

Calvin Christian School

Service-Learning Rationale

School Mission Statement: The mission of Calvin Christian School, in cooperation with the home and church, is to teach the whole child from a biblical worldview, founded in the Reformation, providing children from Christian families with an excellent education for a life of Christ-centered service.

Definition: Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful Christ-centered community service with instruction and reflection.

Rationale: Calvin Christian School's mission is to teach the whole child from a biblical worldview and to provide its students with an excellent education that prepares them for a life of Christ-centered service. Emphasizing service-learning in the curriculum strengthens that mission and provides an opportunity for students to make a tangible connection between their faith and learning by living out their faith and putting their knowledge—both spiritual and academic—into practice. It also demonstrates Calvin's commitment to develop students who are prepared not only with their hearts but also with their hands to "do justice, seek mercy, and walk humbly with our God" in their communities. Service-learning serves a practical purpose of satisfying requirements important for college acceptance and has the ability to enhance other areas of student learning.

Why does Calvin have service-learning?

1. **Development of Christian Maturity**

In Galatians 5:13-14 the Lord commands His followers to serve one another in love. "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" We strive to not only teach our students the Word of God but also to help them develop an active faith that serves others. Service to others presents opportunities that the Lord can use to teach us more about Himself and the Christian life.

The foundations for learning the biblical story are laid at the elementary level. The challenge is for that knowledge not to become mere "head knowledge" but to be transformative, empowering students to actively live out their faith in our world today.

2. **Expression of Love for God**

In Ephesians 6:7 the Lord calls us to serve others as if we were serving Him. "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." Service is an expression of our love for God as we serve and love our neighbors.

Elementary students often have a hard time seeing beyond themselves and their own needs. However, as students discuss and reflect on their service, they start to see outside of themselves. They realize that other people are not so different from themselves, and they gain an appreciation for who we are as unique images of God. They also learn to appreciate the joy that comes from serving others and, ultimately, God.

3. **Sharing of Individual Gifts**

In 1 Peter 4:10 every believer is called to use his gift to serve others. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Corinthians 12 also talks about the church being a body with each member having a different function or gift to be used for the good of the body. Service-learning helps Calvin students to develop their gifts.

Students are discovering their gifts and talents as they progress through school. It is sometimes difficult for elementary students, especially those who struggle in school, to recognize their talents and abilities. Providing opportunities for service allows students to find other areas where their gifts may be revealed and utilized.

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4. Encouragement of Christian Leadership

In Mark 10:42-45 Jesus characterized leadership very differently than the world's definition. He said "...you know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Service opportunities lay a foundation for developing the servant's perspective of leadership.

When elementary students are actively involved in serving others, there is often a genuine excitement that permeates the project. However, that is not always the case. Therefore, it is our job to continually cultivate the mentality that serving requires self-sacrifice but, by putting aside our own desires, there is a greater reward. We must emphasize the fact that by serving we are leading. It's a difficult message to convey in today's society that focuses so much on the individual, but if we can invert the "me first" paradigm at a younger age, it will provide a foundation for the future.

5. Preparation for the Future

Proverbs 22:6 tells us to "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Service-learning helps teach Calvin students that service is a life-long endeavor that should continue throughout their lives. By participating in service-learning students will also have a greater understanding of themselves and their roles in the church, community, and school. They will be better equipped to make decisions about career goals and future plans, and be more qualified candidates for employment, college admissions, scholarships and various types of financial aid.

Starting service-learning at the elementary school sends a message to the students and their parents that service is valued at every educational level at Calvin Christian. It also conveys the expectation that students will be involved in service throughout their educational career at Calvin.