

Date of Hearing: April 27, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 2116 (McCarty) – As Introduced February 14, 2022

SUBJECT: Service learning: pupils in grade 12: study: pilot program: reports

SUMMARY: Requires CaliforniaVolunteers, in collaboration with the California Department of Education (CDE), to conduct a study on ways to incorporate impactful service learning for pupils in grade 12 and provide recommendations on how to integrate service learning; establishes a pilot program for purposes of engaging pupils in grade 12 who are enrolled at participating schools; and, requires CaliforniaVolunteers to submit a report on the pilot program to the Legislature. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Creates the Every Californian Serves Act.
 - a) Defines “service learning” as an educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs.
 - b) Requires CaliforniaVolunteers, in collaboration with the CDE and appropriate stakeholders, shall conduct a study on ways to incorporate impactful service learning for pupils in grade 12 and, on or before January 1, 2024, provide recommendations to the Legislature on how to integrate service learning.
- 2) Defines a local educational agency (LEA) as a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school.
- 3) Establishes the California Serves Pilot Program administered by CaliforniaVolunteers, in collaboration with the CDE, for purposes of incorporating impactful service learning for pupils in grade 12 who are enrolled at participating schools.
- 4) Appropriates an unspecified amount to eligible LEAs and requires participating LEAs to use funds for the following:
 - a) Stipends for pupils stipend in the amount of \$1,000 for personal expenses, including, but not limited to, travel expenses and purchasing community service uniforms, of engaging in service learning under the program; and
 - b) Hiring two California Serves Learning Coordinators at an amount of \$200,000 with each coordinator receiving an amount of \$100,000.
- 5) Requires CaliforniaVolunteers, in collaboration with the CDE, to develop programmatic details, administrative guidelines, and application criteria for purposes of the program.
- 6) Requires CaliforniaVolunteers, in collaboration with the CDE, to submit a report to the Legislature on the pilot after one year.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the 21st Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens program to award grants for after-school enrichment programs for high school students. A program consists of an academic assistance element and an enrichment element that may include community service or service learning. (Education Code (EC) 8421).
- 2) Establishes the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning Program awards grants to local and state operated Americorps, National Senior Service Corps, Learn and Serve, or Conservation Corps programs that submit proposals to engage students through their schools and school districts in community service that qualifies as instructional time on Cesar Chavez Day. (EC 37220.6)
- 3) Establishes a State Seal of Civic Engagement, to be affixed to the diploma of qualifying high school graduates, based on a demonstration of excellence in civics education and participation. (EC 51470)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states, “Service-learning provides students the opportunity to meaningfully give back to the community, while connecting the lessons they learn in the classroom with the service they provide in the community. High quality service learning enhances a student’s academic and personal development and interpersonal skills, facilitating cultural and racial understanding while building a deeper commitment to service and community involvement. AB 2116 would establish the California Serves Pilot Program, which will enable participating schools to establish service-learning programs that will provide community benefits and create civically minded students.”

Service-learning vs. community service or volunteering. Service-learning is distinguished from volunteering or community service in that it connects service with structured opportunities to learn from the experience. The federal Learn and Serve program of the Corporation for National and Community Service defined service-learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

Service-learning supports academic achievement, narrows achievement gap. A 2011 meta-analysis in the Journal of Experiential Education, *A Meta-analysis of the Impact of Service-Learning on Students*, of 62 studies involving 11,837 students found that, compared to controls, students who participated in service-learning programs demonstrated significant gains in five outcome areas: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance. The analysis also found that following certain recommended practices—such as linking to curriculum, community involvement, and reflection—were associated with better outcomes. A 2005 analysis of 217,000 student surveys found that “service [service-learning was not measured] of only one hour per week among lower-income students was related to significant reduction of the gap in achievement-related assets between higher and lower-income students.”

Nationally, community service increasing but service-learning declining. A 2008 national study published by the Corporation for National and Community Service found that “while school-based community service remains robust, the substantial growth in service-learning documented by federally funded studies conducted in 1979 and 1999 has not continued. In fact, the 2008 survey reveals a reversal of that trend, with the percentage of schools with service-learning declining from 32 percent in 1999 to 24 percent in 2008.” The study attributed that trend, in part, to the higher value placed on service as a means to promote civic behaviors than academic engagement. The study concluded, “When faced with budget constraints and state curriculum requirements, many schools are likely to place service activities outside of the curriculum and use methods other than service-learning in the classroom.”

CalServe program, eliminated in 2012, was inconsistently implemented and had unclear benefits. In response to the National and Community Service Act of 1990, the CDE developed the CalServe Initiative to support K-12 service learning partnerships to enhance student academic achievement and civic responsibility, increase teacher effectiveness and satisfaction, heighten school district awareness of service-learning, and provide authentic service to the community. During 1990 through 2012, CalServe provided funding for LEAs to support the statewide implementation of the instructional method known as service-learning.

A 2002 report, *Service-Learning in California: A Profile of the CalServe Service-Learning Partnerships, (1997-2000): Executive Summary*, analyzed the outcomes of teachers participating in CalServe program. The analysis found several inconsistencies in planning and implementing service-learning within partnerships with unclear benefits. The concerns include the following:

- Partnerships experienced issues in measuring the academic impacts of service-learning making it difficult to track outcomes and progress. Goals proposed by the partnership were different than the goals the individual teachers adopted for their service-learning activities;
- Metrics used by local partnerships to collect data was inconsistent thus making overall generalizations and conclusions about academic learning during service-learning activities difficult;
- Difficulties determining student’s sense of civic responsibility when participating in service-learning activities;
- Goals among teachers regarding service-learning varied greatly;
- Partnerships focused primarily on immediate needs and issues and did not have a clear plan on the sustainability and long-term goals; and
- Teachers faced difficulty arranging service activities, and needed more planning time and support from administrators and other teachers.

Teachers reported acquiring better teaching management skills and increased subject-matter knowledge. Administrators reported an increased engagement by parents and community members.

The report made recommendations for improving high-quality partnerships, sustainability, local evaluation, research on best practices, and institution service-learning.

Some districts have a volunteer or service-learning graduation requirement. While the state does not collect data on service-learning courses or community service graduation requirements, many school districts have local service-learning or volunteer graduation requirements. These vary in terms of time requirements and integration with coursework. Some districts with such requirements, as of 2015, included:

- Los Angeles Unified School District required a service-learning experience of all high school students, measured by an approved project, not a number of hours served;
- Culver City Unified School District required 60 hours of community service in high school for graduation;
- Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District required 40 hours of community service for graduation; and,
- San Jose Unified School District required certification of a minimum of 40 hours of community service for graduation.

California Volunteers higher education service program. In 2022, California Volunteers launched #CaliforniansForAll College Corps, a college service initiative in partnership with 48 California college and universities to provide 6,500 college students service opportunities in areas focused on climate action, K-12 education, and food insecurity. Participating students who complete a year of service receive \$10,000 and includes service learning opportunities for AB 540 eligible Dreamers. The initiative has three goals which include:

- Helping low-income students graduate college on time and with less debt;
- Addressing societal challenges and build equitable communities; and,
- Creating a generation of civic-minded leaders with the ability to bridge divides and solve problems.

Recommended Committee amendments. Staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

- 1) Move program from Government Code to Education Code and delete the title. Move administration of the program to the CDE, in partnership with CaliforniaVolunteers.
- 2) Add more specificity to the definition of service-learning.
- 3) Require the CDE to review the available evidence on service-learning and post it on its website (instead of conducting a study), develop uniform metrics for measurement of outcomes of the program (including the State Seal of Civic Engagement), and to use this evidence in the administration of the program.
- 4) Require that grants be made to LEAs with a student population which is at least 50% “unduplicated pupils” for purposes of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

- 5) Expand the list of allowable uses of grant funding to include professional development, instructional materials, participation costs for students, and personnel costs (instead of requiring stipends and the hiring of a coordinator).
- 6) Require that the report to the Legislature include an evaluation of the program using uniform metrics determined by the CDE.

Arguments in support. Improve Your Tomorrow states, “The transition from brother to mentor is a direct result of the positive and influential impact that mentorship and community service have on a developing adolescent. The ‘service learning’ pilot program AB 2116 will establish in high schools for 12th-grade students is a program that will yield similar results that IYT has experienced with our brothers and mentors. This pilot program under California Volunteers will be an opportunity for young people to grow personally and professionally while improving the quality of living for their families and neighbors through education and community service.”

Related legislation. AB 2088 (Cooper) of the 2021-22 Session would establish the California Pilot Paid Internship Program to provide grants to LEAs to establish or expand internship programs within their Career Technical Education courses or pathways.

AB 2678 (McCarty) of the 2019-20 Session would have required California Volunteers, in collaboration with the CDE and appropriate stakeholders, to conduct a study on ways to incorporate impactful service learning for pupils in grade 12 and, on or before January 1, 2022, provide recommendations on how to integrate service learning. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 189 (Low) of the 2017-18 Session would have required the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to develop a model curriculum on service-learning for pupils in grades ninth to 12th grade, for voluntary use by educators. This bill was vetoed by Governor Brown. The veto message read:

I believe this bill is unnecessary. The Instructional Quality Commission carefully considered the subject of service learning when it was updating the History-Social Science Framework and embedded it throughout the curriculum framework that the State Board of Education subsequently adopted.

AB 24 (Eggman), Chapter 604, Statutes of 2017, establishes a State Seal of Civic Engagement, to be affixed to the diploma of qualifying high school graduates, based on a demonstration of excellence in civic education and participation.

AB 1689 (Low) of the 2015-16 Session would have required, beginning with the high school class of 2022-23, that at least one of the courses required for graduation include a service-learning component. The bill would have defined service-learning and also required the SPI to develop curriculum standards for courses that incorporate a service-learning component. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 524 (Low) of 2015-16 would have required, beginning with the high school class of 2020-21, that at least one of the courses required for graduation include a service-learning component. The bill would have defined service-learning and also required the SPI to develop curriculum standards for courses that incorporate a service-learning component. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 127 (Jeffries) of the 2009-10 Session would have established the California Volunteers Commission, which would serve as California's "State Commission" for purposes of the federal National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and its implementing rules and regulations. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 984 (Polanco), Chapter 213, Statutes of 2000, establishes the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning program to promote service to the communities of California in honor of the life and work of Cesar Chavez and authorized the local and state operated Americorps and Conservation Corps to submit proposals for programs that will engage pupils through their schools and school districts in community service that honors the life and work of Cesar Chavez.

AB 1911 (Wesson and Hertzberg) of 1999-2000 would have required school districts offering grades 9 - 12 to offer students the opportunity to enroll in courses that include service-learning activities for credit toward graduation. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

Improve Your Tomorrow

Opposition

None on file

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