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## Students' Perceptions of Their Community Service Experience Based on High School Resources

Brooke A. Muriello

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Students' Perceptions of Their Community Service Experience Based on High School  
Resources

by  
Brooke A. Muriello

Dissertation Submitted to the  
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education  
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Education

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2020

## **Approval Page**

This applied dissertation was submitted by Brooke Ann Muriello under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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## Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

Where another author's ideas have been presented in this applied dissertation, I have acknowledged the author's ideas by citing them in the required style.

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Brooke A. Muriello

August 14, 2020

## Abstract

Students' Perceptions of Their Community Service Experience Based on High School Resources. Brooke A. Muriello, 2020: Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and Criminal Justice.

Keywords: community service, civic engagement, benefits, perception, school resources, high school students

The research questions focused on students' perceptions of how the school's resources influenced students' benefits from community service.

This research is designed to provide information that identifies factors that affect students' perceived benefits from their mandatory or credit merit community service work based on high schools varying approaches to implementing a mandatory community as a graduation requirement or awards credit toward graduation for students' community service work in states without a statewide high school service requirement; credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service; or explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation.

The service-learning experiences for this study were designed using experiential educational theory and a blended framework from community service learning common goals (a) usefulness and accessibility of school support resources (b) ability to complete (c) gain new awareness of community's needs (d) value of their service (e) enjoyment and (a) list of local community service sites (a) list of local community service sites, (b) list of examples of community service work, (c) school community service mentor, coordinator or guide, (d) a method to identify types of community service work based on student interest and ability, (e) providing transportation or transportation information to and from community service site, (f) authentication of student's completed community service work, (g) identification of community service purpose or goals, (h) community service work tied to academic work or addressed in class, (i) reflection or discussion post community service work.

The literature review unveiled that community service with structured resources available to students provides a more meaningful learning experience for students and higher sense of civic duty along with the importance of individual participation. Prior studies reveal that unstructured mandatory volunteering from students have had counterproductive results.

The quantitative study research design using a student centered learning theoretical framework lens collected data from high school students in grades 9-12 who have completed a minimum of one community service hour and attend a school that has community service as a mandatory requirement or gain credit toward graduation.

The findings in this study provide information for schools to improve the efficacy of their community service programs approach and implantation to maximize students' positive learning experiences and minimize negative experiences.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem to be addressed in this research study is the limited studies that identify school-related factors that impact student perceived benefits from community service programs in high schools with mandatory community service as a graduation requirement or credit toward graduation.

Schools that adopt a mandatory community service as part of a high school graduate requirement in states that do not have (a) a statewide high school service requirement; (b) credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service or explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation are not required to provide resources; (c) guidance to students; (d) identify purpose; (e) learning objectives, support materials, or academic connection activities that would assist students learning; and (f) experience the potential benefits from performing community services (Baumann, 2014). Studies suggested that continued investigation regarding aspects of the civic engagement experience that leads to continued civic engagement and the types of methods is the most effective civic engagement pathway for students (Daynes & Wygant, 2003). As a result of schools that are not required to evaluate the efficacy of benefits from community service work students perform, there is limited data available (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Given the paucity of student feedback data, schools lose valuable information for civic engagement program improvement adjustments for students to increase learned outcomes, positive experiences, civic awareness comprehension, civic participation understanding, and continued volunteer work post-high school graduation is never gained (Bender &

Jordaan, 2007). Additionally, without an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of student learned outcomes from his and her mandatory civic engagement activities, schools remain unaccountable of validating the additional work students are required to complete for graduation, as well as the quality of the school's approach to implementing a civic engagement requirement based on schools' community service resources (Tugend, 2010).

The inconsistent or absent state or federal community service program standards in education, high schools have the freedom to implement community service programs in any way the school deems appropriate; this freedom has resulted in schools employing varying approaches to implementing civic engagement requirements, which includes, but not limited to varying factors: (a) civic term definitions, (b) qualifying civic engagement work, (c) learning objectives or skill-building goals, and (d) resources (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010).

Based on the stated problem, the topic of this proposed dissertation study is to examine factors, specifically schools' community service support services, that affect high school students' perceptions of their community service experience who attend a school that either requires community service as a graduation requirement or award credits toward graduation. Prior studies have shown that factors outside of the school's scope, such as parental involvement and religion, are influential factors in students' learned outcomes from community service (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Metz & Youniss, 2003, 2005; Smith, 1999); however, only the variables controlled by the school are included in this study as the school is mandating that students must complete a set number of civic engagement hours as a graduation requirement or awarding credit toward

graduation for completed civic engagement work, and thus the school is solely accountable for students' learned outcomes.

### **Background and Justification**

There is a need to know if and which schools' community service resources assist students in completing and learning from their community service work based on student perception. In part, the push for volunteer service reflects the idea that the act of volunteering would be beneficial to those who participate and might impede feelings of cynicism and indifference, as well as the notion that volunteers are needed if national problems are to be addressed with limited government resources (Nolin, 1997). Youth are often made a special focus because they are at a time in their lives when their attitudes are still being formed, thus volunteer service has the potential of having a greater impact on character development (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019). Volunteering in America Report finds increases in volunteering and civically related activities and has reached a record high with contributions worth an estimated \$167 billion in economic value (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Increasing community service participation has long been a goal in the United States (Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000). National policies that mark civic engagement as a valued entity, such as President Kennedy's creation of the Peace Corps, President Bush's creation of the Points of Light Foundation, President Clinton's creation of AmeriCorps, and Congress' adoption of the National Education Goals, embrace the objective that all students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship and community service (Tugend, 2010).

The need for youth to be more civically engaged was acknowledged and validated in 1990 when the federal government began encouraging community service for all citizens and provided incentives for schools to create community service-learning opportunities for students (Cherry, 2012). In addition to addressing community needs without using finances, the work was found to be beneficial to students; youth gain an opportunity to test, strengthen, and apply their academic studies and skills (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Students have had the opportunity to explore career options, develop collaboration and problem-solving skills, and learn the importance of civic participation (Clinton & Thomas, 2011).

As of 2014, the Education Commission of the States research and reports have documented that 28 states have a statewide high school service requirement, allow credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service, or the state explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation (Baumann, 2014). The number of schools that adopt community service as a requirement or credit merit work is a result of federal incentives to motivate more students to engage with their community in an effort to develop more civic-minded individuals (Clemmitt, 2017). A student's experience from his or her community service will affect continued community service post-graduation (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010). Students' perceptions of the quality of their mandatory community service experience were found to be powerful predictors of their attitudes towards social responsibility, while ongoing volunteering was found to be influenced more significantly by the school and community influences, especially previous volunteer participation (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010). Other factors, such as the structure and implementation of the mandatory or credit merit community

service program in schools, impact the students' perceived experiences (Caspersz & Olaru, 2017).

According to a study by the National Youth Leadership Council, youth who participated in service that included a structured reflection of the type found in service-learning achieved positive civic outcomes in adulthood (Finlay, Flanagan, & Black, 2007). Students who performed community services gained psychological, social, and cognitive benefits (Kolb, 1984). Studies that have been conducted to evaluate the efficacy of high school community service, volunteer, or other civic engagement programs have found a relationship between the perceived quality of community service experience and continued civic engagement post-graduation (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014). The implications of this study stem from the finding that it is the students' perception of their community work experiences, indicating that participation in community service is not enough motivation for ongoing civic engagement.

A study by Gallant, Smale, and Arai in 2010 suggested that educated-related civic engagement policy related to mandatory community service programs should contain guidelines and accessible resources to create substantial experiences for students engaged in mandatory service. The study concluded that improving the quality of students' experience, particularly for those with no previous volunteer experience, increased the probability of ongoing civic participation post-graduation and instills a sense of social responsibility (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010).

There remains to be literature gaps in high school students' mandatory community service research, and studies suggest that continued research should be conducted to identify variables that affect benefits and to measure negative or positive contributions

gained by the community from student involvement, student perceptions and attitudes, community perceptions and attitudes, and any additional dependent variables that can be altered to improve student-community programs (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014).

Different learning and development objectives from community service experience vary among states and national studies. The National Center for Education Statistics published "Service-Learning and Community Service in K-12 Public Schools" in 1999 that defined student community

service as community service activities that are non-curriculum-based and are recognized by or arranged through the school, may be mandatory or voluntary, generally does not include explicit learning objectives or organized reflection or critical analysis activities, and may include activities that take place off of school grounds or may happen primarily within the school. (p. 1)

However, Florida state officials implemented the Florida Volunteer and Community Service Act of 2001 identifies value of work toward the community, build continued dedication toward community service participation, find new and creative ways to address Florida's community present and future problems, maximize efficiency of skills set of volunteer with community needs, and to build character and competence as specific goals for community service participants. The "Service-Learning and Community Service in K-12 Public Schools" 1999 survey results do indicate potential confusion for respondents may have resulted for those who have routinely identified or labeled service activities in their school as either community service or service-learning.

As schools across the nation continue to adopt the policy of requiring students to complete a set number of community service hours to graduate or used as credit toward

graduation, empirical evidence for student benefits would validate the additional school imposed tasks shouldered by students (Caspersz & Oлару, 2017). The limited of research to validate students' learned outcomes and gained skills is a result of inconsistent program structure, the inconsistent definitions of tasks that qualify as community work from school to school, inconsistent or unrequired completed community service work verification, and inconsistent accessible service opportunities to students (Tugend, 2010). Unlike other mandatory requirements for graduation or credit merited work, federal and state program policies are not required for mandatory community service graduation in high schools, and there is no required data or evidence of student benefits from community service work participation that justifies high schools' civic engagement activities.

### **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Deficiencies in the evidence include a lack of clear, consistent student feedback about students' perceptions of learned outcomes from their work in the community (Bender & Jordaan, 2007; Neimi & Chapman, 2000). Unclear, generalized, and varying definable civic engagement terms make measuring the impact of the type of civic engagement employed by a school challenging because of the general accepted definition of civic engagement (Daynes & Wygant, 2003). Many studies have suggested that service-learning does engage students in civic life (Eyler & Giles 1999). However, "research has significant issues, such as the assumption that service-learning and civic engagement are synonymous, and its reliance on evidence from courses that naturally attract engaged students" (Daynes & Wygant, 2003, p. 85). The inconsistent use of terms that entail civic engagements can easily lead to confusion (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, &

Yee, 2000). Additionally, researched civic engagement programs tied to education findings have identified factors that have benefited students, but neglect to include the school's approach to implementing the program and outside factors that could have potentially contributed to the research's findings (Bennett, Alsbury, & Fan, 2016).

Studies continue to suggest that civic engagement programs attached to educational institutions should include a curriculum, program implementation methods, available resources, matching students interest and ability with community service work, student completed community service hours verified, reflection and celebration of, as variables that could potentially affect student-benefits from their work endeavors (Jones & Hill, 2003). A 2010 study recommended future research explore what factors cause some students to experience community service more positively than others and seek out more tangible ways in which students' approach to community service facilitated more positive experiences (Gallant, Smale, & Arai, 2010). Although there have been numerous of civic engagement in education studies conducted, "few studies have focused its research about students' attitudes to and perceptions of Community Service-Learning before it is merged into the curriculum of a module or course in an academic learning program" (Bender & Jordaan, 2007, p. 638). Black's 1999 study states that "investigating students' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of value because attitudes influence behavior. Uninformed students who participate in Community Service-Learning programs may develop negative attitudes and participate unwillingly" (Black, 1999, p. 215). A study has shown that students who reported being uninformed or unaware of the purpose of their school enforced civic engagement work had a negative attitude prior to their community service work, which leads to reporting a negative community service



experience (Bender & Jordaan, 2007). The study concluded that "information about students' preconceived ideas, attitudes, and perceptions have about Community Service-Learning, and community service could provide insight on "how best to integrate Community Service-Learning into learning programmes [sic], so as to ensure successful integration" (Bender & Jordaan, 2007, p. 639). When comparing a structured or curriculum-tied civic engagement to an unstructured or open civic engagement, structured, curriculum-tied civic engagement proved to be more valued by students (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). Schools that are unchained to state standards have the freedom to create civic engagements pathway, and high school civic engagement studies, have recommended that future research of schools' approach to implementing civic engagement programs and impacting factors should be conducted (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, Keyes, & Shubert, 2017). The lack of student feedback from community service work research is a significant void of valuable data that validates the purpose or goals from community service participation as well as potential adjustments to increase student perceived benefits from volunteering activities.

### **Audience**

The research on examining the phenomenon of students' perceptions of benefits is intended to benefit students, teachers, administrators, education policymakers, educational institutions, community members, and civic engagement organizations. Studies have found that both students and local community organizations benefit from participating in youth civic engagement activities (Loupe, 2000). Using student feedback to improve schools' community service programs, students increase the gains of building character by taking on altruistic endeavors, encounter a variety of challenges, and gain

new perspectives about the community and society as whole (Riordan, 2013). The community also gains an increased number of volunteers from those students who find their experiences meaningful, and those who have a positive experience are more likely to continue volunteering within their communities beyond graduation, which means their service will become purely voluntary (Schroeder, Graziano, Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 2015). Administrators can use this study's findings to establish productive and educationally effective community service programs, and community members and organizations can become aware of the work required of students and have the opportunity to work with their local schools to address their community needs through the high schools' community service programs.

### **Setting of the Study**

The study collected data from a private school located in southern Florida using an online survey via Survey Monkey. Participants accessed the participation letter and survey link from their school advisors' online course webpage, or the link that was sent to their school email account using a snowball sampling. Students who are in Grades 9-12 at a school that requires community service as a graduating requirement and who have completed a minimum of one community service work hour was requested to answer survey questions voluntarily.

### **Researcher's Role**

The researcher has been in the educational field since 2004 as a high school teacher and other various roles in the school community, including community service activities advisor, in California, Florida, and New York, and a wide range of socioeconomic background student demographic scholastic settings with a mandatory

community service-graduating requirement. Halfway through the 2008 school year, the researcher created and piloted a community service volunteer high school program with three participating students that increased to 28 participating students, the recommended maximum number of participating students per teacher, by 2010. In 2014 and 2015, the researcher independently volunteered to chaperone a weeklong abroad community service trip to Haiti to help clean and repair homes, as well as organize and play games and interact with orphaned children. In 2016, the researcher became the first teacher club advisor for a community service club at an online private school connected to a university with students from various parts of the globe. The researcher facilitated an opportunity for students to research, plan, and execute a weeklong abroad community service trip in Costa Rica to teach English to residents in a struggling community. The researcher's role is to provide the online link survey to teachers to administer to students; the survey is the primary instrument used to collect data for this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the phenomenon of students' perception of learning from community service work using the social constructivist theoretical framework provided the focus for the relationship between students' perception from their community service experience and schools' approach, specifically the school's available and accessible community service resources. Students' feedback on their perceived benefits from their community service based on their schools' community service program implementation method and support resources serve as an evaluation of the usefulness and accessibility of schools' community service support resources. Benefits in this study is defined by any positive entity achieved from

community service work experiences as perceived by the student. This research identifies the strength and nature of the relationship between specific variables and students' community service experience benefits. Students performing community service were created for students to learn through experiences and instill a lifelong sense of civic duty (Cherry, 2012). Identifying students' perception of information or skills learned from their community service work allows schools to identify the task requirement's areas of weaknesses and strengths, data that can contribute valuable information to improve the currently implemented community service programs, and increase beneficial results for the student, school, and community (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Kiesa, Godsay, & Sullivan, 2012). Moreover, students' evaluation of their civic engagement service experience potentially provides schools with the opportunity to adjust its civic engagement program to benefit both students and communities (Kackar-Cam & Schmidt, 2014).

Students' account from their community service experiences was used to measure the variables that influence the student's perception from their community service experience, as well as an evaluation method many schools neglect to utilize as it would hold the school accountable to provide quantifiable evidence as adding a community service graduation requirement as a valuable educational task. Analyzing the obtained data revealed common themes and trends of problematic areas in the current community service program; given this information, theoretical remedial solutions may be proposed, applied, and assessed to improve student perceived community service experiences.

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question 1.** What are the participants' perceptions of the availability of community service guided learning resources correlation to the participants' ratings of

their capacity to complete their community service work?

Rating how available are the resources correlating with their rating how much the resource helped for them completing work

**Research Question 2.** What are the participants' perceptions of the availability of community service guided learning resources correlation to the participants' ratings of the value to them of learning about their community's needs?

**Research Question 3.** What are the participants' perceptions of the availability of community service guided learning resources correlations to the participants' ratings of the value of their community service work to their community?

**Research Question 4.** What are the participants' perceptions of the availability of community service guided learning resources correlation to the participants' ratings of the enjoyment of their community service work to their community?

The following school community service resources that effect student perception of his or her benefits from community service performed in the research study was based on the following factors:

1. List of examples of community service work,
2. List of local community service sites,
3. School community service coordinator or guide,
4. Reflection or discussion post community service work,
5. Community service work tied to academic work (addressed in class),
6. A guide to match student interest with type community service work,
7. Identification of community service purpose or goals, and

8. Authentication of student's completed community service work (e.g. form to submit with hours completed and/or community service work site).

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, civic engagement is identified as work to make a change in the civic life of an individual's community using his or her combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. The constructs, or terms, below have been identified in the research literature as necessary for civic engagement (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, 2019). The terms are defined to establish a concrete understanding that community service is characterized as civic engagement.

*Civic action* is participation in activities such as volunteering or service-learning to help better the community (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009, p. 617).

*Civic commitment or duty* is willingness to make positive contributions to society (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009, p. 617).

*Civic skills* are the ability to be involved in civil society to make positive contributions to society (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009, p. 617).

*Community-based learning* requires students engage in actively addressing mutually defined community needs (as a collaboration between community partner faculty, and students) as a vehicle for achieving academic goals and course objectives (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013, p. 9).

*Community service* "volunteers" participate because they are required to by academic institutions (Ryan, 2012).

*Service-learning* is an" educational activity, program, or curriculum that seeks to

promote student learning through experiences associated with volunteerism or community service. Service-learning emerges from helping others and reflecting how you and they benefited from doing so” (Ryan, 2012, para. 2). Students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013, p. 9).

*Social cohesion* is sense of reciprocity, trust, and bonding to others (Bobek, Zaff, Li & Lerner, 2009, p. 617).

*Volunteerism* is “the genuine devotion of time to a cause without receiving compensation” (Ryan, 2012, para. 2). Students engage in activities where the emphasis is on service for the sake of the beneficiary or recipient; client, partner (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013, p. 9).

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Student perception is discussed from an information-processing framework, and the components of this framework are related to learning phenomena. Research on student perceptions about different community service resources for community service. Two predominant features are task demands, including instructional activities and teacher behavior, and classroom organization. Students' cognitive mediation for civic engagement activities is a useful extension to research on learning. The literature review addresses the learning theories that initiated schools adoption of community service, or civic activities, into the academic institution, as well as discusses the factors that affect student's perceptions of their benefits based on his or her community service school's various methods program implementation. The historical context of community service and the conceptual framework on which it is based on as part learning and developing students' knowledge, awareness, and sense of civic duty through civic engagement are addressed. Various peer-reviewed articles and research using various instruments, analysis, and data collection methodologies are included to provide evidence of this research's current relevance and significance.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Educational institutions inclusion of community service as learning stems from following theoretical frameworks: Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, John Dewey's social education reform, David Kolb's experiential learning theory, and Charmaz's grounded constructivist theory (Dongyu, Fanyu, & Wanyi, 2013). Piaget's theory was not intended for education methodology,



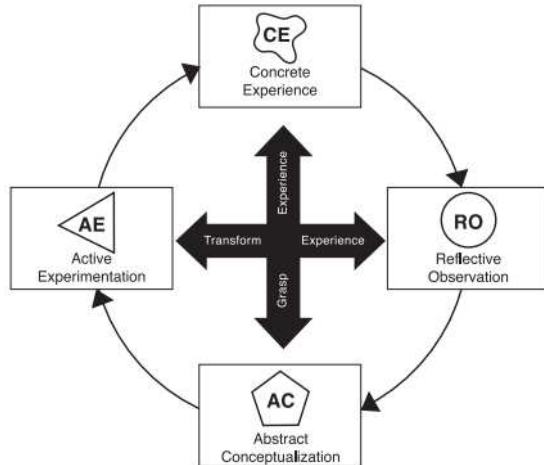
but educational programs have been constructed based on his cognitive development theory, essentially guiding students' learning in social environments. Piaget recognized that guided learning in one's social environment produced the most positive benefits in children (Piaget, 1976). Piaget established that guided learning, a support learning resource, maximize student positive benefits.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that social interaction are continuous stage changes in children's thinking and behavior that can vary significantly among cultures. The theory indicates that a child's development hinges on social interaction and the tools that the culture provides to support perception of his or her world view (McLead, 2007). Three cultural tool used to develop an individual's world perception and conform to social norms are (a) imitative learning, where one individual imitates others behaviors; (b) instructed learning, where an individual uses instructions to self-regulate; and (c) collaborative learning, where a group of peers endeavor to understand each other and work together toward a specific goal or gain a specific skill (Zhou & Brown, 2015). This theory concludes that children's knowledge and cognition are constructed from his or her social environment and cognition construct children's knowledge; thus, communication is a significant role in development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Problems with Vygotsky's theory are that it is applicable to all cultures, all social environments are conducive for learning, and all social interactions result in positive learning outcomes (Zhou & Brown, 2015). Both Vygotsky and Piaget's learning theories established that an environment is a direct contributor to one's learning.

Philosopher John Dewey, a pragmatist philosopher with progressive ideas about learning and education, proposed that a critical instrument to education reform is hands-

on education that would contribute to social development (Williams, 2017). The need to raise civically aware community members, provide "real-life" experience to youth, and aid a community without economic means are a few of the factors that grafted civic engagement to education (Zhou & Brown, 2015).

Influenced by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, psychologist David Kolb developed and proposed Experiential learning theory, "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Experiential learning encapsulates both Vygotsky's and Piaget's recognition of the societal component as an essential element for maximizing student learning outcomes (Zhou & Brown, 2015). His theory approaches learning holistically and recognizes that several factors influence individual learning styles, such as personality type, subject and skills strengths, career or work choice of interest, current level ability and knowledge, and adaptive capabilities (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory states that learning or meaning conceptualizations, reflective observations, and active experimentation is based on participants experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). David Kolb identified unknown benefits from high school students who completed community service hours as a significant problem in 1996 that needed to be addressed, and that utilizing individual learning styles could potentially increase positive benefits from experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). Figure 1 is diagram to illustrate individual learning styles and to provide an explanation of a cycle of experiential learning that applies to all learners (Kolb & Kolb, 2017).



*Figure 1.* The Experiential Learning Cycle. Source: Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *ELTHE: A Journal for Engaged Educators*, 1(1), 7-14.

The Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) model demonstrates that during the learning process, learners must continually choose which abilities to use in a certain learning situation and resolve learning abilities that are on opposite ends of a spectrum (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002). Learners address the tasks of understanding an experience and view the experience from different points of view within a spectrum of approaches. It is important to note that learners also must go outside of their comfort zone with the opposite approach on the spectrum for the learning experience to be effective (Kackar-Cam & Schmidt, 2014). When a learner is more comfortable perceiving new information in a concrete manner and actively experimenting during the processing of the experience, the learner then will have to use abstract conceptualization and reflective observation to complete the cycle of effective learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). To clarify the relationship between the learning cycle and learning style with a more thorough definition, the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) 4.0 in Figure 2

provides a visual representation of various types of learning styles and the symbiotic predilections for the four modes of the learning cycle:

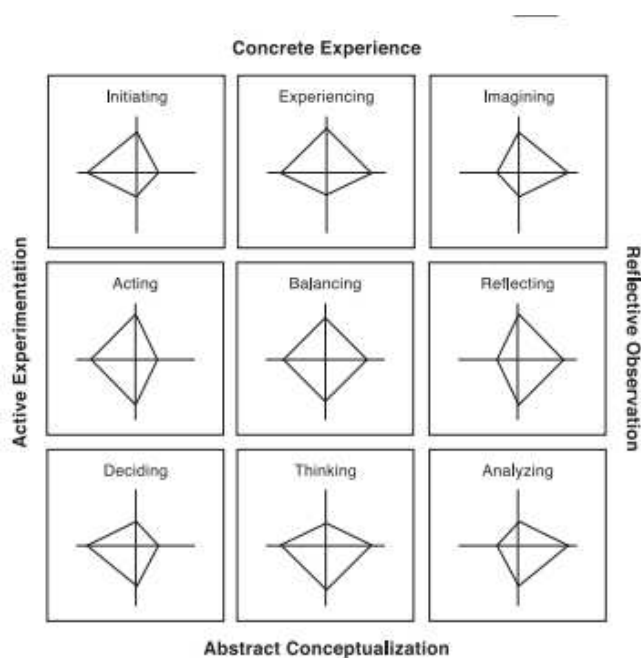


Figure 2: The nine learning styles in Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) 4.0. Source: Source: Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *ELTHE: A Journal for Engaged Educators*, 1(1), 7-14.

Kolb's diagram identifies initiating, experiencing, imaging, reflecting, analyzing, thinking, deciding, acting, and balancing as specific styles of learning. See Appendix A for definitions of each style. A learner who experiments with models and manipulates them in the process of learning must also be able to conceptualize and form observations based on what he or she experiences. This must occur, even if the learners do not consider themselves strong in these areas' development (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002).

Constructivist grounded theory, developed in 2003, was developed from Straussian classical grounded theory. While grounded theory examines a population, constructivist grounded theory gathers information from studies' participants. As an epistemological stance, constructivism asserts that individuals construct reality as they

assign meaning to the world around them, created as individuals interact with and interpret these objects (Breckenridge et al., 2012). Constructivist grounded theory studies the relationship between the researcher and participants, and ‘an explication of what can be known is epistemologically subjective and ontologically relativist (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Meaning is constructed through the qualitative researcher’s interpretive understandings, an emic perspective, or the study of cultural norms that are specific to one group of people or within one culture that assumes a relativist and reflexive stance toward the data (Charmaz, 2009). Drawing from the epistemological, or the study of knowing; nature of knowledge, and ontological, or the philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations, are foundations of social constructivism, meaning is co-constructed with participants through interactive processes of interviewing, communication, and actions in practice (Nagy Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, 2008). It is from such reflexive processes that a new theory emerges, rather than being discovered in, the data reflecting practitioners’ lived experiences (Charmaz, 2009).

Research findings continue to identify that the most critical factor associated with a positive service-learning experience appears to be the student’s degree of interest in the subject matter. Subject matter interest is an especially important determinant of the extent to which (a) the service experience enhances understanding of the “academic” course material, and (b) the service is viewed as a learning experience (Astin, Vogelgansang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Constructivists' theoretical framework used in the research encompasses Piaget’s

Cognitive constructivism, Vygotsky's Social Cognitivism, and Kolb's Experiential Learning, Discovery Learning Theory. Students have mandatory community service hours and activities to complete, and an evaluation of their benefits from their community service based on the school's available community service resources provides a potential evaluation of the efficacy of both the accessibility and usefulness of the resources. Resources supplied to students that assist them in understanding examples of community service, lists of local community service sites, a guide or coordinator to assist students to choose to participate in a community service based on their interests and abilities potentially provide a more positive experience, as well as motivation to continue volunteering post high school graduation (Bobek, Zaff, Li, & Lerner, 2009). According to the Discovery Learning Theory, a positive experience propels student motivation to participate and learn (Jones & Hill, 2003). Identifying the purpose and goals of student participation in community service work, incorporating community service in an academic course addresses Vygotsky's social constructivism. Student reflection on his or her community service provides critical thinking opportunities that Kolb identifies as an essential piece for effective experiential learning.

### **Positivism Paradigm**

Positivism, or logical positivism, embraces the idea that the scientific method is the only way to establish truth and objective reality. Positivism is based on the perspective that science is the only foundation for true knowledge to be obtained, and that methods, techniques, and procedures used in the natural sciences offer the best framework for investigating and understanding the constructs and dynamics of the social world (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). The term 'positivism' reflects a strictly empirical

approach; a belief that knowledge is based directly on experience or perception, and that positivism stresses facts and the causes of behaviors. Positivism typically applies the scientific method to the study of human action.

Positivists believe that there is a reality independent of an individual's thoughts that can be studied through the scientific method. Positivists hold that there is a single, tangible reality that is relatively constant across time and setting. Part of the researcher's duty is to discover this reality. Positivists view reality as objective and independent of the researcher's interest. It is measurable and can be broken into variables. For the positivist, the nature of knowledge is inherent in the natural science paradigm. Positivists view knowledge as those statements of belief or fact that can be tested empirically – tested facts are confirmed and verified or disconfirmed through observation or experience rather than a theory or logical assumption, and are stable and can be generalized (Eichelberger, 1989).

In the positivism/post-positivism paradigm, the purpose of research is to predict results, test a theory, or find the strength of relationships between variables or a cause and effect relationship. Quantitative researchers begin with ideas, theories, or concepts that are defined as they are used in the study to point to the variables of interest. Positivist paradigm research approaches are quantitative and include experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, causal-comparative, and survey designs (Creswell, 2008). The techniques of gathering data are mainly questionnaires, observations, tests, and experiments. Within this context, "the purpose of research is to discover laws and principles that govern the universe and to predict behaviors and situations. The problem

statement at minimum specifies the variables to be studied and the relationship among them” (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012, p. 59).

The factors in this study are limited to the accessibility and availability and usefulness of a school’s community service resources. The “interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings,” the co-construction of data, the notion of relativism, and the predetermined lens through which data are processed (Breckenridge et al., 2012). Ideal for use in education, survey research is used to gather information about population groups to “learn about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 183). This research proposes to identify variables that contribute to students perceived learned outcomes based on a social setting, activities completed in a student’s community. Positivism is a paradigm that offers the most practical paradigm based on this nature of research (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012).

### **Civic Engagement in Education**

Civic engagement in education became popular when the percentage of youth participation in volunteerism dropped to 13.5 in 1989, and the need for youth to be more engaged with their community was recognized and evident in 1990 when the federal government began providing incentives for schools to adopt a community service requirement for all in the country (Cherry, 2012). The radically low percent created the urgency for youth civic engagement to increase, and as a result, more schools began including some form of civic engagement as a part of school curricula (Clemmitt, 2012). Schools have become motivated to implement community service as part of their curriculum for both potential benefits for students and government incentive funding (Cherry, 2012).



**Student benefits from community service work.** Walker's research identified the following benefits students gained from their community service: (a) improvement in grades, (b) higher attendance rates, (c) lowers drop-out rates, (d) development of personal and social responsibility, (e) builds positive and collaborative relationships between students and teachers and students and the community, (f) reverses student disengagement, (g) provides more motivation for learning, (h) develops a sense of civic and democratic awareness and responsibility, (i) fewer behavior problems, (j) exposure to different careers, and (k) crosses cultural and class barriers (Walker, 2008). As the civic engagement became more popular among educational institutes, more studies were conducted to investigate the relationship between civic engagement and student development (Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Research has shown that adolescents who engage in community service have reported to have an increase sense of responsibility, higher self-esteem, and higher resiliency (Ranapurwala, Casteel, & Peek-Asa, 2016). Volunteering aids adolescents in learning new skills that assist them in employment, such as leadership, communication skills, dependability, time management, and decision making (Bhaskar, 2015). Research has shown a connection between youth who volunteer and other forms of youth civic engagement; findings suggest that "among youth, volunteering plays a valuable role in shaping how youth learn to interact with their community and develop the skills, values, and sense of empowerment necessary to become active citizens" (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2005, p. 3). Students can gain "work and life experiences outside of the classroom's theoretical applications of skill sets, allowing students to apply their education directly to a real-life experience, thus increasing the student's sense of value of the curriculum and skills

taught at school” (Clinton & Thomas, 2011, p. 63). As community service becomes more common among graduation requirements, it has become an important part of the high school experience, especially for students who endeavor to highlight their accomplishments and experiences to college admissions officers or have opportunities to discover and develop new interests, increase creativity, and gain leadership skills (Riordan, 2013).

**Civic engagement inconsistent terms usages.** The American Psychological Association defines civic engagement is the following individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy: civic engagement houses various terms, which include but are not limited to volunteerism, community service, and service-learning. Civic engagement encompasses a wide range of activities, such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. More recent studies in the literature review have associated civic engagement terms with independent defining qualities, i.e. service learning is curriculum bound while community service is untethered to structured learning objectives like volunteering (Kawashima-Ginsberg, Kiesa, Godsay, & Sullivan, 2012). Youth civic engagement activities generally are intended to create civic awareness and socially benefit the individual and the community (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, 2019).

Volunteering, community service, service-learning, civic commitment, civic duty

and civic action are all forms of civic engagement, and terms are often used interchangeably when discussing youth involvement in their communities. Service-learning does not have to include a civic dimension and all forms of civic engagement are not service-learning. Civic engagement is a broader concept that may encompass, but is not limited to, service-learning. Service-learning differs from community service or volunteerism in two distinct ways: (a) the service activity is integrated with academic curriculum and content, and (b) students engage in reflection activities after their service experience and apply their learning in real-life activities (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, 2019).

A commonly accepted and established term is not required if schools accompany the civic engagement term with a clear definition and defining qualities affiliated with the chosen term. For *civic engagement* work to have “meaningful and long-term impact upon students, partners, and postsecondary institutions, each institution must undertake the difficult work of defining civic engagement for itself such that the definition aligns with the institution’s educational mission and local context” (Brabant & Braid, 2009, p. 61). Requiring students to do community service is essentially mandatory volunteer work and, without clarification of purpose and terms, are two opposing ideologies; mandatory indicates an action that must be done and eliminates the possibility of volunteering, an action of choice and free will. Students, who are uninformed about the beneficial gains and purpose, have reported negative attitudes and felt the civic obligation was forced servitude (Ryan, 2012). Although there are defining qualities to each civic engagement term, these terms continued to be used interchangeably. Earlier studies have tethered community service to a curriculum, but without established definitions among

civic engagement terms, it will remain unknown if community service is a graduation requirement or credit-merit toward graduation requirement is tied to a curriculum unless specifically stated (Pancer & Pratt, 1999). Community service has been defined as students engage in activities to enhance their own vocational career development (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013, p. 9). As illustrated in Figure 3, community service is identified as that recipients are the primary intended beneficiary; primary focus is to provide meaningful service; the intended education purpose is moral, personal, and social growth development; and the nature of service is based on the participants' interest, ability, and motivation.

	<b>COMMUNITY SERVICE</b>	<b>SERVICE LEARNING</b>	<b>INTERNSHIP</b>
<b>PRIMARY INTENDED BENEFICIARY</b>	recipient(s)	recipient(s) and provider	provider
<b>PRIMARY FOCUS</b>	providing meaningful service	providing meaningful service and enhancing classroom learning	learning by doing
<b>INTENDED EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE</b>	moral, personal and social growth and development	Academic learning, enhancing intellectual and civic engagement	Career development and professional preparation
<b>CURRICULAR INTEGRATION</b>	None	Fully integrated into curriculum	Co-curricular or supplemental
<b>NATURE OF SERVICE ACTIVITY</b>	Based on student interest/motivation	Based on course topic or discipline	Based on industry or career

*Figure 3.* Loyola University, New Orleans, Civic Engagement Terms Chart.

Research studies also show that definitions of community service and service learning have been closely related and even used interchangeably in some cases (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Several different terms, often proves to be confusing to students, are used to describe or refer to Community Service-Learning “community-based learning/education, Service-Learning, academic Service-Learning and curriculum-

based Service-Learning” (Bender & Jordaan, 2007 p. 633). The Bender and Jordaan studies suggested that community service programs lend the idea that definitive terms to establish a coherent and common understanding of civic engagement program defining qualities. One study that directly compares service learning and community service, in order to identify the unique contributions, if any, of course-based service beyond those of community service attempts to understand more fully how service learning enhances learning (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Until a concrete definition with qualifying activities are wholly recognized and used by society, it is the school’s responsibility to provide a definition and qualifying work for students. To develop a thorough literature review, research included the use of terms housed under civic engagements, such as service-learning, community-based learning, and community service.

**Varying civic engagement pathways in schools.** With the increased popularity of school’s adopting a community service requirement, more research studies have examined and compared the varying pathways to implementing a civic engagement school requirement (Cloyd, 2017). Schools that are unchained to state standards have the freedom to create its own pathway to civic engagements, and high school civic engagement studies have recommended that future research of schools’ approach to implementing a civic engagement programs and impacting factors should be conducted (Wray-Lake, Schulenberg, Keyes, & Shubert, 2017). While the popularity of the term “civic engagement” is evident in that it is now attached to many postsecondary programs, agreement regarding the meaning and purpose of such programming is hardly unanimous. For example, not all programs that institutions place under the general rubric of civic

engagement seek to address the civics of engagement. Brabant and Braid cited in 2009, a 2007 survey of the literature on engagement, where Swaner identified institutions tend to use one of two definitions that student civic engagement in very different ways. The first common civic engagement defining quality is when students are engaged in educational experiences that lead to better benefits; however, merely demanding students to perform a civic engagement activity does not automatically lead to students gaining a sense of “identity as citizens or increase their understanding of theories or practices of citizenship” (Brabant & Braid, 2009, p. 63). The second common civic engagement definition is a political driven learning activity for students to be engaged with communities not on school grounds with the purpose of developing students’ sense of citizenship, participation in democracy, and sense of social responsibility (Brabant & Braid, 2009).

Montana University currently is conducting studies of implementing service learning, a form of experiential education to gain a better understanding of how experiences instruct and how to guide students’ experience to develop positive benefits (Tanner, 2006). The university’s previous research findings reported that the most beneficial practices in experiential learning require a combination of classroom instruction, through which students gain the necessary foundational and professional skills, experience, and action on genuine community needs. Through this combined approach, students can take their knowledge bases and apply them to address an array of societal problems. This pedagogy practices structured time for students to reflect on their experience in the community setting, their roles, and their responsibilities members of the community (Leming, 2001). This practice does not restrict instruction and evaluation to teachers, but also professionals in fields from the community where students perform

their service. Potential problems with this new pedagogy require faculty to work as co-teachers with their community-based counterparts and work cohesively to benefit student-benefits (Walker, 2008).

**Community service educational and developmental purpose.** With the increased popularity of school's adopting a community service requirement, more research studies have examined and compared the varying pathways to implementing a civic engagement school requirement (Cloyd, 2017). Researchers consistently report a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility, more positive attitudes toward adults and others, more active exploration of careers, enhanced self-esteem, growth in moral and ego development, more complex patterns of thought, and greater mastery of skills and content that are directly related to participants who reported positive community service experiences (Cherry, 2012). As with any intervention, effectiveness depends on how well the program is implemented. The National Center for Mental Health in Schools at the University of California of Los Angeles (UCLA) compiled findings study that suggests that students may be harmed when a service-learning program is implemented poorly based on following inquiries: (a) What values do service-learning curricula model and seek to promote? (b) What kinds of social and political relations do they ask students to imagine? (c) What kinds of relationships develop between students and those they serve? (d) What kind of society does service-learning lead students to work toward? (Westheimer, 2000).

Schools that have adopted a civic engagement graduation requirement or credit merit work in states without civic engagement standards or regulations have freedom to choose or create a civic engagement requirement approach. The increased amount of

research on school's adoption of civic engagements has exposed the problems listed below, which have repeatedly risen from implementation of a community service as a graduation requirement or merit credit toward graduation without structure or effective resources such as (a) inconsistent definitions and examples of community service work and services to be completed by students (Ryan, 2012); (b) inaccessible or absent resources to assist student in completing community service work, i.e. transportation to community service site, list of local community service opportunities (Bennett, Alsbury, & Fan, 2016); (c) poorly implemented programs with absent or unclear goals and objectives of student benefits from completing the work (Kahne, Westheimer, & Rogers, 2000); (d) unestablished or informal relationships between the community and the schools to help guide students community service work, as well as efficiently fulfilling services and completing work needed in the community (Clinton & Thomas, 2011); and (e) lack of or unstructured curriculum for students to identify skills or knowledge gained from their community service work (Cherry, 2012).

Ryan's 2012 text indicated that providing students with a goal and purpose will result in substantially improved student perceptions and benefits from their community service experience. Research has shown that students will gain a critical understanding when students are able to discuss and question cause and effects of social issues, yet there are many service programs that do not examine causes of social problems or possible solutions (Reichert, Frank, & Murray, 2018). Identifying currently implemented high school community service programs' educational value for students can be addressed through obtaining and documenting high school students' perceptions of their community service work experiences meaningfulness (Ryan, 2012).



**Common or popular civic engagement pathway approaches.** Schools will now commonly include information on the school’s website along with purpose and goals from community service work, list of community service work, list of local organizations and institutions for community service sites, verification forms for work completed, resources, amount of time needed to be completed. Pittsford High School does promote civic engagement by allowing students to earn credit toward their high school diploma and as a requirement to earn a diploma “with honors”. Pittsford High School’s website homepage provides a link to a page that has a menu of community service information options “Pittsford Schools Community Service Program” that provides links for “frequently asked questions”; “Timesheet”; “Opportunities”; “Pathways to college & career readiness: what are career clusters”; “Form for credit”; and “Agency Request for Volunteers”. Pittsford Central School District clearly identifies that community service is not required for graduation, provides a specific amount of hours needed for each amount of credit that can be earned, amount of community hours needed to graduate “with honors”, a list volunteer opportunities at school, general community volunteer sites, such as senior living homes, hospitals, soup kitchens, etcetera, as well as a monthly updated link to specific local community service opportunities (Pittsford Central Schools, 2019).

School will provide information to students such as the amount of community service hours required, a short statement of community service work purpose, identifies both qualifying and unqualifying community service work, contact school faculty or staff member for assistance, verification form for proof of community service work completion, and link for possible local community work sites; Lyons Central School District school’s community service requirement employs this approach information can

be found on the school's website, Appendix B contains a copy Lyons Central School District's community service requirements approach among schools (Lyon Central School, 2019).

Schools may also have civic engagement activities are embedded in a required course: Webster High School requires 12 grade students complete *Citizens in Action* course, stating a prerequisite of a "desire to make a difference . . . students will learn and apply the skills of citizenship to bring about change and exemplify Margaret Mead's ideals. . . students will be expected to take their learning from the classroom to the real world" (Webster School District, 4-Year High School Plan, 2019-2020 Course Description Book, p. 62).

Although the school does not hold a mandatory community service graduation requirement according to the posted graduation course curriculum, *Citizen in Action* is a required course containing tasks of students performing "real world" engagement activities to be applied outside of the classroom. This indicates that high schools are not required to enforce a mandatory civic engagement requirement as independent program or task. Additionally, Schools also have the freedom to change its approach to a civic engagement requirement without school board or stakeholders approval: Brighton High School required students to complete 20 hours of community service by the end of each school in Grades 9-12 as of 2017 but was informed that community hours were no longer required according to a school staff member when contacted in July 2019. Further research on the Brighton Central School website revealed that community service was embedded in three different courses: Health, Mountain Bound Leadership, and Extended

Studies Seminar. Health, a required course for graduation, course description program of study reads:

Required for Graduation. This half-year course examines topics that affect the health status of teens. The course uses the concepts used in the book *The [sic] 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* to help focus on what students can do to be more proactive. Six skill areas (communication, decision-making, planning and goal setting, self-management, stress management and advocacy) are included within the content areas of alcohol and other drug use and abuse, sexuality, as well as the American Red Cross CPR and AED units.

There is a term project required from every student. This is a community service project consisting of a minimum of 25 hours in which students seek out an agency locally or nationally to serve. This community service must occur during the semester in which the course is completed or during the summer before their sophomore year. The summer volunteer experience will also include 25 hours. Before the start of a student's [sic] project a contract is required, the contract ensures that all parties involved understand the project and placement; parents, agency supervisor, student and teacher. The project will count as the final exam grade for the course. (Brighton Central Schools, 2019, para. 1-3)

("New York State Diploma Requirements Applicable to All Students Enrolled in Grades 9-12", 2019).

Schools in states without civic engagement requirements have the liberty to choose and change their approach to mandatory civic engagement requirements without the department of education scrutiny. Schools' civic engagement programs vary widely

in scope and quality. Although states may have adopted a community service requirement for a high school diploma, University of Maryland researchers discovered that differences in policies on civic engagement: Volunteering were not associated with the widely disparate state-level rates of volunteering and giving, and volunteering in high school looked very different in different states. Kansas, Maine, and Nebraska led the country, with more than 40% of students volunteering—while in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Tennessee, fewer than 1 in 5 teenagers got involved. Top-10 states Maine and Michigan both have service-learning requirements in their civics standards, but fellow leading states Kansas and Nebraska do not. Among the 10 states with the lowest volunteer rates, Alabama requires service learning, while Tennessee does not. In Maryland, the only state that requires community service hours for graduation, 34% of high school students and 33% of college students reported volunteering. That puts the Old-Line State in the top 20 states for volunteering among those age groups, but far below the top volunteering states (Sparks, 2019).

Loope's 2009 study identified that Chicago administrators perceived school systems with successful civic engagement programs included building community support, allowing students to decide the type of work, training teachers support student learning from his or her civic engagement experience, recognizing student projects, and having students reflect on their civic engagement work as critical program components. The lack of providing civic engagement curriculum or support learning resources have resulted in school's failure of students' embracing civic responsibility. In a study of two schools 840 miles apart, high school juniors in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, and Chicago Illinois Public Schools required students to complete a community service as a graduation

requirement. Jefferson eliminated the community service requirement during 1999-2000 school year because educators believed that the service requirement was competing with academics. Chicago, however, had established a successful program that included thousands of participating students. Chicago school district had implemented a civic engagement high school graduation policy in 1997, giving them an additional year than Jefferson to prepare a program (Loope, 2000). Studies continue to suggest that school's structure and support for learning from community service activities are essential to students' academic and personal benefits gained.

**Civic engagement variables in education.** Prior studies have shown that factors outside of the school's scope, such as parental involvement and religion, are influential factors in students' learned outcomes from community service (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Metz & Youniss, 2003; Smith, 1999); however, only the variables controlled by the school was included in this study as the school is mandating that students must complete a set number of civic engagement hours as a graduation requirement or awarding credit toward graduation for completed civic engagement work, and thus, the school was solely accountable for students' learned outcomes. Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives to affect both the learner and the agency or community served. It combines volunteer work with opportunities for reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and content knowledge. When students cleanup trash from a body of water located in their community, they are doing volunteer work; however, when they collect trash from a body of water in their community and then analyze it, write a report about their findings for their science class, and share the report with neighborhood residents, they are both

volunteering and learning; this is commonly identified as service-learning. Students are providing an important service to the community and, at the same time, learning about water quality and laboratory analysis, developing an understanding of pollution issues, learning to interpret science issues for the public, and practicing communications skills by speaking to residents. They may also reflect on their personal and career interests in science, the environment, and public policy. It is a significant asset to both for the community and student to add a learning component to community service activities in an intentional way. Students begin to apply learned skills and information in an authentic setting as opposed to a classroom setting that only offers theoretical applications.

Volunteer Projects with potential learning components is identified in Appendix C (McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca, & Malak, 2004). Youth gain an opportunity to test, strengthen, and apply their academic studies and skills. They can explore career options, develop collaboration and problem-solving skills, and learn the importance of civic participation. According to a study by the National Youth Leadership Council, youth who participated in service that included a structured reflection of the type found in service-learning achieved positive civic outcomes in adulthood (Finlay, Flanagan, & Black, 2007). Evaluating implemented civic engagement work adopted by schools should include what students have learned to benefit the community. The youth-generated service-learning plan will be an important tool to measure project outcomes and the schools' accountability of student learned outcomes. One recommended plan includes:

- (a) results of the community scan or research findings that support the need for the planned project or activity, (b) the intended outcomes of the project or

activity, (c) the roles and responsibilities of various partners and participants, (d) a budget, (e) transportation plan, (f) an evaluation protocol, and (g) timeline. The plan provides an overview and direction for the project but can be changed and revised at any time. The process of designing and planning a project is one that will equip youth with skills and experiences they can apply in their classes, work, and personal lives. (McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca, & Malak, 2004, p. 53)

**Linking academics to community service work.** A 2007 study by Roehlkepartain, concluded that integrating central elements of effective service-learning is essential to maximizing benefits gained from structured civic engagement such as providing teens with authentic leadership positions. By providing guidance, development goals, reflection activities, and performing shorter, more frequent services over a longer span of time results in an increased efficiency of meeting the needs of the community (Roehlkepartain, 2007).

Service learning represents a potentially powerful form of pedagogy because it provides a means of linking the academic with the practical. The more abstract and theoretical material of the traditional classroom takes on new meaning for the student when he or she can apply learned knowledge and skills toward a life work endeavors. At the same time, the student benefits from the opportunity to connect the service experience to the intellectual content of the classroom. Both the qualitative and quantitative findings provide strong support for the notion that service-learning courses should be specifically designed to assist students in making connections between the service experience and the academic material (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Several superintendents, including Robert H. Holster, superintendent in Passaic, surmised that service must be

embedded into the curriculum for the most effect impact on student benefits (Loope, 2000).

**Teachers' roles in students' community service experience.** A number of international studies suggest that Service-Learning can foster student teachers' engagement with the profession, enhance their self-esteem, their leadership and their mentoring ability, and increase their respect for and understanding of diverse communities (Henderson & Brookhart, 1997; Shimmons-Torres, Drew-Cates, Johnson, & Overbeek, 2002). It can also provide a compelling and broadening context for the transformation of teacher learning, leading to new understanding of ways of connecting with students at the margins of society (Bender & Jordaan, 2007). Modern educational goals have increasingly emphasize the importance of problem-solving and interpersonal skills, and studies continue to prove that these goals are not being developed through passive, rote-oriented learning focused on the memorization of disconnected facts, but rather having a deeper understanding supporting the transfer of skills and use of knowledge in new situations fostered or facilitated (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

Direct reports on student service requirements have been profoundly successful when paired with teachers who have had access to service guidance training, and that lack of preparation of the school and teacher has contributed to unsuccessful student service in the community requirement (Loope, 2000). Learning from inquiry challenges that are planned and well-supported so that students in fact learn, rather than going through the motions without thought through discoveries has resulted in little knowledge gained rather than developing critical thinking and observational skills. Research syntheses have documented the advantages of inquiry-based learning over expository



forms of instruction for the transfer of learning to new contexts, and have also found that the benefits for achievement are greater for students who have received useful guidance from their teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). The extent to which the service experience is enhanced by the academic course material depends in part upon the amount of training that the student receives prior to service participation (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Research has shown students will increase their understanding to ask questions to solve problems when learning is connected to prior knowledge and experience, actively engaged, and emotionally invested about the work they are doing in the community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

**Significance of student compatibility with community service work.** Theorists and studies have concluded that an increase of students reporting positive or beneficial learning experience when the student has a positive attitude about a task, which results in an increased social awareness and sense of responsibility to become productive citizens within and beyond the school (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Kolb identified four different learning styles as the converger, diverger, assimilator, and accommodator, all four learning styles are based on two major features: active/reflective and abstract/concrete (Cherry, 2012). Although establishing learning styles structure a more efficient community placement for students, the divisions may possibly limit and exclude students from positive opportunities due to a placement that is not compatible with a student's strongest learning style. Kolb's experiential learning focuses on adaptation and learning as opposed to content and outcomes since knowledge is gained from processing the experience both subjectively and objectively (Cherry, 2012).

Variables that affect student's interpretation from his or her community service work is socioeconomic background, personality, skill ability, and maturity level, access to community service setting (McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca, & Malak, 2004). Neurological data, longitudinal ethnographic studies, naturalistic observational research, and experiments about short and long term learning provided evidence that short term interest stimulates cognitions and increases attention, which leads the learner to generate questions, and sustains engagement in learning activities; long term learning interest increases employment or career direction and educational opportunities. Interests can also support academic resiliency, for example, in overcoming challenges in processing text or persevering in difficult tasks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Students have stated that volunteer opportunities that are of interest to the student provide a stronger sense of valuable contribution from their community service work than volunteer work that is not appealing or desirable (Sparks, 2019).

**Significance of reflection and discussion.** Reflection provides students an opportunity to critically think and communicate about complex and abstract issues (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). The positive effects of service can be explained in part by the fact that participation in service increases the likelihood that students will discuss their experiences with each other and that students will receive emotional support from faculty. Both the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that providing students with an opportunity to "process" the service experience with each other is a powerful component of both community service and service learning. Compared to community service, taking a service-learning course is much more likely to generate such student-to-student discussions.

The second most significant factor in a positive service-learning experience is whether the professor encourages class discussion. Thus, service learning and community service enhance student development in part because they increase the odds that students will interact with each other and experience personal support from professors. Additional records of meaningful learning are discussion with other students; discussion among peers has strongly shown mediation of the effects of service on these outcomes. In other words, the opportunity to “process” the service experience with other students appears to be a powerful component of both community service and service learning (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000).

Passaic’s Holster provides evidence of that successful service programs lay out expectations that are measurable and observable such as improvements in student attendance, up to 93.4% daily in 1999-2000 from 90.1% the year before, lower dropout rate down to 10.6 % from 12.2% and fewer student suspensions, a drop of nearly 1,100 in a single year, largely to the community service students have performed (Loupe, 2000). Both qualitative and quantitative studies emphasize, once again, the significance of reflection as a method of connecting the service experience to the academic course material. Varying forms of reflection such as discussions among students, discussions with teachers, and written reflection in the form of journals and papers. Reflection, and interaction with faculty facilitate positive change in the affective and behavioral measures were found to improve the students’ positive civic engagement work perceptions (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000).

Reflection, another staple of service-learning pedagogy, has shown improved the quality of student civic engagement regardless of the type of civic engagement activity

the student performs (Daynes & Wygant, 2003). The structured reflection that the students do before, during, and after performing the community service-learning activities is also noted as an important feature of community service-learning, as it gives the students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and, in this way, determine their value for their learning, as well as an opportunity for schools to change and adapt resources or curriculum to better meet students' needs and achieve the activities' goals (Bender & Jordaan, 2007).

**Student feedback value.** The student's personal feelings, inclinations, values and experiences has been identified as an important source of information for schools to improve how it can improve implementing methods of implementing community service requirements to maximize student benefits from community service experiences (Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1999). Individuals learn what has meaning for them personally, and therefore they create their own learning through selective perception (Carl, 2000). Students who are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making become more deeply involved, and as a result students' motivation, participation and benefits improves (Myers & Bellner, 2000). Briggs and Sommeveldt study in 2002 identified students' evaluation of benefits from community service as a significant resource in adjusting the community service implementation improvements, transforming a community service program in authentic and relevant ways. Later studies continue to confirm the importance of students' responses as way to improve the connection between the students' education and their personal experience as well as the presence of different identities (Bender & Jordaan, 2007).

Framed by self-determination and identity development theories, a 2014 study investigates the relationship between high school reported students' feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness and the process of participation in a community-based service-learning project (Kacker-Cam & Schmidt, 2014). As earlier stated, Kolb's experiential learning, participation in organized activities identifies adolescents as actively and consciously taking part in their own development (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). Students limit their possibility of learning and cognitively developing from their civic engagement work if they approach the work with the attitude of doing the work for the sake of meeting a requirement; benefiting from civic engagement work requires critical reflection (Van Goethem, Van Hoof, Orobio, & Van Aken, 2014).

Apart from the need of adolescents' interpretation of their own activities as an essential factor in understanding the effects of their civic engagement activity participation in their development, studies have found a discrepancy between students' perception of the value gained from their community service and their teachers' report of the civic engagement activity. Student autonomy of choosing his or her own project was found to be another significant issue. Kacker-Cam and Schmidt 2014 study found that teachers or mentors with too much control over a student's experience showed a discrepancy of perceptions of benefits between students and teachers' evaluation while a positive correlation was found between students who perceived themselves to independently make decisions and reflect on their experiences and a positive evaluation of their service project.

Studying the service experience as reported by students inform schools to the variations in students' perceptions of service involvement to which would not have

access if the evaluations of outside observers. This study reinforces the value of adolescents reports in service as a significant component in designing programs that create optimal civic engagement experiences for adolescents (Kacker-Cam & Schmidt, 2014).

**Recording student community service work.** Authenticating and tracking students' civic engagement work and hours provides students the opportunity to be held accountable for their work, a basic form of reflecting and recounting their work, and limits their ability to inflate hours or manufacture civic work completed. Again, according to Loope's 2000 study, learning from service experience needs to be tracked to avoid student inflating hours or completely manufacturing hours of the community service work he or she had completed. Although this adds more responsibility to school staff, as learning and development activity, students' civic engagements and services should be recorded and documented to increase the probability of the work being authentically completed, and in turn, have actual experience for students to potentially learn and develop.

Literature review has established unstructured and unguided learning from community service experience has increased students reporting negative or indifferent perceptions from their community service work. Although community service is generally not identified as an activity that has structured curriculum as opposed to service-learning programs that connect formal education and community work experience together, both are intended for students to learn, gain a sense of value the student has contributed to the community and foster continued civic engagement

activities post-graduation from the work experience done in the community (Westheimer & Kahne, 2000).

A service-learning program is intended to provide meaningful, real world experiences that promote reflection on, and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the academic objectives of a course and/or major field of study (Caspersz & Olaru, 2017). The study provides specific definitions for volunteerism and service-learning; however, again, evidence of varying defining qualities is assigned to terms; this leads to a lack of an established common understanding of what qualifies as community service, volunteer work, service-learning, and experiential learning. The inconsistency among civic engagement terms potentially stems from goals and purpose of participating in these community activities (Westheimer & Kahne, 2000). Currently, 33 states include service-learning in their state academic standards or frameworks; 23 states allow or require school districts to award credit toward graduation for service-learning; and 21 states have adopted policy stating that student engagement is positively affected by participation in service-learning.

As states continue to add community service as part of high school graduation requirement, it is becoming more imperative to adopt a program that is meaningful and effective. In August of 2013, Education Week published the article “Community Service Requirements Seen to Reduce Volunteering” that affirms schools' service-learning programs require planning and time for students to reflect on their experiences in order to be meaningful. After the service requirement, Maryland seniors were “9.2 percentage points to 17.4 percentage points less likely to volunteer” (Sparks, 2019, para. 3). Despite the need for some remnants of guidance for students independently navigating work

within their community, there is a concern that required service tied to curriculum becomes laborious and another burdensome responsibility shoulder by faculty “It is a rather well-known symptom that anything institutionalized quickly becomes a chore. And that people avoid chores unless forced,” (Sparks, 2019, para. 4). Sparks’ 2019 article continues to identify strong leadership, an expectation that students can make a positive difference in their own community, a diverse set of opportunities, student connect with the cause or work, and school-wide support promotes a sense of inclusion as variables that influence students’ positive perceptions from their community service work.

### **Impactful Stakeholders on Community Service Programs**

Stakeholders in student civic engagement participation include but are not limited to the school administration, faculty, and student body as well as community members. Bender & Jordaan’s 2007 study rationalizes that the institution, academic staff, students and community, as critical stakeholders of civic engagement work. As significant and direct stakeholder, students are entitled to the opportunity to reflect on and be represented in the implantation of learning form civic engagement work, and student perceptions of and attitudes about their community service experience should be information used to adapt and mold community service program implementations to best meet students’ learning opportunities (Bender & Jordaan, 2007). For students to perceive their civic engagement experiences to be successful, students want to have a voice in identifying the community problem, planning the solution to the problem, and having time to reflect on their experiences (Morgan & Streb, 2001).

**Community and the student.** Finally, community relationships would provide



evidence of institutionalization when community agency resources are coupled with the academic institution to build reciprocal, enduring and diverse partnerships which mutually support community interests and learning goals (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Civic engagement activities have the potential to address coursework learning objectives through the application of their work in the community to prompt a positive change in the community, civic engagement projects that benefited both the student and the community. In the District of Columbia, high school geometry students improved their graphing skills with a community improvement project that graphed the number of liquor stores and liquor advertisements posted near churches, recreation centers and health facilities in the local neighborhood; students analyzed the data, then using concrete evidence, wrote to the mayor identifying specific city quadrants that contained the more liquor stores per quadrant and neighborhood improvement suggestions (Loope, 2000). Students were able to take knowledge acquired in the classroom and apply their learned skills in their community setting, experiencing the potential value of their mathematic skills and importance of content knowledge other than a grade or score on a standardized test. Additionally, “the positive effects of community participation suggest that joint programs of schools and communities provide additional chances to increase adolescents’ willingness to participate in the future” (Reichert & Print, 2018, p. 332). Schools working with the community show to be another influential factor that potentially contribute to students’ positive civic engagement. Unfortunately, Reichert and Print’s study was unable to identify, “how a school subject and school curriculum on civic and citizenship education would be most suitable to promote active citizens,” but was able to establish that there is a relationship between school curriculum and civic education in

facilitating informed citizens (Reichert & Murray, 2018, p. 335).

Community service, or civic engagement has shown to be a resource for schools itself; schools that may not have the funding for additional faculty to support students who need extra help to perform at level reading and parents may not have the spare funds to high a private tutor for their child now have access to additional support from older students who tutor the younger students in need of additional assistance (Loope, 2000). Again, study's findings show that high school students gain experience in teaching and exposure to different learning styles, practical application use of their in-class learning, and job-related experience.

### **Civic Engagement Program Gaps in Education**

Beyond the requirement being instilled by high schools; students are motivated to participate in community service to build up their resumes and gain an advantage of college admissions over their competitors. This motivation is self-serving and tends to provoke students to embellish services that they have provided or inflate hours completed, or simply do the work without making a connection so that the community service work may be added to their list of accomplishments. A 2008 survey of admissions officers from the top 50 colleges and universities by the organization DoSomething.org found that admissions officers consistently valued continuous volunteering over several years at a local place as opposed to a short-term stint overseas (Tugend, 2010). However, Larke's 2019 study surveys and semi-structured interviews with students about their week immersion stint in Mexico resulted in students feeling like that they had positive learning experiences. Students expressed that their Mexico volunteer civic engagement trip had a strong impact on a deeper sense of understanding

and empathy about migrants and migration policies, which in turn, ignited a motivation to continue to learn and work in unification with migrants (Larke, 2019). Larke's 2019 study findings indicated that experiential learning has the potential to be a strong form of learning to develop diverse cultural empathy globally.

For high school community service programs to have a positive impact on civic engagement, students must volunteer in a meaningful way and identify their volunteering as a positive experience. Researchers Henderson, Pancer, and Brown (2014) surveyed 1,293 respondents and conducted 100 semi-structured interviews with past participants of the mandatory community service program implemented by the Ontario Provincial Government in 1999. This was to identify how and why students generate positive evaluations of community service requirements and whether the diversity of implementation or the mandatory nature might account for negative reactions to volunteering (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown 2014).

To encourage a sense of civic duty among youths, mandatory volunteering requirements were put in place. Henderson, Pancer, and Brown (2014) found that if the mandatory volunteering were to be successful, voluntary organizations would need to provide students with opportunities to engage in volunteering that helps students to feel that they are making a difference. In addition, it offers them a chance to have fun, to connect with new people, and to gain an appreciation for what they have, as well as provide tangible benefits in terms of communication, leadership, and organizational skills, which potentially increase the likelihood those students, will emerge from the mandatory volunteering program with a positive view of their activities.

Reinders and Youniss' 2006 study found that the students suggested a number of possible changes to the administration of the program, including greater assistance within the school or community for locating volunteer placements, greater supervision of the way hours were spent and recorded, and an annual requirement for hours rather than 40 hours over the course of one's high school career. Regardless of students' own experiences, almost all the students in the sample hold volunteering and the mandatory volunteering program in high regard both for its positive impact on communities and for its positive impact on individuals. There remains to be a need for improved development of community service programs or resources if the purpose is to promote active citizenship. School involvement is essential, as is the type of volunteering experience enjoyed by individuals. Reinders and Youniss data emphasize the considerable variety in the experiences of students. Young people pursued a range of activities while volunteering, and such scope of experience is a significant influence of student assessments of their volunteering accomplishments. Those who had a difficult time securing their placement, who felt cheated by lax administration of the program, or felt that the tasks they completed were tedious or emotionally overwhelming, had lower positive assessments of their experiences than others (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown 2014). The study confirms, again, that poorly implemented community service, now paired with the work being a mandatory requirement has resulted negative, or less positive, student feedback (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014). More research is needed to assess how the curricular requirement of Student Service Learning (SSL) impacts these students relative to both their social development and academic achievement. To proceed with the current program requirements without such

knowledge is not good educational policy (Cloyd, 2017). This only serves to emphasize what is clear from the existing research on community service requirements, and that programs need to have certain characteristics in order to meet their goals (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown 2014).

**Evidentiary learning gaps community service programs.** In the last 15 years, curriculum development for student-community learning based programs has become increasingly popular among scholastic settings (Daugherty, 2009). Service learning has the potential to be a significant learning practice, and like other learning practices for students, civic engagement, or service-learning, community service, and volunteering should be executed well to produce positive benefits for students (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). Many schools are service learning on their campus to enhance their classroom content. According to Learn and Serve Clearinghouse, "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..." (Benefits of Student Participation in Community Service, 2005, p. 3). Despite that the popularity of mandatory civic engagement activities in high school, schools developing and implanting civic engagement curriculum remains as an unrequired policy. As schools continue to envelope community service hours to be completed by students as a graduation mandate, student learning and gaining valued experiences varies greatly from their work in their community due to an inconsistent structure, identification of qualifying community service work, authentication of community service work completed, and challenging community service work locations (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2014).

Unlike credited courses in schools, community service programs adopted by schools are not required to have set standards, structure or benefits depending on the state. The benefits from community service are not automatically gained by merely requiring students to complete a set amount of mandatory volunteering in their community, and the benefits will vary depending on the focus, scope, and quality of a service or service-learning experience (Roehlkepartain, 2007). Research studies have found a correlation between community service participants' negative attitudes to such factors as disorganization of service projects, lack of school guidance for placement, absent resources, and time constraints (Bennett, Alsbury, & Fan 2015). Negative or indifferent student attitudes resulting from experiences from a required task that is intended as a learning opportunity can stem from unknown or unclear objectives, unavailable needed resources, unchecked completion, or a lack of guided information (Cloyd, 2017). High school students have reported that when they are "thrust in a volunteer situation they don't understand or feel that they are simply being assigned made-up work, it can actually have a detrimental effect" (Tugend, 2010, p. 5). Participants who perceive their efforts as a type of busy work will be unprepared or disinterested and will have counterproductive results (Ryan, 2012). Students have reported apathetic, and in some cases, negative attitudes about civic engagements who attended a school that had implemented a community service graduation requirement without structure or available resources (Pancer, 2007). An extreme example of an adverse reaction to mandating community service as a graduation requirement was the case in 1993 of *Steirer v. Bethlehem Area School District*:

The Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the argument that a district's 60-

hour service requirement amounted to ‘involuntary servitude’ banned under the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery. The amendment bans ‘forced labor through physical coercion,’ not service that is ‘primarily designed for the students’ own benefit and education’ by teaching them about the value of community work. (Clemmitt, 2012, p. 84)

Neglecting to implement an effective method to teach students the purpose and value of an educational requirement decreases the possibility for students to gain benefits from their community service experience (Reinders & Youniss, 2006). The Bethlehem case demonstrates the need for schools to teach students the value of community engagement and how to identify potential benefits gained from the work done in the community (Ryan, 2012).

Research continues to indicate the need for research to validate a student’s learning and gaining skills is attributed to inconsistent program structure, the varying definitions of tasks that qualify as community work, authentication that the community service work was completed, and the inconsistent work and opportunity accessibility to students as perceived by students limits civic engagement potential as a learning entity. Without schools providing quality civic engagement resources, civic engagement activities learning maximum potential is restricted to teach children and teenagers understand the role they can play in their community to using their civic work “There is some cynicism among people that some portion of community service is prompted by students interested more in résumé-building,” said Richard G. Niemi, professor of political science at the University of Rochester (Tugend, 2010, para. 3).

Earlier studies concluded that service-learning did not seem to have a determinative effect on student attitudes about the quality of civic life, it did influence the way students understand the role of citizens in a democracy. “Most American Heritage students shared a set of attitudes about civic life, but service-learning students were more likely than others to believe that community service is the proper way for citizens to influence that civic life” (Daynes & Wygant, 2003, p. 86). Another study, with the help of colleagues, Joseph E. Kahne, a professor of education at Mills College, completed a survey of more than 500 teenagers in the 11th and 12th grades from a diverse set of 19 high schools in California that followed the students for up to three years after graduation and found students who were engaged in some sort of community service in high school, either mandatory or voluntary, were more likely to volunteer or be involved in some civic activity (Tugend, 2010). Professor Kahne’s student surveys found that volunteer work that had classroom learning attached to it that participants perceived more educational and contribution value from the work they had completed (Tugend, 2010). Professor Niemi stated that

if there is a forum to talk about and question the larger issues involved.

Otherwise, he said, students may believe that all problems are solved through individual efforts and government doesn’t have a role. They’ll see that the homeless don’t have food and that individuals help, but they won’t understand the connection between public policy and the homeless. (Tugend, 2010, para. 8)

Here the research attaches the idea of meaningful with connection. It is not enough that students are given guided curriculum, but that they connect with what their service is providing and connect the social constructions that create these societal deficiencies.



Furthermore, the study shows the profound results of attaching community service with classroom content, creating a connection between student learning in the classroom and learning in the community. “Most service programs do not examine causes of social problems or possible solutions and, therefore, play down the need for political engagement” (Tugend, 2010, para. 10). Again, research reiterates that young adults who are pushed into a volunteer situation that they are unprepared for, lack understanding of its purpose or feel that they are being forced to do busy work may have a negative effect. James E. Youniss, a research professor of psychology at the Catholic University of America, said an unpublished study of New York students found that students had negative feelings and perceptions of community service when students were told their work would help people in the community but were assigned menial jobs that seemed unrelated (Tugend, 2010).

### **Building on Previous Community Service Program Studies**

The strategy of inquiry utilized for advocacy/participatory is based on constructivist grounded theory. Previous research studies explored school’s academic support and social support for students while engaged in civic engagements and examining the variables that influence retention in community service activities.

“An Experiential Learning Perspective on Students’ Satisfaction Model in a Flipped Classroom Context” was a study that examined the relationship between student’s reported level of satisfaction from experiential learning and variables that affected students’ reported level of satisfaction, and the results showed that learning experience, perceived quality and perceived value are significant precursor for predicting students’ level of satisfaction (Xuesong, 2017). Previous studies continue to suggest that

future research of high school community service programs should examine the relationship of schools' support resources and students' reported experiences (Brabant & Braid, 2009). The assertion is made that students do not effectively learn citizenship responsibilities and develop humanitarian values without well-structured curriculum with correlating civic engagement activities (Brabant & Braid, 2009).

The study obtained information about students' perceived benefits from their community service, the participating community members' feedback about the level of help from the students' work provided, and the students' probability of continuing such voluntary work post-graduation. Another study identifies the benefits from serving their communities in many ways, as research from the Corporation for National and Community Service and other national youth-serving organizations<sup>1</sup> shows. Youth-focused programs also benefit when they go beyond simply offering volunteer projects for youth to engaging them in service-learning (McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca, & Malak, 2004).

### **Summary**

Adding service-learning to the volunteer projects offer can benefit both young people and your program. For youth, service-learning demonstrates the relevance and impact of their volunteering on their communities, their studies, and themselves (Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013). It can improve their self-image and self-esteem; help students: develop valuable study, communication, and job skills; and instill a lifelong ethic of service and good citizenship. For students, service-learning helps keep youth volunteers connected, engaged, and loyal to your program and agency. This, in turn, promotes volunteer retention and positive program outcomes (McKinney, Medvedeva,

Vacca, & Malak, 2004). Scales et al. (2006) recommended that more longitudinal studies to determine relationships between variables, particularly in terms of perceived benefits, should be conducted. For example, while their study (Scales et al., 2006) found higher levels of student service learning (SSL) participation were correlated with higher levels of academic achievement for SSL students, the researchers acknowledged that students who are motivated to participate in SSL might also be more motivated to achieve academically. Kackar-Cam and Schmidt (2014) acknowledged the homogeneous nature of their participant group and suggested that more studies are needed to explore the impacts of SSL on other demographics. More studies also need to be conducted to determine student perceptions of their own SSL experiences, since the quality of experiences has the potential to impact future volunteering (Kackar-Cam & Schmidt, 2014, p. 92).

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Overview

Schools in the United States continue to adopt community service as a graduation requirement for students; unlike all other high school graduation requirements, not all schools are required to provide student community service, or civic engagement, support resources or obtain evidence of students' benefits or benefits gained from students' civic engagement participation. Student perception of benefits based on school's civic engagement available and accessible supporting resources is valuable information to obtain as a measurement of civic activity engagement educational efficacy. The information from this study would provide schools the opportunity to improve or create a civic engagement program that could potentially increase the number of students who perceive benefits from their civic engagement participation.

The research study site is a southern Florida high school that has 100 community service hours as a mandatory graduation requirement. The factors for this study was available community service resources available and utilized by students to complete their community service resources. The outcome is each student's evaluation of each community service resource contribution to his or her participating in community service work, learning about the community's needs, feeling the community service work was valuable to the community, and enjoying community service work – the student's perceived benefits from his or her community service work based on the school's community service resources.

This chapter addresses the ethical considerations and procedures taken, the participants, the sampling procedures, the data collection process, the data analysis

procedure, the validity and reliability information. Students evaluated community service experience identified as positive and beneficial, on a Likert scale, is the outcome and factors are qualities tied to the community service program implemented, such as available resources, specified learning objectives, guidance counselor or community service coordinator, quality and quantity of work accountability, pre and post community service work meta-cognitive activities. This helps the researcher understand if, and which, community service resources are related to the students' perceptions of their community service experience. The researcher collected data that identifies students' overall perceptions of their community service work experiences and their awareness of potential contributing variables, factors identified from the literature review, to students' perceived experience about completed community service work using an online survey through SurveyMonkey.

### **Description of Variables**

The factors in the study are the availability and accessibility of the listed schools' community service resources (a) list of examples of community service work, (b) list of local community service sites, (c) school community service coordinator or guide, (d) reflection or discussion of completed community service work, (e) community service work tied to academic, (f) student interest in community service work, (g) identification of community service purpose or goals, and (h) student community service completed work is authenticated. The factors are used to establish the outcome variables: complete community service work, awareness of community's needs, value of work completed for the community, and enjoyment while performing community service. These outcomes were chosen based on research findings stated earlier in the literature review identified

the four outcome variables have a strong correlation with motivation and learning with community service work.

### **Participants**

Before beginning the study, the researcher received site approval from the school's principal. The target population are high school students who have either a mandatory community service set amount of hours completed as a requirement for their high school diploma; earn credit toward their high school diploma by completing the school's required amount of community service hours; or earn a school recognized award, honor or scholarship recognition for completing a set amount of community service hours as required by the school. Participants that are included are students in high school, Grades 9-12, and have completed at least one community service hour of work. Once the study receives Intuitional Review Board (IRB) approval, a snowball sampling method was employed, a sample method that the researcher asks participants to identify others to become members of the sample (Creswell, 2013). A weakness with using a snowball sampling method is it is not possible to determine the possible sampling error and make statistical inferences from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2013). However, a snowball method provides speedy access to a larger pool of potential participants.

**Inclusion criteria.** Students who currently in Grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 and have completed at least one hour of community service and attend a school in a state that has statewide high school service requirement, credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service or state explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation.

**Exclusion criteria.** Traditional public, charter, magnet, and online or virtual schools that are in states that do not have statewide high school service requirement, credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service or state explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation. Students who obtained outside assistance and guidance from their school's available resources were excluded from this study due to their experience and perceptions could potentially affect their responses and skew the intended research study's goals.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Students will respond honestly to survey questions
2. Accessibility of a school's community service resources will be based on if the school either has the resources posted on the school's website or school can provide documented evidence.
3. Availability of a school's community service resources will be based on if the school either has the resources posted on the school's website or school can provide documented evidence.
4. Benefits is any positive entity achieved from community service work experiences as perceived by the student.

### **Instrument**

A single instrument was employed to collect data for this study: a survey designed on SurveyMonkey and was given access to freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students who have completed a minimum of one-hour community service through a weblink. Using a Likert Scale is a 5-point scale ranging from one, "N/A (Not

Applicable) or school did not have this resource” to five, strongly agree (see Appendix F). The survey included 36 questions that asked students to rate each of the following 9 categories:

1. List of local community service sites
2. List of examples of community service work
3. School community service mentor, coordinator or guide
4. Community service work tied to academic work (addressed in class)
5. A guide to match student interest with type community service work
6. Identification of community service purpose or goals
7. Reflection or discussion post community service work
8. Authentication of student’s completed community service work (e.g. form to submit with hours completed and/or community service work site)
9. Providing transportation or transportation information to and from community service site.

Students were then asked to rate of each available school resource if it contributed school community service resources contribution to his or her participating in community service work, learning about the community’s needs, feeling the community service work was valuable to the community, and enjoying community service work. Each item was scored 0 to 4, with 0 being “N/A” to 4, “Strongly Agree”.

The survey includes 36 question. The survey questions 1 through 9, directly address research question one; survey questions 10 through 18 directly address research question two; survey questions 19 through 27 directly address research question three; and survey questions 28 through 36 directly address research question four. This



instrument is created specifically for the study. The researcher used a formative committee to assess and approve the validity and strength of the instrument (Ross, 2016). Committee members validating credentials regarding their knowledge about research instruments for measurement are the director of the Ph.D. program in Educational Research and Evaluation at a private university with prior experience as the Executive Dean of Licensure, Compliance and State Relations and Associate Dean of Doctoral Studies and is an Associate Editor for the Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, serves on editorial boards of scientific journals authored or co-authored over 20 research articles in peer reviewed scientific journals focusing on individual differences in reading and math skills. The final edited survey based on my research questions and objectives was administered to targeted population.

In a cross-sectional survey, the researcher collected information from a sample drawn from a population. A cross-sectional study can examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices. Attitudes, beliefs, and opinions are ways in which individuals think about issues, whereas practices are their actual behaviors, and some cross-sectional designs evaluate a program, such as a survey that provides useful information to decision makers (Creswell, 2013). It involves collecting data at one point of time. A cross-sectional survey design was used to evaluate the learning efficacy from community service experiences that is a graduation requirement or merits credit – collecting data from students who have completed a minimum of one community service hour and are currently in enrolled in high school Grades 9 through 12.

### **Validity of Web-Based Survey**

While hard copy surveys have been used as data collection instruments for decades, there are many limitations to these such as the survey getting lost in the mail either getting to the respondent or returning from respondent; the respondent mistaking the survey for junk mail if the envelope was not addressed in such a way as to alert the respondent to its contents; and technology-favoring respondents simply do not want to take the time to fill out a hard copy questionnaire that might have specific rules or guidelines to follow (i.e., only blue ink, limited or no space to add personal comments, etcetera). Caporali, Morisset, and Legleye in 2015 investigated an even more critical need for online survey data collection and storage, and that is the ease with which the information can be accessed and transmitted across the world for researchers to collaborate instantly with one another. Social scientists can now analyze data faster and more efficiently, which affords researchers the ability to replicate studies more expediently, as compared to waiting days or weeks for the hard copy to arrive, and then manually interpreting the data. Most online data collection programs have a data analysis program built into the survey aspect of the collection tool; with just a few mouse clicks, the data is instantly sorted and analyzed using any number of statistical analyses from which the researcher can choose.

Other positive aspects of using online survey data collection and storage are that, according to Caporali, Morisset, and Legleye's 2015 study, occurrences of scientific fraud have been reduced due to the number of field experts that can quickly review the data analysis and determine its reliability and validity. Online data collection also exposes more researchers to a broader range of experts, which can facilitate a

researcher's promotion within his or her field. *Measures and Survey Research Tools* (2018) explained some of the benefits of using online survey tools such as Survey Monkey. First, the survey is created online which makes editing your survey questions and responses very easy as compared to writing these by hand, and all the researcher needs is a valid email address from the respondent, which means the survey can be sent to as many people as needed, around the world, and nearly instantaneously, as compared to a hard copy survey that can be lost or very costly and time consuming with regards to postage and correctly addressing each envelope. The second advantage is that most survey data collection tools come with a built-in statistical analysis program, or the data can easily be cut and pasted into a separate analysis software, which significantly reduces manual data entry errors *Measures and Survey Research Tools* (2018) compared several of the most popular online survey tools, which included SurveyMonkey, Survey Gizmo, Qualtrics, and Amazon Mechanical Turk. Of these, Survey Monkey had a free basic plan (though a person can upgrade for more features for a fee), an unlimited number of surveys, 100 respondents per survey, 15 different question types from which to choose, 15 graphic survey templates, and real-time reporting of respondents' answers.

While Survey Monkey does have its statistical analysis program, the collected data can easily be transferred into SPSS, which is the most common statistical program used by social scientists (*Measures and Survey Research Tools*, 2018). Bentley, Daskalova, and White's 2017 study conducted a survey of utilizing over 1,000 respondents answering specific technology questions in order to determine which online survey data collection tool, Amazon Mechanical Turk or Survey Monkey, was more efficient for processing large-scale data submissions. Participants were asked questions

concerning the use of their email accounts, using coupons from their cell phones, and if they had cable television, Netflix, HBO, or Amazon Prime subscriptions. The purpose of the researchers' study was to compare the speed and capabilities of the two most popular online survey data collection instruments. Bentley, Daskalova, and White study concluded that Survey Monkey was faster and more reliable in its data collection and analysis. This study supports this researcher's use of Survey Monkey as a reliable and valid method for data collection.

### **Procedures**

**Design.** This study was an investigation of participants' perceived learned outcomes from community service experiences phenomenon through employing a non-experimental design with a realism ontological, and a positivist epistemology, quantitative method using survey data collecting method was utilized to investigate participants' perceived personal and educational beneficial gains from community service work tied to an educational institution apart from a requirement or earn credit toward a high school diploma.

This study used descriptive statistics to present data and distribution, a multiple regression statistics test to identify relationships between variables, and cross-sectional survey design to assess whether there are any direct effects between specific school civic engagement resources and students perceived benefits from civic engagement activities as part of a school requirement or credit toward earning a high school diploma, as well as the schools' available resources and students' awareness of the schools' resources. The purpose of the positivism/post-positivism paradigm methodology research is to predict results, test a theory, or find the strength of relationships between variables. Quantitative

researchers begin with ideas, theories, or concepts that are defined as they are used in the study to point to the variables of interest; the problem statement at minimum specifies the variables to be studied and the relationship among them (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012, p. 59).

The factors in this study are limited to the accessibility and availability and usefulness of school civic engagement resources. This study investigated the education from civic engagement phenomenon using a nonexperimental design with a realism ontological, what can know, approach and a positivism epistemology, how can we know, quantitative method using an online survey data collecting method was utilized to investigate the youth's personal and educational beneficial gains from civic engagement tied to an educational institution apart from a requirement or earn credit toward a high school diploma. Cross-sectional studies study a single population or sample size during a single specified timeframe and give a "snapshot" of opinion data. Cross-sectional surveys comprise the most significant number of projects that are undertaken; however, the problem with cross-sectional surveys is that the events, opinions, behaviors, and other phenomena that such surveys are designed to assess do not generally remain stagnant (Blackstone, 2012).

**Advantages of cross-sectional studies.** Cross sectional studies allow researchers to conduct or collect data in a short amount of time, all variables are collected at one time, multiple outcomes can be researched at once, prevalence for all factors and be measure, ideal method for descriptive analysis, and can be used as a springboard for further research (Black, 2012).

***Disadvantages of cross-sectional studies.*** Disadvantages of cross-sectional

studies are that it cannot be used to get timeline-based research, challenging to find participants that are exposed to the same exact variables, associations are difficult to interpret, and emotions can cause bias answers or skewed data, and does not concretely determine cause (Black, 2012).

**Data collection procedures.** The researcher obtained approval from Nova Southeastern University's Internal Review Board (IRB) for this applied dissertation study. The researcher obtained written permission from the appropriate parties at the utility site where the research was conducted. The problem addressed in this study is the need to obtain student perceptions of benefits from community service participation as a high school graduation requirement.

The school has a mandatory minimum of 100 community service hours completed as a graduation requirement posted on its website. Students were given information about the survey and how to access the survey by their advisors. Students were informed that they are not required to complete the survey. They accessed the online survey link through their school email. Survey Monkey was used to build the survey and generate a link for students to click on and take the online survey.

Students were given access to a link to a web-based questionnaire created through Survey Monkey, an online survey software program, was sent directly to their school generated email addresses along with instructions to students that the survey was voluntary participation and that the questions were a way for the school could evaluate the mandatory community service work based from their (students) perception.

The following items were used to create the survey:

1. List of local community service sites

2. List of examples of community service work
3. School community service mentor, coordinator or guide
4. Community service work tied to academic work (addressed in class)
5. A guide to match student interest with type community service work
6. Identification of community service purpose or goals
7. Reflection or discussion post community service work
8. Authentication of student's completed community service work (e.g. form to submit with hours completed and/or community service work site)
9. Providing transportation or transportation information to and from community service site.

Students were then asked to rate of each available school resource if it contributed to their ability to complete the required work, enjoyment from their CS work, the work was valuable to their community, and gained new awareness of their community's needs to them on 5-point Likert scale. The scores correlated answers provided by students are 1 for "N/A or school did not have resource was not available"; 2 for "Strongly disagree"; 3 for "Disagree"; 4 for "Agree"; and 5 for "Strongly agree".

**Ethics and confidentiality.** The researcher conducted the study in an ethical manner. The researcher ensured that no descriptive personal data was included in the study. The researcher ensured that all personal information pertaining to the study is kept confidential within the researcher's authority.

**Data analysis procedures.** The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform descriptive analysis to determine the strength of participants' perceived strength of their school's community service resources. The study included

four dependent variables: ability to complete community service, awareness of community needs, value of community service work performed, and enjoyment of community service experience. The study examined compared each group using correlation statistical tests about the student's perception, given one or more factors, the school's community service resources. A Likert type scale was utilized along with means and standard deviations. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the survey items in order to better understand its underlying factor structure. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test were performed to assess the statistical assumptions of the EFA. The KMO statistic was used to test for sampling adequacy and Bartlett's tests was used to test for sphericity. A scree plot was used to determine the number of factors to extract from the EFA. An oblique rotation was utilized to better interpret the factor structure. The extracted factors and their respective items were summed together to yield a subscale score. Internal consistency reliability of the subscales were tested using Cronbach's alpha. If acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ) was detected, then the subscales were named and entered into a correlational analysis. In order to choose either a parametric or non-parametric correlational test, the statistical assumption of normality was tested for each subscale using skewness and kurtosis statistics. If both statistics were below an absolute value of 2.0, then the assumption was met. Pearson's  $r$  correlation was used to assess the association between the subscales. All analyses were performed using SPSS Version 26 (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.) and statistical significance was assumed at an alpha value of 0.05.



## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

This chapter describes the finds of the research and gives an overview of the results from the data collected. This study set out to investigate participants' perceived learned outcomes from community service experiences phenomenon through employing a non-experimental design with a realism ontological, and a positivist epistemology, quantitative method using survey data collecting method was utilized to investigate participants' perceived personal and educational beneficial gains from community service work tied to an educational institution apart from a requirement or earn credit toward a high school diploma. Despite the national and global pandemic of the covid19 viral outbreak that required social distancing and all group gathering activities ceased had been in place for the past six weeks, the researcher was able to collect data based on students community service prior to the social distancing policy's implementation.

This study uses a quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional survey design to assess whether there are any direct effects between specific school civic engagement resources and students perceived benefits from civic engagement activities as part of a school requirement or credit toward earning a high school diploma, as well as the schools' available resources and students' awareness of the schools' resources. The purpose of the positivism/post-positivism paradigm methodology research is to predict results, test a theory, or find the strength of relationships between variables or a cause and effect relationship. Quantitative researchers begin with ideas, theories, or concepts that are defined as they are used in the study to point to the variables of interest; the problem

statement at minimum specifies the variables to be studied and the relationship among them (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012, p. 59).

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Students who currently in Grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 and have completed at least one hour of community service and attend a school in a state that has statewide high school service requirement, credit toward graduation for service-learning or community service or state explicitly permits districts to adopt a service requirement for high school graduation.

### **Data Analysis**

A total of 59 respondents, and 50 of those 59 participants answered all 36 Likert scale survey questions. The survey measure students' ratings of nine items, community service resources, and effect on four outcomes, completion, awareness, value, and enjoyment using a 5-point Likert scale. In total, the survey consisted of 36 statements. participants rated their level of agreement (1- N/A or resource not available to 5 "strongly agree") to a positive statement for each community service resource's contribution towards their ability to complete community service, gain awareness of their community's needs, contributed valuable work to their community, and enjoyment from doing their community service, were grouped into four separate categories "completion", "awareness", "value", and "enjoyment". Missing data, unanswered questions, was given a -1 score and excluded from all calculations. A total of 36 questions, nine Likert items divided into four Likert scales. The Likert items are the nine community service resources that evaluate four domains of student perception of community service. In addition, the four Likert scales were analyzed using SPSS parametric correlation test.

Each question that was left unanswered was purposely coded to be excluded from the analysis to avoid skewed test results. Each question was positively phrased so reverse coding was unnecessary. The questions were broken into four groups representing four domains of student's perception of enjoyment, ability to complete, awareness of community needs, and value of work from their community service experience based on the nine Likert items.

**Research Question 1.** Is there a relationship between student's ratings of usefulness of each individual community service resource and their ability to complete, become aware of their community's needs, value from their participation, and enjoyment from their community service work?

Table 1

*Percentage of Students' Perceptions Effect on Their Ability to Complete Community Service Hours [1-5].*

	N/A or not available	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. My school provided a list of local community service sites (locations) that was helpful for me to do my community service.	13 (22%)	4 (6.8%)	13 (22%)	23 (39%)	6 (10.2%)
2. My school's community resources list of examples/types of community service work was helpful for me to do my community service.	15 (25.4%)	1 (1.7%)	19 (32.2%)	18 (30.5%)	6 (10.2%)
3. My school provided a mentor/coordinator/counselor that was helpful for me to do my community service.	15 (25.4%)	6 (10.2%)	15 (25.4%)	18 (30.5%)	5 (8.5%)
4. My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to do my community service.	24 (40.7%)	3 (5.1%)	10 (16.9%)	12 (20.3%)	10 (16.9%)
5. My school provided a guide and/or assistance to match my abilities and/or interests with types of compatible community service work was helpful for me to do my community service.	26 (44.1%)	11 (18.6%)	11 (18.6%)	6 (10.2%)	5 (8.5%)

Table 2

*Percentage of Students' Perceptions Effect on Their Ability to Complete Community Service Hours [6-9].*

	N/A or not available	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6. My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to do my community service.	25 (42.4%)	4 (6.8%)	10 (16.9%)	15 (25.4%)	5 (8.5%)
7. My school providing me with information about the purpose or goals of community service work was helpful for me to do my community service.	9 (15.3%)	3 (5.1%)	13 (22%)	25 (42.4%)	9 (15.3%)
8. My school's required form that identified my community service's location, type of work, and/or amount of time I spent doing my community service was helpful for me to do my community service.	8 (13.6%)	2 (3.4%)	9 (15.3%)	28 (47.5%)	12 (20.3%)
9. My school's assistance with either providing transportation or assisting me in finding transportation to my community service site was helpful for me to do my community service.	25 (42.4%)	5 (8.5%)	8 (13.6%)	13 (22%)	8 (13.6%)

A significant number of participants answered "N/A or resource was not available" for the school's community resources available for six of the nine resources available. Questions 1, 7 and 8 resulted in 50% or more students "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" that these specific community service resources helped their ability to complete their community service hours for graduation. Questions 5, 6 and 9 comprise 50% or more students perceived these specific community service resources as either "N/A or resource was not available" or "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" effects on their ability to complete their community service hours.

**Research Question 2.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to gain awareness of their community's needs?

Table 3

*Percentage of Students' Perceptions Effect on Their Ability to Become Aware of the Community's Needs.*

	N/A or not available	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. My school provided a list of local community service sites (locations) that was helpful for me become of my aware of my community's needs.	23 (39%)	5 (8.5%)	13 (22%)	12 (20%)	6 (10.2%)
2. My school's community resources list of examples/types of community service work was helpful for me become of my aware of my community's needs.	21 (35.6%)	6 (10.2%)	12 (20%)	15 (25.4%)	5 (8.5%)
3. My school provided a mentor/coordinator/counselor that was helpful for me become of my aware of my community's needs.	19 (32.2%)	5 (8.5%)	16 (27.1%)	14 (23.7%)	4 (6.8%)
4. My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to become of my aware of my community's needs.	20 (33.9%)	4 (6.8%)	14 (23.7%)	10 (16.9%)	9 (15.3%)
5. My school provided a guide and/or assistance to match my abilities and/or interests with types of compatible community service work was helpful for me to become of my aware of my community's needs.	26 (44.1%)	4 (6.8%)	14 (23.7%)	9 (15.3%)	3 (5.1%)
6. My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to become of my aware of my community's needs.	17 (28.8%)	4 (6.8%)	16 (27.1%)	13 (22%)	6 (10.2%)
7. My school providing me with information about the purpose or goals of community service work was helpful for me to become of my aware of my community's needs.	13 (22%)	2 (3.4%)	14 (23.7%)	15 (25.4%)	11 (18.6%)
8. My school's required form that identified my community service's location, type of work, and/or amount of time I spent doing my community service was helpful for me to become of my aware of my community's needs.	10 (16.9%)	5 (8.5%)	10 (16.9%)	19 (32.2%)	10 (16.9%)
9. My school's assistance with either providing transportation or assisting me in finding transportation to my community service site was helpful for me to become aware of my community's needs.	21 (35.6%)	3 (5.1%)	9 (15.3%)	12 (20.3%)	8 (13.6%)

Missing data began to show up in the results. Questions left blank was crossed checked with participants' answers to prior questions to identify a potential reason for questions left unanswered. There was no pattern of answers from respondents who left questions unanswered. Students who left questions unanswered had answered previous questions with had both answered previous questions with a variety of positive, negative, and "N/A" responses; a pattern or theme was undetected. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9 were answered "N/A or resource was not available" by 28% or more of the participants. 20% of the participants answered "Agreed" for questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9 while 20% or more of the participants answered "Disagree" for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

**Research Question 3.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to contributing valuable community service work?

Table 3.

*Percentage of students' perception of their school's community service resources effect on students to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.*

	N/A or not available	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My school provided a list of local community service sites (locations) that was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	24 (40.7%)	2 (3.4%)	10 (16.9%)	9 (15.3%)	7 (11.9%)
2. My school's community resources list of examples/types of community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	19 (32.2%)	2 (3.4%)	11 (18.6%)	12 (20.3%)	8 (13.6%)
3. My school provided a mentor/coordinator/counselor that was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	23 (39%)	2 (3.4%)	10 (16.9%)	18 (30.5%)	4 (6.8%)

4. My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	21 (35.6%)	2 (3.4%)	6 (10.2%)	16 (27.1%)	7 (11.9%)
5. My school provided a guide and/or assistance to match my abilities and/or interests with types of compatible community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	24 (40.7%)	2 (3.4%)	13 (22%)	9 (15.3%)	4 (6.8%)
6. My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	17 (28.8%)	2 (3.4%)	13 (22%)	17 (28.8%)	3 (5.1%)
7. My school providing me with information about the purpose or goals of community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	18 (30.5%)	2 (3.4%)	9 (15.3%)	17 (28.8%)	8 (13.6%)
8. My school's required form that identified my community service's location, type of work, and/or amount of time I spent doing my community service was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	9 (15.3%)	2 (3.4%)	13 (22%)	21 (35.6%)	7 (11.9%)
9. My school's assistance with either providing transportation or assisting me in finding transportation to my community service site was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.	22 (37.3%)	2 (3.4%)	9 (15.3%)	12 (20.3%)	7 (11.9%)

Missing data was cross checked with participants' answers to prior questions to identify a potential reason for questions left unanswered. There was no pattern of answers from respondents who left questions unanswered. Students who left questions unanswered had answered previous questions with had both answered previous questions with a variety of positive, negative, and "N/A" responses; a pattern or theme was undetected. A minimum of 25% of the participants answered "N/A or resource was not available" for questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. While a minimum of 20% of the students

answered “Agreed” to questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and a minimum of 20% of the students “Disagree” on questions 5, 6, and 8.

**Research Question 4.** What are participants’ perceived effectiveness of their school’s community resources to enjoy their community service work?

Table 4.

*Percentage of students’ perception of their school’s community service resources effect on students’ ability to enjoy my community service work.*

	N/A or not available	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My school provided a list of local community service sites (locations) that was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	23 (39%)	3 (5.1%)	12 (20.3%)	11 (18.6%)	3 (5.1%)
2. My school’s community resources list of examples/types of community service work was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	23 (39%)	2 (3.4%)	7 (11.9%)	15 (25.4%)	5 (8.5%)
3. My school provided a mentor/coordinator/counselor that was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	22 (37.3%)	6 (10.2%)	8 (13.6%)	11 (18.6%)	5 (8.5%)
4. My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	24 (40.7%)	2 (3.4%)	5 (8.5%)	13 (22%)	8 (13.6%)
5. My school provided a guide and/or assistance to match my abilities and/or interests with types of compatible community service work was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	27 (45.8%)	2 (3.4%)	8 (13.6%)	10 (16.9%)	5 (8.5%)
6. My school’s written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	20 (33.9%)	3 (5.1%)	9 (15.3%)	14 (23.7%)	6 (10.2%)
7. My school providing me with information about the purpose or goals of community service work was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	18 (30.5%)	3 (5.1%)	8 (13.6%)	14 (23.7%)	9 (15.3%)
8. My school’s required form that identified my community service’s location, type of	10	5	9	19	7



work, and/or amount of time I spent doing my community service was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	(16.9%)	(8.5%)	(15.3%)	(32.2%)	(11.9%)
9. My school's assistance with either providing transportation or assisting me in finding transportation to my community service site was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.	23 (39%)	2 (3.4%)	9 (15.3%)	11 (18.6%)	5 (8.5%)

Missing data was crossed checked with participants' answers to prior questions to identify a potential reason for questions left unanswered. There was no pattern of answers from respondents who left questions unanswered. Students who left questions unanswered had answered previous questions with had both answered previous questions with a variety of positive, negative, and "N/A" responses; a pattern or theme was undetected. 25% or more of the students responded "N/A or resources was not available" to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9. "Agree" 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8. "Disagree" was only responded by a minimum of 20% students on question 1.

**Research Question 5.** Is there a relationship between participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community services resources and participants' ability to complete, gain community needs awareness, provide valuable work to the community, and enjoyed experience from their community service work?

Based on the research design and survey, a regression analysis will be used to determine if a factor predicts the effects of the outcome; students' perception of their school's community service resources, on the outcome; students' perceptions of their ability to complete, awareness of community needs, and value of completed community service work completed.

The statistical assumptions of the EFA were met in regard to sampling adequacy (KMO = 0.66) and sphericity ( $p < 0.001$ ). The scree plot showed that two factors should be extracted. The rotated solution showed that seven (7) items loaded on the first factor and accounted for 54.58% of the variance. The second factor had four (4) items that loaded on it and they accounted for 6.34% of the variance. Together, the two factors accounted for 60.92% of the variance. The factor loadings for each factor are presented in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha found that there was acceptable reliability for the first factor ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ), and for the second factor ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). The statistical assumption of normality was met for both factors. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between the two factors,  $r = 0.635$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 5

*Factor Loadings from Oblique Rotation*

Question	Learning	Reflection
Question 4	0.58	
Question 13	0.64	
Question 20	0.55	
Question 22	0.62	
Question 25	0.55	
Question 30	0.61	
Question 31	0.78	
Question 6		0.56
Question 15		0.84
Question 24		0.70
Question 33		0.53

The instrument created was unable to answer these specific questions; however, this instrument did identify a relationship between learning, reflection, and positive experience. This research findings imply that students who are able to complete, become aware of their community needs, find value in their community service work, and enjoy their community service participation when learning and reflection is implemented. This study confirms Jones and Hill 2003 research study hypothesis that civic engagement programs attached to educational institutions should include a curriculum, program implementation methods, available resources, matching students interest and ability with community service work, reflection as variables that could potentially affect student-benefits from their work endeavors. The study's results also support Kolb's ELT importance of reflection as an essential piece for learning perception and Piaget's theory's framework of guided learning.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

This chapter further discussed the results of the study, its summary of findings, and interpretations. Implications of the findings and limitations of the study were discussed along with recommendations for future research in the field of Education.

### **Summary of Findings**

High school graduation community service completion hours requirements continue to increase in the United States since it first was introduced into the American Education system. This research study intentions were to identify specific community service resources provided by the school effects on students' perceptions of their ability to complete their community service, gain awareness of their community's needs, feel that their community service work was valuable, and enjoy their community service experience. These four constructs were chosen to measure students' success rate, able to complete; learning, gain awareness of their community needs; meaningful or value of participation, feel that their community service work was valuable; and motivation, enjoy their community service.

The instrument was unable to answer the research questions; however, the analysis of the data did identify that a correlation, a significant relationship, exists between learning and reflection, factor 1 and factor 2, post the exploratory factor analysis.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Participants who answered “N/A or resource was not available” indicates that student was unaware of the resource existence or availability at their school or that they did not feel that the community service resource did not have an affect on the specified outcome. The researcher was expected to identify specific resources that affect a student’s perceived community service experience. The instrument or sample size was able to identify a relationship between community service experiences and learning.

Questions that were statistically significant included the following for Factor 1:

**Q31.** My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.

**Q13.** My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to learn about my community's needs.

**Q22.** My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.

**Q30.** My school provided a mentor/coordinator/counselor that was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.

**Q4.** My school including a community service lesson in a class was helpful for me to do my community service.

**Q20.** My school’s community resources list of examples/types of community

service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.

**Q25.** My school providing me with information about the purpose or goals of community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.

Questions that were statistically significant included the following for Factor 2:

**Q15.** My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to learn about my community's needs.

**Q24.** My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to feel that my community service work was valuable to my community.

**Q6.** My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to do my community service.

**Q33.** My school's written and/or verbal reflection about my community service work was helpful for me to enjoy my community service work.

### **Context of Findings**

To date, research has shown limited evidence to support that mandatory community service weakens young people motivation to engage in future service. As stated in the literature review, there is evidence to indicate the opposite. Often, research has either found that mandatory service is linked with heightened intent to engage in future volunteering (Metz & Youniss, 2003, 2005) or has not found links between mandatory service and intent to volunteer (Henderson, Brown, Prancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Kim & Morgül, 2017). This research findings are contradictory to other

developmental research and theory that stresses the importance of autonomy for personal motivation and healthy development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). One explanation for contradicting research results is that mandatory community service may hinder students' intent to participate in future community service if youth reflect on their experience and do not find value in community service work other than to fulfill the requirement (Stukas et al., 1999). Essentially, this research indicates that it is both reflection and value of community service work, or feelings about the community service experience, is important aspect to address if schools are making community service mandatory.

Community service experiences vary, as well as the level of enjoyment or meaning student's gain from their community service possibly due to the type of activity youth perform. Community service or volunteer experiences that provide teenagers with an opportunity to develop new relationships, reflect on social problems, and cultivate a sense of purpose and enjoyment is beneficial as opposed to community service activities or tasks without these opportunities (Bennett, 2009; Henderson et al., 2007; Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003; Reinders & Youniss, 2006). Community service activities that is an organizational task such as clearing floors, filing papers, etc. or other types of activities that neglect to provide students with a high-quality experiences results in students in developing negative or indifferent attitudes about their community learning experiences; thus, reducing motivation for future volunteering and little to no learning or personal development. Parents, teachers or school administrators have the opportunity to assist students engage in high-quality community service activities within their community.

### **Implications of Findings**

Community service or volunteering was implemented for students personally and socially evolve. Schools adopted mandating community service as a learning opportunity; however, prior research and this research demonstrates that an overall positive experience is related with learning resources and reflection. This study intended to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to their ability to complete their community service work?

**Research Question 2.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to gain awareness of their community's needs?

**Research Question 3.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to contributing valuable community service work?

**Research Question 4.** What are participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community resources to enjoy their community service work?

**Research Question 5.** Is there a relationship between participants' perceived effectiveness of their school's community services resources and participants' ability to complete, gain community needs awareness, provide valuable work to the community, and enjoyed experience from their community service work?

The instrument created was unable to answers to these specific questions; however, this instrument did identify a relationship between learning, reflection, and positive experience. This research findings imply that students who are able to complete, become aware of their community needs, find value in their community service work, and enjoy their community service participation when learning and reflection is implemented.



### **Limitations of the Study**

During the time of this study's data collection, a global and national pandemic outbreak of covid19 resulted in social distancing policies and required people to be isolated for the first four weeks. This new unprecedented social distancing policy had been implemented for three weeks when the data was collected; this policy restricted students from physically attending school or participating in community or group activities. Many schools changed grading procedures and community service requirements for graduation for remainder of the 2020 school year to accommodate students now restricted to online learning and social distancing policy.

### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity refers specifically to whether an experimental treatment and/or condition makes a difference or not, and if there is enough evidence to support the claim. Cross-sectional research designs do not allow for the same level of control as experiments, they often have weaker internal validity than other research design methods (Yu & Ohlund, 2010). Self-selection effects are students who decide to respond to an online survey, provide answers that are not accurate due to not remembering or inaccurately remembering or students do not complete the full survey. Maturation effects are older students have a more self-awareness and experience in social engagements which may affect their reported civic engagement benefits. Also, the number of hours completed by a student could affect their reported benefits.

### **External Validity**

External validity refers to the generalizability of the treatment/condition outcomes. History, maturation, selection, mortality and interaction of selection and the

experimental variable are all threats to the internal validity of this design (Yu & Ohlund, 2010). Selection bias is no assurance that a thorough representation of targeted population using a snowball sampling. External variables could motivate students to complete the survey or discourage students from completing the survey. There are weaknesses of survey methods, as with all methods of data collection, survey research also comes with limitations. Although surveys provide an opportunity to ask any number of questions on any number of topics in them, the researcher is restricted to a single instrument for collecting data, the questionnaire. The researcher does not have another opportunity to edit and resend a survey without skewing the results. A benefit from conducting in-depth interviews is that the researcher can provide respondents further explanation for any needed clarification and can modify and adapt their questions as they learn more about how respondents seem to understand them.

Validity can also be a problem with surveys because the questions are standardized, and it is challenging to ask anything other than general questions that a large range of people will understand. Consequently, survey results may not be as valid as results obtained using methods of data collection that allow a researcher to examine whatever topic more comprehensively is being studied. Survey research does have limitations for both flexibility and validity. In terms of time, there are two main types of surveys: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Cross-sectional surveys are those that are administered at just one point in time. These surveys offer researchers a sort of snapshot in time and show an idea about respondents at the specific point in time that the survey is administered. An issue with cross-sectional surveys is that the events, opinions, behaviors, and other phenomena that such surveys are designed to assess do not generally

remain stagnant. Thus, generalizing from a cross-sectional survey about the way things are can be challenging. Other limitations include low response rates and participants self-reporting their beliefs about their experience. Low response rate results in obtaining inaccurate information or does not reflect the targeted demographic population. Issues with self-reporting beliefs is that respondents may respond in a way that they believe that is correct rather than their authentic beliefs or perceptions (Creswell, 2008).

### **Future Research Directions**

Further research is required in this area of education to maximize students' learning opportunities from community service. Based on the findings of this research, the instrument has established a "new" variable to examine and include in future studies. An instrument to measure the effects of specific community service resources remains to be established. Additionally, future research should include a larger sample size from multiple school, include grade level, amount of community service hours completed, an overall score for each of the four constructs: ability to complete community service, gained awareness of community's needs, feel the community service work done was valuable, and overall enjoyment from community service experience. Community service experiences vary, as well as the level of enjoyment or meaning student's gain from their community service possibly due to the type of activity youth perform. Additional research could be conducted on the type of community service activities students engaged in and reflection of students' experiences.

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## Appendix A

### The Nine Learning Styles in Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) Definitions

## Appendix A

- The Initiating style is characterized by the ability to initiate action in order to deal with experiences and situations. It involves active experimentation (AE) and concrete experience (CE).
- The Experiencing style is characterized by the ability to find meaning from deep involvement in experience. It draws on concrete experience (CE) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO).
- The Imagining style is characterized by the ability to imagine possibilities by observing and reflecting on experiences. It combines the learning modes of concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO).
- The Reflecting style is characterized by the ability to connect experience and ideas through sustained reflection. It draws on reflective observation (RO) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC).
- The Analyzing style is characterized by the ability to integrate and systematize ideas through reflection. It combines reflective observation (RO) and abstract conceptualization (AC).
- The Thinking style is characterized by the capacity for disciplined involvement in abstract and logical reasoning. It draws on abstract conceptualization (AC) while balancing active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO).
- The Deciding style is characterized by the ability to use theories and models to decide on problem solutions and courses of action. It combines abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE).
- The Acting style is characterized by a strong motivation for goal directed action that integrates people and tasks. It draws on active experimentation (AE) while balancing concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC).

- The Balancing style is characterized by the ability to adapt by weighing the pros and cons of acting versus reflecting and experiencing versus thinking. It balances concrete experience (CE), abstract conceptualization (AC), active experimentation (AE), and reflective observation (RO). (Kolb, Kolb, 2017, p. 23-24)

The nine learning styles in Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) 4.0. Source: Source: Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2017). Experiential learning theory as a guide for experiential educators in higher education. *ELTHE: A Journal for Educators*, 1(1), 7-14.

Appendix B

The Lyons Central School Community Service Online Information Guide

## Appendix B

The Lyons Central School District believes that community service is an integral component in the process of developing mature, responsible citizens as our graduates. Therefore, community service is a graduation requirement of each Senior. The intent of the requirement is to encourage students to be active and engaged members of their communities and to address important community issues and is required to be performed in conjunction with a reputable public service organization.

Information:

Starting in September of their Junior year, each student can begin to accumulate community service hours. Each Senior is required to have completed their twenty (20) hours of community service by March 1st of their Senior year.

No payment may be received for service.

No family members may be the recipients or supervisors of service.

No service may be performed during a student's school hours.

Service is to be in conjunction with a reputable public service organization (Ex.: Wayne Co. Nursing Home, Wayne County Humane Society, local churches, or any community sponsored event such as Peppermint Days, Pumpkin Palooza, etc.)

If it is listed on the Community Service opportunities table, then it is acceptable! (otherwise get permission from xxxxxxxx or xxxxxxxx)

Process:

Contact an organization to arrange community service hours

Complete the agreed upon community service hours

Complete the 20-Hour Community Service Project Form including signature of supervisor of community service

Hand in completed 20-Hour Community Service Project Form with required signature to Ms. xxxxxx or Mrs. xxxxxx

Repeat this process until you have a total of twenty (20) or more hours completed

Not Acceptable:

Service performed for monetary reward

Paying others to complete service hours

Service performed for family, friends, neighbors, or an employer

Absence from school to perform a service

Working for a profit-making organization/business

Contacting an organization to have them retroactively approve past community service. If you have any questions, please contact either Ms. xxxxx or Mrs. xxxxx.

#### Related Links

##### Community Service Opportunities

View a list of opportunities in our community:

[https://docs.google.com/a/lyonscsd.org/document/d/1ucXLOZBzS5uQ-aaMvtb\\_KwUzidXoHs8Dv7EJ\\_vbcD20/pub](https://docs.google.com/a/lyonscsd.org/document/d/1ucXLOZBzS5uQ-aaMvtb_KwUzidXoHs8Dv7EJ_vbcD20/pub)

(note that user must be logged into school to access link).

Appendix C

Community Service Activities Examples

### Appendix C

Volunteer Project	Possible Learning Component(s)
Plant a community garden.	Learn about plants, gardening, and landscaping. Get to know community members and learn from them.
Perform a play, read aloud, or sing songs at a nursing home or hospital.	Practice singing, performing, and conversation. Learn about nursing homes, aging, or hospitals. Learn how to relate to new people and make new friends.
Read to or tutor younger students.	Enhance the reading skills of younger children and your own. Learn responsibility, patience, and teaching skills.
Hold a toy/food/clothing drive for a shelter or soup kitchen.	Learn about hunger and homelessness. Practice counting and sorting skills.
Adopt a local park or neighborhood and work to keep it clean. If there is a shortage of trash receptacles or services, find out who is in charge and write letters.	Learn about the environmental impact of litter. Learn to do research and practice writing skills. Learn about responsibility and accountability.
Set up a fruit and vegetable stand that serves healthy snacks to children and adults.	Learn about food, nutrition, and entrepreneurship. Practice math, marketing, and business skills.
Sort food at a food pantry or help prepare and serve food at a soup kitchen.	Learn about hunger in your community. Use counting, sorting, measuring, and cooking skills.
Write a cookbook, sell it, and give the proceeds to a local cause.	Learn about healthful cooking and menu planning. Practice marketing and language arts skills.

McKinney, Medvedeva, Vacca & Malak, 2004



Appendix D

Department of Education Florida Statutes 14.295

Florida Volunteer and Community Service Act of 2001

## Appendix D

- (1) This act may be cited as the “Florida Volunteer and Community Service Act of 2001.”
- (2) It is the intent of the Legislature to promote the development of better communities by fostering greater civic responsibility through volunteerism and service to the community. Toward this end, the Executive Office of the Governor may establish policies and procedures which provide for the expenditure of funds to develop and facilitate initiatives by public agencies, scholastic institutions, private institutions, and individuals that establish and implement programs that encourage and reward volunteerism.
- (3) Initiatives and programs developed pursuant to this act shall have the following purposes and objectives:
  - (a) To place increased priority on citizen participation and volunteerism as a means of addressing the increasingly complex problems facing Florida’s communities.
  - (b) To encourage local community leaders to implement strategies that expand civic participation based on the fact that volunteers represent a valuable and much-needed asset within communities.
  - (c) To promote the concept and practice of corporate citizenship, particularly in communities where such initiatives are less developed.
  - (d) To build the enthusiasm, dedication, and combined expertise of individual citizens and public and private systems to find new and creative ways to effectively use volunteerism and community service as a strategy to meet the challenges facing Florida’s communities both now and in the future.
  - (e) To foster the alignment of community volunteer resources with the goals of the state.
  - (f) To implement policy and administrative changes that encourage and enable individuals to participate in volunteer and community service activities.
  - (g) To encourage nonprofit agencies to interweave volunteers into the fabric of their service delivery as a means of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of their services.
  - (h) To support and promote volunteer service to all citizens as an effective means to address community needs and foster a collective commitment to lifelong community service.
  - (i) To recognize National Volunteer Week as a time to encourage all citizens of Florida to participate in local service projects.
  - (j) To recognize the value of individual volunteers and volunteer and service organizations and programs and to honor and celebrate the success of volunteers.
  - (k) To encourage volunteer and service efforts to point children in the right direction and to endow them with the character and competence they need to achieve success in life. In order to accomplish this, the citizens of Florida are encouraged to support America’s Promise, the Alliance for Youth, and Florida’s Promise for Youth through volunteerism and citizen service, to help ensure that children in Florida have the following five fundamental resources in their lives:
    1. An ongoing relationship with a caring adult.
    2. Safe places with structured activities during after-school hours.

3. A healthy start.
4. A marketable skill through effective education.
5. An opportunity to give back through community service.

Appendix E

The 2019 Florida Department of Education Statutes Service Learning 1003.497

## Appendix E

(1) The Department of Education shall encourage school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12. Service learning refers to a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their schools or communities. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula, standards, and course, district, or state assessments. Service-learning activities foster academic achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration and enable students to apply curriculum content, skills, and behaviors taught in the classroom.

(2) Upon request of any school district that chooses to implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies, the department shall provide assistance in locating, leveraging, and utilizing available or alternative financial resources that will assist school districts or teachers desiring to receive training and other resources to develop and administer service-learning programs or activities. School districts are encouraged to include kindergarten through grade 12 service-learning programs and activities in proposals they submit to the department under federal entitlement grants and competitive state and federal grants administered through the department.

(3)(a) The department shall develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for inclusion in middle and high school course code directories, which will allow additional opportunities for students to engage in service learning. School districts are encouraged to provide support for the use of service learning at any grade level as an instructional strategy to address appropriate areas of state education standards for student knowledge and performance.

(b) The hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and community service requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. School districts are encouraged to include service learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation and to include and accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards, especially those awards that currently include community service as a criterion or selection factor

Appendix F

Student Perception of Benefits From Community Service Experience Survey

**Appendix F**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QN6S3DC>