

Fulfilling Our Civic Mission:
Service-Learning in Massachusetts



A Report by the Community Service-Learning Advisory
Council to the Massachusetts Board of Education

March 2006

The Community Service-Learning Advisory Council

The Community Service-Learning Advisory Council was established in October of 2000 to review, advise, and make recommendations on state service-learning programs and policies to promote academically meaningful, sustained, and high quality service-learning experiences throughout students' schooling. In this capacity, the Council will serve as a resource to both the Board of Education and the Department of Education in Massachusetts

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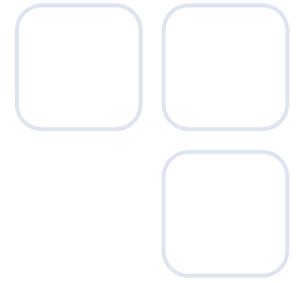
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In 2000, the Massachusetts Board of Education authorized the formation of a Community Service-Learning Advisory Council (Advisory Council) to advise the Board and the Department of Education on how best to utilize service-learning to improve student performance, enhance students' social development and engage students civically. Over the past five years the members of the Advisory Council have provided ongoing advice and assistance to the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Board of Education on the state's service-learning programs. However, it became clear to the Advisory Council that in order to provide ongoing advice and assistance on the future of the state's service-learning programs, we needed to assess the current status of service-learning in Massachusetts and think strategically about what policies and practices the state could implement to best advance service-learning.

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the Advisory Council began surveying schools and superintendents to assess the degree to which districts had effectively implemented service-learning, including the policies that best supported integration and the challenges schools and districts confronted that limited implementation and growth. This report details the history of service-learning in Massachusetts, the findings of our research, and recommendations that educators, the Board of Education and the legislature can use to enhance the value and effectiveness of service-learning. Research has shown that service-learning, if done well, can contribute significantly to students' academic, civic and social development. With declining rates of civic engagement and civic knowledge among young people, there is no more critical time to invest our energies in this area than now. We hope this report will enable local and state policymakers to renew their efforts in direct and constructive ways to realize the vision of helping young people become engaged, informed, and effective citizens through acts of service that are fully integrated into their academic studies.

“The original purpose of education was to build and sustain a democracy. Service-learning is part of the broader plan to promote democracy and citizenship within students and adults.”

FROM A MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR'S ROUNDTABLE ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

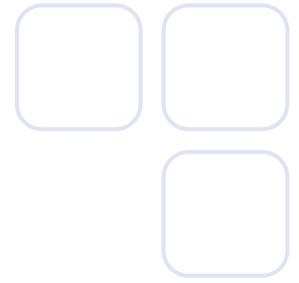
Over the past twenty years, service-learning—the involvement of students in community service linked to classroom learning—has become an increasingly common component of schooling in Massachusetts and across the nation. Nationally, nearly a third of all public schools and half of all high schools report the use of service-learning in classrooms, up from less than 10% in 1984. In Massachusetts, the 2001–2002 survey of school districts discussed in this document points to a similar level of service-learning activity, with more than a third of all school districts reporting the use of service-learning in classrooms.

SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Service-learning has grown over the past decade for a number of reasons. For many educators, parents, and civic leaders, service-learning is seen as a way of strengthening the civic mission of schools and, in the words of the federal legislation supporting service-learning, of “renew[ing] the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community” across the United States. For others, service-learning provides a means of deepening classroom learning by providing critical opportunities for young people to

apply their learning in real-world settings. Service-learning offers young people needed developmental experiences, providing them with the opportunity to take responsibility for others, work closely with adults, and see themselves as positive contributors to their communities. At the same time, service-learning programs in schools create new links between schools and the community, often leading to new partnerships, stronger communities and renewed support for the public schools.



“[Service-learning] is the application of classroom learning. Unless you make learning real, you’re not going to achieve the full impact of the curriculum on students. We need to make sure that students have a chance to apply their learning out in the community.”

FROM A MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S ROUNDTABLE ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

Massachusetts was an early leader in the field of service-learning in the 1980s. In fact, the federal legislation drafted by Senator Edward M. Kennedy that led to the creation of the Commission for National and Community Service in 1990, was modeled on practice in Springfield, Massachusetts. The 2001–2002 survey of school districts discussed in this document, however, reveals that while the use of service-learning as a teaching strategy in Massachusetts schools is growing, the infrastructure for supporting practice excellence and integration has not kept pace. This is one of the major findings that emerged through survey results of 119 of the 350 school districts. Other findings include:

- Service-learning is most often encouraged as a practice in order to enhance students’ sense of civic responsibility and foster positive relationships with the community.
- Service-learning is most widespread in schools and districts where there is policy and administrative support.
- Barriers to improving and expanding the practice of service-learning include lack of funding, teacher overload, and limited professional development.

The goal of this report is to provide a set of recommendations, based on the past ten years of experience in the field, that will enable Massachusetts to take positive next steps in capitalizing on the potential of service-learning for all students. Based on the responses of school districts in Massachusetts, the CSL Advisory Council makes the following four recommendations:

Recommendation 1: State and local leaders need to provide the necessary leadership, policy support and public advocacy for service-learning as a means of accomplishing the state's civic and academic goals for youth.

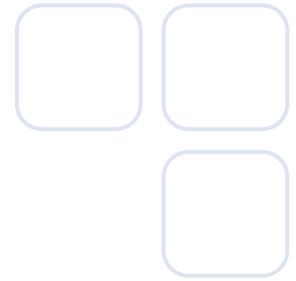
Recommendation 2: State and local leaders need to increase resources available to support service-learning.

Recommendation 3: State and local leaders need to increase professional support and resources for service-learning.

Recommendation 4: The Massachusetts Department of Education needs to establish a system to collect data on and evaluate service-learning programs.

“Service-learning completes the circle in a community. Education becomes more relevant. The sense of community grows. The community’s support for the schools increases because they see the relevance in what students are doing. So every part of the circle gets stronger.”

FROM A MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S ROUNDTABLE ON SERVICE-LEARNING.



Service-Learning Is More Than Community Service

Service-learning is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates community service with academic learning. In well-designed service-learning programs, service in the school and the community is used to enrich and extend classroom learning by providing students with opportunities to apply academic skills in real-world settings and to make connections between academic content and everyday issues and concerns. The following are based on examples from Massachusetts communities:

- Students involved in service-learning might hone their historical research skills by developing a local history trail through the town or teaching a class in local history to students in younger grades.
- As part of their science instruction, students may conduct research on the wetlands, woodlands or watershed areas near their school and use the data they collect to inform the community about threats to those environments and/or strategies for protecting local resources.

PART I Service-Learning

- Younger students might practice their reading and writing skills by creating books that they read to pre-school students or by creating cards and stories to be read to senior citizens; older students might strengthen their writing and history skills by interviewing veterans and transcribing their experiences in a book for the local library.
- Students of all ages (kindergarten through high school) might enhance their civic knowledge and skills by identifying issues they are concerned about in their community, and then researching the policies, laws, and other public processes that related to those issues, and by exploring steps they could take to promote useful solutions.

The options for curriculum integration are limitless with service-learning.

Service-learning is distinct from community service in that it is fully integrated into the curriculum. It is not an “add-on” volunteer activity, an hourly service requirement, or a method of punishment. It is, in the words of the National Commission on Service-Learning, “a teaching and learning methodology that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”¹

¹National Commission on Service-Learning, “Learning In Deed: The Power of Service-Learning,” (2003).

Good quality service-learning, as defined by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the primary federal funder of service-learning programs, is also good quality instruction. Effective service-learning programs involve significant time on task through sustained (rather than one-time) service activities. Quality service-learning projects have:

- Clear and specific learning objectives;
- A strong link to the curriculum students are studying; instruction that helps draw the connections between the service that students provide and what they are learning in the classroom;
- Regular, structured opportunities for discussion and reflection; and
- Clear opportunities for student leadership in the design and execution of the projects.²

As Senator John Glenn, chair of the National Commission on Service-Learning, recently wrote:

Service-learning provided a context for subject learning, and a way to demonstrate what students had learned. Rather than competing for learning time, service-learning provided a holistic learning experience, bringing together learning from books and lectures with learning from hands-on application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings. Service-learning embodies the ancient saying:

“I hear, I forget. I see, I remember. I do, I understand.”³

Why Service-Learning?

Why is service-learning important? Service-learning offers schools a way to meet a number of the critical challenges facing them today. A growing body of research shows that service-learning can have a positive impact on students’ academic engagement and skills, civic responsibility, and personal and social development. These impacts range from increased enjoyment in school and knowledge of subject matter, to decreased behavioral problems, heightened care for community, improved relationships, and a greater desire to learn. As one recent summary of the literature noted, service-learning’s strength is its capacity to work in multiple domains: helping to develop students’ “heads, hearts, and hands.”⁴

A number of recent publications have summarized the emerging research on service-learning, including the report from the National Commission on Service-Learning; the report on the Civic Mission of Schools from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), and articles in leading educational publications, including the *Phi Delta Kappan* and the *School Administrator* magazines.⁵ The findings across these reports affirm the contribution service-learning can make to a student’s education.

²Corporation for National and Community Service, Learn and Serve America 2004 Program Guidelines.

³Senator John Glenn and Leslie Hergert, “Service-Learning: A Critical Pedagogy for American Schools,” *CYD Journal*, vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 2002), 7.

⁴Shelley Billig, “Heads, Hearts, and Hands: The Research on K–12 Service-Learning,” in National Youth Leadership Council, *Growing to Greatness, 2004: The State of Service-Learning Project* (Minneapolis: National Youth Leadership Council, 2004).

⁵See the report of the National Commission on Service-Learning, *Learning In Deed: The Power of Service-Learning* (2003); Carnegie Foundation and CIRCLE, *The Civic Mission of Schools* (2004); Shelley Billig, “Research on K–12 Service-Learning: The Evidence Builds,” *Phi Delta Kappan* (May 2000); and Shelley Billig, “The Effects of Service-Learning,” *School Administrator*, vol. 57, no. 7 (August 2000), 14–20.



“I want my students to feel they can make a difference in the world. Service-learning is the quintessential way to get there.”

SHELDON BERMAN, SUPERINTENDENT, HUDSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Engagement and Academic Skills A number of studies have found that students who engage in service-learning activities are more engaged in school and, in many cases, demonstrate improved academic performance compared to non-participants. Students learn best when they connect their learning to something meaningful. The evaluation of the federally-funded Learn and Serve America program, as well as studies in California, Michigan, Hawaii, and Texas have found positive impacts that include significantly higher levels of student engagement, increased attendance, improved course grades and grade point average, higher standardized test scores, and reduced dropout rates. While the results have varied widely from study to study (reflecting the diversity of service-learning programs and strategies), as a group the research suggests that involvement in service-learning has a positive impact on attitudes towards school and general school performance. The Learn and Serve study found that academic impacts were particularly strong for minority students and students who had been classified as educationally disadvantaged, suggesting that service-learning can be a useful tool in the effort to reduce the achievement gap. Assessments by students themselves parallel the more formal findings, with large majorities of students generally reporting that their service-learning experiences were particularly engaging and that “they learned more” in their service-learning programs than in their regular classes.⁶

Civic Responsibility While the major focus of educational policy makers has been on student academic performance, there is also growing national concern about the civic skills and attitudes of young people. Recent research, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the International Education Assessment Civic Education Study, and surveys conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) “bear out the conclusion that levels of civic learning—and more importantly, civic engagement—are disappointing.” While many more young people are engaged in community service than ever before, civic engagement among youth is on the decline. According to the CIRCLE report, the Civic Mission of Schools, “Since 1972, turnout among young people under 25 years of age has slipped by about 15 percentage points. In 2000, young people (ages 18–24) constituted only 8% of all voters.” Other studies suggest that young people also do not have adequate civic, historical and political knowledge. Results from the 1998 NEAP Civics Assessment, show that “nearly one-third of high school seniors lack a basic understanding of how American government operates.”⁷

Almost every study of service-learning has found that service-learning has a positive impact on the attitudes, skills, and behaviors that are associated with active citizenship. Students involved in service-learning gain an increased sense of social and civic responsibility and are more likely to report

⁶Brandeis University and Abt Associates, *The National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America, School and Community-Based Programs* (Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service, 1998). Reports from California and Texas are cited in Billig, “Research on K–12 Service-Learning;” the Michigan and Hawaii studies are described in Billig, “Heads, Hearts, Hands.”

⁷Carnegie Foundation and CIRCLE, *Civic Mission of Schools*, p. 19. Turnout for younger voters (ages 18–24) did increase substantially in 2004, with the highest youth voting levels since the early 1990s. However, the youth share of the overall vote was similar to that of earlier years, at around 9%. See the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) fact sheets “Youth Voting in the 2004 Election” (2005) and “Youth Voter Turnout 1992 to 2004: Estimates from the Exit Polls” (2005) at www.civicyouth.org.

an awareness of community needs, increased connection to community, and a commitment to lifelong involvement in their communities than students in a comparison group. Service-learning students in other studies showed an increase in their understanding of how government works and an increased ability to understand and analyze community issues.⁸

Students who are involved in service-learning are also more likely to become active citizens as a result. The national Learn and Serve evaluation found that students in service-learning programs were significantly more likely to volunteer in their communities as a result of involvement in a service-learning program, and that high school students continued to volunteer more regularly a year after their involvement in

service-learning. One longer-term study found that high school students who participated in service-learning and service were found to be more likely to be engaged in a community organization and to vote fifteen years after their participation in the program than those who did not participate. National surveys of adult volunteers have long shown a strong relationship between volunteer service as a young person and later volunteering as an adult.⁹ In this domain, as with the studies of academic impacts of service-learning, the existing research varies widely in the specific impacts, age groups, and programs that are examined. What is generally consistent, however, is the finding that service-learning programs can help to build the kinds of civic attitudes, skills and behaviors that are at the core of education's civic mission.

Personal and Social Development Service-learning also provides many of the kinds of experiences young people need to grow into healthy and productive adults. A growing body of research on positive youth development and resiliency highlights the need for young people to be involved in activities that provide opportunities for leadership and responsibility, connections to caring adults, and the chance to demonstrate competency in real-world settings. These studies are increasingly pointing to service-learning as an important means of providing these kinds of experiences for young people.¹⁰

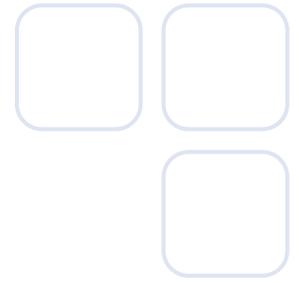
The research on service-learning programs presents a strong case for service-learning as a valuable tool for promoting healthy development and for reducing the involvement of young people in negative or risky behaviors. A number of well-designed studies have found that students involved in service-learning programs were less likely to engage in early and unprotected sexual activity, become teenage parents, engage in violent behavior or be arrested, and require disciplinary action at school. On a more positive front, students involved in service-learning were more likely to trust and be trusted by others, report strong bonds with an adult, show an increased respect and acceptance of cultural diversity, and see the benefits of working with others in teams.¹¹

⁸See the reports cited in notes 5 and 6.

⁹See the reports cited in notes 5 and 6. Data on adult volunteers and the association with early volunteer experiences can be found in the Independent Sector's semi-annual reports on adult and youth volunteering. See, for example, *Engaging Youth in Lifelong Service, Giving and Volunteering in the United States* series (Washington: Independent Sector, 2002).

¹⁰See, for example, the recent National Research Council's report on effective community youth development programs. In preparing that report, the NRC reviewed the major studies on youth development and highlighted service-learning as one element common to many effective youth development programs. See Jacquelyn Eccles and Jennifer Gootman, eds., *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2001). For an overview of the research on resiliency, see Bonnie Benard, "Fostering Resilience in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community," August, 1991.

¹¹See the articles cited in notes 5 and 6 above. For a review of the research on teenage pregnancy prevention programs that highlights service-learning, see Douglas Kirby, *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teenage Pregnancy* (Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy, 2001). Also see the National Research Council report.



Looking Across the Research as a Whole While research studies tend to focus on a single set of outcomes—academic growth, civic engagement, or youth development, for example—one of the greatest strengths of service-learning is that it offers the potential to address a wide variety of educational and developmental needs through a single, integrated set of activities. Schools increasingly struggle to ensure basic academic competency, help students develop more sophisticated reasoning and problem-solving skills, encourage active and thoughtful citizenship, and promote healthy and productive lifestyles. Service-learning offers a way to bring those agendas together for the Commonwealth’s schools and students.

“I agree that kids have got to be civically responsible, but they also become better artists, better mathematicians, better scientists by applying learning in a real way.”

WAYNE LAGUE, FORMER SUPERINTENDENT, WAREHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

National Endorsements and Growing Policy Support Service-learning has been deemed an effective method of teaching and learning by many educational organizations and national foundations. The Kellogg Foundation’s National Commission of Service-Learning recommended service-learning to be a universal experience in American public schools. The Commission, chaired by John Glenn, challenged the country “to ensure that every child in kindergarten through high school participates in quality service-learning every year.”

- The Education Commission of the States’ National Study Group on Citizenship in K–12 schools has sought as one of its three goals to “advance service-learning as a strategy that can challenge and guide students to meet their civic responsibilities.”
- The *Civic Mission of Schools* report from the Carnegie Corporation and the Center for Inquiry and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (February 2003), recommends service-learning as a “promising approach for consciously pursuing civic outcomes.”
- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the American Youth Policy Forum, in their recent report *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools* (2005), recommends the enactment of “supportive education policy at the national, state, and local levels that provide a framework for balancing academic performance and civic engagement.”

Through the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools led by the Council for Excellence in Government, more than a dozen states have begun to re-examine the civic mission of schools and the role of service-learning as a strategy for strengthening the teaching of civics and citizenship in public schools. Changes being considered range from efforts to reintroduce civics into the public school curriculum to changes in student participation in school governance. In each case, however, service-learning is being highlighted as an effective practice for teaching civics and citizenship in the public schools.¹²

¹²The report of the National Commission and the *Civic Mission of Schools* report are cited in note 5. Also see Bruce Boston, Sarah S. Pearson and Samuel Halperin, *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools*, (Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, 2005). Information on the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools can be found at www.civicmissionofschools.org.

History

Massachusetts was an early leader in the field of service-learning in the 1980s, though well-developed service-learning programs were evident in only a few communities. In 1989, Senator Edward M. Kennedy and his staff took the lead in drafting legislation to fund service-learning at a national level, based in part on their visits to the Springfield Public Schools to learn first-hand about the practice in Massachusetts. The legislation passed by Congress in 1990 (the National and Community Service Act of 1990) created a new, federal program called ServeAmerica, which provided funding through state departments of education and national and regional nonprofit organizations to support service-learning efforts in K–12 schools. In 1993, the federal legislation was amended, creating the national Learn and Serve program as a successor to ServeAmerica and establishing a new federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service, to promote service programs in K–12 schools, colleges, and in the community.¹³ Under that legislation, approximately \$43 million each year became available as grants to public schools, community-based agencies, and higher education institutions to promote the involvement of young people in service and service-learning.

PART II

The State of Service-Learning in Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, the passage of the federal legislation led to the consistent growth of service-learning. In 1992, the state was awarded its first federal service-learning grant (under the ServeAmerica program), which allowed the Massachusetts Department of Education to hire a full-time Community Service-Learning Specialist and launch a statewide initiative through the coordination of small competitive grants to schools and districts, sponsorship of training and technical assistance events, and support for program evaluation. Since 1992, Massachusetts' service-learning initiative has grown significantly, with over 100 districts receiving ServeAmerica or Learn and Serve grants over the years. An average of \$430,000 in federal grant funds, channeled to Massachusetts districts through the Learn and Serve program annually, has supported the work in these districts.

In 1997, the Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA), the state commission on service and volunteerism, led an advocacy effort that resulted in \$2.5 million in state funds annually for school-based, higher education, and after-school service-learning. The school-based allocation of \$800,000 supported an additional CSL Specialist position and the expansion of grant recipients from twenty to fifty-five. Unfortunately, the funding was removed from the state budget in 2002.

In 2000, the MSA, through funding from Learn and Serve America, established a Youth Council Initiative, which is still in existence today. Youth Councils learn about philanthropy by awarding mini-grants to youth groups, students, teachers, and youth-serving organizations that plan to conduct service-learning projects addressing community needs. To date, over thirty Councils have been funded through MSA's program. Each Council receives approximately \$15,000 to operate a mini-grants program. On average MSA has given \$150,000 in grants each year. The total funds committed to this model since 2000–2001 has been \$940,000.

¹³The 1993 National and community Service Trust Act also created the AmeriCorps program to support full-time service programs for older youth and adults.

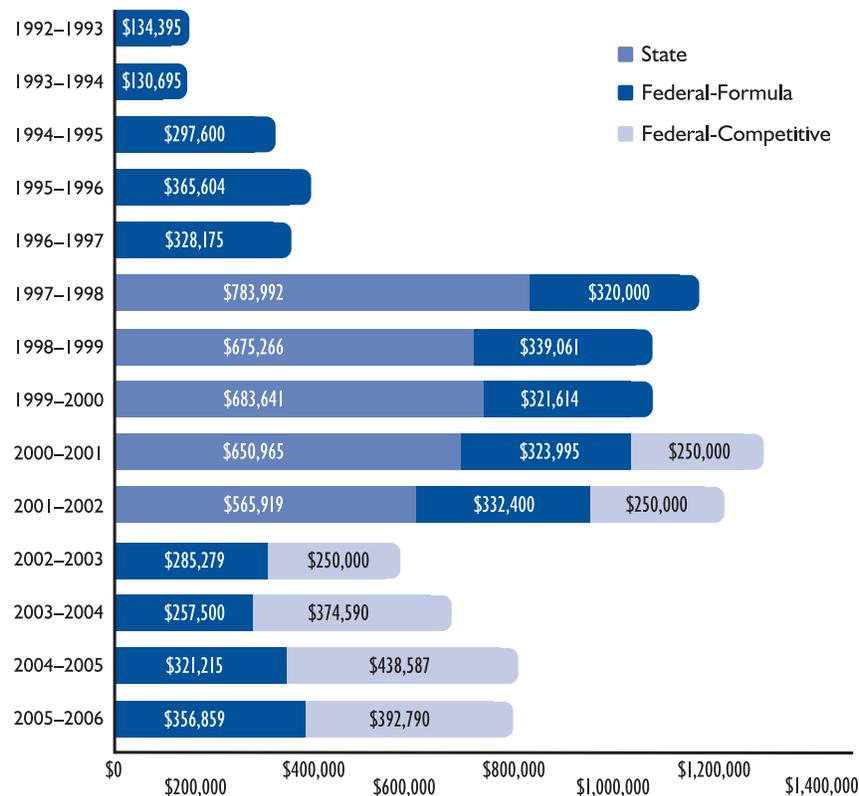


In addition to the basic federal allocation from the Corporation and the state legislature, the Massachusetts Department of Education has successfully increased service-learning funding since 2000 through competitive grants from Learn and Serve America. In 2000, Massachusetts won one of twenty competitive Community, Higher Education, and School Partnerships (CHESP) grants and received \$850,000 over three years for projects linking K–12 public schools with higher education institutions. Based on the success of the 2000–2003 CHESP initiative, the Department was one of five grantees in the country to be awarded a second round of CHESP funding totaling over \$1 million for 2003–2006. In 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education also partnered with the Maine Department of Education, KIDS Consortium and the Rhode Island Department of Education on the successful Living Democracy grant. For the years 2003–2006 the Department will subgrant over \$250,000 to eight school districts to integrate service-learning with the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks.

For fiscal year 2003, the Department of Education allocated over \$550,000 in federal dollars to twenty-seven service-learning programs in districts serving over 20,000 students. Grants to districts increased to \$632,000 in fiscal year 2004, \$760,000 in 2005 and \$750,000 in 2006, with most of the increase resulting from the CHESP and Living Democracy programs. Twenty-nine districts in 2005 and thirty-seven districts in 2006 received grants through either the Learn and Serve, CHESP, or Living Democracy programs. The districts funded in 2005 and 2006 serve nearly 50,000 students.

Exhibit I: State and Federal Funding History for MA Service-Learning Program

Massachusetts Community Service-Learning District Funding History



[The chart above does not include the funding provided by the Massachusetts Service Alliance for Youth Councils.]

NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING LEADER SCHOOLS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Phillips Academy, Andover

Tantasqua Regional

Junior High School, Fiskdale

Hudson High School, Hudson

John F. Kennedy Middle School,

Hudson

Millbury Memorial High School,

Millbury

Drury High School,

North Adams

Sharon High School, Sharon

Wareham High School, Wareham

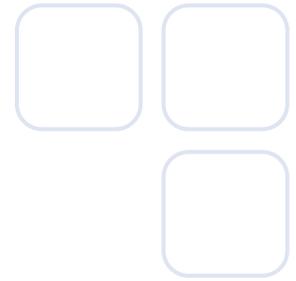
Wareham Middle School, Wareham

Exhibit 1 shows the state and federal funding history for Massachusetts service-learning programs since 1992–1993, the first year in which federal funding was available. The chart highlights the relatively steady share of federal Learn and Serve formula funding supporting service-learning in Massachusetts, and the substantial impact that the addition, and then loss of state funding has had on the state’s capacity to support service-learning in local districts. As of 2004–2005, 100% of the state’s funding for service-learning comes from the federal Learn and Serve program, and roughly 60% of that funding is from time-limited competitive grant programs. Should the competitive grant programs end, the state’s funding for service-learning will drop back to the level of the mid-1990s.

As a result of the resources provided to the state and to school districts, the Department has been able to:

- Provide grants for service-learning activities to approximately sixty school districts each year. A number of these districts and their schools have been recognized nationally as “Service-Learning Leader Schools”
- Sponsor an annual statewide conference attended by over two hundred teachers, administrators, students, community, and higher education partners. The event showcases best practices and offers opportunities for networking.
- Provide technical assistance to schools and districts as they integrate service-learning into their instructional program.
- Develop a curriculum resource guide, *Community Lessons: Integrating Service-Learning into K–12 Curriculum*, authored by Julie Bartsch¹⁴ and contributing teachers, which contains fourteen units spanning all disciplines and grade levels. Each unit connects service activities aligned to specific Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and includes hypothetical MCAS questions.
- Conduct several research projects and evaluations, including a best practices study of the 2000–2003 Community, Higher Education, and School Partnerships grant; case studies of service-learning initiatives in three districts; and a performance measurement toolkit that provides districts and schools with tools to assess the impact of service learning on students’ academic engagement, civic skills, and personal development.

¹³Co-chair CSL Advisory Council



Background

In 2001, in an effort to identify the scope and characteristics of service-learning activities in Massachusetts school districts, the Community Service-Learning Advisory Council to the Board of Education distributed a service-learning survey to each school district in the state. Of the 350 school districts in Massachusetts, 119 school districts returned the survey, representing approximately 32% of the districts and 42% of the public school students in the state.¹⁵ While not a statistically representative sample of the state's districts, the survey clearly captures a substantial segment of the state's districts and students.

The Advisory Council developed the survey in order to answer the following questions:

- How prevalent is service-learning among Massachusetts school districts?
- How are service-learning activities funded in Massachusetts?
- What kinds of policies and practices do districts have in place to support service-learning?
- What are the most significant reasons that motivate districts to integrate service-learning?
- What kinds of strategies have districts used to foster and support service-learning?
- What are the most significant challenges to implementing service-learning practice?

PART III Community Service-Learning Survey

Based on the data from the survey, the Council hoped to address two additional questions:

- What are the significant differences in district policy and supports between those districts with stronger and weaker presence of service-learning in their schools?
- What policies and initiatives could be put in place to most effectively advance the extent, depth and meaningfulness of service-learning in Massachusetts?

Initially, the survey was disseminated to district superintendents through the Commissioner of Education's bi-monthly electronic update. As a follow-up, superintendents on the CSL Advisory Council encouraged colleagues to complete the survey at Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents meetings and through email. Additionally, the CSL Specialist at the Department required funded programs to complete the survey. Due to dissemination and collection methods, it can be assumed that districts with service-learning were more likely to have returned the survey.

After the data was tabulated, CSL Advisory Council members contacted survey respondents to clarify inconsistent responses and to delve more deeply into the practices of districts that fell into higher and lower levels of service-learning practice (i.e., those districts reporting more than 60% of their students involved in service-learning, and those reporting less than 20% of their students in service-learning). With respect to districts that reported low levels of service-learning, Advisory Council members conducted phone interviews to better ascertain barriers to the implementation of service-learning. In the fall of 2003, in order to supplement the survey data, a group of superintendents from districts with high levels of service-learning participated in a focus group to discuss the value of service-learning and how they achieved widespread practice in their district. Quotes from that discussion are excerpted throughout this report.

¹⁵See appendix for a copy of the survey.

Exhibit 2: Scope of Service-Learning in Massachusetts Districts

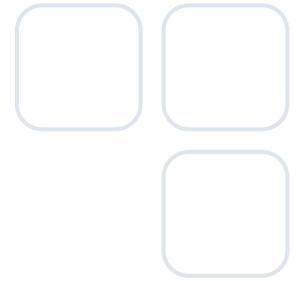
SCOPE OF SERVICE LEARNING [PERCENT OF DISTRICTS]*	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF DISTRICTS
District-Wide (all schools in the district)	29	31.2%
All high schools	46	49.5%
All middle schools	25	26.9%
All elementary schools	14	15.1%
Multiple schools (more than one school, but not a full category)	17	18.3%
One school only	13	14.0%
Other	10	10.8%

SCHOOLS WITH SERVICE LEARNING [PERCENT OF SCHOOLS IN REPORTING DISTRICTS]	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF SCHOOLS WITH SERVICE LEARNING
Pre-K	82	36.6%
Elementary Schools	329	48.6%
Middle Schools	118	61.0%
High Schools	115	93.0%
All Schools	644	57.3%

PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS WHO USE SL IN THEIR CLASSROOM	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF DISTRICTS
0%	2	2.3%
1-20%	53	60.9%
21-40%	17	19.5%
41-60%	5	5.7%
61-80%	4	4.6%
81-100%	6	6.9%

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SL AS PART OF REGULAR ACADEMIC CLASSES	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF DISTRICTS
0%	0	2.2%
1-20%	39	43.3%
21-40%	24	25.8%
41-60%	13	14.0%
61-80%	3	3.2%
81-100%	9	9.7%

*Note that some districts responded to more than one category; percentages add up to more than 100%.



Five major findings emerged through the survey results:

ONE | Service-learning is broadly practiced throughout the state. However, the reported percentage of teachers and students within districts that practice service-learning is relatively small.

Districts were asked to identify the extent of service-learning practice in the district during the 2002 school year. Districts provided information on the percentage of teacher and student involvement, whether involvement had increased or decreased in recent years, and the scope of service-learning in schools within a district. Key findings included the following (Exhibit 2)

- Overall, seventy-eight percent of the respondents (93 of 119 districts) indicated the presence of service-learning activities during the 2002 school year. While it is difficult to know about the non-responding districts, it is clear that at a minimum, service-learning is taking place in at least a third of the state's school districts.
- Within those districts with service-learning, multiple schools are generally involved. Thirty-one percent of the districts with service-learning indicated that it took place in every school in the district; only 14% of the districts reported that service-learning took place in only one school. Among districts that provided a more detailed breakdown, 93% of the high schools, 61% of the middle schools, and 49% of the elementary schools were involved in service-learning.
- While service-learning is widespread among schools, only a few districts (less than 10%) report that all teachers or students are involved in service-learning. On the other hand, 63% of the districts report that less than 20% of their teachers are involved in service-learning, and 46% report that less than 20% of their students are involved. By those measures, it is clear that for most districts, service-learning practice is wide, but not deep.
- In the same vein, as Exhibit 3 shows, 34% of the districts responding to the survey provided some form of professional development on service-learning during the year before the survey. However, they estimated that only 13% of their teachers participated, and that less than one quarter of their teachers (22%) had participated in service-learning professional development in the past five years.
- Finally, it is important to note that involvement in service-learning is growing. Three quarters of the districts with service-learning indicated that the proportion of students involved in service had increased over the past five years.

Exhibit 3: Professional Development on Service-Learning in Massachusetts Districts

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON SERVICE LEARNING	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS RESPONDING	PERCENT
Percent of districts that sponsored or provided professional development on service-learning in past 12 months	93	34.4%
Average percent of teachers that received professional development in past 12 months	77	13.4%
Average percent of teachers that received professional development in past 5 years	75	22.3%

TWO 2 Districts use a variety of funding sources to support their service-learning programs.

Nearly 60% of districts with service-learning used school or district operating funds to support service-learning activities. For the 2001–2002 school year, 26% received federal service-learning grants, while 20% received state service-learning funds. Districts also used a variety of non-service-learning funds to support their programs, including federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Title I education funds; other state grant funds (for example, community development funding); and United Way, foundation, and corporate grants (Exhibit 4).

While most districts supported service-learning at least in part through district funds, participants in the roundtable discussions were clear that the federal and state grants played a special role in helping to initiate and grow service-learning in their districts. As one Superintendent noted:

“The grants from the state and federal government were and remain key in getting things going.... The impetus for this is clearly getting funding to jumpstart things to attract attention and to make things happen.”

Exhibit 4: Funding Sources for Service-Learning

QUESTION/TOPIC	N	PERCENT
General school or district operating funds	54	58.7%
Learn and Serve America grants (DOE fund code 354)	24	26.1%
State service-learning funds (DOE fund code 536)	19	20.4%
Other federal funds (Safe and Drug Free, Title I, etc.)	16	17.4%
Other state grant or program funds	15	16.1%
Community/private contributions (United Way, etc.)	14	15.2%
Other	13	14.0%
Other CNCS grants (AmeriCorps, Vista, etc.)	8	8.6%
Foundation grants	7	7.6%
Don't know	4	4.3%
Corporation grants	3	3.3%

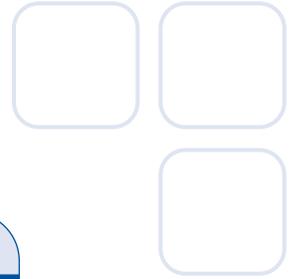


Exhibit 5: Reasons Districts are Involved in Service-Learning

WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN SERVICE LEARNING	N	PERCENT
To help students become more active and responsible citizens	71	76.3%
To meet real community needs and/or foster positive relationships between the school and surrounding community	47	50.5%
To promote the moral development of students, including the idea of altruism or caring for others	39	41.9%
To improve student personal and social development	24	25.8%
To increase student knowledge and understanding of the community	18	19.4%
To improve student achievement in core academic courses	16	17.2%
To teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills	15	16.1%
To improve student engagement and attitudes towards school	15	16.1%
To increase career awareness and exposure among students	12	12.9%
To reduce student involvement in risk behaviors	3	3.2%
To improve student achievement on statewide assessments	1	1.1%
Other	1	1.1%

THREE

3 The large majority of districts pursue service-learning as a means of building students' sense of civic responsibility.

Districts were asked to select the three most important reasons for encouraging student involvement in service-learning. The most common reason for encouraging student involvement in service-learning was overwhelmingly “to help students become more active and responsible citizens” (76% of districts). While service-learning can help meet a wide variety of educational goals—including academic achievement—most educators see it first and foremost as a means of addressing the school’s charge to develop effective citizens (Exhibit 5).

Educators did cite a variety of other reasons for promoting service-learning in their districts. These include promoting the moral and social development of students, improving student knowledge of the community, fostering partnerships between schools and the community, increasing student engagement in school, promoting critical thinking skills, and improving academic achievement.

FOUR

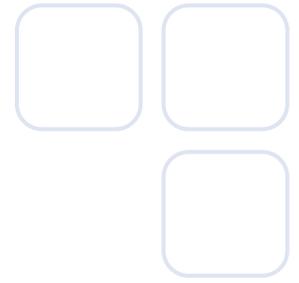
4 Districts with high levels of involvement in service-learning actively support it by building stakeholder support and implementing supportive policies and practices.

Districts with high levels of service-learning (those in which more than 60% of students are involved in service) vary in size and type of community. However, their service-learning programs share a number of common characteristics. In all of these districts there is strong support from a variety of stakeholders. They have built capacity within the system through professional development, staffing for coordination and strong curricular integration. And they have also written service-learning into school and district improvement plans.

Exhibit 6: Stakeholder Support for Service-Learning

STAKEHOLDER GROUP [PERCENT SUPPORTIVE OR VERY SUPPORTIVE]	PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN SL			
	0-40% [N=61]	40-60% [N=12]	60%+ [N=7]	ALL SITES [N=81]
School Superintendent	86.9%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%
School Board/School Committee*	78.0%	100.0%	100.0%	83.3%
Building Principal/Administrator	78.7%	100.0%	100.0%	83.8%
Department Chair**	57.9%	91.7%	100.0%	67.1%
Teachers**	59.0%	91.7%	85.7%	66.3%
Parents	66.1%	91.7%	85.7%	72.0%
Students	72.9%	91.7%	100.0%	78.2%
Community Agencies	80.7%	100.0%	100.0%	84.2%
Business Support	71.2%	66.7%	85.7%	71.8%
Establishment of a district leadership team/advisory group to plan and support service-learning***	32.3%	58.3%	100.0%	42.0%

Note: * indicates statistically significant at the .10 level; ** indicates significant at the .05 level; and *** indicates significant at the .01 level.



Stakeholder Support

As part of the survey analysis, districts were divided into three groups based on the percentage of students involved in service-learning: low (less than 40%), middle (40% to 60%) and high (60% or more). Districts with higher levels of service-learning practice reported high levels of support from a wide variety of stakeholders, and statistically significant differences in support from three critical groups: *the school board, department chairs, and teachers*. In addition, districts were significantly more likely to have established a *district service-learning leadership or advisory group*—a key mechanism for building support for service-learning. This leadership or advisory group generally consists of teachers, students, community partners, administrators, and a service-learning contact or coordinator and meets on a regular basis to plan and support local service-learning efforts (Exhibit 6).

As the data indicate, administrative support appears to be essential to the growth and institutionalization of service-learning. This was echoed in the focus group drawn from high level service-learning districts. Focus group participants spoke emphatically about their belief that administrative support is essential to the growth and institutionalization of service-learning as a core instructional strategy. These district leaders pointed to such strategies as building the integration of service-learning into teacher and administrator evaluation, convening of broad-based service-learning leadership councils, and providing mini-grants as incentives for teachers to integrate service-learning into the curriculum as important administrative vehicles for strengthening service-learning.

The survey results confirm the perception of David Hornbeck, former superintendent of the Philadelphia Public Schools and a supporter of service-learning in Philadelphia's schools, "Without strong administrative support, service-learning remains a 'niche practice,' wonderful for the small proportion of teachers, students and community partners who use it, but unavailable to most children and the communities in which they live."

Exhibit 7: Service-Learning in District Policy

DISTRICT POLICY SUPPORTS FOR SERVICE LEARNING	PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN SL			ALL SITES
	0–40% [N=61]	40–60% [N=12]	60%+ [N=7]	
Inclusion of service-learning in district mission statement*	24.2%	50.0%	57.1%	30.9%
Inclusion of service-learning in school improvement plans in a majority of schools**	25.8%	41.7%	71.4%	32.1%
Inclusion of service-learning in new staff orientation and/or new staff induction process***	16.1%	50.0%	71.4%	25.9%
Inclusion of service-learning in district’s professional development plans*	27.4%	41.7%	71.4%	33.3%
Inclusion of service-learning in district hiring policies***	4.8%	25.0%	42.9%	11.1%
Inclusion of service-learning in criteria for teacher evaluations and/or district performance standards for teachers***	9.7%	.0%	57.1%	12.3%
Funding/resources specifically set aside for service-learning*	38.7%	50.0%	85.7%	44.4%
Policies encouraging or requiring the integration of service-learning in course curriculum**	33.9%	50.0%	85.7%	40.7%
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS				
Service-learning as graduation requirement	11.3%	25.0%	.0%	12.3%
Community service hours as a graduation requirements	19.4%	25.0%	.0%	18.5%

Note: * indicates statistically significant at the .10 level; ** indicates significant at the .05 level; and *** indicates significant at the .01 level.

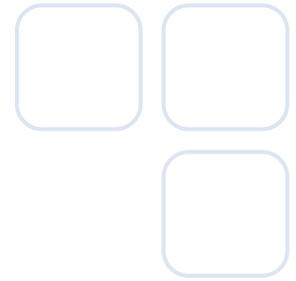
Policy Support for Service-Learning

Districts with high levels of student involvement in service-learning tended to support those efforts through a variety of district-level policy mechanisms. Districts with high levels of service-learning were significantly more likely to include service-learning in the district mission statement, school improvement plans, and professional development plans. They were more likely to have policies in place encouraging integration of service-learning into curriculum and to set aside funds specifically to support service-learning. Perhaps most important, high level service-learning districts tended to build support for service-learning into their personnel

policies and practices, by including support for service-learning in their hiring criteria, integrating service-learning into new staff orientations, and including service-learning as a criteria to be considered in teacher evaluations (Exhibit 7).

At the same time, it is important to note that none of the high level service-learning districts included service-learning or community service hours as graduation requirements. At least some initial research suggests that establishment of effective service-learning programs in the schools was a better means of involving students in service than graduation requirements.¹⁶

¹⁶A U.S. Department of Education study found, for example, that students in schools with community service requirements were less likely to participate in service than those in schools that had programs to make service opportunities available. See Brian Kleiner and Chris Chapman, "Service-Learning and Community Service Among 6th Through 12th Grade Students in the United States: 1996 and 1999." National Center for Education Statistics, *Statistics in Brief*, November, 1999 (NCES 2000-028rev).



Investing in Capacity Building

The survey also found that districts with high levels of service-learning were significantly more likely to invest in a variety of support and capacity building efforts to provide teachers with the training and assistance they need to establish new service-learning programs (Exhibit 8). District support takes a number of different forms:

- High level service-learning districts were three times as likely to have a district service-learning coordinator and/or building-level coordinators as were low level service-learning districts (71% vs. 23%–26%).

Exhibit 8: District Capacity Building Supports for Service-Learning

QUESTION/TOPIC	PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN SL			ALL SITES
	0 40% [N=61]	40 60% [N=12]	60%+ [N=7]	
District sponsored or provided professional development on service-learning in past 12 months	30.6%	33.3%	71.4%	34.6
DOES THE DISTRICT PROVIDE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR SERVICE LEARNING?				
Support for service-learning curriculum planning and development by teachers (e.g. planning meetings, grants for curriculum development, teacher workshop days, etc.)*	58.1%	66.7%	100.0%	63.0
Mini-grants for SL program or curriculum development**	51.6%	58.3%	100.0%	56.8
Technical assistance on implementation of service-learning activities*	40.3%	50.0%	85.7%	45.7
Establishment of a district leadership team/advisory group to plan and support service-learning for the schools***	32.3%	58.3%	100.0%	42.0
Recognition or rewards for teachers for quality service-learning practice**	25.8%	58.3%	35.8	
Promotion of service-learning as a means of achieving state or district curriculum standards**	33.9%	41.7%	85.7%	39.5
Adoption and/or dissemination of quality standards for service-learning (for example, Essential Elements)**	25.8%	25.0%	71.4%	29.6
Partnership with one or more colleges or universities to support quality service-learning practice**	17.7%	33.3%	57.1%	23.5
District has full or part-time staff person to support service-learning**	22.6%	50.0%	71.4%	30.9
District has a staff person in a majority of schools to support service-learning**	25.8%	66.7%	71.4%	35.8

Note: * indicates statistically significant at the .10 level; ** indicates significant at the .05 level; and *** indicates significant at the .01 level.

Exhibit 9: Funding Sources by Percent of Students in Service-Learning

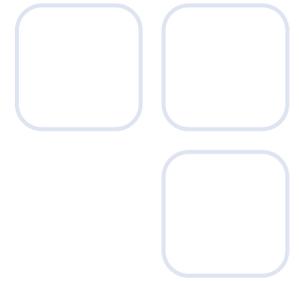
QUESTION/TOPIC	PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN SL			ALL SITES [N=81]
	0-40% [N=61]	40-60% [N=12]	60%+ [N=7]	
General school or district operating funds	61.3%	41.7%	71.4%	59.3
Learn and Serve America grants (DOE fund code 354)	27.4%	25.0%	42.9%	28.4
State service-learning funds (DOE fund code 536)**	16.1%	25.0%	57.1%	21.0
Other federal funds (Safe and Drug Free, Title I, etc.)	11.3%	25.0%	28.6%	14.8
Other state grant or program funds	16.1%	8.3%	28.6%	16.0
Community/private contributions (United Way, etc.)	4.8%	.0%	.0%	3.7
Other CNCS grants (AmeriCorps, Vista, etc.)	6.5%	8.3%	28.6%	8.6
Foundation grants	6.5%	8.3%	.0%	6.2
Average Massachusetts DOE Grants Received, 1992–2002	\$36,510	\$38,324	\$90,886	\$43,859

Note: * indicates statistically significant at the .10 level; ** indicates significant at the .05 level; and *** indicates significant at the .01 level.

- High level service-learning districts were significantly more likely to support service-learning through support for curriculum development, mini-grants for teachers, and technical assistance on program implementation. Overall, high level service-learning districts were more than twice as likely to have provided some form of professional development in the past year as were low level service-learning districts.
- High level service-learning districts were significantly more likely to promote high quality practice through recognition for teachers, dissemination of quality standards, establishment of partnerships with higher education institutions, and promotion of service-learning as a means of achieving state or district curriculum standards.

The lessons are clear; the most effective district strategies for involving students in service-learning include investments in staff support for service-learning, training and assistance, and recognition and promotion of high quality practice.

Millbury Public Schools conduct service-learning institutes held twice a year to help teachers understand service-learning as solid methodology. “In our professional development scheme, an institute is twelve hours of instruction and three hours of application. The target audience for the institute is beginning teachers, who receive mentors to help support implementation of their projects in the classroom. We want to develop capacity by instilling a notion that this (service-learning) is part of how we do business. It’s fundamental to the district,” commented David Roach, superintendent.



Funding

Does funding make a difference? The comments made at the Administrator’s roundtable discussion (cited earlier) suggest that it does. According to those local leaders, federal and state service-learning grants provided the consistent grant funding over time that enabled them to build a base of support for service-learning in the district and a strong and stable enough program to command district resources.

While the differences are not strongly significant, the survey data do suggest that high level service-learning districts were those that had pursued the greatest range of funding and had received substantially greater state and federal grant resources over the years. High level service-learning districts were more likely to support their service-learning programs through a variety of funding sources, with higher proportions of those districts reporting using district operating funds, as well as a variety of state and federal grants. In particular, they were significantly more likely to have received Massachusetts service-learning grants than lower level service-learning districts. Similarly, high level service-learning districts were significantly more likely to have received a larger total in grant funds since 1992 when the grantmaking process began in Massachusetts. As Exhibit 9 shows, high level service-learning districts received nearly three times as much in grant funds over the years, likely reflecting both the credibility of their commitment to service-learning (they impressed the grant-makers) and the value of that funding in raising student involvement in service. Money does count, but likely is most effective when tied to the policy and practice supports that were also common in the high service districts.

“We are giving up teachers and social workers in our schools because of lack of money. Our district cannot support service-learning without help from the outside.”

FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S FOCUS GROUP ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

FIVE Lack of funding, teacher overload, and limited professional development are barriers to improving and expanding the practice of service-learning.

One of the purposes of the survey was to determine key challenges and barriers to service-learning implementation and growth. Districts were asked in the form of an open-response question: “What do you see as the greatest challenges to the growth and development of service-learning in your district?”

Districts indicate lack of funding as the primary challenge, followed by teacher overload, and an increased need for professional development.

“In order to meet all the standards set forth by the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, we need to integrate this important aspect of learning into courses presently in our Program of Studies.... Integration is the answer.”

FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S FOCUS GROUP ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

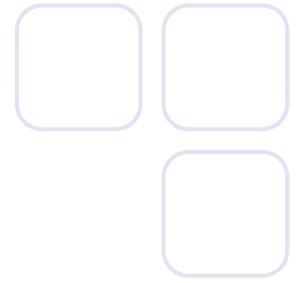
Districts indicated that funding is needed to hire a district service-learning coordinator, offer professional development, and provide transportation. Several responses indicated the critical need to hire a coordinator “who would oversee curriculum development, budget development and supervision, grant writing and curriculum implementation. Without this, it is difficult to implement a truly devoted, curriculum-inclusive program of service-learning.” One district stated, “The lack of a full- or part-time coordinator has been the greatest challenge. It has been very difficult for a full-time teacher to try and train, foster, assess, etc. all the various facets of service-learning programs.”

Districts also identified teacher overload as a predominant challenge to incorporating community service into the curriculum. Many responses indicated that service-learning should not be viewed as an “add-on,” but the time needed to integrate service activities into curriculum is a great challenge.

Districts describe the overload challenge as: “competition for time and energy devoted by staff and students to academic instruction and rich extra-curricular opportunities;” “time is needed to coordinate the effort and find meaningful service experiences;” and “teachers are overwhelmed by state standards and pressure to teach in after-hours programs for MCAS remediation. They are prioritizing their efforts and CSL does not score high enough on the list.”

Many districts identified lack of professional development opportunities as a challenge.

They commented that “our greatest challenge is providing professional development for all teachers in the district” and “a challenge we face is continued professional development to increase levels of participation.” One response stated, “There is a need for professional development for classroom teachers to develop a better understanding of how to include service-learning in the curriculum.”



Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that a number of districts have been successful in large-scale integration of high quality service-learning experiences. The data from the surveys and interviews point to a number of important elements that support development of service-learning practice. Districts with high levels of service-learning have clear administrative support, engage a variety of stakeholders in their program, have written service-learning into mission statements, improvement plans and district policies, have staffing that supports service-learning coordination, provide on-going professional development for faculty, and access a variety of funding sources to support the integration of service-learning. In particular, the high-level of practice districts accessed state and federal resources over an extended period of time and point to the critical nature of this funding in building both the internal capacity for the program and public support to sustain it with district funds. In contrast, school districts with lower levels of service-learning practice lacked these characteristics in some measure.

LESSONS FROM DISTRICTS WITH HIGH LEVELS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

- Build Stakeholder Support through a district advisory council and other strategies.
- Integrate service-learning into district policies—mission statement, improvement plans, district budget, and personnel policies.
- Invest in capacity building for service-learning: Establish a service-learning coordinator position; provide regular professional development opportunities; use mini-grants to support innovation; and promote, recognize and reward high quality practice.
- Seek outside funding to jumpstart and support service-learning until it becomes an integral part of the district's schools.

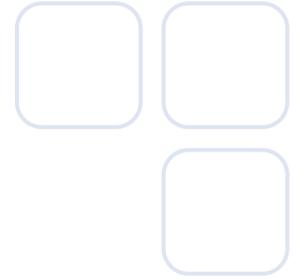
Massachusetts has had a strong and longstanding commitment to public service and to promoting service-learning. The funding provided to school districts over the past 13 years demonstrates the importance Massachusetts places on engaging youth in service experiences and helping them become active, engaged and caring citizens. Our data shows that this support has clearly had an impact. A significant percentage of districts implement service-learning at some level and a number of districts have become state and national models of large-scale integration and institutionalization of service-learning. It is clear that Massachusetts has built a strong base of service-learning practice. However, the findings of our study show that we have much work to do to fulfill the vision of state-wide implementation and integration of service-learning as an instructional methodology.

PART IV Recommendations

The research on service-learning confirms the important contribution service-learning can make in the lives of students. *Effective service-learning programs can help students improve academically, increase attendance and engagement in school, develop personal and social responsibility, acquire high level critical thinking, communication and problem solving skills, and become responsible citizens in their communities.* The survey respondents echo these themes in their rationale for supporting service-learning.

Over the past three years, there have been significant financial strains on school district budgets. The additional state funding for service-learning was eliminated in 2002, further compromising districts' efforts in service-learning. At the same time, there has been a growing concern nationally and in Massachusetts about restoring the civic

mission of schools and providing students with the civic knowledge and civic competencies to effectively participate in our democracy. With the economy beginning to recover and the concerns about democratic participation expanding, the time is right to renew and reestablish efforts to further service-learning practice state-wide. We believe this requires the efforts of those in leadership at both the state and district level. We offer the recommendations below to reignite interest in and commitment to service-learning as a vital instructional methodology and to scale up the use of service-learning in our schools. For each recommendation we offer a number of important strategies that policy makers and state and district leaders can pursue. We have italicized those that we believe are priority steps.



RECOMMENDATION 1: State and local leaders need to provide the necessary leadership, policy support and public advocacy for service-learning as a means of accomplishing the state’s civic and academic goals for youth.

Executive and Legislative

- *Establish a Legislative Commission on Service and the Civic Mission of Schools to develop policy recommendations to promote service-learning and civic education as an integral part of public education.*
- In partnership with the Massachusetts Service Alliance, issue an executive order requiring state agencies to integrate volunteer service and service-learning into their public programs and encouraging their cooperation with schools in developing service-learning opportunities for students.
- Publicly support service-learning in speeches, public appearances, and visits to service-learning programs.

“You need role models. From the governor, to state board of education chair, to university presidents, to the Commissioner of Education modeling it and talking about it.”

FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S FOCUS GROUP ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

Massachusetts Board of Education/Department of Education

- *Develop and pass a policy statement supporting service-learning as a means of accomplishing the state’s civic and academic education goals.*
- *Establish an internal working group to identify ways of integrating service-learning into DOE-funded programs and initiatives, including integration into curriculum frameworks, professional development, RFP/grant language, etc.*
- Develop and implement a strategy for increasing awareness of service-learning among district-level policy makers, administrators, and teachers (for example, publications, videos, conference sessions, etc.).
- Sponsor a high-level conference on service-learning for school administrators.
- Create a “Leadership in Service-Learning Recognition Program” for schools, administrators, teachers and students.

Local Educational Leadership (School Committees/Superintendents)

- *Establish a local service-learning advisory group or task force that includes school committee members, district and building administrators, teachers, parents, community partners and students to identify methods of providing policy and infrastructure support for service-learning.*
- Develop and endorse district policy statements supporting service-learning as an effective means of addressing civic and academic goals.
- Integrate service-learning into district operating policies, including hiring, promotion, teacher training and orientation, transportation, liability, and other policies that can promote and/or serve as barriers to service-learning.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Increase resources available to support service-learning.

Governor, Department of Education, Legislative Leadership

- *Restore and increase the service-learning line item in the state budget with a target of \$3 million per year to provide additional resources to help districts start or expand service-learning programs.*
- Provide additional technical support staff at the Department of Education to assist districts in implementing effective practices.
- Identify service-learning as an effective and allowable strategy in Department of Education sponsored grant programs.
- Pursue private, state and federal resources for service-learning programs.

Local Educational Leadership

- *Allocate local education funds to support service-learning through mini-grant and other programs.*
- Establish policies granting service-learning programs equal priority in requests for district resources (for example, access to buses).

“Money is important to get it started.”

FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATOR’S FOCUS GROUP ON SERVICE-LEARNING.

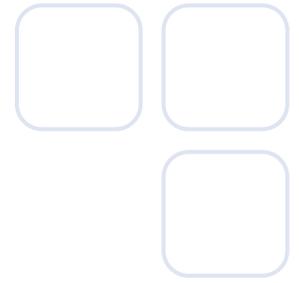
RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase support for professional development.

Massachusetts Board of Education/Department of Education

- *Integrate service-learning into state professional development plans, including state-approved professional development and recertification programs.*
- *Work with Massachusetts teacher education programs to ensure that service-learning becomes part of the regular pre-service teacher education curriculum.*
- Establish a resource center or clearinghouse that collects and provides information on service-learning for Massachusetts teachers and administrators
- Establish and support an in-state professional development center on service-learning.
- Encourage all DOE programs and departments to include service-learning in the training and professional development they provide.
- Identify and highlight models of effective practice and systemic integration that receive resources to mentor districts seeking to develop their service-learning practices.
- Provide training for administrators.

Local Educational Leadership

- *Establish one or more service-learning coordinator positions to provide technical assistance, training and leadership for local service-learning programs.*
- Establish service-learning as an integral element in the district’s professional development program



RECOMMENDATION 4: Establish a system to collect data and evaluate service-learning programs.

Massachusetts Board of Education/Department of Education

- Build measures of service-learning activity into district reporting and district report cards on the Department’s website.
- Encourage service-learning and service activity as an item on standard state transcript and individual record reporting.
- Provide funding for evaluation of local service-learning grantees and programs at least once every 5 years.
- Develop a Massachusetts service-learning evaluation toolkit with resources for local practitioners to use in assessing their programs.

“To make this more powerful for school systems out there it has to be something that you are assessed on.”

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Local Educational Leadership

- Require building administrators to include data on service-learning activities as part of the annual school reporting process.
- Establish mechanisms for tracking/counting local service-learning activities.
- Seek funds for and support local evaluation efforts aimed at documenting the district’s service-learning activities and impacts.
- Require the use of civics and service portfolios as part of the graduation requirement.

Without expanded support for service-learning statewide, Massachusetts risks the loss of the gains that were made throughout the 1990s. Establishing service-learning as an important element in state education policy and funding has the potential to enable all students to graduate with a greater depth of academic knowledge, a firmer commitment to serving others and their community, and a stronger sense of civic engagement and commitment. The dividends provided by a renewed commitment to the integration of service-learning are many. Not only will this improve the education of children in the Commonwealth, but it will help create a better Commonwealth for our children.



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