Service-Learning in Massachusetts 2010-2011

This report summarizes the activities and impacts of the 2010-2011 Learn and Serve America School-Based Formula funded programming administered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE).

What is Service-Learning?

"Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities."

-From the National Commission on Service-Learning 2001

Through service-learning, students and teachers across the Commonwealth engage in hands-on projects where they identify community needs, investigate and implement solutions to those needs, evaluate the effectiveness of their service, and demonstrate their results. Teachers facilitate the service-learning process and make authentic connections to student learning. Students apply their learning by taking action to meet needs like water and energy conservation, supporting our troops and our veterans, helping those who are hungry and/or homeless and reducing bullying in their schools.

Service-Learning Grants

In 2010-2011, ESE awarded grants to 69 school districts to support activities related to planning, implementing and sustaining service-learning. Grants ranged from $1,050 to $10,500. These grants supported more than **25,000 students** and nearly **1,100 teachers** as they implemented service-learning projects.

2010-2011 High School Service-Learning Project:

Juniors and Seniors at the Codman Academy Charter Public School in Boston were interested in how the Codman Square Health Center can better serve the large, local immigrant population. Students conducted client satisfaction surveys, and met with doctors, nurses, and clients to identify how medication directions were being communicated and followed. Students designed pictorial labels for medications so that non-literate patients would be able to correctly identify and take their medication. Throughout this process, students used their language, data analysis, and computer skills to improve client health care at the Health Center.

## Service-Learning in Massachusetts: An Overview

Across the state, students and teachers at all grade levels engaged in service-learning projects in their classrooms, clubs and after-school programs.

Students made connections to their learning in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, technology/engineering, the arts, foreign languages and many electives. Their projects addressed problems or issues in their school, local community, and/or throughout the country. They worked to help the environment, support our troops and our veterans, make their schools and neighborhoods safer, protect animals, improve school meals, and provide needed help to the elderly and homeless.
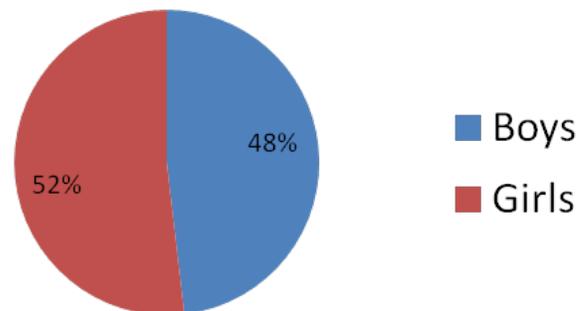
25,083 Massachusetts students (grades K-12)
1,091 teachers

Service-Learning Participants by Grade-Level
- K-5: 39%
- 6-8: 39%
- 9-12: 22%
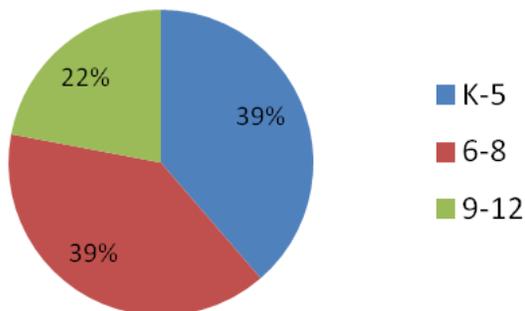
Service-Learning Participants by Gender
- Boys: 48%
- Girls: 52%

Source: LASSIE (**Learn and Serve System Information Exchange**), completed by all grantees June 2010

2010-2011 Elementary School Service-Learning Project:

"Pajama Party and Bedtime Stories." Students at Greylock Elementary School in North Adams in grades K-7 collected pajamas and story books to donate to the Louison House Homeless Shelter. The drive concluded with a school-wide pajama party where families were asked to donate a new pair of pajamas. Students used their ELA, Math and Technology skills to create promotional posters and flyers, count items, and create graphs . Over 200 people attended the party, and 129 pairs of pajamas and 339 books donated.

Service-Learning Evaluation

Pre/post surveys were administered to a sample of middle and high school students participating in service-learning, as well as a comparison group of students from the same schools not participating in service-learning, in order to gather information about the impacts service-learning has on students. (Find a link to the survey questions in Appendix A at the end of this report.) ESE received 670 pre-surveys and 405 post-surveys, of which 297 were matched pre/post surveys. The following analysis reflects the 297 matched pre/post surveys.

Surveyed Students

Service-Learning Participants vs. Non-Participants (based on teacher report)	#	%
Service-Learning Participants	174	59%
Non-Participants	123	41%
Total	**297**	**100%**

Students Surveyed by Grade-level
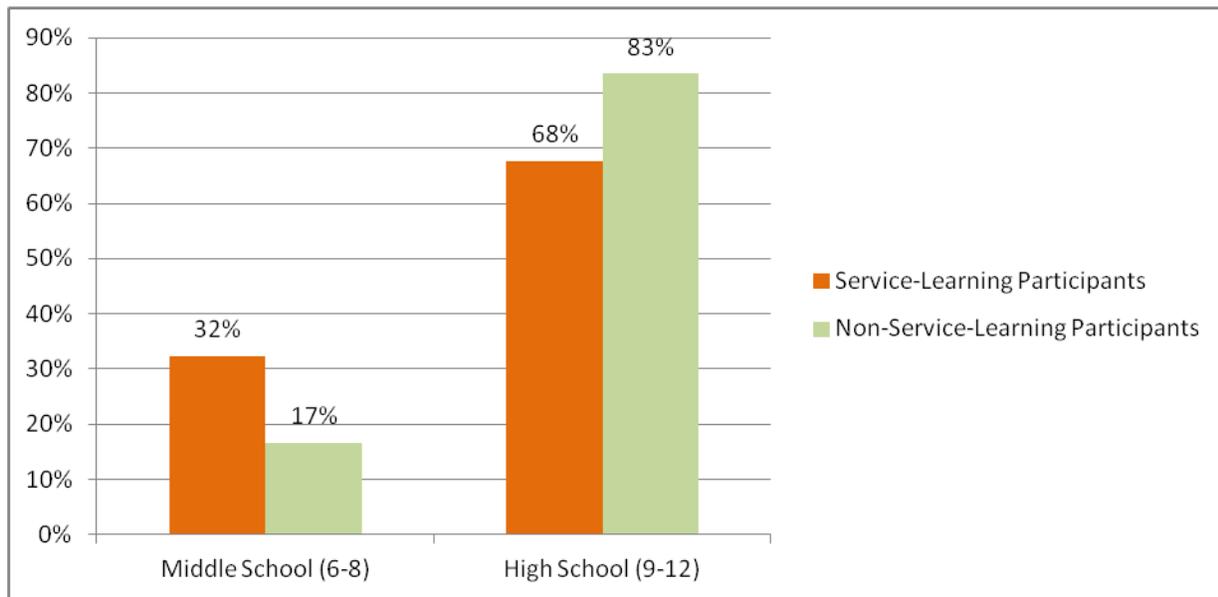
### 2010-2011 Middle School Service-Learning Project:

The Fowler Middle School in Maynard, once again teamed up with Maynard CAN (Climate Action Network) to organize a Maynard CAN Fair to raise awareness about the effects of our actions upon the environment, and to provide ideas and resources to help make our lives

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more "green." The Fair had the greatest attendance ever this year, and many parents, students, and community members walked away with a greater knowledge of how they can make a difference in helping the environment.

The Impact of Service-Learning on Students

Students reported several benefits of service-learning, including increased school engagement, improved connections to teachers, and improved communication and problem-solving skills.

Service-learning is associated with increases in self-reported measures of student engagement in school. Students participating in service-learning averaged a 4.5% increase from pre to post survey in response to the question: "I like being at school." In contrast, non-participants averaged a 4.3% decrease in their responses to the same question.

Average Percentage Change in School Engagement, on CSL Survey, Pre-Post FY2010
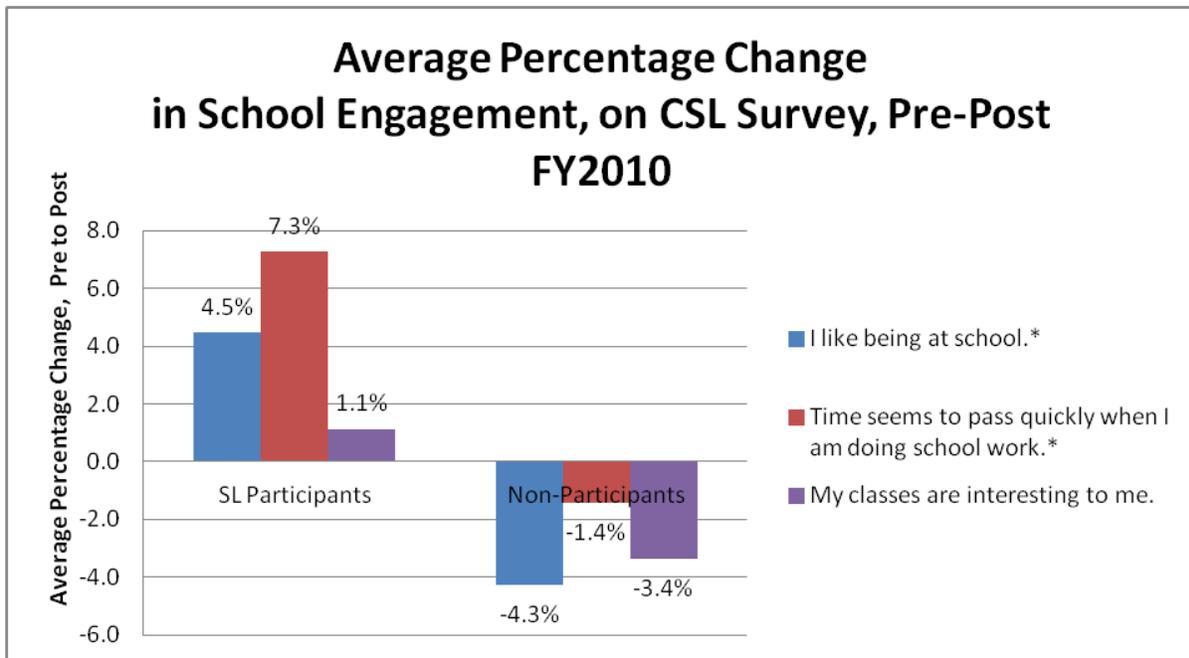
*Statistically significant based on one-way ANOVA (p ≤.01)
Source: Grantee administered student pre/post surveys.

Service-learning improves middle and high school students' perception of how seriously adults take their interests. Students participating in service-learning averaged a 2.4% increase from pre to post survey in response to the question: "At least one teacher or other adult at school takes students' interests seriously." In contrast, non-participants averaged a 2.2% decrease in their responses to the same question.
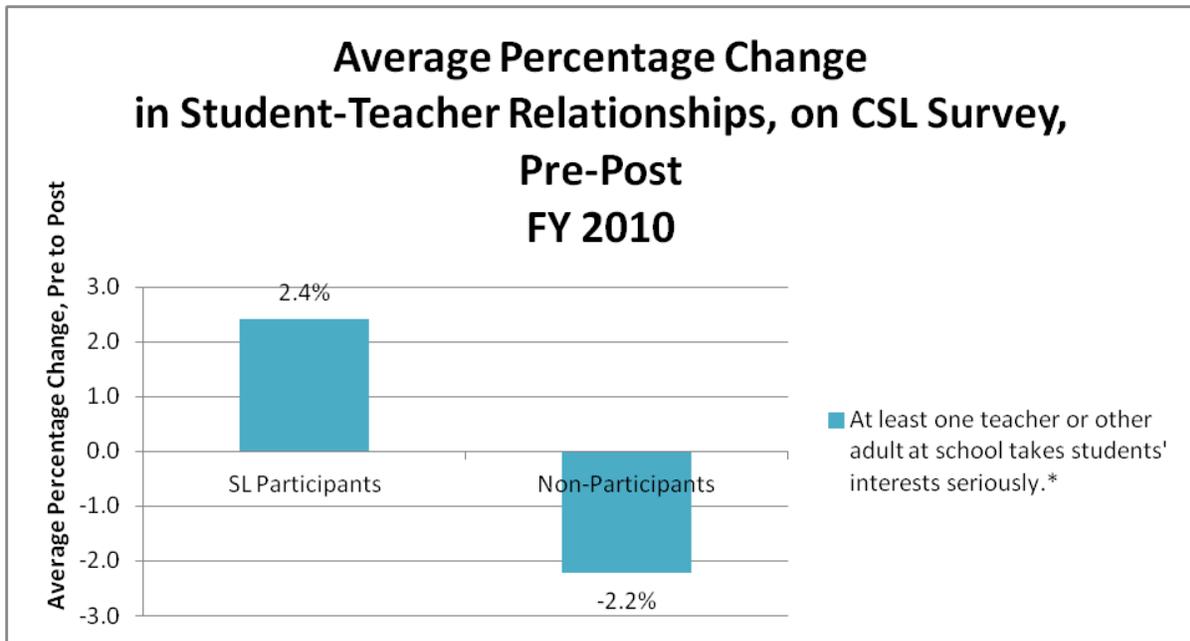
*Statistically significant based on one-way ANOVA (p ≤.05)
Source: Grantee administered student pre/post surveys.

Quality Service-Learning

The National Youth Leadership Council's Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice provides guidance for educators to optimize the experience of service-learning for students. The student surveys and the LASSIE reports (completed by each grantee) provide valuable information about the extent to which these standards are being implemented. The standards for which no specific data was collected are included at the end of the list. **Note:** The definitions in italics below are taken directly from the standards.

Link to Curriculum

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

Most students (55%: students responding "A good bit" or "A lot") reported that service-learning helped them to understand what they are learning in class.

How well did your service-learning project help you understand what you were learning in class?	#	%
Not at all	14	9%
A little bit	18	12%
Somewhat	34	23%
A good bit	60	40%
A lot	23	15%
Total	149	100%

Reflection

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

Students reflected on various aspects of their projects using multiple methods.

How did you reflect on your project activities?	#	%*
By writing	87	50%
By having conversations led by a teacher/group leader	84	48%
By creating a display for parents or other members of the community	49	28%
By having conversations led by another student	45	26%
By doing skits, poems or plays	23	13%
Other	16	9%
What topics did you focus your reflections on?	**#**	**%***
How I felt as I went through the project	76	44%
How our group made decisions about the project	74	43%
Class-related information we learned while doing the service activities	65	37%
How to deal with the setbacks to our project plans	55	32%
Other	8	5%

*Students could check more than one response.

Youth Voice

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

In most projects (65%), students had a say in choosing the project they worked on, and 60% of students felt their views and ideas helped shape their project.

Who chose the problem that you worked on?	#	%*
We Students	127	65%
Our Teacher	113	58%
Our Community Partners	33	17%
Our Principal	11	6%
Adult Volunteers	8	4%
Other	10	5%

*Students could check more than one response.

How much did you feel that your views and ideas helped shape your service-learning project?	#	%
Not at all	4	3%
A little bit	30	20%
Somewhat	27	18%
A good bit	71	46%
A lot	21	14%
Total	153	100%

Partnerships

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

In the majority of projects, community partners were involved in supporting students' work

How did community partners help with your project	#	%*
Not at all	15	9%
Choosing a problem to work on	54	31%
Providing information	63	36%
Suggesting solutions to the problem(s)	63	36%
Guiding us in our service activities	58	33%
Other	8	5%

*Students could check more than one response.

Duration and Intensity

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

Most students spent 5 or more hours performing their service.

About how many hours did you spend on *service* activities you provided during your project?	#	%
11 or more hours	66	43%
5-10 hours	47	31%
Less than 5 hours	40	26%
Total	**153**	**100%**

The remaining standards for quality practice were not specifically measured in the program evaluation however programs are encouraged to use all of the standards as guidelines for service-learning implementation.

Meaningful Service

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

Diversity

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

Progress Monitoring

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

Summary

Overall, service-learning in Massachusetts is providing demonstrable impacts on the students, schools and communities involved.

For more information about service-learning in Massachusetts, please visit: www.doe.mass.edu/csl

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Appendix A: CSL Student Survey

[Click here to access a sample CSL Student Survey (in Survey Monkey)](#). Note: This survey was the post-version for student participants in grades 6-12. It includes questions about students' service-learning experience. All other questions are the same in the pre-survey and in the comparison group (non-participants) surveys.