



# Strategies for Involving Youth in Service-Learning Activities

Service-learning is community service with a kick. The work involved is only half of the equation, because youth don't just focus on improving their communities. Service-learning also brings schoolwork alive by showing youth how real-world issues directly relate to what they study in school. Here are some tips on how to involve youth with and without disabilities in service-learning:

- ❑ Consider projects that take place at or near school, so that problems with funding or transportation don't become major barriers to success. The project will also be easier to coordinate.
- ❑ Plan service-learning opportunities during school hours to reduce scheduling problems that may arise. After-school and weekend projects will probably need extra support from families and teachers, especially transportation to and from the project and supervision at the site.
- ❑ Develop opportunities for peer mentoring as a strategy to provide natural supports for students with significant disabilities. Pairing or grouping 3-4 students into buddy teams, with each student having co-equal tasks, increases socialization opportunities and helps develop genuine new friendships.
- ❑ Have every student involved actively participate in getting the project off the ground, from pre-planning to actually doing it. When students are decision-makers on projects, the level of commitment is much higher and the results are much more positive and lasting.
- ❑ Involve students in a service-learning advisory panel, which could also include teachers, parents, administrators and community groups. Advisory panels identify existing opportunities, work with the community to create additional opportunities, evaluate programs and participation and offer other types of feedback.

---

## Natural Supports Project

Waisman Center, A107  
1500 Highland Avenue  
Madison, WI 53705  
(608) 890-1687 telephone  
(608) 265-3441 fax  
<http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/>



Waisman Center  
University of Wisconsin–Madison



Funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, CFDA No. 93.768. Wisconsin Department of Health Services/Pathways to Independence