



A Campus

Engaged...

Service/Community Based Learning

Tip Sheet

Program Evaluation

Effective service-learning employs systematic evaluation of the program, not only of the students' performance within it. Engaging in program evaluation keeps the service linked to real community needs. It can also provide raw data for supporters, including parents, administrators, and grant-makers.

When appropriate, students can be involved in both the data-tracking and analysis, extending learning.

The Evaluation Process

The following steps are the basics of program evaluation:

- Formulate the question (what do you need to know?), and identify the audiences (who needs the information? and why?).
- Identify the data/information needed to answer the question.
- Identify the sources of information.
- Establish the methods for collecting data (who will gather the information? when? how?).
- Collect the data.
- Analyze the data
- Compare and report results.

Program evaluation can help you answer questions from key groups:

- Administrators who may ask whether the educational benefits of service-learning outweigh the costs of implementation, and whether the teaching approach is effective.
- Teachers who want to know what changes they might expect to see in their students, or whether service-learning activities will benefit certain types of students.
- Parents and other members of the community who want to know what service-learning will do for students and the community.
- Funders who may want to help support this learning strategy.

Program evaluation is important because it helps...

- Determine whether program goals are being met
- Document program effectiveness
- Determine what students are learning
- Document what community members are gaining
- Examine strengths and weaknesses of the program
- Determine what needs to be improved
- Make informed decisions about the future of the program