



“Hound-Town” Serving Around Town: Service-Learning at Loyola By Casey Fradkin

Service Learning: Caring for Others

Service-learning provides an opportunity for you to engage with and become informed about the community surrounding Loyola ([Drewery & Lol-lar](#)). The goal of service-learning is to develop communication and leadership skills you can gain in a unique way outside the classroom. At the same time, these projects also benefit the community. Loyola University places value on having well-rounded students who seek to fulfill the school's [core values](#). The school seeks to achieve the goal through service in the community, and service learning helps to achieve that goal. As a Jesuit university, Loyola has a “distinctive way of looking at life” which emphasizes caring for others ([Loyola University Maryland](#)). As a result of Loyola's Jesuit values, there are high expectations of students achieving not only academic excellence, but excellence in leadership and service. Loyola provides their students with many opportunities to uphold these values and engage with the local Baltimore community through service-learning programs. In fact, knowing that Loyola had these opportunities drew me to the school. I am involved with service-learning through one of my education courses. Through my program, I can gain valuable, practical experience as an education major in a real-world setting. Community service work is an essential component of the Loyola experience and you should be excited to take advantage of these opportunities throughout your time at Loyola.



Loyola students first day at service-learning placement

My Story

I found my service-learning project through my “Introduction to Reading and Literacy” class. [The Center for Community Service and Justice](#) guided me by assigning me to a local Baltimore elementary school near campus. I volunteer at the school once per week where I administer a literacy test to individual students and help strengthen their areas of weakness. After I administer the assessment, we focus on the student's support needs, ranging from help with homework assignments to engaging through play. As an education major, my service-learning is beneficial in many ways. For instance, I am able to get early onset experience and exposure to the ins and outs of my future career. Especially with the challenges in education today and high teacher attrition rate, it is important for aspiring educators like me to fully grasp the reality of the field. This early exposure has helped grow my passion for teaching and given me reassurance that this is the field for me. Sofia Viganola, another first-year in my service-learning program, feels similarly in that her experience has strengthened her passion for teaching and makes her “excited for the future.”

In addition to solidifying my passion for teaching, this experience helps me to apply the knowledge I gain from my lessons to practical experience. I have had practice teaching skills ranging from reading comprehension, consonant and vowel sounds, punctuation, and print awareness. Through practice, I am able to grasp my level of ability and put my skills to the test. I am developing the skill to adapt my techniques to a specific student's needs. For instance, I assessed one student's print concept awareness and identified an area of weakness in the punctuation section of the exam. I curated a lesson that would introduce all the punctuation marks including their naming, function, and application to sentences. I created an individualized lesson for this student and saw an improvement. This is just one example of how my service-learning strengthens my teaching skills, establishing a good foundation for my future career.

Impact on Community

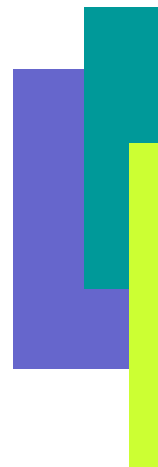
What's unique to service-learning is not only the benefits I receive, but the reciprocal benefits to students and the wider community. Working with students one-on-one and addressing their challenges during after school hours, I am able to provide them academic and social support. I can give the students individual support that they need in our one-on-one sessions to fill the need for more support that the teacher may not have time to provide for everyone. I help them with their school work but I also give them "buddy time" to look forward to. I am able to help students cultivate confidence in their abilities and make them comfortable with the skills they have. This service-learning, in turn, provides the teacher with additional support as I can better prepare their students for the next day of class. Taking some burden off and alleviating some of the teachers' stress is another benefit.

Another Group Wins

Service-learning can also be beneficial for parents, because this system offers a lot of support and ensures that their children get the resources they need to be successful in school. With this being a free program, it is accessible to all students and may help diminish disparities. Not every parent may have resources to support education outside of the classroom, but this program may ease parents' fears that they aren't able to do enough to support their kids academically. The community at large benefits, too, because when kids are closely monitored for additional time after school, they are less likely to get into trouble. The service-learning program also helps promote literacy skills which are essential for kids to become well-developed individuals who can contribute to society. When students get a good foundation, they have a better chance of continuing through higher education, getting well-paying jobs and, in turn, giving back to society through their work. Even though a small program like this service-learning program may not be seen as essential, it has the potential to serve everyone involved.



My student and I doing a coloring activity.



Exploring Service Learning: Interests for All

While I have found my enjoyment for service-learning through my interests in education, isn't the only program where you can find service-learning. In fact, many core requirement classes at Loyola offer service-learning paths, so volunteering in the community doesn't have to be specific to your major. These opportunities can range from Soccer Without Borders, SquashWise, and the Refugee Youth Project, just to name a few, to suit many interests. Your service-learning at Loyola can also be outside the scope of your major, allowing you to explore different fields, further your other interests, and broaden your horizons in the Baltimore community. Sofia Viganola, '27, says "this strengthens my passion of wanting to be a teacher because today when I taught my lesson plan to my student, I could see my student's eyes light up when they got things right and a prize for everything they got right in the assessment—this made me excited for the future because this is only a fraction of what I'm going to encounter in the future." Service-learning invokes passion within students and most have a fondness towards their engagement because it's fulfilling act. Research demonstrates that students across the country enjoy service-learning, benefit a lot from the experience, and think that more schools should offer it ([Drewery & Lollar](#)). Service-learning clearly has many benefits for you and our community, so you should seek out these opportunities during your first year at Loyola. (You can find community-engaged learning classes when you are looking for classes in Student Planning.)

Be The Change

As demonstrated through my work with service-learning, first-year students at Loyola have the unique opportunity to be a part of this rewarding practice. Service-learning benefits everyone. First, it supports us, Loyola students, by giving us hands-on practice and skill development in our field of choice that can only be obtained outside the classroom. These experiences help us grow academically and personally, setting us up to be successful after graduation. Service-learning also helps to support the community as a whole as we offer needed support and services. With these reasons, incoming first-years are lucky to have this opportunity supported by Loyola—you definitely want to take advantage of it!

**“When the heart is challenged by direct experience,
the mind may be challenged to change.”**

—[Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach](#)



Hope Sandvul working with her student.

