
Frequently Asked Questions

National Survey of Service-Learning in K-12 Public Schools

Conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
in conjunction with Westat

Who Is Initiating this Study?

This research project is an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation), the Federal agency that promotes volunteerism through such programs as AmeriCorps, VISTA, and RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). One of the key programs of the Corporation is Learn and Serve America, a national grant program that provides support to schools, higher education institutions and community-based organizations to implement service-learning programs that involve young people in meaningful service to their communities while improving academic, civic, social, and career-related skills. For more information about the Corporation for National and Community Service, go to www.nationalservice.gov.

What Is the Purpose of this Study?

This study is a follow-up to two previous national surveys on the scope and scale of service-learning in K-12 public schools: the Department of Education's national survey conducted in 1999 and the National Youth Leadership Council's follow-up survey in 2004. This survey uses a comparable questionnaire and will update information obtained in the previous two studies. It also examines the scope of community service and service-learning in schools, which will allow the Corporation to assess its progress towards the Agency's 2010 strategic planning goals.

How Was My School Selected to Be in the Study?

Your school was selected at random from the national Common Core of Data database of all K-12 schools in the United States. This random selection method provides a sample of schools that is statistically representative of all K-12 public schools in the United States.

What is Entailed in Completing this Survey?

Either the principal or a service-learning coordinator at the school should complete the survey, which will take approximately 30 minutes. Responses will remain confidential. No names of schools or respondents will appear in the report. Findings will be presented in the aggregate only.

What is the Time Frame for Completing the Survey?

Principals will receive the survey by Federal Express on [March __, 2008]. We ask that surveys be completed and returned to Westat by [April __, 2008]. Westat staff members will administer the survey and follow up with respondents throughout March and April, 2008.

When and How Will Study Results Be Available?

It is anticipated that the findings from the study and a full report will be available in fall 2008. All participating schools will receive a copy of the research findings. The findings will also be available at www.nationalservice.gov.

What Do You Mean by Service-Learning?

For the purposes of this survey, **service-learning** is defined as curriculum-based community service that integrates classroom instruction with community service activities. The service must:

- Be organized in relation to an academic course or curriculum;
- Have clearly stated learning objectives;
- Address real community needs; and
- Involve students in drawing lessons from the service through regularly scheduled organized reflection or critical analysis activities, such as classroom discussions, presentations, or directed writing.

The following is an example of a service-learning project: Students in a middle school science class studying the environment help preserve the natural habitat of animals living at a local lake. Through classroom studies, the students learn about the environment. The students keep the area around the lake clean, post signs providing information to the public, and study soil and water composition as well as the impact of industrial development on wildlife. Throughout the project, students write about their experiences in journals and participate in class discussions about the project and its effect on their lives and the local community.

This is only one example. The actual service activities in service-learning may be varied, including visiting the elderly, cross-age tutoring, collecting and distributing food to those in need, etc., *so long as instruction and service are integrated as defined above.*

How Is Service-Learning Different from Community Service?

For the purposes of this survey, **student community service** activities are defined as community service activities that, unlike service-learning, are *non-curriculum-based and generally do not include explicit learning objectives, organized reflection, or critical analysis activities*. Similar to service-learning, community service may be voluntary or mandatory, or recognized by and/or arranged through the school.

Community service activities may be carried out as school-wide events, separately organized school programs, or projects conducted by school-sponsored clubs (e.g., Girls/Boys Clubs, National Honor Society). Examples of community service activities could include cleaning up a local park, visiting the elderly, or participating in a food drive for a local shelter.

Where Can I Get More Information?

If you have specific questions about completing the survey, please contact Ellen Tenenbaum, the Westat survey manager, at 1-800-937-8281, ext. 3617 (e-mail: Ellentenbaum@westat.com). If you have other questions about the project or about service-learning, please contact Learn and Serve America at 202-606-5000 (e-mail: Isaabout@cns.gov).