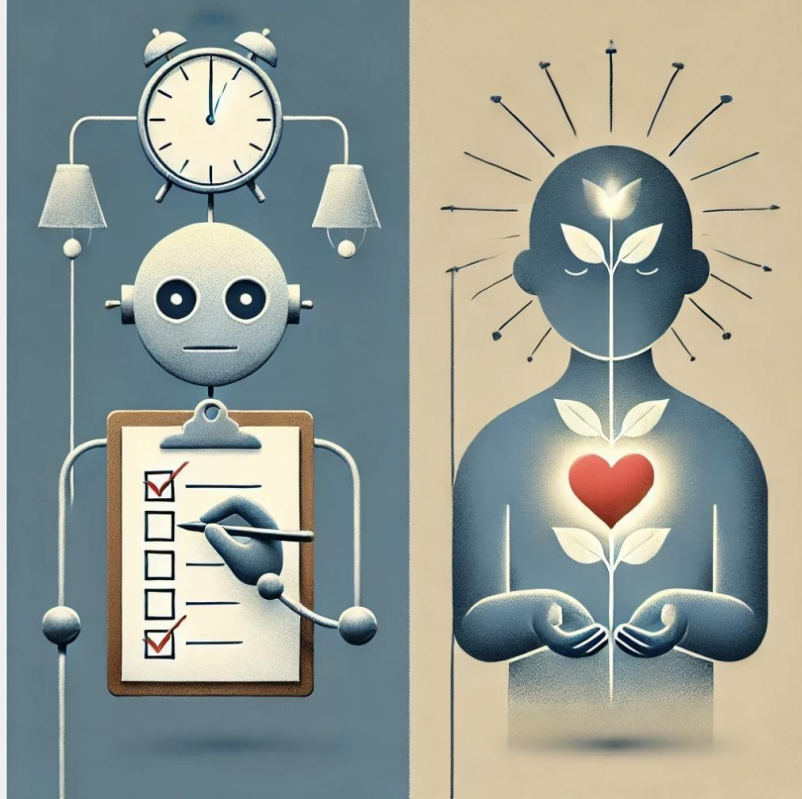
— *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 208

Service learning helps students **live their faith in action**, teaching them that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17) and that every person is called “to contribute... to the good of society” (*Compendium*, no. 417).

It forms **disciples who act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God** (*Micah 6:8*).

Studies on disaffiliation indicate that young people involved in youth groups that participate in service are significantly more likely to report doing church related service 10 years later than those who did not.

What does it even mean?



Transactional
Vs.
Transformational

Define Service Learning

Volunteering

- Single Event
- Efficient
- Single Direction change (perhaps)

Service Learning

- Multi Steps
- Messy
- Reciprocal Change

Three Parts of Service Learning



Service Learning demands an intellectual understanding of the systemic issues of injustice, and barriers to access, power, and inclusion that result in inequity. Paired with charitable giving and understanding, this knowledge, this “learning,” makes the service work capable of changing the volunteers participating in it, and ultimately preparing them to be agents of change in the society they lead. It is the cycle of intellectual preparation, works of direct service and mercy, and self-reflection that comprises an authentic service learning experience.

- Preparation and Education - “Why” is the work needed
- Work of Direct Service - Do the work
- Reflection and Prayer - Who and what was changed

Three Parts of Service Learning



Preparation



Direct Work



Reflection

The Role of Child Development



Elementary School Aged

- Concrete vs. Abstract
- Learn best through stories
- Want to be helpers



Middle School Aged

- Aware of “fairness”
- Identity based on others
- Growing in abstract awareness



High School Aged

- Critical thinking developing
- Value real world impact
- Leadership skills growing

Service Learning Guide

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Transactional vs. Transformational

Service Learning needs to support kids' growth beyond a "collection of hours", "what do I get", and "does this count" mentality and develop a "what is needed and how can I help?" leadership mindset.

Service Learning demands an intellectual understanding of the systemic issues of injustice and barriers to access and power that result in inequity. Paired with charitable giving and understanding this knowledge, this "learning", makes the service work capable of CHANGING the volunteers that participate in it. This makes them agents of change in society.

Goals of Service Learning

- Foster a curiosity about others and skills to question and investigate the reasons for barriers to access (What has happened in the past?)
- Equip young people with the practical skills and experience needed to lead activities that support their communities (What can we do right now?)
- Develop the spiritual and emotional strength found in morally and civically responsible young people (How will we act moving forward?)

Three Fundamental Parts of a Service Learning Experience

1. Preparation and Education - Ask "why" is this work needed.
2. Work of Direct Service - Do the work and allow the students to lead.
3. Reflection and Prayer - Consider how all the people involved were changed and what happens now.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

Any Questions?

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Let's



Get



Excited!

