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Service Learning a Strategy for Improving Education GOALS 2000: Educate America Act and Service Learning

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**Service Learning a Strategy for Improving Education
GOALS 2000: Educate America Act and Service Learning**

GOALS 2000: Educate America Act calls for the development of comprehensive state education strategies that result in the attainment of the national education goals and lifelong learning systems. Under GOALS 2000 programs previously viewed as separate and categorical, but which address specific phases in youth education and development, must now be viewed as part of a system with many reinforcing and essential elements. Under GOALS 2000 diverse programs dealing with early childhood, elementary, middle and secondary education as well as education for employment preparation must begin to function as part of a coordinated continuum of positive development and preparation for life.

GOALS 2000: Educate America Act:

- ▶ Supports planning for comprehensive education reform in states, schools and communities;
- ▶ Provides funds for use by states and schools for ongoing teacher training and professional development;
- ▶ Promotes parental and community involvement in education;
- ▶ Promotes bottom-up education reform in every school and community.

National Education Goals - Under GOALS 2000 states, schools, and communities are required to develop strategies to achieve the eight National Education Goals. Service learning is a strategy that can help states and schools achieve the national education goals.

Goal 1 School Readiness: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

Strong community/school partnerships that involve all stakeholders in the positive development and education of all children are essential for assuring school readiness for all children. The service learning process helps to facilitate community-wide partnerships that benefit all the community from the very young to senior citizens.

Goal 2 School Completion: By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Service learning as teaching and learning strategy makes school relevant to students by connecting academic concepts to real-life application. The service learning process makes students active learners, responsible for their own learning and thus, leading to more motivated students who are interested in school.

Goal 3 Student Achievement and Citizenship: By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy.

Service learning is an effective form of experiential education for teaching all academic subjects. Service learning is a core element of Civic and Citizenship education. It provides students the opportunities to develop the competencies for responsible participation in social and political life through active involvement in addressing community issues. In 1993, the Nation's Governors adopted service learning as an indicator of citizenship in Goal 3.

Goal 4 Teacher Education and Professional Development: By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

Service learning can help drive the transformation of teaching. Teachers involved in service learning and who use service learning as an instructional strategy develop the skills and perspectives necessary to affect school change. These skills include the ability to use multiple teaching and learning strategies to engage students in active learning opportunities that promote the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance capabilities and the use of community resources to foster student learning.

Goal 5 Mathematics and Science: By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

Service learning is an effective form of applied learning strategies that have been recommended by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Service learning experiences are proven effective hands-on or laboratory experiences for math and science curriculum. Most often these experiences are more effective than simulated activities because students are solving real problems that have consequences for the them and their community.

Goal 6 Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning: By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Service learning helps to prepare young people to be productive and responsible citizens. It fosters the development of skills that promotes life-long learning.

Goal 7 Safe, Disciplined, and Alcohol - and Drug Free Schools: By the year 2000, every school in the United states will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Research in the prevention and youth development fields has shown that some key elements of effective approaches to preventing high risk behaviors among young people include: approaches that integrate community-wide planning and collaboration; empowerment of youth and opportunities for leadership and participation; are indirect in teaching about high-risk behaviors and consequences; promote early identification; and address multiple needs and many interrelated risk factors. Service learning embodies all of these key elements.

Goal 8 Parental Participation - By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and partnerships in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

The service learning process involves parents and other community stakeholders in the educational process in significant ways. Through service learning parents and other community members have opportunities to become true partners in their children's development and learning.

Coordinating Broad-Based Planning for School Improvement

States are required to coordinate their broad-based school improvement plans with plans for other federal initiatives such as the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. States should also coordinate their GOALS 2000 plan with the programs under the National and Community Service Trust Act, specifically the school-based Learn and Serve America programs which support service learning activities.