



State and School District Policy for K-12 Service-Learning

Source: RMC Research Corporation, July 2002, updated May 2008

For additional resources on this and other service-learning topics visit Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at <http://www.servicelearning.org>.

As service-learning continues to become more prevalent, states are adopting policies that both support and regulate its practice. Some states address issues of mandatory service while others focus on transportation, safety, and alignment with state standards. Samples of policies include: the incorporation of service-learning into state education standards and graduation requirements; the distribution of funds received from the federal government for service-learning programs; and the development of guidelines for local school boards that are implementing service-learning programs.

Overview of State Policies on Service-Learning

- Eight states (AR, CT, DE, IA, MN, OK, RI, WI) permit community service or service-learning activities to be applied toward high school graduation requirements.
- One state (MD) includes service-learning as a requirement for high school graduation.
- Eight states (AR, CA, GA, ID, IL, LA, MT, UT) have policies regarding rules, regulations, and the creation or purpose of programs related to service-learning.
- Ten states (CA, CT, FL, IN, MI, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX) plus the District of Columbia encourage the use of service-learning as a mechanism for increasing student achievement and engagement.
- Seven states (ID, ME, MI, MN, NJ, NM, VT) include service-learning in the state's education standards.
- Six states (MA, MN, MS, NJ, NM, VT) have policies regarding the authorization of funding appropriations and the creation of service-learning activities and programs.
- Twenty states have no mention of service-learning in any state policy.

(Source: Education Commission of the States "Recent State Policies/Activities in Service Learning/Community Service," 2008 and the "Policy Scan," 2001 www.ecs.org.)

Learn and Serve provides funding for 48 states as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia to implement service-learning programs through their State Departments of Education. More information on the Learn and Serve America program and the status of this federal legislation is available online at www.nationalservice.org.

Also supporting the work of State Departments of Education staff and directors from the 50 states and the U.S. territories are Learn and Serve America's representatives within the State Education Agency K-12 Service-Learning Network (SEANet). SEANet supports the managing and implementing of statewide service-learning programs, providing: program evaluation, curriculum development, providing training, issuing subgrants, and supporting partnerships. Information on SEANet is available online at www.seanetonline.org.



Examples of Recent State Policies

Recent policies adopted by some states demonstrate the importance and expansion of service-learning as an educational practice. For example:

- In August 2007 Illinois signed into law funding for civic education professional development for high school teachers. It provides for funding based on high school enrollment and requires teachers and principals to be given a blueprint to better understand how current curriculum, service learning, and extracurricular activities are providing civic learning experiences for their students.
www.ilga.gov/legislation/95/HB/PDF/09500HB2787lv.pdf
Title: H.B. 2787
- The Colorado General Assembly, as of May 2006, requires each school district to adopt a policy whereby a student may earn a certificate of community service reflected on the student's high school diploma; specifies the minimum contents of a policy to award certificates; identifies examples of community service that may/may not qualify a student receiving a certificate.
www.leg.state.co.us/clics2006a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/EC9C67F8DD2F13F78725709A005E7DC3?Open&file=1121_enr.pdf
Title: H.B. 06-1121
- In Iowa, as of April 2003, local school boards may require service-learning units for a service-learning endorsement on a high school diploma or as a condition for graduation according to legislation passed by the Iowa General Assembly.
www.legis.state.ia.us/GA/80GA/Legislation/HF/00100/HF00180/Current.html
Title: H.F. 180

(Source: Education Commission of the States, "Recent State Policies/Activities: Service-Learning and Community Service," 2008 www.ecs.org.)

District Policies

Service-learning policies at the district level are becoming more common. In addition to adopting service-learning as part of high school graduation requirements and aligning service-learning with content standards, there are now schools in some districts that have a service-learning focus. Recent examples of district level service-learning policies include California's Monterey Peninsula Unified School District's Strategic Plan for 2003-2008. As part of the plan, the district encourages community service and volunteerism at all grade levels and seeks to expand service-learning programs for increasing student involvement in the community. More information can be found at www.mpusd.k12.ca.us/strategic_plan.html.

Conclusions

The development of state and district policies serve as evidence of broad support for service-learning as a key component of K-12 education. These policies also provide mechanisms for stable funding and development of guidelines for service-learning programs at the local school level. As such, they are an important factor in the institutionalization and sustainability of K-12 school-based service-learning.

For a more detailed discussion, including references and documentation, see the complete online fact sheet at

http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/policy/expanded.php

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http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/policy/