



What is Community-based Learning?

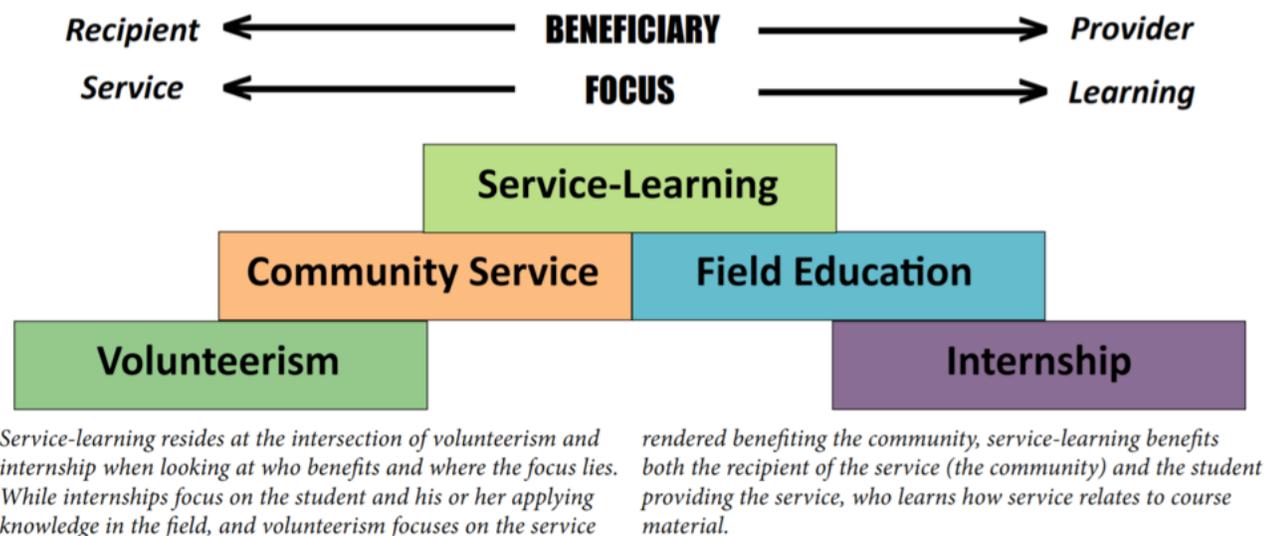
A resource for students

Community-based Learning (CBL), sometimes called service learning, classes incorporate meaningful community engagement with course content so you can get real-world experience as part of a for-credit class. Students report that in CBL classes, they learn more, understand course content better, and enjoy the class more.

Community-based Learning classes include at least 25 hours of service throughout the semester as part of the course requirement. Typically, you'll begin by exploring the background of the issues related to the class and preparing to work with a community organization or agency. Then you will usually spend a few hours a week at that community partner site or working on a project for a community partner, using your skills to provide real benefits to your community partner. During the course, you will learn from your community partners and experiences in the community, while also learning during class time. In this way, the partnerships you have in the community will be mutually beneficial, meaning both you and your community partner will benefit.

Community-based Learning Courses Take Many Forms

FIGURE 1B: WHERE SERVICE-LEARNING FITS IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (Furco, 1996)



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Although CBL courses may look different, they share these 6 qualities:

1. **Integrative:** The CBL experience goes beyond traditional ideas of classroom learning, practicum training or off-campus volunteering. CBL holistically integrates class learning objectives, faculty guidance, as well as community perspective and priorities. When engaged in genuine engagement, students participate as both learners and community members. Students demonstrate success both academically and interpersonally.
2. **Reflective:** “The process of reflection is a core component of CBL. CBL practitioners and researchers alike have concluded that the most effective CBL experiences are those that provide ‘structured opportunities’ for learners to critically reflect upon their engagement experience. Structured opportunities for reflection can enable learners to examine and form the beliefs, values, opinions, assumptions, judgments and practices related to an action or experience, gain a deeper understanding of them and construct their own meaning and significance for future actions” (Moon, 1999, as cited in Conner & Seifer, 2005).
3. **Contextualized:** CBL provides students a unique opportunity to access knowledge and expertise that resides within the community. There is opportunity to connect the knowledge of a discipline, as explored in class, to the knowledge in practice, as evidenced in communities. Learning experiences in community settings immerse students in the unpredictable and complex nature of real-world situations. Working alongside community members and experienced professionals, the opportunity to construct learning and responses can be immediate and uncontrived.
4. **Strength-based:** CBL draws upon existing community strengths and resources, and honors community members and organizations as co-educators of students. Communities are never built from the outside in. A strength-based approach focuses on the capacity and expertise that exist in every community, rather than on what is absent. By shifting away from a deficit mentality, students learn partnership strategies to identify and develop each community’s unique strengths.
5. **Reciprocal:** The CBL relationship offers all parties involved some benefits; it is a two-way street. Students give time, talent and knowledge in order to learn the course material more deeply, lessons from community expertise, and the nuanced nature of social issues. Community members and organizations invest time as co-educators and in turn accomplish
6. **Lifelong:** CBL is learning that sticks. By combining theory and practice (known as praxis), this educational method provides a distinctive, meaningful and influential life experience. Students build relationships, solve problems, value a sense of community and gain self-awareness. CBL is beyond memorable; it can influence one’s career path and enhance civic responsibility. CBL extends learning beyond the academic term; it lays the foundation for continual personal growth throughout the student’s academic experience and beyond.

This section summarizes a document that was the result of a learning community hosted by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), UW, 2012. Contributors: M. Clevenger-Bright, K. Hays, L. Henricksen, D. Hlebain, J. Maglalang, M. Packard, K. Pursch Cornforth, D. Raftus.

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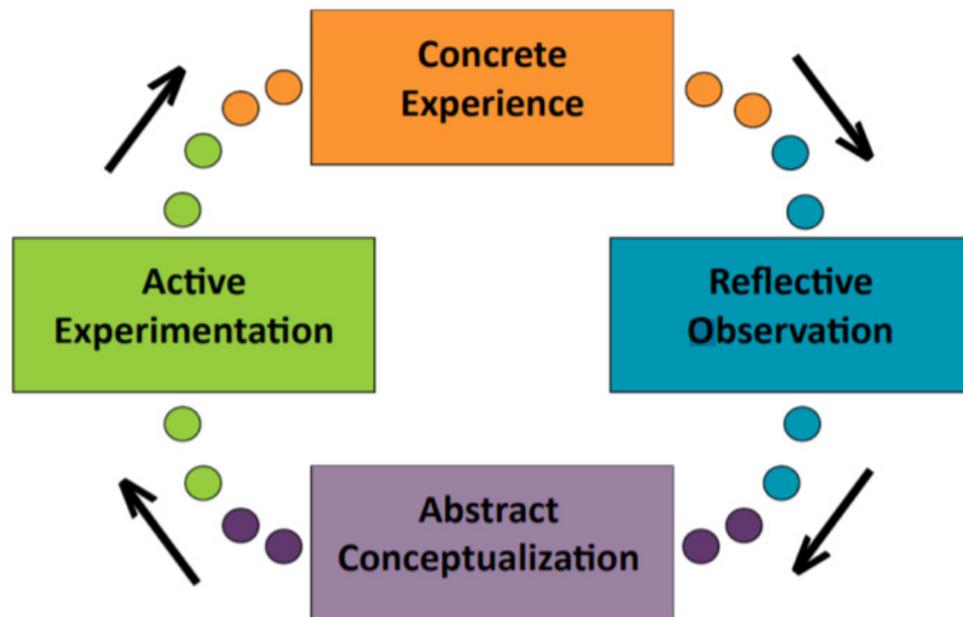
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CBL courses integrate Theory and Practice through Reflection

FIGURE 3A: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE (David Kolb, 1984)



David Kolb's model of experiential learning demonstrates the process through which a student's mind works throughout the reflective process. Your goal as faculty and staff is to utilize reflective assignments that help guide the student around this reflective cycle.

Figures from <https://www.usf.edu/engagement/documents/weber-state-u-toolkit.pdf>

Have questions about CBL or your CBL class?

The Morgridge Center for Public Service works to connect campus and community through service, community-based learning, and community-based research at UW-Madison. We are here to support CBL and students like you! If you are interested in learning more about CBL, want to view of a list of all CBL classes offered on campus, or are curious about other community engagement opportunities (including paid student staff positions), please visit our website at morgridge.wisc.edu. If you have other questions or concerns, please contact Assistant Director for Community-Engaged Scholarship, Beth Tryon, at etryon@wisc.edu.

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