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SERVICE-LEARNING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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Thousands of students across South Carolina have helped improve their communities by participating in service-learning programs while strengthening their classroom learning experiences. Service-learning is one of the work-site components of the SC School-to-Work Transition Act of 1994. This Act provides all students with opportunities to connect what they learn in school with the real world through learning experiences at a work-site. Through service-learning, students combine classroom instruction with work-based activities in a non-profit organization or community agency. Students learn valuable interpersonal skills and a strong work ethic by participating as a member of a work team with specific goals.

All over the state, students are gaining insight into how local governments and non-profit organizations can work together to better their communities. The Department of Education and a locally based, statewide non-profit organization, the Palmetto Project, have modeled that relationship and have joined forces to document service-learning in the state. Each year, the Palmetto Project assists the Department of Education by conducting focus groups with students, arranging meetings with service-learning providers and community-based partners, and by collecting data in the form of a survey which is randomly administered. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the impact service-learning is having statewide and in individual communities, and to find out how students perceive service-learning activities. Student responses have been overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with service-learning. Both middle and high school students gave high marks to service-learning in a variety of areas. The charts included in this article detail some of these results.

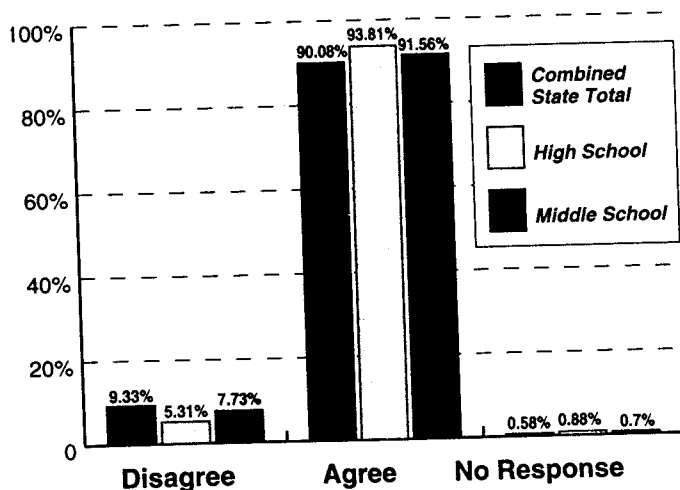
For assistance with how to collect and analyze data from your students contact Kathy G. Carter at (803) 734-8451 or e-mail her at kgibson@sde.state.sc.us.

In 1995, students finishing their service-learning experience received a survey asking them about their experiences. Five hundred sixty-nine surveys were returned. The following charts and graphics portray the results.

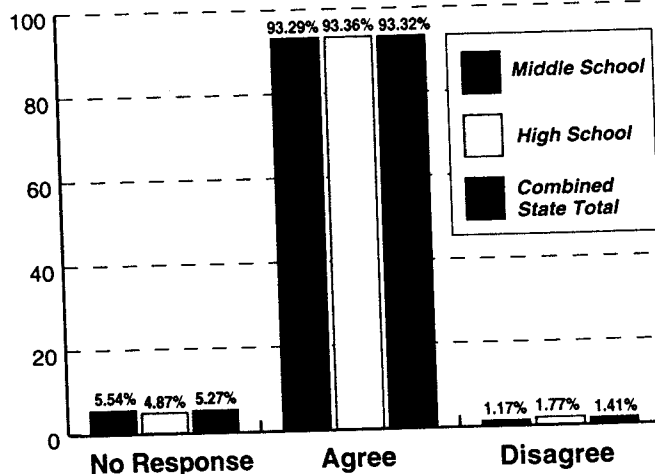
Service-Learning Activities...

- ...acquaint me with career possibilities
- ...broaden my understanding of places and people
- ...develop my personal qualities
- ...help me acquire new skills, interests, and knowledge
- ...help me develop habits of community service and volunteerism
- ...help me better understand what I study in class
- ...give me an opportunity to be creative and put my ideas to work
- ...help me better understand my community and how it works
- ...teach me how to work in a team
- ...build my school spirit
- ...should be worked into all my classes
- ...make learning more interesting
- ...help me connect what I study in school with my life in the community

Teach Me How to Work Better in a Team



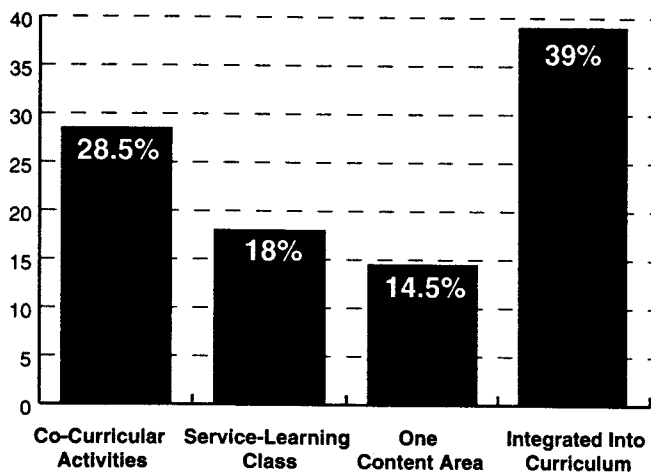
Help Me Acquire New Skill, Interests, & Knowledge



The students' responses are overwhelmingly positive. Both middle school and high school students gave high marks to service-learning in a variety of areas. See the chart below for details of their responses.

| Middle School Students | | High School Students | | Students Statewide | |
|------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Agree | Disagree | Agree | Disagree | Agree | Disagree |
| 87% | 12% | 88% | 10% | 88% | 11% |
| 91% | 9% | 93% | 6% | 92% | 8% |
| 90% | 9% | 91% | 8% | 90% | 9% |
| 93% | 6% | 93% | 5% | 93% | 5% |
| 91% | 7% | 94% | 5% | 92% | 6% |
| 76% | 22% | 75% | 23% | 76% | 23% |
| 90% | 9% | 93% | 5% | 91% | 7% |
| 85% | 14% | 91% | 8% | 88% | 12% |
| 90% | 9% | 94% | 5% | 92% | 8% |
| 82% | 17% | 76% | 23% | 79% | 19% |
| 79% | 17% | 77% | 22% | 78% | 19% |
| 87% | 9% | 91% | 8% | 89% | 8% |
| 88% | 10% | 90% | 9% | 89% | 10% |

Project Format



The graph to the right indicates how service-learning is being offered in South Carolina. As districts begin to institutionalize service-learning, programs move toward total integration of curriculum and service-learning.

- Students choose these options
- These options are less a part of the curriculum
- Excellent way to initiate service-learning

- All students can participate in these options
- These options are more a part of the curriculum
- Service-learning is institutionalized