SERVICE LEARNING UPDATE

POLICY ISSUE/SITUATION

Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Through service learning, young people—from kindergarteners to college students—use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. They not only learn the practical applications of their studies, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform. (National Service Learning Clearinghouse)

This spring, the StEPP facilitators at the high school level met to begin developing a proposal for Service Learning to become a graduation requirement with the class of 2017, or the incoming class of 2013-14. Their considerations are included in this packet. There is much more research and work needed before a plan can be completed. Tonight the Board is receiving an update.

Research has been included from the National Service Learning Clearinghouse and the K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice developed by the National Youth Leadership Council. Further research should include studying successful programs throughout the United States.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board receive this update and ask questions.

<u>Service Learning / Community Service Plan Development and Considerations</u>

Currently, there are two high schools that have service learning/community service graduation requirement including: ACMA and Southridge. Other high schools have leadership service requirement, but do not make it a graduation requirement.

StEPP Facilitators at the high school level including Ken Bell, Tim Moe, Angela Simons, Wes Showalter, Mason Smith, Chris Martin and Shawn Swick met this spring to outline the considerations for implementing a K-12 Service Learning/Community Service requirement. The considerations below are primarily for the high school level, and further discussions to address community service at the middle and elementary level will be needed in the future.

- **Describe the benefits for students participating in service learning/community service.**
  - ➢ Develop positive relationships with an adult/mentor/supervisor
  - ➢ Make connections with learning, career and life goals
  - ➢ Gain awareness of themselves as a member of a community
  - ➢ Develop as a balanced individual
  - ➢ Gain awareness of their strengths and weaknesses
  - ➢ Forming a habit of volunteerism and community engagement

- **Define service learning and community service (similarities/differences). See research.**

  Service Learning—curricular and career-related services to your school and/or community

  Community Service—non-curricular and non-career related services to your school and/or community

- **Describe what types of activities will qualify for service learning/community service.**

  All activities should be uncompensated (caution against using for-profit placements)
  Other limitations/restrictions left to each school to determine.

- **What will be the minimum expectation for service learning/community service?**

  - o How many hours?
    - ▪ A minimum of 20 hours required for graduation. Schools can increase this number to meet their individual mission or desired outcomes.

  - o Are students required to reflect on the experience?
    - ▪ Students will be required to reflect upon each experience.

- o Sample form that students will use to document and to reflect on their experience.
  - Career-Related Learning Experience form is attached that can be revised to include service learning or community service hours and contact information.

- **Recommendations for how the District manages the implementation roll-out**

  We recommend that the District roll out this requirement for graduation with the class of 2017, the incoming 9th grade class during the 2013-2014 school year. School Board Policy and the Administrative Regulation need to be updated to reflect the new requirement.

- **What resources are needed for full implementation?**

  - o Electronic data collection tool? Should students be able to log their own hours and reflect on the tool as well?
    - Possibly use new Student Information System and portal
    - Other options include Naviance or Manageback program
    - Students should be able to log their own hours and reflect with supervisor approval (staff would be alerted to login and could approve entry)

  - o What are your recommendations for who will certify that the student completed the experience and how will this occur?
    - Determined in each building based on staff model, but could include StEPP Facilitator, Advisors, Counselors or other staff as assigned.
    - See bullets on previous question for how hours will be logged.

  - o Approximately how much certified and classified time do you estimate is needed to support an "average" high school of 1800 students?
    - In order to implement this requirement with integrity, we believe the following is required:
      - A full-time StEPP Facilitator
      - A 4-hour classified position dedicated to assist with documentation and other needs

Research

What is Service Learning?

Service Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Through service-learning, young people - from kindergarteners to college students - use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. They not only learn the practical applications of their studies, they become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

Service Learning can be applied in a wide variety of settings, including schools, universities, and community-based and faith-based organizations. It can involve a group of students, a classroom or an entire school. Students build character and become active participants as they work with others in their school and community to create service projects in areas such as education, public safety, and the environment.

Community members, students, and educators everywhere are discovering that service-learning offers all its participants a chance to take part in the active education of youth while simultaneously addressing the concerns, needs, and hopes of communities.

What Service Learning Looks Like
If school students collect trash out of an urban streambed, they are providing a valued service to the community as volunteers. If school students collect trash from an urban streambed, analyze their findings to determine the possible sources of pollution, and share the results with residents of the neighborhood, they are engaging in service learning.

In the service-learning example, in addition to providing an important service to the community, students are learning about water quality and laboratory analysis, developing an understanding of pollution issues, and practicing communications skills. They may also reflect on their personal and career interests in science, the environment, public policy or other related areas. Both the students and the community have been involved in a transformative experience.

Examples of Service Learning

- **Elementary school students in Florida** studied the consequences of natural disasters. The class designed a kit for families to use to collect their important papers in case of evacuation, which students distributed to community members.
- **Middle school students in Pennsylvania** learned about the health consequences of poor nutrition and lack of exercise, and then brought their learning to life by conducting health fairs, creating a healthy cookbook, and opening a fruit and vegetable stand for the school and community.

Each of the examples above shows how service learning is integrating meaningful community service with instruction and reflection in order to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen our communities.

What are the Characteristics of Service Learning?

Authentic service learning experiences, while almost endlessly diverse, have some common characteristics (taken mostly from Eyler & Giles, 1999):

- They are positive, meaningful and real to the participants.
- They involve cooperative rather than competitive experiences and thus promote skills associated with teamwork and community involvement and citizenship.
- They address complex problems in complex settings rather than simplified problems in isolation.
- They offer opportunities to engage in problem-solving by requiring participants to gain knowledge of the specific context of their service-learning activity and community challenges, rather than only to draw upon generalized or abstract knowledge such as might come from a textbook. As a result, service learning offers

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powerful opportunities to acquire the habits of critical thinking; i.e. the ability to identify the most important questions or issues within a real-world situation.
- They promote deeper learning because the results are immediate and uncontrived. There are no "right answers" in the back of the book.
- As a consequence of this immediacy of experience, service learning is more likely to be personally meaningful to participants and to generate emotional consequences, to challenge values as well as ideas, and hence to support social, emotional and cognitive learning and development.

Service Learning is *not*:

- An episodic volunteer program
- An add-on to an existing school or college curriculum
- Logging a set number of community service hours in order to graduate
- Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators
- Only for high school or college students
- One-sided: benefiting only students or only the community

The distinctive element of service learning is that it enhances the community through the service provided, but it also has powerful learning consequences for the students or others participating in providing a service. Service learning is growing so rapidly because we can see it is having a powerful impact on young people and their development. It is a dynamic process, through which students' personal and social growth is tightly interwoven into their academic and cognitive development. According to scholars Eyler and Giles (1999), with the service learning model "experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action."

Source: National Service Learning Clearinghouse

K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice
(developed by the National Youth Leadership Council)

Meaningful Service
Service learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

Indicators:
1. Service learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. Service learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

Link to Curriculum
Service learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.

Indicators:
1. Service learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. Service learning is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curriculum.
3. Service learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
4. Service learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

Reflection
Service learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.

Indicators:
1. Service learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
2. Service learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
3. Service learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
4. Service learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
5. Service learning reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their service-learning experience so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.

Diversity
Service learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.

Indicators:
1. Service learning helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
2. Service learning helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
3. Service learning helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
4. Service learning encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.

Youth Voice
Service learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service learning experiences with guidance from adults.

Indicators:
1. Service learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
2. Service learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service learning experiences.
3. Service learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. Service learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.

5. Service learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service learning experience.

Partnerships
Service learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.

Indicators:
1. Service learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

Progress Monitoring
Service learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

Indicators:
1. Service learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service learning experience.
2. Service learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service learning experience.
3. Service learning participants use evidence to improve service learning experiences.
4. Service learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service learning understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

Duration and Intensity
Service learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

Indicators:
1. Service learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. Service learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. Service learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.