



COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

BEST PRACTICES

Successfully incorporating community-based learning into your course will take thoughtful pre-planning. Remember that community-based learning is not intended to be more work for you or your students. It is not an additional component; rather **it is an experiential method of teaching course concepts**. The success of your students meeting the course learning objectives and making a difference in the community depends upon a well-integrated package of syllabus, orientation, reflection, and assessment. The Community-Based Learning Staff can help you with any and every step of the process!

The following are best practices for community-based learning and examples of how they have been applied here at PCC.

	BEST PRACTICE	ASSIGNMENT/PROJECT: Tutoring elementary students, ex: Math
<p>PCC CORE OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communication ■ Community & Environmental Responsibility ■ Critical Thinking & Problem Solving ■ Cultural Awareness ■ Professional Competence ■ Self-Reflection 	<p>1: Course Relevance & Assessment Curricular goals of the project are defined and stated. A connection to curricular learning outcomes is clearly met through service-learning.</p>	<p>Students practice their skills, reinforce previous knowledge, and gain confidence by teaching simpler mathematical concepts. Later, these math students create word problems combining course concepts with elements of their volunteer experience, which they present to their math class as a form of practice and review.</p>
	<p>2: Communication with Partner Agency and Preparation for Service Service goals meet a genuine community need and are clearly established. Selection, design, and evaluation of the project are shared by all participants. (Students are provided the opportunity to interact with the community.)</p>	<p>Students attend an orientation with the partner agency to learn about elementary students, the math concepts they're studying, and goals for the tutoring project. Students have clear guidelines on tutoring policies and expectations.</p>
	<p>3: Understanding the Community Context for Service Community connections are made that build knowledge about the community, identify community resources, and cultivate partnerships. All participants are prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to perform the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reasons behind the need for tutors (under-funded, over-crowded classrooms) ■ Impact that basic math skills have on thinking skills and daily life ■ How tutoring programs are funded (whether school-based, volunteer-run, or nonprofit) ■ Learn about additional volunteer opportunities.
	<p>4: Diversity/Cultural Competency Opportunities are offered to discuss value differences or to interact with a variety of individuals or groups, providing a deeper understanding of diversity, oppression, equity, and inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning how to bridge cultural divides fosters patience and understanding. <p><i>Students are likely to work with children for whom English is their second or even third language.</i></p>
	<p>5: Reflection Students are involved in some method of reflection. Community partners may also be involved in this process.</p>	<p>Journal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tutoring experiences and ideas for the assigned word problems <p>Word Problem Design in small group or pairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compare their experiences with other tutors and collaborate on designing the word problems
	<p>6: Recognition All achievements (from students and possibly even the community partners) are celebrated and all participants are recognized. This can be any number of ways through presentations, information sharing, poster sessions, zines, etc.</p>	<p>Instructor recognizes the students' volunteer work in class, as well as their contribution to the class' understanding of the material via their word problems.</p>

EXAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS	BEST PRACTICE 1: Course Relevance & Assessment	BEST PRACTICE 2: Communication with Partner Agency and Preparation for Service	BEST PRACTICE 3: Understanding the Community Context for Service	BEST PRACTICE 4: Diversity/Cultural Competency	BEST PRACTICE 5: Reflection	BEST PRACTICE 6: Recognition
Trail restoration and creation of educational material for the Nature Conservatory. ex: Biology, Science, or Environmental	With the goal of improving a local nature trail, students apply their science skills to map four animal and plant habitats. The maps are then shared with the local Nature Conservatory organization for use with their public education program	Students, instructor, and community advisor investigate, discuss, and brainstorm the restoration needs of the trail, as well as the needs and use for educational material. All agree on a list of tasks to be completed during the CBL project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public and societal impacts of creating and maintaining nature trails. ■ How maintenance of natural areas is funded ■ Role of public education programs in protecting access to nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How differently-abled people might experience nature trails. <i>The community advisor is a senior citizen who uses a cane and walks slowly. Students help her through difficult places on the trail.</i> 	Journal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ reflection on specific topics posed by instructor (i.e. the role of nature trails in an urban society, the health of a particular animal habitat, etc.) 	Community partners are invited to in class celebration where the educational material created by the students is formally presented to the agency.
Create oral histories for senior citizens, immigrants, or homeless people. ex: Writing	Students apply writing skills to prepare a writing piece based on the interviews they conducted with the community members. Students use the writing techniques learned in the course.	Students attend an orientation by the community organization to learn about the people they serve and how the community organization operates. Guidelines and structures are given for conducting interviews. There is discussion about how to use the final writing pieces to influence local policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impact on city policies and funding, etc. when there is increased public awareness of the experiences of marginalized communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning how to ask appropriate questions will foster inter-cultural communication and compassion. <i>Students will likely be interviewing people of different backgrounds.</i> 	Journal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ interviews and experiences ■ notes of ideas to include in the final writing piece In class discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ sharing of experiences 	The writing instructor displays or hosts a reading of the writing produced by the students and community members are invited to join.
Create videos or brochures for a local nonprofit about how to access community resources ex: Multi-media, Photography, Graphic-Design, Journalism, or Foreign-Language	Students apply technical concepts learned in the course to create this final product. Students learn to adjust the language and images in the video/ brochure for the target audience. The video/ brochure is graded by a rubric given to students beforehand, and students present their final project to the class.	Students meet with the organization to learn about the challenges faced by their community. Sample brochures/ videos are provided as models. There is discussion about how the final products might be distributed to other agencies that could benefit from them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Challenges faced by marginalized communities in accessing resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seeing the world from the perspective of someone with different life experiences. <i>Students will likely be preparing videos/ brochures to be used by people (or organizations) of different backgrounds.</i> 	Illustrated story-board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ chronicals the experience and process of learning about the community organization and developing their ideas for a final project In class discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ challenges and victories of the process. 	Instructor displays all the brochures/ videos created by the class and community agency is invited to the celebration to collect the final, usable products.
Teach basic computer literacy skills to low-income families or senior citizens (or provide free technology trainings to staff members of local non-profits) ex: Computer Science, Information Technology	Knowledge of basic computer skills is reinforced by teaching community classes. (Or, students practice advanced computer skills by training staff members at a local agency). Students gain useful practice in communicating complex ideas to non-computer specialists.	Students meet with the organization to identify which computer skills are most needed, learn the mission of the organization, and become familiar with the machines they will be using for the computer trainings. There is also discussion about how organizations might benefit from the creation of a "technology tips" poster.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How the digital divide affects poverty. ■ Limited resources of non-profits contributes to the lack of tech resources essential to accomplishing their missions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning to interact with and make difficult concepts clear to a diverse group of people. <i>The people who attend the technology trainings may be from a variety of backgrounds.</i> 	Journal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ reflection prompts from instructor. Handbook (done in groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ tips and suggestions for future students 	Instructor shares the handbook with future students. If appropriate, the former students are invited to share a memorable moment from the project with the class.