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**To:** ["TEACHING-TOOLBOX@LISTSERV.JMU.EDU"](mailto:TEACHING-TOOLBOX@LISTSERV.JMU.EDU)  
**Subject:** Teaching Toolbox: Why Make Service-Learning Part of My Pedagogical Approach?  
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## **Teaching Toolbox: Why Make Service-Learning Part of My Pedagogical Approach?** **by Steve Grande**

“The most engaged learning communities are those that gather around vivid, lively, and morally compelling realities, or their representations, rather than around ‘inert facts.’ The more a pedagogy can focus learners on such realities, the deeper the learning will go.” - Parker Palmer

Service-Learning is a teaching method that JMU faculty have found rewarding, effective, and energizing. Over the last 30 years, there are numerous examples of effective JMU Service-Learning and a growing body of international scholarship demonstrating the transformative learning that results from linking experiences addressing community needs with learning outcomes. The following journals are replete with scholarship of this type of engagement:

- [International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement](#)
- [Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning](#)
- [Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement](#)

JMU students have reported that Service-Learning facilitates deeper engagement with course material, increases their sense of intrinsic motivation, and broadens their view of class content. By applying classroom content to the community, this pedagogy provokes learning and engagement through wicked problems, complex individual stories, and dissonance.

There are variety of ways to integrate Service-Learning into your courses. Our [Community Service-Learning \(CS-L\) office](#) is available to help you consider how to intentionally incorporate the following essential ingredients:

- Course integration (from an optional assignment to a core component that frames the course);
- Meaningful community involvement for a sustained duration (e.g. 15-20 hours for a semester, one week during an Alternative Spring Break, etc.);
- Intentional connection with a community partner (CS-L works with over 100 non-profit and school community partners);
- Preparation prior to beginning service;
- Clear expectations for students and the community partner(s);
- Structured reflection to ensure that service is illuminating course content and that theories and content are influencing practice; and
- Evaluation and learning outcomes assessment.

Service-Learning is not only an excellent tool to enhance student learning, but it also provides faculty an opportunity to refresh or rethink how you want to approach your learning objectives. Service-Learning is not without challenges, though, so CS-L is here to help you develop a successful and proactive approach.

Here are some steps to get started:

- Contact JMU's [CS-L Office](#), your Service-Learning partner. Director Steve Grande ([grandese@jmu.edu](mailto:grandese@jmu.edu) | x83463) is available to brainstorm the degree and type of community involvement that could enhance your learning outcomes;
- Attend a [CFI May Symposium](#) program on Service-Learning (schedule launching next week!);
- Consider participating in small group devoted to Community Service-Learning during [CFI's jmUDESIGN Institute](#) (June 12-16);
- Explore the helpful resources on engaged learning practices provided by the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#);
- Search [Campus Compact's syllabus database](#); and
- Take advantage of materials and resources in the [CS-L Office](#).

*About the author: Dr. Steve Grande is the Director of Service-Learning at James Madison University where he oversees initiatives to partner with communities and faculty members to meaningfully involve students in reflectively addressing social issues, locally and globally. He can be reached at [grandese@jmu.edu](mailto:grandese@jmu.edu).*