

Chapter 1: Background and rationale

Giving service to the community is an important value in our society. It is also an excellent way to enhance students' learning experiences. Moves to incorporate community service into the school environment began about one hundred years ago. Community service programs in schools traditionally concentrated on fostering volunteering and participation. The focus over the last thirty years has been to link community service experiences more directly with learning. Programs that seek to do this in an explicit way are often referred to as 'service-learning'.

More recent developments in community service/service-learning include a move toward 'civic engagement' or democracy in practice. Serving the school community as well as the wider community is an important feature of such civic engagement.

Another recent emphasis in community service/service-learning has been on creating leadership opportunities for students. In some rural communities, helping young people to make meaningful and lasting connections to their community through community service/service learning has been seen as critical to community regeneration.

There is evidence from international research that community service/service-learning benefit both students and the wider community. Benefits include:

- personal and interpersonal development – communication, leadership, problem solving, self-identity, ability to relate to different groups
- reduction of risky behaviours
- development of civic responsibility and skills
- increased engagement and motivation to learn
- improved school attendance
- increased respect between teacher and students
- more positive community perceptions of schools and youth.

The Community Service Program is being introduced into WA secondary schools to foster an ethos of service in young people as part of their overall education.

Although the Community Service Program is not directly linked to a Learning Area, it has multiple links with the Western Australian *Curriculum Framework*. The Community Service Program provides students with an opportunity to meet a number of the Overarching Learning Outcomes and supports the development of the five values that underpin the *Curriculum Framework*. Additionally, depending on the types of activities students engage in, community service activities can address outcomes in Society and Environment, English, Health, Science and Physical Education.

In many schools, students are already engaged in community service activities through their curriculum or extra-curricular activities. Students hold music or drama performances for the community, tutor primary school students or assist in coaching and umpiring during sports events. The Community Service Program enables schools to credit the students and staff for their work in those activities. It also provides an opportunity to more clearly articulate how community service relates to the wider curriculum and to expand on the service experiences available to students by developing partnerships with community groups.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

Chapter 2: What is the Community Service Program?

The purpose of the Community Service Program

The Community Service Program enables students to undertake community service as part of the school program. Within the context of the Community Service Program, community service refers to activities undertaken by students, individually or in collaboration with other students, for the benefit of others in the school or wider community.

Community service gives students the opportunity to be involved in activities that help others. At the same time it is expected that students themselves will benefit from the experience by developing skills and understandings, eg civic responsibility and leadership.

Aims

The Community Service Program aims to:

- develop a culture and ethos of service in secondary schools
- provide opportunities for students to exercise responsibility and develop leadership skills by solving real-life problems
- provide opportunities for students to learn first-hand through helping others
- benefit students and the wider community
- recognise the contribution of students who already participate in service activities in their own time.

Requirements of the program – who, when and where?

The Community Service Program requires all students to do a minimum of 20 hours of service, usually during Years 10 and 11. From 2009, students finishing Year 12 need to have completed 20 hours of service to be eligible for the WACE.

What qualifies as Community Service?

A whole range of activities qualify as community service and the criteria below help to identify these activities. For activities to qualify as community service they should:

- be for the benefit of others
- give service in an area of need
- provide opportunities for learning and reflection
- not involve payment. However, activities that attract a small honorarium and fulfil the other criteria are still considered community service.

Community service may be:

- school-oriented: providing a service in an area of need within the school environment (eg peer tutoring of younger students or taking part in a school recycling program)
- community-oriented: providing a service in an area of need within the community (eg service for a non-profit organisation in areas such as aged care or animal welfare).



“I liked being recognised for something I was good at”.

Student, country high school

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

The service students provide can be direct (involving personal contact with the person being served, ie visiting the elderly) or indirect (food drives, fundraising, environmental clean-ups).

For a fuller description of what counts as community service please refer to the document *What Qualifies as Community Service? Criteria and Guidelines* which is available on the Behaviour Standards and Wellbeing (BSWB) website: www.det.wa.edu.au/behaviourandwellbeing.

You may also like to refer to our website for the latest updates on the Calendar of Events, opportunities for funding, information on awards, useful resources and links to relevant websites. In the meantime please take note of the following events:

- Schools Clean Up Day in March
- National Youth Week in April
- National Volunteers Week in May
- National Reconciliation Week in June.

Community Service and Service-Learning

'Community service' and 'service-learning' are often used interchangeably. However, they differ in the emphasis each places on 'service' and 'learning'. In community service activities, the focus is on the provision of 'service'. Service-learning programs focus equally on student learning and service. Service-learning programs require students to design, implement and report on service projects as part of their school program.

The Community Service Program can include both community service and service-learning activities. The table below illustrates how the emphasis of an activity makes it either community service or service-learning.

Community service	Service-learning
Tutoring students in primary school	Secondary school students tutoring primary school students on a skill that the secondary students have to demonstrate as part of their own English Learning Area outcomes, eg preparing and delivering a presentation.
Assisting in Clean Up Australia Day	Students participate in a litter collection activity in order to research and analyse the sources of litter and explore ways to reduce it as part of their Society and Environment studies.
Assisting at a Senior Citizens' Day Centre	As part of assisting at a Senior Citizens' Day Centre, students collect and collate memories of how the senior citizens celebrated Christmas in their childhood, as part of an oral history project.
Doing a garden maintenance with a community help group	Students help a home owner redesign their garden by drawing plans (Art), giving advice on plants (Science) and helping with the make-over (Service).

Table 1: Comparison between community service and service-learning

Although the Community Service Program highlights community service, there is nothing that stops schools from adopting activities with a service-learning approach as part of their Community Service Program.