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Service - Service Learning

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RESTRICTION CODES

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b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

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~~Sent~~ Race - Service
and
Service - Service learning
EK/Diana

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[001]

November 13, 1997

Mr. Bruce Reed
Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Mr. Reed:

Following up on my letter of October 14th (to Judith Winston, cc'd to you), I was delighted to hear that your office inquired about the potential of Service Learning to promote racial/intergroup healing in a request to Corporation for National Service (regarding Learn and Serve America).

I've not seen the materials the Corporation sent along to you, but in case they did not include (or did not highlight) the attached report, I enclose it for your perusal. (It was issued by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with others.) The report briefly describes Service Learning and notes some of the outcomes it can achieve, as demonstrated by the best multi-site research project to date. This research indicates that the outcomes of Service Learning include increased tolerance for diversity and learning to work cooperatively with others. The relevant, brief summary statements appear on pages i, ii, and iii, and I've highlighted them.

In addition, other research shows that when people define themselves inclusively as part of a larger community that embraces others from diverse backgrounds, this is an important factor in prosocial behavior, and is also an outcome of Service Learning. This is not to say that other kinds of working together toward shared aims in the context of K-12 and higher education (doing theater, playing sports, as examples) cannot have similar impacts when attentive to maintaining diversity and facilitating collaboration. Nor is it to say that more research is not needed, because clearly it is. It is only to say that Service Learning provides an excellent tool for achieving these ends, and does so in a way that positively impacts civic attitudes, a commitment to volunteerism later in life, and character education, more broadly. Hence, it has great promise as a vehicle for promoting healthy intergroup relations among young people – when systematic efforts are made to ensure that the Service Learning activities do not become the exclusive province of only one racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group. (For schools that are not particularly integrated, partnering with community-based organizations that provide such diversity would be necessary.)

Ideally, all schools and institutions of higher education should provide (on a voluntary basis) opportunities for Service Learning at every grade or educational level, so that all students can increasingly discover their commonalities and build friendships across racial divides, as they work together toward shared goals and overcome social segregation.

Since Service Learning will be part of America Reads -- with 10th graders tutoring 2nd graders in reading -- it provides a venue in which the Race Relations Initiative can intersect with America Reads. In this respect, I was happy to read in the Post this morning that your memo (with Gene Sperling) to the President about concrete actions the Race Relations Initiative might take included enhanced literacy work in minority communities.

All best wishes,

Susan M. Andersen
Professor of Psychology (NYU)
Senior Research Associate, Institute for Communitarian
Policy Studies, George Washington University

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SERVICE LEARNING

What It Offers to Students, Schools, and Communities

A Report from
The Council of Chief State School Officers
The Close Up Foundation
Earth Force
and
The National Society for Experiential Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bruce O. Boston

This report has been issued as a joint publication by the organizations listed below; its production has been sponsored by a grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City, Missouri. Together, we express our gratitude to the Kauffman Foundation for its support of this project and for its continuing interest in and support for service learning.

The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide nonprofit organization of the 57 public officials who head departments of public education in every state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, and five extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major education issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, the Congress, and the public. Through its structure of standing and special committees, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership on major education issues.

The Close Up Foundation

The Close Up Foundation is the nation's largest citizenship education organization. Founded in 1970, the Foundation encourages responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs and publications in government and citizenship. Close Up is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has no affiliation with any branch of government, political party, or interest group. The Foundation's programs provide balanced perspectives on issues, allowing participants to make their own judgments. In the past 25 years, more than 50,000 teachers and 400,000 students have participated in Close Up's Washington programs, and more than 4 million citizens have participated in the Foundation's programs outside Washington.

Earth Force

Earth Force is a national, youth-driven, nonprofit organization located in Alexandria, Virginia. The mission of Earth Force is to provide young people, ages 10-14, with educational experiences in working with their communities to care for the environment now, while developing lifelong habits of active citizenship and environmental stewardship.

National Society for Experiential Education

The National Society for Experiential Education is an educational association and national resource center that promotes the effective use of learning through experience for students' academic and career development, civic and social responsibility, cross-cultural awareness, and ethical leadership development. NSEE was founded in 1971 and currently has more than 1,800 members.

Prepared under contract to the Council of Chief State School Officers by Wordsmith, Inc.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Involving young people in service learning activities is increasingly seen by educators and community leaders as a powerful strategy for improving educational performance, supporting school improvement, and contributing to community renewal—simultaneously. In service learning, students are involved in *experiential learning*, long recognized by educational leaders as one of the most powerful learning contexts of all, in which students learn by doing. In service learning, students participate in an educational process that relates their service experience directly to the curriculum's subject matter, while at the same time making a valued contribution to their neighborhoods and communities. But service learning is not a form of "make work" or "do-good-ism." It involves learning and using real academic skills, performing needed service, and producing real results that command respect. The most important characteristic of service learning is the insistence that students *reflect* on their service activity and its relation to academic content as a means to learning.

Service learning has been shown to be a powerful context and catalyst for acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need for success.

Until only recently, relatively few quantitative data have been available to substantiate the positive impact of service learning on academic performance. But in a new evaluation study of more than 1,000 service learning students in Learn and Serve America, a competitive grants program carried out under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, results were evaluated across three areas of programming: (1) the impact on participants, (2) the impact on cooperating community organizations and institutions, and (3) the impact on communities. The data corroborate what teachers have long known, that service learning correlates positively and significantly with academic gains and community benefits.

Results from the National Study

Impact on Student Participants

Service learning programs showed statistically significant, positive impacts on several measures of civic and educational development. ("Statistically significant" means a probability of 5% or less that the result was produced by chance.)

- Students involved in service learning scored significantly higher on four of ten evaluation measures: (1) engagement in school, (2) grades, (3) core-subject grade average (English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies), and (4) educational aspirations (e.g., wanting to graduate from a four-year college).

- Participants showed statistically significant impacts on measures of civic participation, such as personal and social responsibility, acceptance of cultural diversity, and leadership.

- Program participants were 30% more likely to

have been involved in some form of service in the past 6 months, and provided 2.6 times more hours of service—an average of 107 hours—than comparison students.

• Service learning is not restricted in its positive impact on males or females, white or minority, or on the (non)economically and (non)educationally disadvantaged.

• An impressive 90% of participants said they thought others should be encouraged to participate in service learning; 87% said they learned valuable skills that will be useful in the future; and 75% said they learned more than in a typical class.

Impact on Community Organizations

During the 1995-96 school year, Learn and Serve students were involved in more than 300 distinct projects or activities in each semester, providing more than 154,000 hours of service over the year. Their service was broad and far-reaching, for example: building community structures and renovating parks, working as aides in hospitals and nursing homes, tutoring in schools and literacy programs, working in community shelters, managing a city food bank, and leading museum tours. Officials of community organizations consistently gave students high praise for the "value added" they provided to their organizations' mission and work.

Impact on Communities

Increasingly, delivering services in and for social institutions and agencies is emerging as an antidote to the marginalization of the young in our society. If the testimony about the impact of Learn and Serve programs on communities is any barometer, service learning fulfills this potential admirably.

• Service learning students work on real community issues. In 1995-96, approximately 140 Learn and Serve projects provided education-related services; 137 projects addressed human services needs; 30 addressed environmental issues; and 11 worked on public safety issues—more than 300 altogether.

• Community officials give service learning projects high ratings and would use Learn and Serve students again. The quality of student work was rated at 8.6 on a 10-point scale (Unacceptable=1; Best Possible=10). Agency hosts rated participants at 8.7 for their impact on clients and 8.2 for their community impact (0=No Impact to 10=Greatly Impacted); 96% of community officials said they would use the program participants again.

• Three-quarters of the agency representatives said that the service learning volunteers had helped raise the skill levels, engagement, and self-esteem of their clients.

• Learn and Serve projects are not viewed by communities as "make work." Ninety percent of the agencies reported that the volunteers had helped the agency improve the quality of their services to clients and the community.

• Eighty-two percent of community officials said Learn and Serve students had helped build more positive community attitudes toward youth.

• More than two-thirds said that Learn and Service students had fostered a more positive attitude toward working with the schools; more than half said that new relationships with the public schools had been produced.

Impact on School Improvement

Because it performs several crucial tasks at the same time, service learning is a valuable contributor to school improvement.

• Service learning is an adaptable process and not a curriculum; it does not compete with the standard curriculum. Rather, it supports and deepens curricular improvement and involvement for all students.

• Service learning enhances school-community partnerships, one of the most productive education renewal strategies. Service learning helps give commu-

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nities a positive stake in what happens in their schools.

• Service learning focuses student attention and potential at many levels of experience at the same time (e.g., emotions, intellect, sensory stimuli, learning styles, etc.).

• Service learning uses the reflective process to teach students how to reflect on their experience and develop critical thinking skills (e.g., the ability to bring disparate elements of experience together in meaningful ways, the ability to analyze information for patterns and deeper meanings, and the task of making evaluations and judgments).

• Service learning engages the multiple intelligences identified by Howard Gardner—a core idea in educational improvement, especially curriculum development efforts.

• Service learning presents students with issues and problems that cannot be neatly pigeonholed, thereby encouraging them to "think outside the boxes."

• Because service learning requires participants to think across the boundaries of traditional disciplines, students become more adept at integrating their learning and applying it concretely—a core learning goal.

• Service learning places students in real-world learning environments where the skills of cooperation and collaboration—highly prized in the world of work—are required for attacking problems and finding solutions.

• Service learning encourages students to operate effectively in learning environments marked by social and cultural diversity.

Calling Upon the Next Generation

Introducing our children to the idea of service as a part of their education teaches them that they can make a contribution to their communities in their own right. The truly amazing thing is, when we put service at the core of our children's educational experience, they "get" it. And perhaps not so amazing, they like it. The fact that service is also one of the best ways to teach is a bonus.

This wisdom is what Harold Howe II points to in a recent reflection on the value of service learning in *Education Week* (April 2, 1997). "Service learning," he says, "will have to become an integral part of the school curriculum rather than the extracurricular activity it often is." Service to others, he insists, quoting Morris Haynes and James Comer, is a "defining characteristic of a great and compassionate nation." The degree to which one-way modes of instruction and passive learning processes still dominate our classrooms, Howe argues, stands in stark contrast to the cooperative and participatory modes of service learning. "The sad fact of this comparison," Howe continues, "is that it does not have to exist. Academic learning can adopt the strategies of active learning on which service learning is based. ...This rubric holds the potential of a revolution in academic learning."

Recommendations for Supporting Service Learning

At the National Level

• Continue legislative support for the service learning initiatives of state education agencies in schools, communities, and institutions of higher education. Funding support for just over 1 million program participants is currently at $35.80 per child per year. This is a considerable bargain (and under-investment), given the magnitude of the demonstrated impact service learning makes on schools and communities;

• Support the development of guidelines for standards of quality in service learning, teacher and school staff development, technical assistance, and practice for states and communities to adopt or adapt;

• Coordinate school-based Learn and Serve programs with such national school-improvement initiatives as: (1) the Improving America's Schools Act, (2)

Goals 2000, and (3) America Reads. Doing so would include providing states and schools with written, recommended guidelines for how these initiatives can be coordinated at the local level;

• Support the development of standards of quality for service learning practice and training; and

• Encourage and support, through identified funding, professional development opportunities in service learning for all teachers and faculty, school administrators, and staffs of community-based organizations involved in service learning.

In using the word 'service' to talk about experiential learning activity, the school's culture gradually changes.

At the State Level

• Designate a key state education agency staff person to coordinate statewide service learning initiatives, including such capacity-building exercises as professional development for teachers, materials development, documentation for student learning initiatives, and student assessment;

• Work with school districts and teacher education institutions to develop and offer professional development opportunities for teachers in service learning throughout the state;

• Provide a forum for, and assist with, educating state boards of education and state commissions for national service about the need to create and improve standards for high-quality school- and community-based service learning;

• Assist local school districts in monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on the effectiveness of their service learning activities and programs;

• Sponsor or co-sponsor state regional seminars for teachers, principals, and district-level administrators on strategies for: (1) using service learning in state, local, and national school improvement efforts (e.g., Title 1, Drug- Free Schools, School-to-Work Opportunities, and America Reads); (2) assessing the impact of service learning on academic performance; and (3) developing partnerships among public schools, community organizations, and institutions of higher education;

• Help develop a statewide network of service learning educators. These educators can act as peer consultants as a way to help service learning programs get started, to disseminate information about service learning, and to create a support network among all educators as they work to improve education for all young people; and

• Develop and disseminate written policies endorsing the integration of service learning into the academic curriculum.

At the Local Level

• Use existing staff development funds and program structures to provide support for professional development opportunities in service learning and related topics for teachers;

• Incorporate time into the school day for teachers to meet with colleagues, both in the school and in the community, for planning, program preparation, and professional sharing and support;

• Develop a recognition or reward plan, or both, for teachers who give their personal time for professional growth, planning, preparation, and delivery of service learning activities; and

• Develop a school schedule, e.g., through block scheduling, that supports academically based, experiential, service learning activities.

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