

Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement



Between January and March 2005, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and the nonprofit coalition Independent Sector, conducted the “Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey.” The survey gathered information from 3,178 American youth between the ages of 12 and 18 on their volunteering habits and experiences with school-based service projects, as well as information related to positive youth development. The following fact sheet details the major findings around youth engagement in school-based service and service-learning, and the connections between these experiences and other forms of civic engagement. The full findings have been published in the report, “Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement,” the second report in the Youth Helping America Series. All reports and issue briefs relating to the “Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey” can be found at www.nationalservice.gov.

◆ 38 Percent of Students Participate in School-Based Service

- An estimated 10.6 million students nationwide, or 38 percent of students between the ages of 12 and 18, have participated in school-based service, which is defined as community service that takes place as part of a school activity or requirement.
- Approximately 64 percent of students who participate in school-based service do so as part of one class, while an additional 22 percent participate in two classes.

◆ School-Based Service Increases Volunteering

- Students who participated in school-based service more than a year ago are more likely than students who have never participated in school-based service to have volunteered through an organization within the past year, 59 percent to 48 percent.

◆ 77 Percent of Students in School-Based Service Practice ‘Quality’ Service-Learning Elements

- 77 percent of students who have engaged in school-based service report that their service included at least one of the three quality activities/elements associated with service-learning: writing or reflecting on the experience in class (51 percent), participating in planning the activity (36 percent), and participating in regular community service that lasts at least one semester (36 percent).
- Based on student participation in the three quality elements of service-learning, we constructed a Quality Index.
- 23 percent of student experiences in school-based service do not include any of the three high-quality service-learning elements; 40 percent include one high-quality element; 26 percent include two elements; and 10 percent include all three high-quality service-learning elements.

◆ **Type of School, Grade Level, and Academic Achievement Affect School-Based Service**

- Students who attend private schools are 55 percent more likely than students in public schools to participate in school-based service, and students attending private religious schools are the most likely to participate in school-based service.
- High school students are 35 percent more likely than middle school students to participate in school-based service, and they are also more likely to engage in high-quality service-learning activities.
- The higher a student's grade point average, the more likely he or she is to participate in school-based service in general, as well as in school-based service that includes at least one high-quality service-learning element.

◆ **Economic Background Affects School-Based Service**

- Students from low-income families are less likely than those from other families to participate in both school-based service and service-learning courses.
- Youth from low-income families who participate in service-learning and school-based service demonstrate many positive relationships to civic attitudes and behaviors, including volunteering habits, sense of efficacy, and trust.

◆ **Family Volunteer History Affects School-Based Service**

- Students from families with parents and/or siblings who volunteer are more likely than those from non-volunteer families to participate in school-based service and in service that includes at least one high-quality service-learning element.

◆ **High-Quality Service-Learning Activities Yield Positive Benefits**

- Students who participate in school-based service with all three high-quality service-learning elements are more than twice as likely as students without any service-learning elements to report that their experience had a very positive impact on them.

- Students who participate in school-based service with all three high-quality service-learning elements are 40 percent more likely than those whose service does not include such activities to say that they are very likely to volunteer in the upcoming year – and 71 percent more likely than those who have never participated in school-based service.
- Students who participate in school-based service with high-quality service-learning elements are almost three times as likely as students who participate in school-based service without any high-quality service-learning elements to believe that they can make a great deal of difference in their community. They are also more likely to take a significant interest in current events and to talk about politics with friends and parents.
- Volunteering attitudes and behaviors have the strongest relationship to participation in school-based service, followed by interest in politics, belief in personal efficacy, and interest in current events.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through three programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. Together with USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to foster a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.

March 2006