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TAKING A GLANCE AT SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE U.S.

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THE SCALE AND SCOPE OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE U.S.

Service-learning is a rapidly growing movement in the U.S. Research from the U.S. Department of Education has shown that the number of high school students involved in service-learning has grown from 81,000 in 1984 to 2,967,262 in 1997. That is a 3,663% increase! Other indicators include:

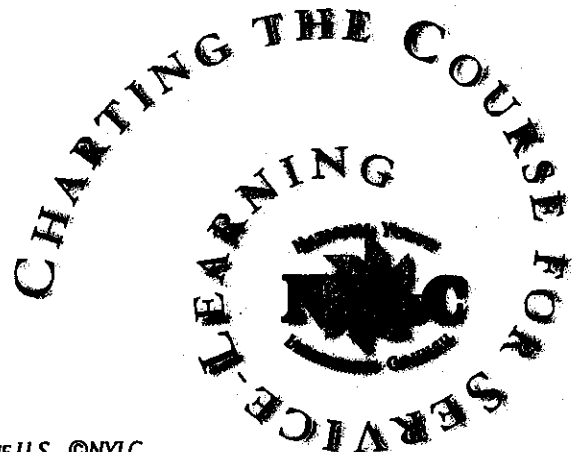
- An estimated 13 million K-12 students participated in service-learning during the 2000-2001 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).
- 25% of U.S. public elementary schools using service-learning (U.S. Department of Education, 1999)
- 38% of U.S. public middle/junior high schools using service-learning (U.S. Department of Education, 1999)
- 46% of U.S. public high schools using service-learning (U.S. Department of Education, 1999)

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

In a 1999 survey, Roper-Starch found strong public demand for schools to "prepare students in practical ways for their lives outside of school and after graduation." The results of this research also indicate:

- 89% of Americans agree that improving public K-12 education system should be a very high priority in the United States.
- 83% of Americans strongly agree "a good education is much more than just learning to read, write and do math."
- 39% of Americans are familiar with the term service-learning.
- 90% of Americans endorsed the practice of service-learning when it was explained to them. Americans are most supportive of service-learning that give students an opportunity to strengthen their academic skills in real-world projects helping other children and their communities.
- Americans agree that service-learning will:
 - Help students build the skills they need to be successful later in life (90%)
 - Encourage active citizenship and community involvement among students (89%)
 - Improve students' grasp of academic basics (85%)

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, PROCEDURES, & ETHICS
DATE: 5/10/03 ROOM: 3138 EXHIBIT L 1 of 4
SUBMITTED BY: Andrew Heilman



THE IMPACT OF SERVICE-LEARNING ON STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES

beyond benefiting school climate and the attitudes and awareness of both teachers and students alike, service-learning has a large impact on academic skills and knowledge:

- Students in more than half of the high quality service-learning schools studied show moderate to strong gains on achievement tests in language arts or reading, improved engagement in school, an improved sense of educational accomplishment and better homework completion (Weiler 1998, in Billig 2000).
- Participation in service-learning is associated with higher grades and higher scores on state standardized tests (Shumer 1994, in Billig 2000).
- Elementary and middle school students who participate in service-learning have improved problem-solving skills and an increased interest in academics (Stephens 1995, in Billig 2000).
- Students at all levels feel that they learn more in classes that integrate service-learning than in their other classes (Weiler 1997 and Berkas 1997, in Billig 2000).

WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Cleaning up a river is *service*.

Sitting in a science classroom, looking at water samples under a microscope is *learning*.

Students taking samples from local water sources, analyzing the samples, documenting the results and presenting scientific findings to a local pollution control agency is *service-learning*.

Service-learning is a method of teaching that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and their communities. Through careful integration with established curricula, lessons gained from hands-on service heighten interest and enhance academic achievement, citizenship, and character development. Service-learning is a proven key to educational reform that also makes significant contributions to community development (NYLC, 1994).

Service-learning is a *philosophy*, a *community development model* and a *teaching and learning method*.

As a *philosophy*, service-learning embraces young people as a community resource and asset. It views all people in a democratic society as citizens with the capacity to contribute – no matter their age.

As a *community development model*, service-learning takes on real issues such as pollution control, hunger and homelessness, and diversity. Communities change for the better when service and learning are joined.

As a *teaching and learning method*, service-learning is a form of active learning that values critical thinking and problem solving. Research shows that when service-learning is effectively implemented students gain in measures of academic achievement, citizenship, and character.

WHAT SERVICE-LEARNING IS NOT

Another way to understand service-learning is to know what it is not.

Volunteerism/Community Service because service-learning has clear and direct ties to curriculum and community outcomes.

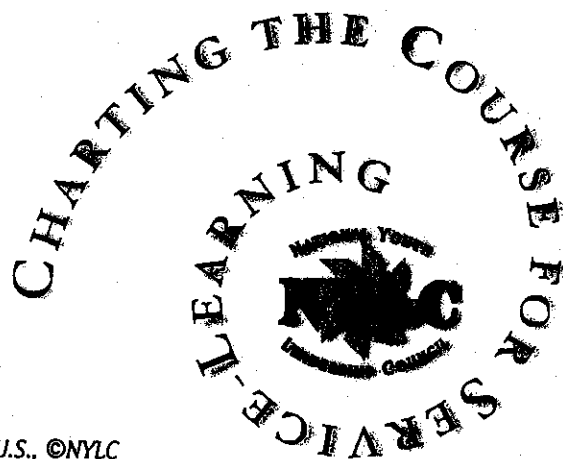
Mandated Service Hours because most often students who complete mandatory service do so after school or on the weekends and it is typically a stand-alone volunteer activity. Service built into required courses such as civics or government can be service-learning.

Stand-alone, one-time projects that focus on altruism only because service-learning requires preparation, action, and reflection that often results in asking the tougher and bigger questions about the causes of community issues.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Developed under the leadership of the National Youth Leadership Council, the *Essential Elements of Effective Service-Learning* address the issue of deepening and broadening the quality of service-learning practice.

1. Establishes clear educational goals that require the application of concepts, content and skills and involves students in the construction of their own knowledge.
2. Students are engaged in tasks that challenge and stretch them cognitively and developmentally.
3. Assessment is used as a way to enhance student learning as well as to document and evaluate how students have met content and skills standards.
4. Students are engaged in service tasks that have clear goals, meet genuine needs in the school or community and have significant consequences for themselves and others.
5. Employs formative and summative evaluation in a systematic evaluation of the service effort and its outcomes.
6. Maximizes student voice in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating the project.
7. Values diversity through its participants, its practice, and its outcomes.
8. Promotes communication and interaction with the community and encourages partnerships and collaboration.
9. Students are prepared for all aspects of their service work including a clear understanding of task and role, the skills and information required by the task, awareness of safety precautions, as well as knowledge and sensitivity to the people with whom they will be working.
10. Reflection takes place before, during, and after service, uses multiple methods that encourage critical thinking, and is a central force in the design and fulfillment of curricular objectives.
11. Multiple methods are designed to acknowledge, celebrate, and further validate students' service work.



KEY U.S. SERVICE-LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

The National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), www.nylc.org, a national and international civil society organization, is America's most prominent advocate of service-learning and national service.

The National Service-Learning Exchange, www.nslexchange.org, supports high quality service-learning programs in schools, colleges and universities, and community organizations through a network of over 450 volunteer Peer Mentors who have experience in service-learning in different settings and who have volunteered to assist others.

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, www.servicelearning.org, provides information services and technical assistance in the areas of academic research, program startup, assessment and evaluation.

The National Service-Learning Commission, www.servicelearningcommission.org, is a blue-ribbon committee of 18 strategic thinkers and leaders representing key sectors that influence education and public opinion. Commission Chair, Senator John Glenn summarizes their findings, "We've found that service-learning is a powerful strategy for teaching and learning, which allows young people to deepen and demonstrate their learning and at the same time develop a strong sense of civic responsibility. We firmly believe that it can become a central strategy for teaching and learning in our schools."

The Peace Corps' World Wise Schools, www.peacecorps.gov/www/index.html is an innovative education program that seeks to engage U.S. students and educators in an inquiry about the world, themselves, and others.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, www.nationalservice.org, is the U.S. federal agency which coordinates national and community service grant programs for AmeriCorps, National Senior Service Corps and service-learning. Specific information about the federal service-learning grant program, Learn and Serve America, can be found at www.learnandserve.org.

Campus Compact, www.compact.org, is a national coalition of more than 740 college and university presidents committed to service-learning and the civic purposes of higher education.

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This resource sheet has been provided to you by the
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