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6-1-2008

# Service Learning and its Effect on Students' Attitudes towards Learning

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## Recommended Citation

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DePaul University

School of Education

**SERVICE LEARNING AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENTS'  
ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING**

A Dissertation in Educational Leadership

by

William Thomas Conard

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

June 2008

We approve the dissertation of William Thomas Conard

Name

Date



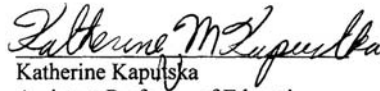
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to examine if students who participated in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher would have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service)? A service learning project is generally defined as a thoughtfully organized community service experience that enhances what teachers have chosen as the objectives, standards and curriculum in their classrooms. Service learning projects focus on providing students with the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be applied to real-life situations.

The sample for this study consisted of students who had participated in either service learning or community service projects. The sample also consisted of teachers who had implemented a service learning project with their students. The students and teachers came from an urban public high school in Chicago in which students are required to complete forty hours of service learning in order to graduate.

This research study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods and data analysis. The annual Service Learning Survey administered by the sample high school was analyzed using t-Tests while also comparing percentages between the responses to the survey from the two groups of one hundred and thirty four students – forty nine self-identified service learning students and eighty five self-identified community service students. Focus groups were conducted in order to have a more in-depth and holistic analysis of the experiences of the students. There were three focus

group sessions: ten students who did service learning, ten students who did community service, and ten teachers who implemented a service learning project with their students. The systematic analysis of the data from the focus groups included an inferential content analysis of the responses based on the dimensions of the attitudes towards learning as identified in the framework of the research study.

The analysis of the quantitative data collected showed that the percentage of students answering strongly agree or agree was considerably higher with the service learning students than with the community service students. Overall, thirteen of the eighteen questions had service learning students answering more positively than the community service students. With the t-Tests, although there was no statistically significant difference when analyzing strongly agree and agree answers, there was a statistical difference for the service learning students on three questions when analyzing agree answers only. The inferential content analysis of the qualitative data from the student and teacher focus groups suggested that the students who did service learning had more positive attitudes toward their learning than the students who did community service.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Dr. Radner for your constant support for me not only through this process but also since we first met fourteen years ago. Your wisdom and guidance has left an indelible mark on me both as an educator and a person. I want to thank Dr. Mindes for reminding me that it is profoundly important to give high school students an opportunity to have a voice when we are discussing what happens in schools and in the teaching and learning process. I want to thank Dr. Kapustka for assuring me that it is *really okay* for the data to tell the story. And I want to thank Dr. Hieu for reminding me that success depends on dedication to perfection through preparation of the work.

Mom and Dad, thanks for always believing in me. I am forever grateful to you for instilling in me the values necessary to live a life that aspires to respect, serve, and love those that have been sent to me. You too Carol, as I know you know. And thanks to my dear friend Jean, whose support and love for me and my family kept me on track and always reminded me to never give up.

Leya, K.T., and Sarah – you are all “Papa’s little girls” who have already showered me with endless memories of joy. I love you so much and I pray that I will always be the father you need me to be.

Finally, I’d like to thank my wife and best friend, Nok. You are the greatest gift God has ever given to me and I am so proud of the family we have created together. I love you with all of my heart and soul.

# CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

*“It is possible to store the mind with a million facts and still be entirely uneducated”.*

-Alec Bourne

## 1.1 Educational relationships

A service learning project is a thoughtfully organized community service experience that enhances what teachers have chosen as the objectives, standards, and curriculum in their classrooms. Service learning projects focus on providing students with the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be applied to real-life situations (Wade, 1997). The research question that this study investigates is: will students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who do service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service)?

In attempting to explain and expand on the answers to this research question, this study will link theories of adult education, adolescent development, and experiential education. Theories of adult education are relevant, as will be explained in more detail in this chapter, in that many adolescents in an urban school have many of the characteristics that affect the education of adults, including jobs and family responsibilities that compete with school work. The research study investigates a relationship that involves three principal variables: students, teachers, and knowledge. This study presumes that it is the union of these three variables that ultimately determines the degree to which students will learn via the curriculum and the teaching and learning process. This study specifically investigates student engagement within the teaching and learning process and its effects

on students' attitudes about learning as demonstrated through participation in curricular service learning projects in comparison with participation in community service projects.

In recent years, there has been an increasing educational movement to have students become more engaged in the learning process. In fact, it would be difficult to work in education today without being familiar with the phrases 'engaged learning' or 'active learning'. In 1996, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* declared, "Upon the teachers in all high schools falls the responsibility for ensuring that the work that confronts students has the potential to engage them...Moreover, the level of engagement must be sufficient to command the continued interest of students despite their possible inability to grasp it (difficult work) immediately" (p. 14). Active learning calls for the implementation of teaching and learning strategies that engage and involve students in the learning process. Numerous research studies have shown the value of active or engaged learning, particularly in improving the achievement level of the lowest-performing students and minorities (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1992; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1983).

This concept of active or engaged learning has caused a dramatic paradigm shift from the student being a passive recipient of the learning process to an active participant in the learning process. Due to the depth and scope of this particular paradigm shift, it has ultimately affected all teachers in one way or another; this is truly the sign of a paradigm shift as Kuhn asserts in his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: "The new paradigm implies a new a more rigid definition of the field. Those unwilling or unable to accommodate their work to it must proceed in isolation or

attach themselves to some other group” (p. 19). For example, although there are times when teachers must diligently invest some of the instructional time in the direct teaching of abstract principles and basic concepts as a necessary prelude to the application of knowledge (Viadero, 1994), direct instruction, with the 'all-knowing teacher filling the empty-vessel students with the all important knowledge', is no longer acceptable as the only means of instruction. Similarly, 'cooperative learning', 'the seven learning styles', 'project-based learning' and 'experiential learning' are concepts that most modern educators have some understanding of and that make up the variety of active learning teaching strategies.

Although the recent paradigm shift is new, it is based on an idea --the idea of an active, engaged, and reflective student – that is not new. Dewey believed that the pupil should be looked upon as willful, purposive, curious and active (1916) and advanced the belief that active student involvement in learning was an essential element in effective education (1956). R.W. Tyler believed that learning takes place through the active behavior of the student; that it is what the student does that he/she learns, not what the teacher does (1949). Leaders in American education, particularly in the progressive movement during the 1950's, continued this emphasis on engaged learning. Cognitive leaders, including Piaget and Bruner, further developed an understanding of what it means to enable learners to relate experience to cognitive development. Their educational theories have had substantial influence on the design of curriculum. Piaget believed the starting point for a child's intellectual growth was his or her own action (1972) and although Bruner and Piaget did not agree on all points, Bruner did create a theoretical framework based on the principle that learning is an active process in which

learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current or past knowledge and experiences (1960).

Helping students learn how to reflectively learn is one of the most critical and essential skills that a teacher imparts to his or her students. It is the teacher's responsibility to properly prepare the students for the life-long process of learning by teaching them the skills necessary to become active and independent learners. If teachers conducted their classes so that they more often acted as coaches, and students pursued more of their learning on their own, it would be possible for more students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Additionally, showing students how to apply what they know underscores the practicality of knowledge and heightens students' interest in the learning taking place.

In particular, service learning can provide a vehicle for validating students' experiences and thus bridging the cultural divide between school and neighborhood by bringing teachers and students together in a process of discovery and a context in which the teacher is not the depository of all knowledge (Keith, 1997). Much of what is learned does, in fact, have a connection to the world and teachers should make students aware of this fact, because although learning can be applied in the community, it can also take place in the community as well (Breaking Ranks, 1996).

## 1.2 Teaching and Learning

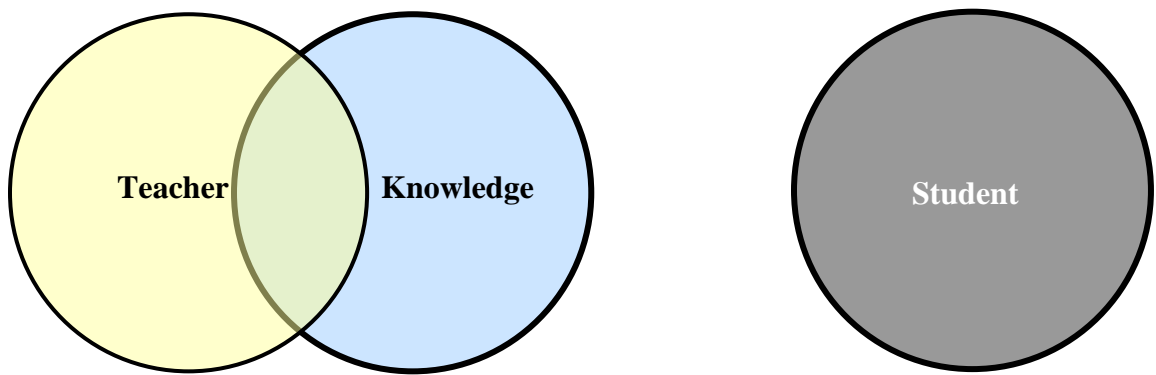
The phrase "teaching and learning" needs to be clarified. Teaching in a contemporary classroom is defined variously depending on which philosophy guides the teacher. However, as most schools of education define it, the teaching and learning process includes guiding student learning with a destination -- an objective or standard.



Academic standards are specific statements of the knowledge students should have and the skills they should have to apply that knowledge. In its manual, *Standards-Based Instruction* (1997), the Chicago Public Schools stated that "Standards tell us what students should learn and what teachers should teach. Needed improvements in academic achievement nationwide suggest the importance of agreements about what America's children should be learning. As we prepare for the future, standards act as a focal point and are the basis for decision-making about instruction, curriculum, and staff development" (p. 1). Teaching and learning asks the questions: did the students learn and how do we know they learned? Did the students learn what was supposed to be learned through that particular teaching method or strategy in the lesson's activities? Did that particular teaching strategy or learning activity engage all, some, or any of the students in the successful achievement of the particular objective or standard? In addition, with an increasing emphasis on assessment as well as standards-based curricula that affects all teachers, primarily with the introduction of the No Child Left Behind legislation, did the students have opportunities to show the teacher (and themselves) that they had mastered the new information and skills and could apply them in variety of predictable and unpredictable situations? Did the activities allow for student planning, action, reflection, discussion, and evaluation around the standard that the students were working toward? A teacher may walk away from a class pleased with how the particular lesson developed but does he or she truly know that what was taught was what was learned? Sometimes the teacher may feel that the particular lesson went poorly, but what assessments were employed to help determine if the students actually learned?

To picture the teaching and learning relationship clearer, the image of the student, teacher, and knowledge can be viewed as a group of circles. Many times only two of the three circles (students, teachers, or knowledge) intersect. Using direct instruction in the following graph, the teacher-circle and the knowledge-circle intersect, but the student-circle is left isolated as shown in Figure One below:

Figure One – Venn Diagram, Two Circles Intersect

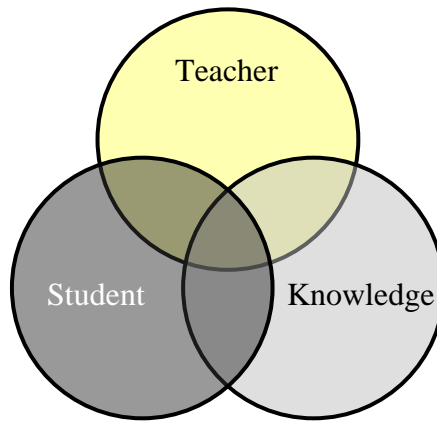


Other times the student-circle and the knowledge-circle might intersect (for example, activation of a student's prior knowledge) but the teacher-circle does not intersect due to neglect, disinterest, or a poorly planned lesson. Breaking Ranks (1996) maintains that relying solely on this type of instruction is a problem plaguing high schools because too many teachers teach in only this one way; that is by the teacher-centered lecture method, which too often leaves the student unengaged. Similarly, in his study about the use of class time, Goodlad (1983) found that during the three quarters of the

time given to instruction, there was a low incidence of activities involving active modes of learning.

The ideal teaching and learning situation –the active construction of knowledge -- arises best when the student, teacher, and knowledge circles intersect each other and form a Venn-diagram as shown in Figure Two below:

Figure Two. Venn Diagram, Three Circles Intersect



When this intersection occurs in a learning activity, the teachers and students are fully engaged in the teaching and learning process. Dewey (1916) believed that through experiential education, students are challenged to discover relationships among ideas for themselves, rather than merely receiving the information about such relationships from the authorities around them. Dewey viewed the community as an integral part of the educational experiences because what is learned in school must be taken and utilized beyond its bounds both for the advancement of the student and the betterment of future societies.

With its emphasis on experiential education, service learning is often promoted as an educational activity which can achieve the ideal teaching and learning

experience. Due to the benefits achieved in the improved teaching and learning, Keith (1997) also maintains that service learning, as experiential education, contributes to improving school culture, “through its beneficial effect on student-teacher relationships. Attitudes and understandings are formed in ‘discourse communities’ that involve relationships; to change these, new communities and new relationships must be forged. Rather than engaging in blaming teachers, students, or parents, community-based service learning can help forge solutions that involve changing these larger structures” (p. 134).

When the teacher, student, and knowledge variables do not intersect, administrators and teachers can often end up doing things to students rather than with them. Shumer (1994) contends that service learning is a valuable tool for promoting a sense of agency in students (e.g. being able to act rather than be acted upon). If this is true, then it seems worthwhile to investigate whether increased student participation in the teaching and learning process through curricular service learning has a significant effect on the attitudes about learning of these students. Simply put, do students have more positive attitudes about learning when they have opportunities to learn through curricular service learning projects which allow them to actively participate and contribute in the teaching and learning process?

### 1.3 Theories Relevant to Engaged Learning

This research study was conducted in a representative neighborhood high school in the inner-city of Chicago. The current theories of adult education and adolescent development seem particularly relevant to the urban, adolescent student as well. The

theory of Houle (1972) that adults who learn are voluntary learners is actually a core element in the development of effective learning experiences, such as service learning, for adolescent students. The adolescent who attends class is not necessarily a learner because his/her presence is required. It is when the student ‘volunteers’ to learn that the learning takes place. This concept seems to be a critical aspect in the search for success in solving the educational problems of disengaged urban, adolescent learners.

Knowing that learner receptivity is unique and that not every student will feel comfortable with this independence, Knowles (1984) was motivated to distinguish between teacher-centered and learner-centered instruction. This realization, in turn, gave rise to his theory of andragogy. According to this theory, Knowles differentiated between the teaching of children (pedagogy) and the learning of adults (andragogy). The fundamental differences are found in the learner characteristics, especially in their maturing in learning. Table One contrasts the two characteristic sets:

Table One -- Comparison of Pedagogy and Andragogy

<b>Pedagogy – teaching of children</b>	<b>Andragogy – learning of adults</b>
Dependent	Self-directing
Little experience	Much experience
Readiness to learn comes with age	Readiness to learn comes from need
Told what to learn	Need to know why, what and how
Subject-centered	Life, task, problem centered
Externally motivated	Internally motivated

In effect, andragogy is an attempt to develop a theory specifically for adult learning. Known as the andragogical model, the use of learner-centered instruction – which supports addressing the needs and interests of learners – is thought to be the most effective way to teach adults.

However, in understanding the experiences and development of the urban adolescent student, it seems possible for this theory to be extrapolated to address the educational needs of the urban adolescent learner as well. In many instances, the urban adolescent student often has the same levels of demands as adults, including child-raising (for some), work (in order to help support the nuclear and/or extended family) and interpersonal challenges (brought on by societal issues including poverty, no formal education in parents, no positive adult role models, etc.). In Chapter Two, this idea will be investigated and discussed further within the review of the literature.

D.A. Kolb (1984) was one of the earliest educators to critically emphasize that different people learned in different ways. Indeed, Kolb's Learning Style Inventory distinguished the fact that people learn in different ways and that teaching should account for this fact. Kolb posited that both direct experience and reflection are essential to effective learning. In unison with other cognitive theorists, Kolb suggests that learning requires four steps: (1) observe or experience events; (2) reflect on that experience; (3) develop concepts that explain and allow generalization from the events; and (4) test these concepts in varied situations.

The idea of different types of learners and therefore a need for differentiated instruction, however, has become most readily practiced with the emergence of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (1983). Educators now have to prepare to

include and engage different kinds of learners in a classroom with differentiated instruction. The same concept or skill needs to be introduced, practiced, applied, and assessed through several methods, strategies, and activities to insure that all students understand the new information and skills and can apply this new knowledge or skill in a variety of predictable or unpredictable situations.

#### 1.4 Role of Student in Engaged Teaching and Learning Process

Piaget (1972) theorized that learning is constructive; that is, you add to that which was previously learned as knowledge is constructed by the active user. The learner will not be a passive recipient of facts and ideas but instead will derive meaning from everything that is learned and apply this meaning to their own present and past experiences and knowledge. The process of assimilating new knowledge is complex and how one actually goes about acquiring skills and knowledge varies with the individual. Some prefer learning by themselves; others prefer to come together with the help of a facilitator, often called a teacher or trainer (Danchak, Jennings, Johnson, & Scalzo, 1999). One logical possibility for a teaching and learning process that required a more engaged student would be the use of a collaborative teaching model that involves the learners as partners. Although Hedin (1987) wrote about how using students as teachers was a tool for improving school climate and productivity, in most situations, adolescent learners may need some direction because they do not have the requisite skills and knowledge to be self-directed or they may need support because they lack confidence or are not committed to the learning endeavor.

Ultimately, most teachers would like to assist the student in becoming an independent learner – one who needs less and less facilitation in acquiring skills and knowledge. As cited earlier, the current teaching and learning theories strongly suggest that the teacher should be a ‘guide on the side rather than a sage on the stage’. Shumer (1994) believes that the relationships developed through service learning projects promote learning opportunities and experiences that can change the quality of relationships between students and teachers by leveling power differences and helping to promote the reciprocity and cooperation that facilitate mutual learning.

Creating opportunities for students to be deeply involved and meaningfully engaged in the teaching and learning process is a critical responsibility for teachers. As is recommended in *Breaking Ranks II* (2004), administrators and teachers must "develop standards for each of the essential learnings defined by the community that tell us what students should know and be able to do (content), how well students must do these things (performance), and which instructional techniques or recommended activities (curriculum) should be used to assist students in accomplishing the ‘what’ and the ‘how’” (p.91).

If this type of engagement was to occur, then not only would students be learning the necessary knowledge and skills but they would also experience authentic and important opportunities to practice, utilize, and ultimately master these skills. In practical terms, and in relation to the theory of andragogy, the teaching and learning process needs to begin to focus more on the outcomes of the student learning process. Although it is absolutely necessary for high school students to demonstrate high levels of academic achievement in relation to learning standards, it is critically important for



teachers to remember that instruction needs to focus on the process of learning regardless of the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation are most useful where teachers must adopt more of a role of a facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader. Table Two below, from the Chicago Public School's *Standards-Based Instruction Manual* (1997), shows the implications for the teacher and student:

Table Two -- Standards-Based Instruction (Key Principles)

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Student</b>
Serving as Facilitator or Coach	Working in teams (discussing, drawing, using calculators, and computers)
Grouping to accelerate learning	Making connections to the world outside of school
Integrating subject matter	Applying knowledge through performance tasks
Providing supportive instruction in reading, writing and math skills	Learning basic skills through higher order thinking
Providing opportunities for students to show what they know and are able to do	

### 1.5 Role of Student in the Assessment Process

Besides giving the student the necessary information to fully participate and make intelligent choices, teachers make themselves accountable to the creation and acceptance of the assessment standards employed in the classroom. Student assessment, for the most part, has traditionally had the teacher in the role of the grader, using a single method of assessment which has relied heavily upon tests and quizzes that are routinely composed of essays and multiple-choice questions. For the student who does not test well, this type of assessment alone does not fairly measure his or her mastery of the knowledge or skills taught. Recently, there has been discussion

involving alternative types of assessment including portfolios, projects, and performances. What seems to be agreed upon by many researchers is that assessment of student work should provide a diverse collection of information that reflects a student's progress in moving through the high school curriculum (Breaking Ranks, 1996).

However, even a teacher who continues to use traditional methods of assessment would enhance the teaching and learning process by allowing the student to know the grading policy of the teacher and the criteria for success necessary to be present in the student's work to score well on the test, performance, or assignment.

In *Understanding by Design*, a book that is recognized by Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as a framework for designing curriculum units, performance assessments and instruction, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) assert that only rarely do students know where a lesson or unit is headed in terms of their own performance obligations. A student typically only knows the topic, what chapters will be read, the directions for each activity, and that a test is coming at the end. This limited information, however, is not sufficient to focus their attention, guide their effort or insure that they understand the goals and know how to meet them. Wiggins and McTighe suggest that students must be able to answer the following questions with specificity and confidence as their work develops:

1. What will I have to understand by unit's end, and what does that understanding look like?
2. What are my final obligations? What knowledge, skill, tasks, and questions must I master to meet those obligations and demonstrate understanding and proficiency?
3. What resources are available to support my learning and performance?

4. What is my immediate task? How does it help me meet my overarching obligations?
5. How does today's work relate to what we did previously? What is most important about this work?
6. How should I allot my time? What aspects of this and future assignments demand the most attention? How should I plan? What should I do next? What has priority in the overall scheme of things?
7. How will my final work be judged? Where is my current performance strongest and weakest? What can I do to improve?

As the questions above indicate, the work must be purposeful from the student's point of view and the student must clearly see the relevance of each assignment, activity, and assessment. Unlike a multiple-choice or true-false test in which a student is asked to choose one of the responses provided, a performance assessment requires a student to perform a task or generate his/her own response. The performance assessment must consist of two parts - a task and a set of scoring criteria or rubric. The task may be a product, performance or extended written response to a question that requires the student to apply critical thinking skills. A rubric sets forth a uniform set of precisely defined criteria or guidelines that will be used to judge student work (The CPS Performance Assessment Idea Book, 1994).

#### 1.6 Objective of the Research Study

When the teacher's actions allow for the students to participate more fully in the teaching and learning process will significant effects in student attitudes about learning be observed? The purpose of this research study is to determine if students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher will have

significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who do their service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service).

Having students becoming more engaged in the learning process actually asks teachers to give up their traditional role as knowledge gatekeeper and be willing to act as presenter and facilitator. As they study and create knowledge, the experiences of teachers and students alike will have a transforming effect on the way that they study and learn. Just as the teacher will guide students through activities that respond to the principle of constructing knowledge rather than delivering it, so too the students will become motivated to learn when they see there are authentic opportunities for possessing and applying certain skills and bodies of knowledge in their community and 'every-day lives'. The goal of this research study is to determine if positive effects on student attitudes toward learning exist when the teaching and learning process allows for opportunities when students, teachers and knowledge intersect with each other.

To address the research question, this study employs both qualitative and quantitative designs developed through an analysis of relevant theory, research, and recent practices. The student survey analyzed was based on questions employed by the Chicago Public Schools Small School Initiative as well as the Chicago Public Schools Service Learning Outcome Guidelines. Data were correlated through t-Tests and comparisons of student responses to the survey. The student and teacher focus group questions were adopted from the student panel questions presented at the Chicago Public Schools 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Service Learning Conference. An inferential content analysis was conducted on the data to determine themes, patterns, and trends.

## 1.7 Significance of Research Study

This research study is significant and necessary for several reasons; the reasons stated briefly here will be discussed more in-depth in the literature review found in the next chapter. First, this study is significant because in the past decade, student involvement in service learning and/or community service projects has increased tremendously. In addition, more school districts and schools have mandated that students accumulate a certain number of service learning or community service hours as a graduation requirement.

Second, although service learning has achieved a rather positive reputation in educational and political circles about improving achievement (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993), some of the research in regard to service learning has found inconsistent results. Indeed, despite the popular appeal among the public, educators, parents and even students for service learning, there is surprisingly little conclusive evidence that students who engage in service learning learn more, develop in different ways, or learn different skills than those who do not (Alt, 1997). This study will emphasize the role that service learning and community service have on students' attitudes about their learning and it will be of particular relevance for educators who are working daily with the youth in our schools and deciding what sort of learning activities students will experience.

A third reason why this research study is significant is the need to further clarify the inherent difference between service learning and community service to determine the effects the learning/serving experience is having on students' attitudes toward their learning. Because of the difference between service learning and

community service, this study will serve as a basis for looking at experiential education and how classroom instruction connects to student attitudes toward their learning and how classroom learning can be applied to community needs in a variety of settings, especially for students enrolled in an urban school setting.

Participation in the study provides both students and teachers the opportunity to define and critique their service learning experiences. Specifically, students will be given the opportunity to give voice to their learning experiences, an opportunity which they are not often able to do, and discuss their roles as service learning participants. Teachers' participation in the study provides them the opportunity to share their professional skills and experiences with other teachers. The results of this study will contribute to the general knowledge about service learning and benefit both students who must complete the service learning graduation requirement and teachers who must find ways to engage their students in the teaching and learning process. The data analysis will inform and improve instruction and curriculum at the high school.

## CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*"Tell me, I will forget. Show me, I may remember. Involve me, I'll understand".*

--Chinese Proverb

### 2.1 Overview of Significance of Study

This research study examines whether students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher will have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who participated in service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service). The literature review focuses on three reasons why this research is significant:

- (1) a substantial increase in the numbers of students participating in mandatory and/or volunteer service learning or community service projects;
- (2) a significant amount of research that gives inconclusive results as to the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and attitudinal effects participation in service learning or community service projects has on students; and
- (3) the need to distinguish between service learning and community service so that a better understanding may be gained regarding the effects that this type of learning has on students' attitudes toward learning.

The review of the research found in this chapter will contribute a clarification of the construct of service learning.

## 2.2 The Engagement of the Urban Student

The need for the engaged student is no where more critical than within the urban school. Literature demonstrates that this urgency exists because for an overwhelming numbers of urban students, schools achieve the opposite of engagement (D'Amato, 1993; Ogbu, 1990). As Newman (1991) observed, "large numbers are so alienated from schools that almost any activities which fall under school sponsorship are suspect" (p. 65).

As failing grades and drop-out rates confirm, schools are struggling to meet the needs of the 21st century student. In their book, *The Quickenning of America*, Lappe and DuBois (1995) note that, "While the world is changing, America's schools are not meeting the needs that are flowing from these changes" (p. 203). They cite the following reasons for these changes:

- An increase in the number of dysfunctional families, resulting in more and more children growing up without the support, guidance, and discipline they need to make responsible choices.
- More and more of our young people are threatened by crime, violence, ignorance, and poverty.
- In the absence of strong positive adult influences, the values of our young people are, more and more, being shaped by their peers.
- The influence of the mass media -- our young people have more information at an earlier age, but do not know what to do with it.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century came to a close, the National Association of Secondary School Principals wrote a significant document entitled, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*. In this publication (1996), the writers and editors theorized that powerful transformations in values and behavior, in expectations and rewards, and even



in the family itself rendered it essential that the high school reevaluate its purpose and functions (p. 3). Indeed, numerous, governmental-supported studies and reports back this assertion that tremendous societal changes require the educational system to reform to meet these changes. Some of the findings in these studies and reports over recent years indicate the following societal trends: that almost one third of all the children in the country under the age of 18 did not live with both parents (US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1993); that one of five children lived in poverty (US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1995); and that tens of thousands of high school students were presumably among the more than half-million teenagers who delivered babies each year (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1994). In the table below, Lappe and Dubois (1995) present how much society has changed and how little the schools have changed to meet the needs of students in this new world:

Table Three -- Schools and Changes in Today's World

<b>Changes in Today's World</b>	<b>Needs That Flow From These Changes</b>	<b>Instead of Meeting These Needs, Our Schools...</b>
Greater Diversity: More cultures and races interacting.	Appreciation of diversity	Isolate students individually from community life
Heightened Interdependence	Interaction skills	Offer little training in team-work and conflict resolution
Spreading Alienation: Growing magnitude of severity of problems	Skills to negotiate interests, hold others accountable, and solve problems	Provide little training in problem-solving skills
Accelerating change in technological development and information output processing	Knowing how to learn and how to teach ourselves	Emphasize routine tasks, repetition, and retention of facts and figures

By drawing from many sectors in education, government and medicine, one area that *Breaking Ranks* clearly addressed for all educational stakeholders was the need for going beyond the traditional methods of instruction, in an attempt to motivate and engage students in their education and prepare them for successful and productive lives. Waterman (1997) argues that this need to go beyond the traditional methods of instruction is necessary when one concludes that there is an abstract quality to the subject matter of most courses in which the academic material appears only in classroom and textbook contexts. Students quite naturally respond to the classroom-based curriculum with questions about its relevance for their lives outside of school.

Much research literature on teacher expectations reveals that urban students' social class, race, and prior academic achievement are strongly correlated with low teacher expectations and impoverished, less demanding and more controlling educational environments (Proctor, 1983). Indeed, where control is an issue, teachers will tend to inhibit student initiative and participation (Cooper & Good, 1983).

This is especially true, suggests Gallego (2001) with new teachers who "without opportunities to deliberately expand and challenge personal and professional habitudes, (prospective) teachers may routinely underestimate students' abilities and misunderstand diversity" (p. 313). Sleeter (1992) similarly found that negative attitudes tend to be strengthened rather than abandoned as a result of teaching in urban schools; programs that focus on pre-professional training and professional development do not easily change, in part because such attitudes are supported by social and organizational arrangements, and the induction of teachers into urban schools thus

produces teacher-student relations that often follow a pattern identified by Williams (1989): the teacher's attempt to 'be nice' (first stage) results in chaos (second stage). Subsequent attempts to reassert authority (third stage) lead to an uneasy truce that involves a 'contract'. Successful teaching and learning is no longer measured by high academic expectations and achievement, but by the relative quiet of halls and classrooms (fourth stage) and it is the most common form of adjustment between urban teacher and their students; only rarely is a fifth and final stage of respect and mutual learning achieved (King, 1993).

How then does service learning better meet the real and unique learning needs of many of the urban youth? Some literature suggests that a school's focus should not be on school culture per se (which often stops at measures of teacher participation and team building among staff) but on school culture and organization as it relates to high teacher expectations, sound teacher-student-parent relationships, student engagement and high levels of learning (Weinstein, Madison, & Kuklinski, 1995). Keith (1997) maintains that in an urban environment, the benefits of service-learning are great and actually go beyond just helping the individual students. He contends that

...where many widely different ethnic and cultural groups attend the same schools, educators must devise new ways of learning about these groups and integrating their experiences and knowledge into culturally appropriate pedagogies. By bringing teachers and students together in a process of discovery and a context in which the teacher is not the depository of all knowledge, service learning can provide a vehicle for validating students' experiences and thus bridging the cultural divide between school and neighborhood (p. 138-139).

Schneider (1995) similarly believed that service learning is particularly important for urban schools, where it can either bridge the gaps that separate groups from each other or reinforce their differences.

### 2.3 Student Motivation and Engagement Through Service Learning

Schools need to look for new ways to include and motivate students to be part of the learning process. Motivation is a subject which has intrigued and fascinated educators and researchers. In observing and investigating motivation, the list of questions seems endless: “What motivates us to start acting to go after a goal?”; “Why do some people take action while others never act on wants and needs?”; and “Why do some people persist for longer periods of time in the things that motivate them while others often change from one pursuit to another?”

These questions – and their answers – are particularly relevant to the urban adolescent student. Reviews by Banks (1994), Levine (1994), Losey (1995), and Vasquez (1994) concluded that schools should be responsive to diverse styles of learning, cognition, and motivation, especially among minority students. These studies found that minority students tended to learn more when knowledge was presented in context, when the learning process was collaborative, when they could see the relationship between their efforts and accomplishments, when they engaged in activities that allowed repeated experiences with success, and when relationships developed with teachers reinforced the perception that teachers were caring.

Successful teachers acknowledge the societal barriers that face poor, minority children but instead of reacting with pity, acceptance, and cynicism -- which according

to Graham (1989), lead to lowered expectations and performance -- they strive to develop communities of support to overcome such barriers. As McPherson & Negben (1991) commented:

Service-learning involves and immerses students in relational learning environments and engages multiple senses and intelligences. Learning becomes more accessible by expanding the definition of competence and redefining the relationship of teacher to student and student to learning. The teacher, rather than simply being the provider of information and the evaluator of competence, is the creator of environments where students learn by doing, working with others, and reflecting on their experiences (p. 1). Service learning that is group and community oriented begins to build those supports, contributing to peer group norms and values that define school as a place for meaningful learning and community problem solving (Keith, 1997).

*A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Non-school Hours* (1992), a study conducted by the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, showed that when service-learning connects with community agencies, these organizations contribute to youth development by providing opportunities that meet the needs of young people to socialize with peers and adults, to develop skills that are relevant now and in the future, to contribute to the community, to belong to a valued group, and to feel competent. As students work beside adults in the community in service learning projects designed to meet real community needs, they begin to view themselves as stakeholders in the community's future (Miller, 1997).

By integrating academic material from the classroom with service projects in the community, the relevance of the classroom content becomes more readily evident. As important, the hands-on application of skills taught in the classroom provides a

clearer, yet simultaneously more complex, perspective regarding those skills. What is experienced through action will be remembered more vividly than what is merely read, or heard in a teacher's class presentation (Waterman, 1997).

#### 2.4 Service Learning within the Chicago Public School System

In August of 1998, the Chicago Public School System introduced a new program to its high schools called service learning. It was established as a requirement for high school graduation and applied to all high school students. Students had to complete a minimum of 40 hours of service learning activities prior to graduation in order to receive a high school diploma. Students were strongly encouraged to participate in semester-long activities and to complete the 40 hour requirement in one semester. Further, the Chicago Public Schools summarized that the service learning activities should require students to spend time preparing for the activity and reflecting on the experience.

In its introductory booklet, *Service Learning* (1998), the Chicago Public Schools explained its mission for service learning: "Service learning will strengthen the classroom instruction of high school students in all subject areas to improve their overall academic success and will fulfill real needs in the city of Chicago. Through their participation in hands-on, creative, and course-related projects, students will be exposed to new concepts in learning and will develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and civic awareness" (p.1). In defining what service learning would mean, the introduction goes on to say that:

In the Chicago Public Schools, service learning provides teachers and students with an educational tool that connects an entire city of resources with our

classrooms. Through service learning, teachers are able to provide students with meaningful applications of the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom, making the learning experience more tangible and real (p. 1).

In its introduction to service learning, the Chicago Public Schools seemed to be actively seeking challenging ways to provide engaging educational opportunities for its students in order to strengthen their academic experiences. The significance of this teaching and learning method lies in its potential to connect classroom learning to real life situations. Like many educational tools, the goal of a service learning project is to provide a chance for students to apply the academic skills that they develop in their classrooms to a real community need. In order for service learning to impact students' academic and social growth, it is essential that service learning projects relate to their classroom learning (Service Learning Project Guide, 2000).

Too often, students do not recognize connections between events in their everyday lives and what teachers teach them; administrators and teachers must put more emphasis on teaching students to apply what they learn. Breaking Ranks (1996) made a recommendation that "...the content of the curriculum, where practical, will connect itself to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future" (p. 15). This requires that high schools do more to present the curriculum in the context of experiences that call upon students to apply knowledge in situations approximating those in which they will use knowledge and skills in real life.

The purpose of this research study will be to determine if students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher will have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who do their

service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service). In light of the discussion in chapter one, this research study is significant and necessary for several reasons.

### 2.5 Significance of Study -- Increase in Numbers of Students and Schools Participating in Service-Learning/Community Service Activities

The growing commitment of young people who contribute voluntarily to larger issues through service is becoming well documented. In the past decade, service learning has grown by leaps and bounds in schools and school districts across the United States. In fact, from 1984 through 1997, the number of K-12 students involved in service learning programs rose from 900,000 to 12,605,740 and the percentage of high school students participating in service learning nationwide increased from 2% to 25%. In 1984, 27% of all high schools in the United States offered some type of service program, and 9% offered service learning (Newmann & Rutter, 1986).

According to a report issued by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 1999, nearly a third of all schools and half of public high schools provide service-learning programs for their students. The National Service Learning Clearinghouse (1998) estimated that the number of high school students engaged in service learning increased by 363 % between 1984 and 1997.

Findings from the 1996 National Household Education Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, found that 49% of students in grades six to twelve in public and private schools participated in community service during the 1995-96 school year. Of the students



volunteering, 86% were in schools that endorsed volunteer service by requiring participation or by arranging the opportunities. A follow-up survey on community service and service learning to the 1996 survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999 and co-sponsored by the Corporation for National Service, found that 83% of high schools offered some type of community service. Overall, 64% of K – 12 public and private schools had students participating in service that was recognized or arranged by the school.

A nationwide survey of college freshmen, given annually since 1966, has been conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute as it regularly measures the level of service activity in high school, as reported by freshmen newly arrived on college campuses. The 1999 survey indicated that 75.3% of freshmen, the highest figure ever, reported having been involved in community service in their senior year of high school. In 1997, 73.1% of incoming freshmen reported having volunteered in high school, while in 1989 just 62% said they volunteered. The survey results show more and more students are volunteering even though only 21.3% of them attended high schools that require community service for graduation. As Sax (1999) points out, “These findings suggest that the majority of students who engage in volunteer work do so of their own volition” (p. 2).

## 2.6 Significance of Study -- Inconsistent Results in Past Studies

This study on service learning will contribute to knowledge about an expanding element of many high schools' curricula. It is a fundamental assumption underlying the practice of service-learning, as well as other forms of experiential learning, that students will develop better understanding and appreciation of academic

material if they are able to put that material into practice in ways that make a difference in their own lives and/or in the lives of other people (Waterman, 1997). However, a second reason why this research study is significant is that a substantial amount of the research in regard to service learning has found inconsistent results and was not very conclusive about either the magnitude or nature of potential impacts of service learning (Caskey, Cairn, Kielsmeier, & McPherson, 1991; Conrad & Hedin, 1991).

These inconsistent results are partially because there was very little early literature in the field of service learning (particularly based on pre-post analysis of quantitative data) that wasn't based on either one specific program (Calabrese & Schumer, 1986; Hamilton & Zeldin, 1987) or on a variety of experiential education and community service programs (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Hedin, 1983; Williams, 1990). Chapin (1999) found that if the literature on service learning is judged, it has increased within the last seven years; however, advocates of service learning do not have a large enough research base to support the effectiveness of their programs. As one review noted, service-learning is a field where 'anecdotal evidence is stronger than empirical data' (Buchen & Fertman, 1994).

Furthermore, such research is complicated by the wide variety of programs that are described as service-learning and the very different goals such program may have -- from improving achievement (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993) to improving civic responsibility (Rutter & Newmann, 1989) to promoting healthier psychological development (Switzer et al., 1995). Because of this, Serow (1997) argues that,

Thus, the basic documents in the field, such as the Principles of Good Practice (1990), are derived mainly from theories of experiential education and from the accumulated wisdom of many years of practice, whereas the

educational policies that have brought new attention to service-learning have been based more on expectations of potential impacts than on hard evidence of actual outcomes (p.13).

Clearly, there is a need to widen the base of evidence that service learning offers a new and better approach toward affecting students' academic achievement and attitudes.

Indeed, despite the popular appeal among the public, educators, parents and even students for service learning, there is surprisingly little conclusive evidence that students who engage in service learning learn more, develop in different ways, or learn different skills than those who do not (Alt, 1997). It is hypothesized by supporters of service learning that students who participate in a service learning activity will become more engaged and motivated. Along with the learning that comes with a service learning project, comes the feeling of being a part of something greater than one self – the feeling of knowing that one has made a difference; the feeling that one's contribution is important, even critical, to the success of a service learning project. As a result, students are more engaged in their learning and it is presumed that when students are engaged and motivated they will have more positive attitudes about school. "Through service-learning, young people become engaged leaders taking responsibility for solving complex problems and meeting the tangible needs of a defined community" (Marais & Yang, 2000, p. 678).

At a Service Learning Summit held in September 1995, however, experts were split on the importance of emphasizing or de-emphasizing changes in basic academic skills. They preferred placing greater emphasis on improved critical thinking and problem-solving as likely outcomes of service-learning programs (Blyth & Kroenke, 1996) and determined that the strength of quality service-learning experiences may

have more to do with how they help students think and work together on teams than in how they help youth improve basic academic skills. Blyth, Saito, and Berkas (1997) report that the results from their student surveys given to sixth through twelfth graders in ten different service-learning programs were remarkably similar to the conclusions drawn by the forty experts at this summit.

Other studies have also shown no statistical difference in students who participate in service learning experiences. A study conducted by Melchoir and Ridgell (1994) concluded that no differences were found between service learning and control group participants on measures of personal or social responsibility. When studying Michigan high school students, Billig (2003) found that when prior service experience and gender were controlled, there was no difference on cognitive engagement. In addition, students showed no statistically significant differences on academic engagement, including math, social studies, and science as well as affective engagement or valuing school. Melchoir (1999) found there were no differences between service learning and control group participants on measures of personal or social responsibility or on such risk behaviors as use of alcohol, illegal drugs or weapons.

Although these studies employed control groups, very few of service learning studies used control groups and very few tracked whether the impacts were sustained over time. Few, if any of the studies, tested hypothesis or cited the theoretical foundations under which the service learning programs were being operated.

Conversely, there have been studies which have shown that participation in service learning activities can have a positive effect on students. In an impact study

conducted by Blyth, Saito, and Berkas (1997), they used Learning Through Service surveys in an effort to get systematic data on the outcomes of service learning projects. Surprisingly, the data from their earlier study referenced above indicated different implications than they had found in this later study. This study showed that youth in these service learning programs saw the benefits of these types of classes and projects over their regular classroom activities. Students saw these activities as less boring, requiring harder thinking, and more related to real life.

Indeed, to achieve stronger academic outcomes, some researchers have determined that service learning program designs must include intentional integration with specific subject matter in the curriculum (e.g. building a wheelchair ramp needs to be explicitly connected with geometry), alignment with standards (since this is typically what is measured in test scores, grades, unit tests, and other measurements of achievement), and reflection activities that use higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, evaluation and problem-solving as ways to understand the service activity and its relationship to the community need (Billig, 2000). When these additional factors are present, strong academic outcomes – as measured by enhanced learning of subject matter, higher grades or higher test scores – can result (Anderson, et al., 1991; Dean & Murdock, 1992).

In a 1997 study conducted by the Brandeis University Center for Human Resources and Abt Associates, results were found which indicated that the Learn and Serve service learning program had a positive post program impact on the civic attitudes and educational development of the students who participated (1999). In reviewing the research on the impact of service learning, Conrad and Hedin (1991)

concluded that “the case for community service as a legitimate educational practice receives provisional support from quantitative, quasi-experimental studies and even more consistent affirmation from the reports and testimony of participants and practitioners” (p. 749). When service learning meets an authentic community need and includes meaningful planning, service, reflection and celebration, it typically succeeds in engaging students in the learning task. Most studies attribute this outcome to the nature of service-learning as an activity that students perceive to be relevant, interesting, meaningful, and fun (Billig, 2000).

A series of other studies have also described behavioral, social, cognitive, and academic effects of community service or service-learning on the students. Coggnetta and Sprinthall (1978) indicated increased self-confidence and Switzer, et. al (1995), Luchs (1981), Conrad and Hedin (1982), and Hedin (1989) found increases in self-esteem. Hursh and Borzak (1979) and Conrad and Hedin (1982) noted increases in self understanding while Luchs (1981), Shaffer (1993), and Conrad and Hedin (1982) also found increases in social efficacy. Luchs (1981), Conrad and Hedin (1982), and Giles and Eyster (1994) all found that students improved their attitudes toward adults and to the people and organizations with whom they worked.

Scales and Blyth (1997) and Berkas (1997) found that students who engaged in service learning were more likely to treat one another kindly, help one another, and care about doing their best. Conrad and Hedin (1982) and Newmann and Rutter (1983) both found that service programs can at least slightly increase students' sense of personal competence and Conrad and Hedin (1989) also found increases in self-understanding. Hamilton and Fenzel (1988) found gains in social responsibility and

Leming (1998) found that students who engaged in service learning ranked responsibility as a more important value and reported a higher sense of responsibility to their school than did comparison groups. Newmann and Rutter (1983) and Scales and Blyth (1997) also found gains in social competence and found that students perceived themselves to be more socially competent after engaging in service learning. Calabrese and Schumer (1986) found fewer disciplinary problems and reduced levels of isolation and alienation among students and Switzer et al. (1995) found healthier psychological development.

Conrad and Hedin (1982) found increases in intellectual growth while Follman (1998) and Calabrese and Schumer (1986) found increases in grade point averages. Hedin (1987) showed increases in math and reading scores for those students who did tutoring while Conrad and Hedin (1982) and Hamilton and Zeldin (1987) found gains in factual knowledge in the areas most directly related to the field experience. Finally, Markus, Howard, and King (1993) and McCluskey-Fawcett and Green (1992) found improvement in the integration of theory and practice while Yates and Youniss (1996) found that high school students who participated in high quality service learning were likely to think about morality in society and were likely to consider how to effect social change.

## 2.7 Significance of Study – Difference Between Service Learning and Community Service

A third reason why this research is significant is the need to establish the difference between service learning and community service. Waterman (1997)

illustrates that the term service-learning has come to be applied to a very wide range of activities with students from kindergarten through higher education. As the use of the term has expanded, there has risen a lively debate about what should and should not be considered educational practices under this label. As noted earlier, inconsistent results have been found in the research that supports the claims made by service-learning advocates; one reason for this may be the confusion about what service learning is and is not (Bradley, 1997). Indeed, in the studies cited in previous sections of this document, the terms community service and service learning are used similarly. Chapin (1998) noticed that the terms “community service” and “service learning” are often used interchangeably; however, distinguishing between the two is important because they do not mean the same.

In both service learning and community service, individuals become involved in service projects that are believed to be of benefit to others, their community, or their environment and from which they derive no direct monetary or material benefits (Waterman, 1997). But community service is a broader term that is currently much more commonly found and encouraged by most teachers. The objective with community service is generally focused on helping others and is not necessarily tied into a schools' curriculum or program of study. In community or volunteer service, there is no explicit focus on the educational value to be gained through involvement in the particular projects (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991).

The purpose of community service is to help those in need; sometimes it is called volunteer service. Kahne and Westheimer (1996) define community service as altruism, charity, or giving back to the community. Diverse models of community service exist at



all grade levels, but most typically, each high school student is required to put in a given number of hours of his or her own time outside of school hours in any type of community organization. The projects do not necessarily have a strong political or social action focus. Instead, community service is often a concrete task that connects students to the social life of the community, but their activity is not necessarily a contribution toward increasing political efficacy or stimulating the political process (Chapin, 1998). In addition, although there is a great deal that individuals may learn on their own from their personal involvement in volunteer service, Waterman (1997) believes the absence of a systematic focus on the educational possibilities of such service inevitably results in less utilization of those possibilities.

Service learning, on the other hand, is defined as integration of community service with academic coursework (Chapin, 1998). In the case of service learning, the projects are designed, enacted, supervised, and evaluated with the educational benefits of the experiences as one of the consciously held goals (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991). Consistent with the objectives of experiential learning, students develop expectations of what can or should be learned as a result of their involvement in the service project. Both during and after the service activities, attention is called to the learning objectives as a means of fostering the educational outcomes and students should devote time toward reflecting on the nature of what is taking place (or has taken place), and the reasons that events have transpired the way they have. Further, explicit efforts are made to integrate what is taking place during the service project with elements of the more traditional in-class curriculum (Waterman, 1997).

In other words, a service learning project is a thoughtfully organized community service experience that enhances what teachers have chosen as the objectives, standards, and curriculum in their classrooms. Service learning projects focus on providing students with the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be applied to real-life situations (Wade, 1997). In addition, when the focus of service or other student-teacher experiential learning is on community knowledge and community development, the potential for improving relationships broadens further, reaching from the school to the local community (Harkavy & Puckett, 1991).

### 2.8 Definition of Service Learning

While disagreement about the exact definition of service learning still persists, this study will contribute a clarification of the construct of service learning. There is general consensus among practitioners in the service learning field that a service learning project should include the following major components:

- active participation
- thoughtfully organized experiences
- focus on community needs and school/community coordination
- academic curriculum integration
- structured time for reflection
- opportunities for application of skills and knowledge
- extended learning opportunities
- development of a sense of caring for others (Billig, 2000).

In Public Law 101-610, The Commission on National and Community Service (1990) has defined service-learning as follows: Service learning is a method:

- (A) under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and the community;
- (B) that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for the student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity;
- (C) that provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
- (D) that enhances what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

When employing the above criteria, service learning has the ability to foster authentic, experience-based learning opportunities that will motivate students and help them engage in higher order thinking in contextually varied environments (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996).

Psychologists have postured that students learn by constructing meaning from their experience (Piaget, 1972; Bruner, 1960) and service learning provides the direct experience and subsequent reflection that learning requires. The importance of reflection to our everyday lives and personal development has been stressed by educational philosophers and theorists (Dewey, 1933) and adult educators (Knowles, 1984). Kolb's experiential learning model required not only reflective observation on a concrete experience but also active experimentation of alternative responses to situations (1984). Implicit in most of Dewey's writings is a theory of how experiential programs ought to be organized to meet the outcome goals of growth and development. He put forward four criteria that were necessary for projects to be truly educative: (1) must generate interest; (2) must be worthwhile intrinsically; (3) must present problems

that awaken new curiosity and create demand for education; and (4) must cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time.

Like Dewey, Bruner (1966) viewed children as active problem-solvers who are ready to explore 'difficult' subjects and in his 'notes on a theory of instruction' he makes the case for taking into account questions of predisposition, structure, sequence, and reinforcement in preparing curricula and programs. He positions education as a knowledge-getting process:

To instruct someone...is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge. We teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think mathematically for himself, to consider matters as an historian does, to take part in the process of knowledge getting. Knowing is a process not a product (p. 72).

But herein is the crux of this study. If there have been inconsistent academic and affective results with students who actually participated in service learning and/or community service activities, and if there is still a significant misunderstanding between a student who volunteers to do community service on their own as opposed to a service learning project with a teacher, and if the numbers of students doing service learning is significantly increasing, then is it worthwhile to determine if curricular service learning experiences are having positive affects on students' attitudes toward learning? In other words, how do students and teachers really teach and learn through the service learning initiative when they are a part of a larger school system that mandates a certain number of service learning hours as a condition of graduation? Is the system, and the members thereof, looking for students to 'just get their hours so

they can graduate' or are they actually concerned with what students learn in the classroom and how they apply this knowledge to a real community need through a service learning project?

It is interesting to note that in its introductory manual on Service Learning (1997), the Chicago Public School System stated that teachers who use a service learning methodology by conducting service learning projects in their classrooms partly define their teaching philosophy of education as the following:

- 1 All students have value and deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their value to their school and community
- 2 Education must be relevant, challenging, purposeful, and student-centered
- 3 Educators should serve as resource guides and learner facilitators
- 4 Learning should be self-directed and oriented towards real-world projects
- 5 High expectations must be maintained and must drive all student efforts

Based on these principles, the teachers who employ service learning offer an innovative, relevant, and successful approach to education. These teaching experiences for students are not confined to a physical place (like a classroom), but rather are focused on physical results that rely on the school and the community for its projects. The community becomes a well-spring for the student, a place where projects originate, and where the resources exist to solve the problems that arise. The students of these teachers are experiencing a self-directed, service-project oriented curriculum that provides value to their schools, their communities and their own learning by establishing learning standards and the criteria for assessing successful achievement of these standards.

## CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

*"Assessment is not primarily about the collection of information - but rather about its use in communicating about learning".*

--David Clarke

### 3.1 Overview of Methodology

The research study was designed to investigate and analyze the experiences of students who participated in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher as compared to students who participated in service learning projects without guidance by a teacher (community service). Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine whether students who participated in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher would have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who participated in service learning projects without guidance by a teacher (community service).

This analysis occurred within an urban high school in a school district that mandates service learning hours be completed as a requirement for graduation. If students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher have more positive attitudes about learning than those students who participate in service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service), it is important to determine how schools and teachers can develop and implement more service learning activities for its students. If there is no difference regarding the attitudes toward learning between students who participate in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher as compared to those who participate in service learning projects without the

guidance of a teacher (community service), it is hoped that this study will uncover some of reasons that prevent this seemingly positive experience from attaining the results it theoretically promises. The sections in this chapter explain the methodology applied in this research study.

### 3.2 Rationale for this Particular Research Design

The impact of service learning has only fairly recently received serious attention from the research community, and although some preliminary findings have been published, it is premature to draw broad conclusions. As discussed in the literature review, there are limited amounts of research that overwhelming support the claims made by service learning advocates (Bradley, 1997). Schine (1999) contends that because service learning can be tailored to serve a variety of purposes, investigations focus on a range of outcomes including impact on academic achievement, social and psychological development, continuing commitment to community involvement, and attitude toward school and community. These differences in outcomes bring into focus the challenges facing those who believe that teachers must attend to affective as well as cognitive learning. Kraft (1996) indicates that one of the major difficulties in evaluating or researching service learning programs is the lack of agreement on what is meant by the term service learning and exactly what it is meant to accomplish. Whereas some programs emphasize social growth, character development, or civic responsibility, others attempt to study psychological development and effects of programs on self-concept, and other studies have attempted to measure the effects of service on the broader community. Bradley (1997) states that "...the changes researchers are most interested in observing -- changes in student

attitudes and behaviors -- often take more than one school year to appear, whereas most service learning programs run for less than that" (p. 152).

Besides the different particular outcomes of service learning, there are other reasons that research and evaluation on service learning have not been more influential. One explanation Serow (1997) offers is that good investigators in this field,

...have taken an unduly restrictive view of what constitutes good research and evaluation. The literature on program impact in particular seems to consist disproportionately of studies grounded in a single approach -- namely, the statistical analysis of responses to surveys of short-term attitude change. As is argued shortly, quantitative analysis can play a useful part in assessing the effects of service-learning on individual development and on community well-being as well. The problems come when we rely *exclusively* on quantification for our knowledge of the changes that occur in conjunction with a service learning program (p. 13-14).

As will be discussed later in this chapter, the methodology of this research study purposefully used both quantitative and qualitative measure to capture a more holistic understanding of the data.

In analyzing the data, the research study was not looking at students' attitudes as they pertained to the specific service learning project they were doing. This particular type of study would have analyzed how students' attitudes changed in relation to the project they were doing. For example, a student doing a service learning project involving a beach clean-up might be expected to be more reflective about pollution and the causes that stem from this problem whereas a student working with younger students in a tutoring program might become more reflective about the need for boys and girls to have mentors in their lives.



Instead, the uniqueness of this study examined the extent to which a service learning or community service project affected students' attitude toward their own learning. As students worked on their service learning and community service projects, the research study attempted to know the extent to which the experience affected their attitude about their own learning. In collecting the data both quantitatively and qualitatively, the research design investigated this question from multiple perspectives. It also collected data from teachers who did service learning projects with their students to see if any additional themes, patterns, or trends were identified or whether themes, patterns and trends already identified by the students were reinforced with the teachers.

### 3.3 Sample Location

In her review of service learning literature, Chapin (1999) found that “most of the journal articles on service learning are ...reports of what happened in a given school with little description of the students or the community in which the service took place” (p.203). This research study surveyed and interviewed students and teachers from a representative neighborhood high school in Chicago, IL (ABC High School). Typically, neighborhood high schools receive the vast majority of their students from those families who live within a predetermined attendance area; there is also a slight number of students who do apply to go a particular neighborhood high schools for various programs that might be established in such schools.

ABC High School in Chicago, IL is an urban, neighborhood high school located in the heart of a major Latino community; consequently, the school serves and

educates a predominately Latino student body. As reported in the State of Illinois School Report Card for 2003, ABC High School's student population was approximately 2,000 students. When the student population is disaggregated, the Latino students compose approximately 85.4% of that total student count. Of the 85% of the Latino student population, Puerto Rican students compose roughly 70% and Mexican students make up the remaining 30%. Of the remaining 15% of the entire student population, African-American students number 11.4%, Caucasian students number 2.1% and Asian/Pacific Islander students number 1.2%. These percentages are almost exactly the same from five years previous when the Latino student population was at 85.2%

As defined by the Illinois School Report Card, some of the data (indicated by percentages) of the student demographics of the ABC High School student population are listed below. ABC High School's student mobility rate was at 33.7% where a mobility rate is based upon the number of students who enroll in school or withdraw from school during the school year. Low-income students are from families receiving public assistance, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, and being supported in foster homes with public funds of eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Limited-English-Proficient students (LEP) are those found to be eligible for bilingual education. Finally, the drop-out rate is based on the number of the students in grade 9-12 who stopped attending school during the school year and did not enroll into another school. The following table demographic information shows ABC High School's percentage in these three areas for the school year 2003-2004. Also included for contextual purposes are the percentages for the district and the state.

Table Four – Demographic Information of Sample School, ABC High School

	Low-income	LEP	Dropouts
ABC High School	87.70%	26.10%	21.70%
Chicago	84.80%	16.10%	15.80%
Illinois	36.30%	6.30%	6.20%

### 3.4 Sample Participants

This research study analyzed data collected from both students and teachers. Two groups of senior students were studied: (1) those who participated in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher and (2) those who have participated in service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service). The student sample of this study include one hundred and thirty four senior students who completed the senior service learning survey (Appendix A) and ten students from each of the two groups (ten service learning students and ten community service students for a total of twenty students) who also participated in the focus groups. All of the participants in the focus groups were senior students who were at least eighteen years old.

This research study also analyzed a group of teachers who had organized and implemented at least one curricular service learning project for their students. The sample size of this teacher focus group included ten teachers who had conducted a curricular service learning project in their class. Participant teachers ranged from veteran teachers (over five years of teaching experience) to new teachers (less than five years of teaching experience). Teachers in the focus group came from a cross-section of disciplines including English, Science, Social Science, Math, Art, and ROTC.

The results of the data analysis of both the surveys and focus groups were designed to inform and improve curriculum and instruction while not putting anyone at risk. All participants, including students, were at least 18 years of age. All students and teachers who participated in this study did so voluntarily and were able to withdraw from the study if they desired. Consent to participate in research letters were given to both students and teachers to sign by themselves (Appendix B). This consent to participate in research letter of introduction and explication was sent by the researcher to all students and teachers who participated in the focus groups. This letter explained that because the researcher was the assistant principal, the researcher would not be the facilitator of the focus groups and that the raw data would be transcribed by a professional transcription service which would use pseudonyms for all participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity was insured for both students and teachers. The survey was completed and submitted confidentially. With the focus group data, all participants' real names were given pseudonyms. Additionally, precautions were taken to mask the characteristics of the student or teacher in the study in relation to the information they shared. All results from this study were reported using these pseudonyms; no student or teacher was named or identified before, during or after this study.

The researcher was one of three assistant principals who worked for a principal in a comprehensive high school with over two thousand students and a hundred and twenty five teachers. The researcher's basic role in the school was the management of the day to day operations of the school. As both the researcher and an assistant principal at the school where the focus groups were conducted, there was a risk of

coercion both in participation and the kind of information shared at the focus groups, for the students and teachers. To minimize this risk, the researcher was not involved in the focus group process whatsoever. The service learning coaches conducted the focus groups and all student and teacher information was processed with pseudonyms which allowed the participants to remain anonymous. Additionally, the data from the focus groups were transcribed by a professional transcription service further insuring anonymity for the participants.

The principal of ABC High School had full evaluative and supervisory authority over all the teachers in the school and the service learning coaches reported directly to the principal as their primary supervisor. In addition, the principal gave her approval for the research to take place at ABC High School. Participation in the study provided students and teachers the opportunity to define and critique the service learning initiative. Also, students were given the opportunity to give voice to their learning experiences, an opportunity which they are not often able to do, and discussed their roles as service learning participants. For the teachers, participation in the study provided them the opportunity to share their professional skills and experiences with other teachers. The results of this study will contribute to the general knowledge about service learning and benefit future students who must complete the service learning hour requirement. The data analysis will inform and improve instruction and curriculum at the high school.

### 3.5 Holistic Approach to Data Collection

One premise of the research approach is that each of the students and teachers in this study had something worth sharing that would enlighten the perceptions about service learning. The research study, therefore, employed methods that would best capture data from a field – service learning – in which worthy studies with notable results seem more the exception than the rule (Serow, 1997).

Buchen and Fertman (1994) noted that service learning is a field where “anecdotal evidence is stronger than empirical data” (p.14) and Fusco and Hecht (1997) reported that “... there is limited empirical evidence to support the benefits for students participating in service learning. While policy makers and researchers generally agree there is a need for more rigorous empirical studies to document how the service experience impacts upon students, practitioners...often rely upon a single case study or first hand accounts of positive student change” (p.1). Conversely, when empirical studies have been conducted, these studies have collected information from a large number of students across varied programs with no little or no additional involvement of the students or teachers (Fusco & Hecht, 1997).

Additionally, there is some recent consensus among researchers that methodological flexibility, that is, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques, should be employed to give a more complete picture of the variables being investigated (Datta, 1994; Hedrick, 1994; Smith, 1994). Therefore, this research study believed that the best way to collect and validate the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes found in the data would be to employ both quantitative and qualitative measures.

This research study employed both quantitative measures -- a Likert Scale Survey -- and qualitative measures -- Focus Group Interviews. In doing so, the study used the quantitative methods to help answer the 'what' questions about the effect service learning or community service had on students' attitudes about learning and the qualitative methods to help answer the 'how' questions about the effect service learning or community service had on students' attitudes about learning. (Shumer, 1997).

Whereas many quantitative investigations on service and experiential learning programs have focused on outcomes, qualitative studies also provide insight into the process of service learning. Serow (1997) contends that research and evaluation can contribute significantly to the continued growth and improvement of service learning but that this potential has so far gone largely unfulfilled:

There may well be other reasons that research and evaluation on service learning have not been more influential, but surely one explanation is that investigators in this field have taken an unduly restrictive view of what constitutes good research and evaluation. The literature on program impact in particular seems to consist disproportionately of studies grounded in a single approach -- namely, the statistical analysis of responses to surveys of short-term attitudinal change (p. 13)

Datta (1994) suggests that if the researcher's interest is in understanding the meanings that participants attach to an experience, then qualitative methods are normally preferred; if, on the other hand, the goal is to examine competing explanations for certain outcomes, then a standard statistical test would probably be called for. But Kraft (1996) argues that perhaps the most difficult arena in researching service learning has been in the area of intellectual, cognitive, and academic effects.

“It has been difficult to design tight experiments to isolate the effects of service on specific academic achievements” (p. 14). This research study limited its scope to only the effects that service learning or community service had on student attitudes rather than on student academic achievement.

### 3.6 Quantitative Data Collection – Surveys

ABC High School administers an annual service learning survey to its senior students and teachers during the month of May. This survey incorporates questions from both the Chicago Public School's Office of Service Learning as well as the Office of Small Schools. It is given to all senior students as an exit survey from high school and all teachers as an end of the year reflection tool.

The survey administered by ABC High School uses a Likert Scale design. Scales are devices constructed or employed by researchers to quantify subjects' responses on a particular variable and they can help researchers to obtain interval data concerning students' attitudes, judgments or perceptions about almost any topic or object (Tuckman, 1999). ABC's service learning survey allowed its students to register the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement of attitude, belief or judgment about school, learning and service learning.

While ABC High School's Service Learning Survey also collects general information about school and learning, this research study only analyzed the section that collected specific information about their service learning experiences. In analyzing ABC High School's Service Learning Survey, two different treatments -- service learning and community service -- were analyzed in relation to their effect on



students' attitudes toward learning. Typically at ABC High School, the information from the service learning survey is reviewed by the service learning coaches as they look for ways to improve the service learning program within the school. However, this research study analyzed the data and compared the data from the two groups of students – those who did curricular service learning guided by a teacher and those who did service learning without guidance by a teacher (community service) -- to determine if any patterns or connections existed.

The analysis of the data from the survey investigated the influences that the service learning or community service experience had on the students' attitudes toward learning. These dimensions of attitude toward learning were emergent, taken from the survey itself, as identified by the researcher. The survey was analyzed to determine which questions correlated to the six different dimensions of attitude as described in the framework of the study:

1. Believing that learning is important, necessary and meaningful
2. Believing that learning allows them to help others
3. Believing that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence
4. Believing that learning must be relevant
5. Believing that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class
6. Believing that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff

Each dimension named was in and of itself one of the questions on the survey. Two additional questions on the survey were also placed in each dimension, giving each of the six dimensions a total of three questions that were related to each particular dimension of attitude toward learning.

The results of this survey analysis were then compared with the data collected via the student and teacher focus groups, as presented in the following section. Besides finding overall themes, patterns, and trends based on the data from the larger survey group, by comparing the data from the surveys with the data from the focus groups, it was hoped to discover even deeper and more meaningful connections.

### 3.7 Qualitative Data Collection -- Focus Groups

Interviews and focus groups help researchers to convert into data the information they receive directly from the people (research subjects). By providing access to what is 'inside a person's head', these approaches allow investigators to measure what someone knows (knowledge and information), what someone likes and dislikes (values and preferences) and what someone thinks (attitudes and beliefs) (Tuckman, 1999).

This research study employed three focus groups to collect the data to be studied and analyzed:

1. Student Focus Group: A 60 minute student focus group (N=10) was conducted with students who had done a curricular service learning project with a teacher.
2. Student Focus Group: A 60 minute student focus group (N=10) was conducted with students who had done service learning on their own without a teacher (community service).
3. Teacher Focus Group: A 60 minute teacher focus group (N=10) was conducted with teachers who had done a service learning project in their class.

The data from the focus groups dealt primarily with student outcomes of participating in a service learning or community service activity and the effect these outcomes had on the students' attitudes toward their own learning. The focus groups occurred after

school and were facilitated by one of the service learning coaches from ABC High School. As both the researcher and an assistant principal at the school where the focus groups were conducted, there was a risk of coercion both in participation and the kind of information shared at the focus groups, for the students and teachers. To minimize this risk, the researcher was not involved in the focus group process whatsoever. The service learning coach conducted the focus groups after being trained by the researcher on the process of conducting focus groups.

The questions listed below were used in the focus groups. These focus group questions came from the student panel questions presented at the Chicago Public Schools 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Service Learning Conference. These questions helped to determine the breadth and depth of the data analysis:

1. Why and how did you choose to become involved in the service project?
2. How did your service project impact your academic learning?
3. How did your service project impact your connection to school and community?
4. What did you expect when you began your service project? How were your expectations confirmed or changed?
5. What happened during your service project that most surprised or engaged you?
6. Do you feel that you made a difference in someone's life? If so, what allowed you to do so? If not, what kept you from doing so?
7. How did adults support your participation in the service project?
8. Did you develop leadership skills in your project? If so, what skills did you develop?
9. How did your attitudes about yourself and your community change through the project?

For the student participants, there were two focus groups of ten senior students each.

Senior students in the focus groups were identified by the service learning coaches as

students who had participated in a service learning activity with a teacher or students who had performed service learning without a teacher (community service). For the teacher participants, there was also one focus group of ten teachers. Teachers in the focus group were identified by the service learning coaches as being teachers who had conducted a service learning project with the students in their classes.

### 3.8 Analysis Plan

This study implemented a systematic analysis of the data collected from the service learning surveys by employing a t-Test. The t-Test is a statistical test that allows a comparison between two means to determine the probability that the difference between them reflects a real difference between the groups of subjects rather than a chance variation in data (Tuckman, 1999). A significant score would have a t-score of  $p < .05$ . An analysis of percentages of the responses from the survey was conducted as well. In addition, there was also a systematic analysis of the data from the focus groups that included an inferential content analysis of the responses based on dimensions of responses correlated with the element of the framework for service learning as developed through the research. Though the primary tool for analysis of the focus group interviews was an inferential content analysis, as explained by Krippendorff (1969), the interpretation of the results of the inferential content analysis also relied on the concept of 'situated meaning' as explained by Gee (1999). Recognition was given to the importance of context of the language used in the responses from the focus interviews with the social and cultural models of knowledge

and the schools in which the students and teachers worked. Table Five below illustrates the research design employed by this research study:

Table Five -- Research Design for Research Study

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>
<b>Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ t-Tests</li> <li>▪ Comparison of Percentages with Responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inferential Content Analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Student Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One hundred and thirty four senior students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ten senior students who participated in teacher-guided curricular service learning</li> <li>▪ Ten senior students who participated in community service (without guidance of a teacher)</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Participants</b>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ten teachers who conducted a curricular service learning project with students</li> </ul>

# CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

**“Knowing is a process, not a product”.**

-- Jerome Bruner

## 4.1 Overview of Chapter

This research study investigated to what degree the service learning or community service project, regardless of the nature of the particular project, affected the students' attitudes toward their own learning. This chapter presents the results for each of the dimensions of students' attitudes toward learning as addressed in the framework of this research study. In addition, this chapter presents a summary of these results; the analysis of the study results will be found in Chapter Five, Discussion.

## 4.2 The Process

As discussed in Chapter Three, this research design employed both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative data was collected via the annual Service Learning Survey given to all senior students at ABC High School in May, 2005. This study analyzed and compared the survey data from the two groups of students – those who did curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher and those who did service learning projects without guidance by a teacher (community service) -- to determine if any patterns, trends, or connections existed. t-Tests were also run on the data to determine if there were any statistical differences between the two groups.

Qualitative data was collected via three separate focus group sessions: students who did a curricular service learning project with the guidance of a teacher; students who did a service learning project without the guidance of a teacher (community

service); and teachers who implemented at least one service learning project with a group of students. The systematic analysis of the data from the focus groups included an inferential content analysis of the responses based on the dimensions of the attitudes towards learning as identified in the framework of the research study.

The analysis of the data from the service learning survey investigated the influences that the service learning or community service experiences had on the students' attitudes toward their own learning. The dimensions of student attitudes toward learning were identified by the researcher from the survey itself. Each dimension of the students' attitudes toward learning identified was, in and of itself, one of the questions on the survey. For example, as was discussed in Chapters One and Two, one of the basic premises of this study was that students must see the connection of what they are learning in their classes to their lives. Survey question number 56 was "My service project assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world". Consequently, the researcher determined that question number 56, which primarily addresses the idea of relevancy of learning, would become one of the dimensions of the study. After analyzing all of the questions on the survey, the following six dimensions were identified as the framework of the research study:

1. Believing that learning is important, necessary and meaningful
2. Believing that learning allows them to help others
3. Believing that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence
4. Believing that learning must be relevant
5. Believing that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class
6. Believing that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff

The survey was further analyzed to determine which other questions from the survey could correlate to the dimensions of attitudes about student learning as identified by the researcher. Two additional questions from the survey were also placed in each dimension, giving each of the six dimensions a total of three questions that were related to the students' attitude toward their own learning. The survey questions were aligned as shown below:

1. Believing that learning is important, necessary and meaningful (#59)
  - Fill unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service that was meaningful and necessary (#54)
  - Served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place (#67)
2. Believing that learning allows them to help others (#55)
  - Exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them (#61)
  - Increased my civic and citizenship skills (#60)
3. Believing that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence (#57)
  - Prepared me for my career/continuing education (#64)
  - Helped me learn how to get things done (#69)
4. Believing that learning assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world (#56)
  - Enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action (#53)
  - Developed a richer context for my learning (#62)
5. Believing that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class (#66)
  - Gave me more responsibility for my learning (#68)
  - Impacted local issues and local needs (#70)
6. Believing that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff (#58)
  - Provided me with cross cultural experiences (#63)
  - Confirmed my career/college choices (#65)



The data from the survey were analyzed to determine percentages of differences between the two groups of students. It was presumed that if students thought the service learning project that they were doing was important, necessary, and/or meaningful (survey question #59), it would have a positive effect on their attitude toward their learning. Conversely, if students thought the service learning project that they were doing was not important, necessary, and/or meaningful, it would have a negative effect on their attitude toward their learning.

The responses from the survey were also analyzed with a t-Test to determine if there was any statistical significance to the student responses. In the service learning section of the survey, students were given a statement and asked if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed or strongly agreed with that particular statement about service learning. In looking at each of the two sets of data – those responses by students who did their curricular service project guided by a teacher and those responses by students who did their service learning project without the guidance of a teacher (community service) -- student responses were grouped by either agree/strongly agree or disagree/strongly disagree. A composite score representing all respondents was also given for both groups together.

Also given with each set of data was the analyzed t-Test score. The t-Test compared the two means to determine the probability that the difference between the service learning group and the community service group reflected a real difference rather than a chance variation in data. The following sections in this chapter include data and charts collected from the student responses from the survey. The percentages are attached to each of the three questions in each dimension of learning as identified by the research study.

Also included in each section is the inferential content analysis on the qualitative data that emerged from the focus groups and some of the supportive comments given by the focus group participants. During the sixty minute focus group interviews, students and teachers answered a set of questions. For an answer to be included in the coding, it must have contained at least one of the dimensions of the attitudes of learning (See Appendix C). Answers coded as having no dimensions of the attitudes of learning are not represented in the data represented in the tables. An example of this type of non-coded answer is when a service learning student asked the interviewer, “Can you repeat the question please”?

Students and teachers who were interviewed gave both short and lengthy answers. Some students and teachers gave single word answers of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. These answers were included in the coding as long as the question that elicited this answer was a question that was directly related to one of the dimensions of the attitudes toward learning. An example of this type of coded answer was when the interviewer asked a community service student, “How about with your dance work and with the pregnancy center clinic work? I mean did what you did affect you and what you were learning in class at all?”, and the student answered “No”. It is also significant that many of the lengthier answers from the students and teachers could have been coded in multiple dimensions depending on the interpretation of the words used in the answer. For example, a service learning teacher stated, “I found that this particular activity enabled some special education kids that really aren’t good at reading and writing. I mean I just saw amazing things where kids that can barely write a sentence could get in front of a group of twenty or thirty people and lead an activity and do it really well.

You can't really measure how much that affects their self-esteem or increases their self-esteem; it was a good experience for them". From this example, the teacher's answer could have been coded in the dimension of *confidence and self-esteem*; however, this answer could also have been coded as a *collegial participation among students, faculty and staff* due to the fact that these special education students stood up in front of a large group of people and led an activity with these other people. In this instance, this answer was coded in each dimension. Table Six shows the overall proportion of the attitudes of learning according to each dimension of this study.

Table Six -- Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Student Focus Groups

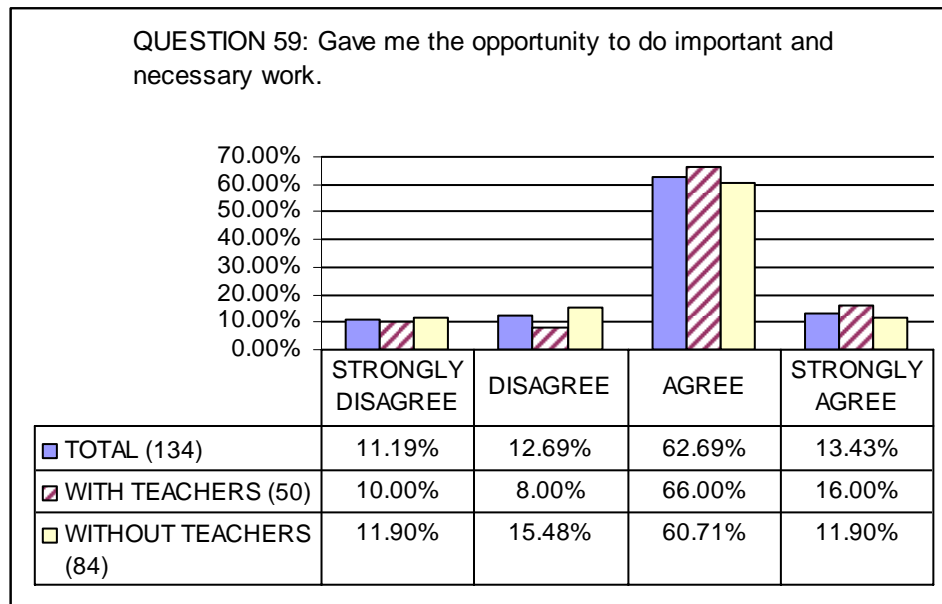
	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
1. Learning is important, necessary, and meaningful	49/64 = 76%	43/88 = 48%	32/51 = 62%
2. Learning allows them to help others	31/64 = 48%	28/88 = 31%	26/51 = 50%
3. Learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence	21/64 = 32%	20/88 = 22%	07/51 = 13%
4. Learning must be relevant	46/64 = 71%	28/88 = 31%	25/51 = 49%
5. Learning keeps them motivated and interested in class	15/64 = 23%	16/88 = 18%	43/51 = 84%
6. Learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff	21/64 = 32%	15/88 = 17%	39/51 = 76%

This remainder of this chapter presents the results for each of the dimensions of attitude as addressed in this research study. Within each section for each dimension is the presentation of the quantitative data followed by the qualitative data.

### 4.3 Dimension One: Believing that learning is important, necessary, and meaningful

One of the indicators involving the students' attitudes was that learning was important, necessary, and meaningful. Question 59 asked the students to what degree their service learning project "gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work". As indicated in Table Seven below, 76.1% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (62.7%) or strongly agreed (13.4%) with that statement. The table also shows that 82.0% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 50), either agreed or strongly agreed while 72.6% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.186.

Table Seven

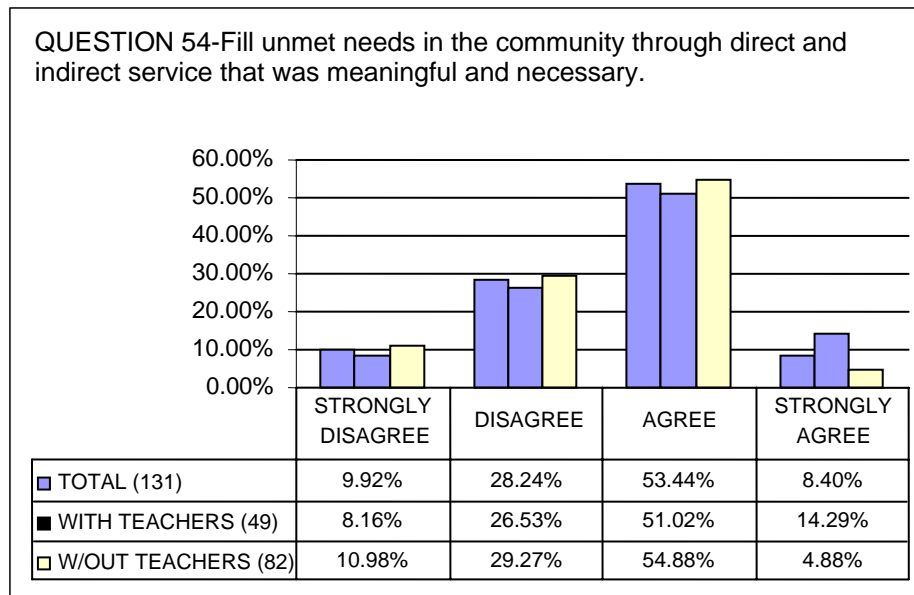


(t-score = 0.186, p<.05)

### 4.3.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension One

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning was important, necessary, and meaningful was Question 54 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "filled unmet needs in the community through direct or indirect service that was meaningful and necessary". As indicated in Table Eight below, 61.8% of the total number of students (n = 131) who responded either agreed (53.4%) or strongly agreed (8.4%) with that statement. The table also shows that 65.3% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 59.7% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 82), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.256.

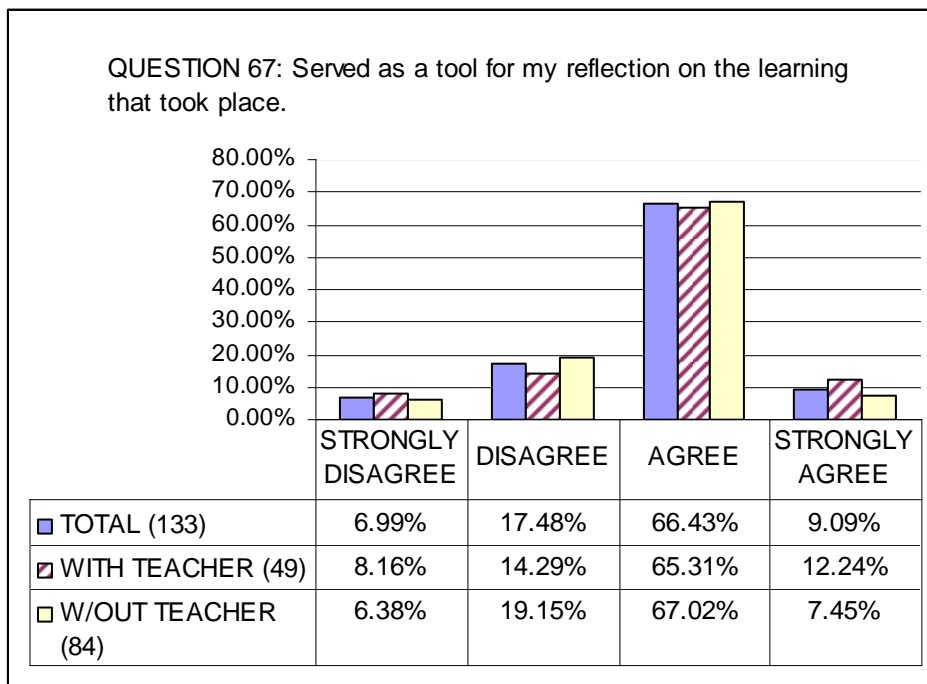
Table Eight



(t-score = 0.256, p<.05)

The second supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning was important, necessary, and meaningful was Question 67 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place". As indicated in Table Nine below, 75.5% of the total number of students (n = 143) who responded either agreed (66.43%) or strongly agreed (9.09%) with that statement. The table also shows that 77.5% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 74.4% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.252.

Table Nine



(t-score = 0.252, p<.05)

#### 4.3.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning is important, necessary and meaningful.

Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
1. Learning is important, necessary and meaningful	49/64 = 76%	43/88 = 48%	32/51 = 62%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 49 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning is important, necessary and meaningful for a percentage of 76%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 43 mentioned this dimension for 48% and for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned 32 times in 51 responses for 62%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

#### Service Learning Students

Students who did service learning projects with a teacher made statements that their learning was important and necessary in both the cognitive and affective domains. Students specifically mentioned how what they learned during the service learning project positively affected their academics. “We learned a lot of facts about things that were going on in countries like Sudan...it impacted my academics very much because I

had to do research on the facts and create a power point presentation on what we learned so we could share it with others”.

As well as the acquisition of important skills, it seems that some of these students experienced a change in attitude toward the community they were serving. “My attitude changed because I always wanted to do something to help others in my community and now I feel glad with myself cause I feel like I gave something to my community... It changed because a whole lot of other people came to us and they wanted to learn more and more”. Students who did service learning with a teacher and shared it with others seemed to believe they learned that their work was meaningful and appreciated. In fact, one student stated that it re-enforced a belief she had always held regarding service toward the community. “I’ve always had the same view of my community where if you want something done you have to do something about it, you can’t sit and wait for anyone else to do it. Especially in the small school that I’m in, I realized that over 70 kids dropped out by our senior year so it was dramatic because they were like my friends and I didn’t want to see that happen. So it didn’t change my attitude, it just made me want to do it more”. This student seems to understand that it is important and necessary for students to stay in school. She is upset her to see her friends dropping out of school and she wants to do something about this situation.

### Community Service Students

Students who did community service projects did not make many statements that suggested that their learning was important and necessary in both the cognitive and affective domains. “I did office work at a clinic. I think it just helped the people that I



was doing the stuff for because I mean I had a lot of paper work and a lot of answering phones...So I think it just helped them out but like it's more obvious in the girls that I taught dance to". As expressed in the quote above, some students in the community service focus group did not seem to feel that their learning was significantly important or necessary.

Students in this group seemed to experience some of these feelings of making a important difference when they were teaching someone about a particular topic. One student shared,

I worked with fourth and sixth grade girls teaching them dance and I think it really made a difference in their life. A lot of the kids came from backgrounds of like abuse or you know different things where they grow up in like a home that's not very loving or whatever... So I think it made a difference because it showed them that you know there are people who care about them... Being with them I could see like how they learn things... I got to like teach them like you know like respect, and discipline and all that stuff and at the end they were like oh thank you and I don't want you to leave and like you know like their whole personality like their whole behavior changed at the end of it so I think it made a difference in their lives.

Most students in the community service group who only did work for someone did not seem to feel as deeply that what they experienced and learned was important. In fact, the same female student quoted in the above blocked quote also worked in a doctor's office and she seemed to feel differently about this second experience. "At the pregnancy center they have like people coming in that they have to go talk to so if I wasn't there doing it would be like chaos and like not having enough time for them to talk to the people and then get your paper work done at the same time. So I think it just

helped them out but like it's more obvious in the girls that I taught dance to". This female student's quotes above express the similarities and differences between the two learning experiences and whether or not the girl viewed them as important, necessary, and meaningful.

### Service Learning Teachers

Teachers facilitated their projects directly through their course while others did the project as an extension of the learning either after school or on weekends. Some teachers talked about how the service project that they facilitated enabled students to see that what they were learning and applying was important and meaningful. One art teacher, who facilitated a service project that created community murals said, "So some kids use skills that they don't necessarily view as skills... one person really likes to talk on the phone so they volunteered to talk on the phone and they called all of these vendors; they even negotiated with some vendors to get a better price you know. So that was really cool for them to see 'oh it is valuable, I do have a valuable skill'...they could see these other skills that are really worthwhile". Teachers who implemented service learning projects saw how students had opportunities to discover that they could either gain a new skill or apply a skill they already possessed.

Teachers also mentioned that students took their service learning project seriously and acted in a manner that was mature and responsible. Students understood the importance of what they were doing and acted accordingly. "I don't think we're surprised at how much our kids can step up because we wouldn't have done service learning projects if we didn't think they could spend the night, if they could go in the

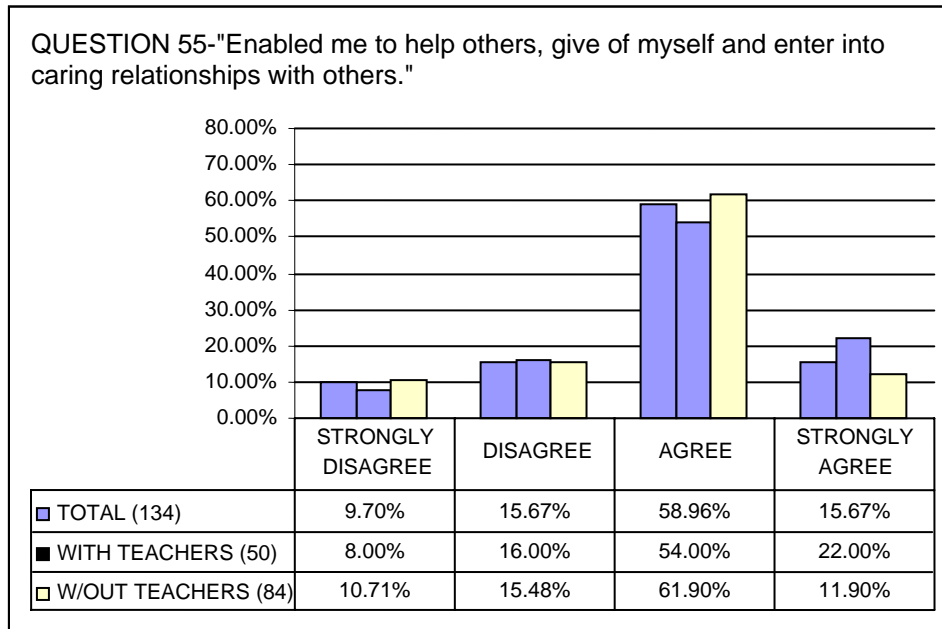
classrooms and be mature, responsible adults. I think it's just reassuring to know every time we do projects that they do step up and that they are great people".

Another teacher indicated that not only was the service learning project meaningful and contained experiences that they would take with them for the rest of their life, but it also increased the academic achievement of their students. "After the service learning project they're working because now they've learned something that they can take with them. They're learning and they can see that there's an application to the real world so I've seen some really good jumps in terms of academics and students".

#### 4.4 Dimension Two: Believing that learning allows them to help others

A second indicator involving the students' attitudes was that learning allowed them to help others. Question 55 asked the students to what degree their service learning project "enabled me to help others, give of myself and enter into caring relationships with others". As indicated in Table Ten below, 74.6% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (58.9%) or strongly agreed (15.6%) with that statement. The table also shows that 76.0% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n =50), either agreed or strongly agreed while 73.8% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.165.

Table Ten

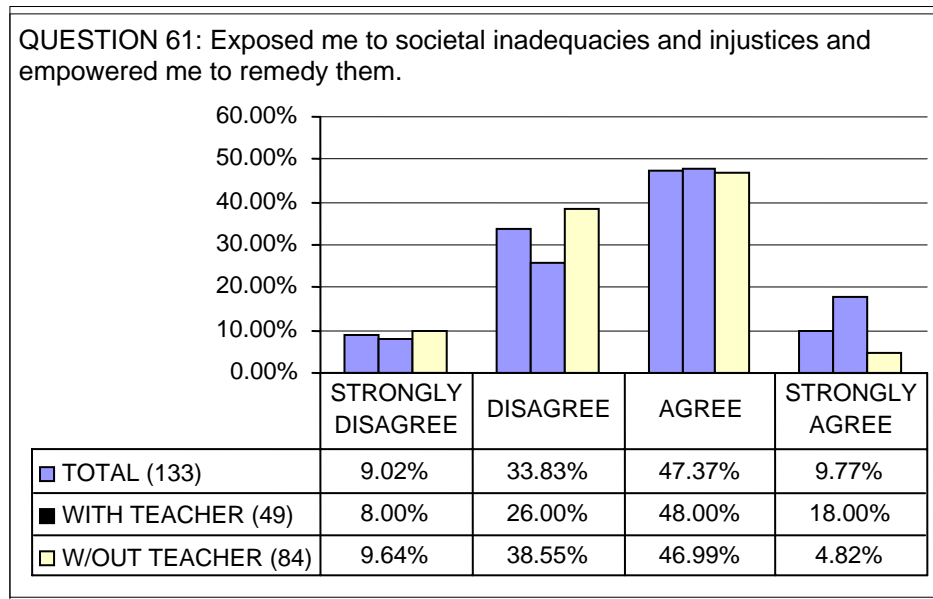


(t-score = 0.165, p<.05)

4.4.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension Two

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning allowed them to help others was Question 61 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them". As indicated in Table Eleven below, 57.0% of the total number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (47.3%) or strongly agreed (9.7%) with that statement. The table also shows that 66.0% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 50), either agreed or strongly agreed while 51.8% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 83), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.458.

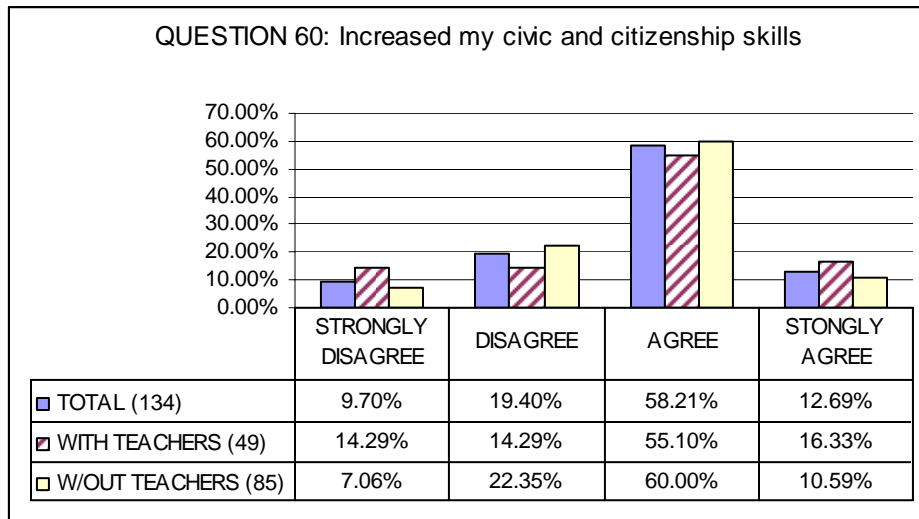
Table Eleven



(t-score = 0.458, p<.05)

The second supportive indicator involving the students’ attitudes that learning allowed them to help others was Question 60 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project “increased my civic and citizenship skills”. As indicated in Table Twelve below, 71.9% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (58.2%) or strongly agreed (12.6%) with that statement. The table also shows that 71.4% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 70.5% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 85), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.319.

Table Twelve



(t-score = 0.319,  $p < .05$ )

#### 4.4.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning allows them to help others.

##### Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
2. Learning allows them to help others	31/64 = 48%	28/88 = 31%	26/51 = 50%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 31 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning allowed them to help others for a percentage of 48%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 28 mentioned this dimension for 48% and for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned 26 times in only 51 responses for 50%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

### Service Learning Students

Students who did a curricular service learning project with the guidance of a teacher expressed that they felt that they had helped others. Some students mentioned that they had chosen the very specific service learning project simply because of the fact that it was going to help other people. “I chose that project because I wanted to work with elderly people and to meet other people and just to share time with those that are in need or just need to have somebody next to them”.

Some service learning students also seemed to have had a change in attitude because of the service project they experienced. Some of these students joined a particular project in order to simply collect their hours to meet the graduation requirement; however, through the course of the experience, they discovered something deeper and more meaningful in helping others. “I didn’t think I was going to feel this way about it. I just thought, ‘Well, let me just get my hours over and done with as soon as I can’ but then I realized while I was doing the project that it is good to give back to the community and to help other people”. Other students stated that they changed during the project from someone only concerned about himself/herself to someone who cared about the community at large. “During the project, I really didn’t care about the community at all. I felt really just as long as I took care of myself that was it. But just doing the project made me feel that the community is a family and we have to take care of our family”.

Additionally, some students who did this work with their teachers actually influenced others to become a part of the project as they shared their experiences with their friends and acquaintances. “I feel that my project did change someone’s life. We

fund-raised money and donated to Doctors Without Borders. When I talked to one of my friends about the project, he came and actually performed a poem for the project because he felt that he wanted to do something about it”. Not only did this student help those who were on the receiving end of the service but he also helped his own friends to become more involved with their community and those in need.

### Community Service Students

Students who did a community service project expressed that they felt that they had helped others. “Yeah I believe I did help...I had this little girl and she would come up to me and she would be like ‘Hi Luis how are you today?’ ...she was really sweet. It was a pretty cool experience”. As expressed in the above quote, student responses in this group were positive. Students consistently gave reasons why their learning enabled them to help others. “For me, it might sound a little philosophical but I think I made a positive change in a lot people’s lives because while playing I was entertaining them and I view art as one of the essential elements for life. If you enjoy art your personality grows”.

Many of the students in the community service focus group mentioned how they worked with younger children and how these relationships enabled them to care for others. “In my other service learning it’s just basically I was to be there for the little kids and just knowing how to put that line between being their leader and being their friend. When they’re small and they think they want to hug you and they’re trying to cross the street you know we’re like stay right there but yeah it taught me how to talk to them”. It is important for teenagers to learn how to talk to and relate with



younger children, especially if these teenagers have younger siblings or have family situations that force them to assume a role of authority that is not typical for most teenagers as was discussed in Chapter Two.

### Service Learning Teachers

Teachers who did a service learning project with their students expressed that they felt that their students believed they had helped others. “For my project, I think it really tied the students to the community that was getting these alarm clocks. They were really sensitive... I think they really felt bonded to the community that they were helping”. This statement was given by a math teacher doing an after-school service learning project with the students in ABC High School’s Engineering Club. The students in this club, who were designing alarm watches for deaf people, touches upon many of the same ideas mentioned by the service learning and community service students. However, in looking at the reasons behind why this teacher thought the students’ learning enabled them to help others and enter into caring relationships with others, the teacher seems to believe that it was the learning process itself which allowed the students to imagine themselves in the situation of the people they were helping. “...I had some initial suggestions on how the clock should look or how it should be clipped to the pillow but then they put themselves in the mind sets of the hearing impaired and they thought ‘oh no when I sleep my pillow is across the bed so I might not wake up on the pillow’ so they really wanted it to be attached to their wrist somehow. So they came up and modified the original design”.

The students then applied what they had learned with their teacher to the image they had pictured in the planning process. “Then they became real sensitive about the size of the clock, you know ‘does it vibrate enough for these elementary school students’, ‘does it feel right or is it too bulky, or too awkward’ so that was really nice to see that they were you know just asking these questions and putting them out there”.

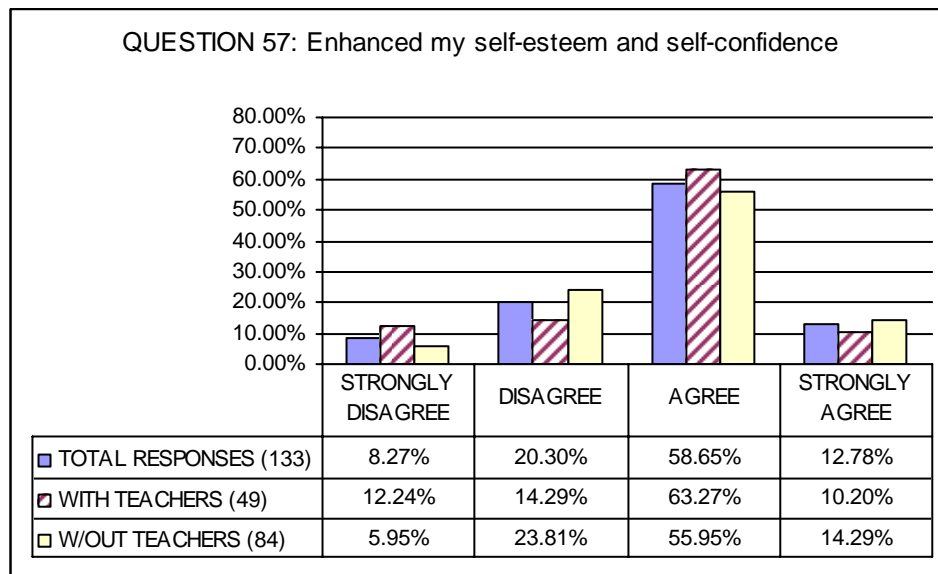
Finally, the students were able to go beyond the parameters of the project and extend their capabilities in helping the intended group. “The best thing we were doing for following up on this activity was that we were creating an I-movie just to show what happened in this project. We have a couple of video clips and we were just going to put these video clips together but one of the students, he’s like a D student but none of us thought of this suggestion, but he thought ‘oh we should make a close caption because if we show it to deaf people how are they going to hear the video clip’ and we thought that was such a wonderful idea that none of us thought about it except this one individual”. The teachers’ comments describing the process for this service learning project suggest that his students were able to more accurately help those in need because the learning process that they were engaged in allowed them to adjust their plans to better meet their needs.

#### 4.5 Dimension Three: Believing that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence

One of the indicators involving the students’ attitudes was that learning increased their self-esteem and confidence. Question 57 asked the students to what degree their service learning project “enhanced my self-esteem and confidence”. As

indicated in Table Thirteen below, 71.4% of the total number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (58.6%) or strongly agreed (12.7%) with that statement. The table also shows that 73.4% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n =49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 70.2% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.306.

Table Thirteen



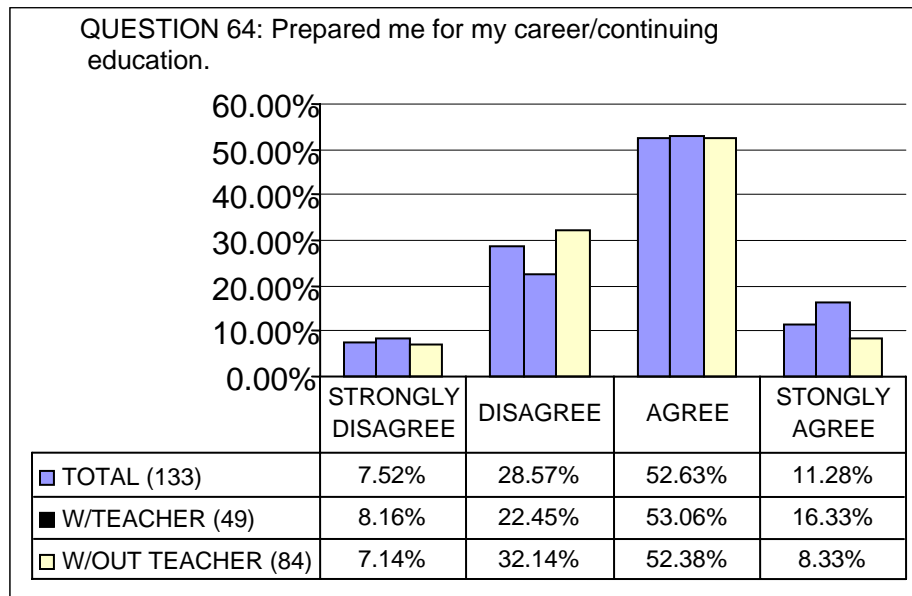
(t-score = 0.306, p<.05)

#### 4.5.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension Three

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning enhanced my self esteem and self-confidence was Question 64 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "prepared me for my career/continuing education". As indicated in Table Fourteen below, 63.9% of the total

number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (66.43%) or strongly agreed (9.09%) with that statement. The table also shows that 69.3% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 60.7% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.188.

Table Fourteen

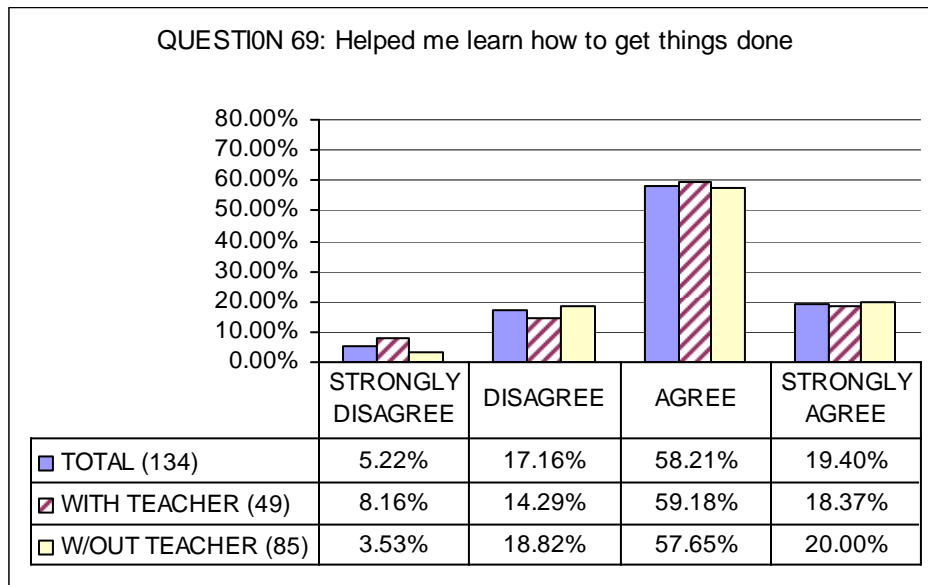


(t-score = 0.188, p<.05)

The second supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence was Question 69 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "helped me learn how to get things done." As indicated in Table Fifteen below, 77.6% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (58.21%) or strongly agreed (19.4%)

with that statement. The table also shows that 77.5% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 77.6% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 85), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.393.

Table Fifteen



(t-score = 0.393, p<.05)

#### 4.5.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence.

Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
3. Learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence	21/64 = 32%	20/88 = 22%	07/51 = 13%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 21 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence for a percentage of 32%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 20 mentioned this dimension for 22% and for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned only 7 times in 51 responses for 13%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

Service Learning Students

The students who did their service learning with a teacher described this attitude of confidence and/or positive self-esteem. One way the confidence of these students' would increase involved specific technical skills that they learned. A real purpose behind curricular service learning projects is that students learn new skills and apply them to both predictable and unpredictable real-world situations. More than just having an affective learning experience, these students mentioned how they actually learned skills that would serve them in life. "It helped me learn more of the basic technical skills and it also helped me improve the way I talk in front of other people in explaining the project I was doing". This student seems to indicate that the project done in the class helped with predictable technical skills needed to create the project plus unpredictable public speaking skills.

The role of the teacher in this sense is paramount. Students will only possess these skills and attitudes if a teacher implements a service learning project that allows for the students to explore, discover and possess their own learning. One student stated, “In my project, it wasn’t so much the teacher doing the project with us. It was more that she pushed us and encouraged us and gave us the little guidelines of what to do”. This student describes her teacher as ‘pushing, encouraging and giving little guidelines’ and the fact that this teacher facilitated the learning experience in this manner let the students know they could do the work and become independent learners. As discussed in Chapter Two, when teachers become facilitators of learning rather than lecturers of information, students have opportunities to become more deeply engaged in their learning and increase their self-esteem and confidence as a result.

#### Community Service Students

The community service students seemingly did not make mention of any specific skills being learned in preparation for or because of their volunteer experience. One student described her experience in the following way, “Well, I did my service learning hours at two different places. The first place was at a pregnancy center so the adults there just basically told me what to do, what they expected me to do. I walked in and they told me this is what needs to be done and they supported me I think the main way the adults helped me was just giving me an opportunity to you know work for them”. Instead of applying skills she had learned in the classroom to real-world situations, this student was simply asked to do what the adults needed done.

When students are just told to do something and are not given the freedom to deeply engage themselves in their own learning, they can become passive learners, almost robotic in their actions. One community service student stated, “Basically I got the same story as she does. I was doing my service learning at two places. First was at my church for basically adults who are just not advising me or anything just compelling me to do work”. When students felt “compelled to do work” it can have a negative effect on their self-esteem and confidence.

### Service Learning Teachers

The context within which this study is researching service learning is that it is a graduation requirement for Chicago Public School students; they have to do 40 hours of service learning to graduate from high school. Although this is a primary concern for some students, one teacher shared this comment, “I think there’s always a percentage that just come for the hours you know. But there’s a percentage of those kids who stay because they just they like what’s happening”. If students “like what’s happening” they are more apt to remain involved in the learning experience and the longer they are involved the more likely it is that they will become more confident in themselves and feel good about the progress they are making.

Several teachers spoke about how the service learning projects directly affected students’ self-esteem and confidence. “I think I was able to see some kids open up more in the class and be more assertive in class. I believe they gained some confidence through the service learning projects”. This science teacher spoke about the students in her environmental science class who applied what they had learned in class during the creation of a community garden on school grounds.

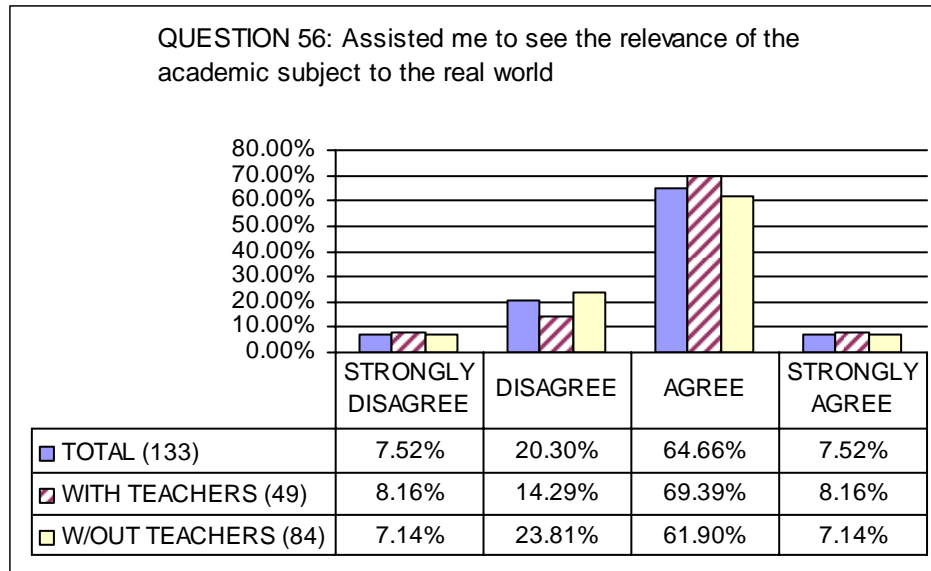


This observation was particularly true for some special education students and those who have different learning styles that don't always transfer into traditional-type classrooms. "I found that this particular activity enabled some special education kids that really aren't good at reading and writing. I mean I just saw amazing things where kids that can barely write a sentence could get in front of a group of twenty or thirty people and lead an activity and do it really well. You can't really measure how much that affects their self-esteem or increases their self-esteem; it was a good experience for them". Teachers here are touching upon the social/emotional aspect of learning, which is the process through which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competence. It includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others (Elias, et.al., 2000).

#### 4.6 Dimension Four: Believing that learning must be relevant

One of the indicators involving the students' attitudes was that learning was relevant. Question 56 asked the students to what degree their service learning project "assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world". As indicated in Table Sixteen below, 72.1% of the total number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (64.6%) or strongly agreed (7.5%) with that statement. The table also shows that 77.5% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 69.0% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.254.

Table Sixteen

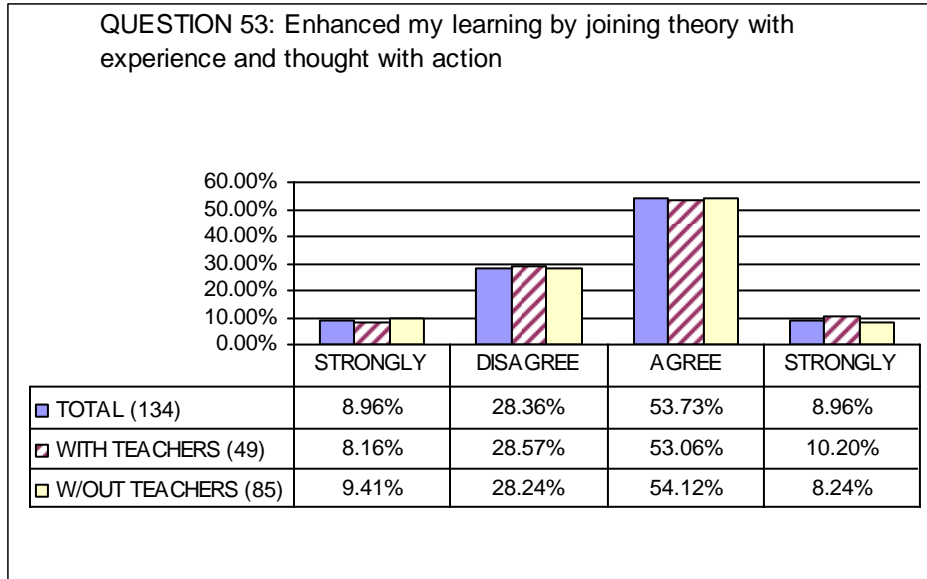


(t-score = 0.254, p<.05)

4.6.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension Four

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning must be relevant was Question 53 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action". As indicated in Table Seventeen below, 62.6% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (53.7%) or strongly agreed (8.9%) with that statement. The table also shows that 63.2% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 62.3% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 85), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.329.

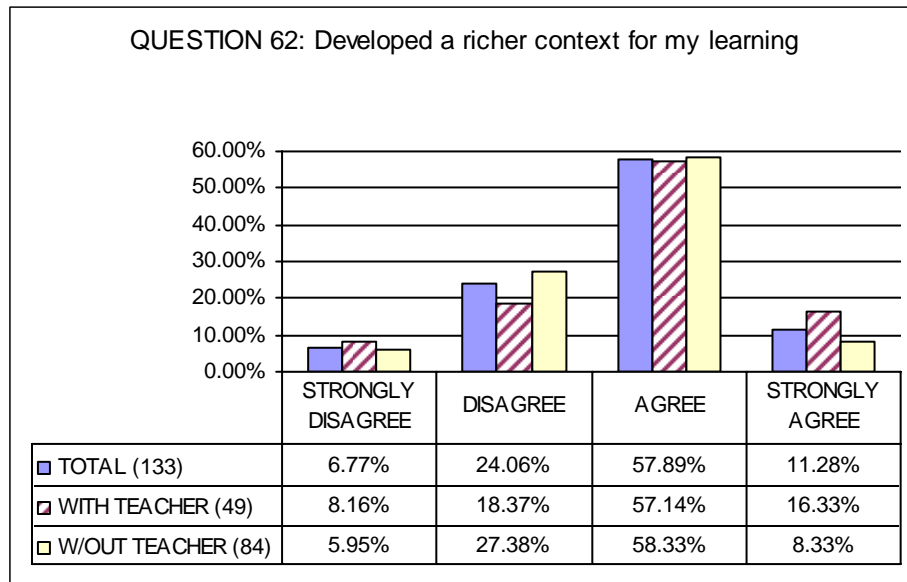
Table Seventeen



(t-score = 0.329,  $p < .05$ )

The second supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning must be relevant was Question 62 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "developed a richer context for my learning". As indicated in Table Eighteen below, 69.1% of the total number of students ( $n = 133$ ) who responded either agreed (57.8%) or strongly agreed (11.2%) with that statement. The table also shows that 73.4% of the students who did service learning with a teacher ( $n = 49$ ), either agreed or strongly agreed while 66.6% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) ( $n = 84$ ), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.371.

Table Eighteen



(t-score = 0.371, p<.05)

4.6.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning must be relevant.

Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
4. Learning must be relevant	46/64 = 71%	28/88 = 31%	25/51 = 49%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 46 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning must be relevant for a percentage of 71%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 28 mentioned this dimension for 31% and

for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned 25 times in 51 responses for 49%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

### Service Learning Students

Events in the community and world often provide a clear opportunity for students to complete a service learning project. Relevance for service learning students came in different facets. For example, one student shared, “In my case the adults played a really important role because when they saw the posters put up for the Tsunami event, a lot of teachers came up to us and they just told us that it was great that we were doing something like that and they were just like telling us that they were so impressed”. By speaking to the students about the tsunami event, these teachers connected with the student learning experience and helped to make it relevant for the students. Another student spoke about the teachers involved in his project in this way, “So it was great finding out that the teachers in school also care about what we want to do”.

Events like the Tsunami, however, even without the encouragement of adults, can trigger sympathy and empathy in students and can cause them to want to do something to help those in need. One student said, “I learned a lot from it not just academically but for myself cause I know what people are going through”. It is these types of events which develop a richer context for their learning. These types of events can make learning relevant for students and motivate them to address the current dilemma while helping those who are working, living, or existing through difficult and challenging situation.

When the learning experience was relevant, students talked about getting things done. One student stated, “It helped me understand what to plan if you want to accomplish something through, like the mayor, and who to talk to and how the process should go”. Another student added, “We actually learned how to participate and how to get your voice heard and have your voice reach the community when you want something to happen”. The main thing seems to be the need for students to take what they learned academically and apply this new knowledge and these new skills to a community need, thus making the learning relevant and authentic.

Finally, the service projects helped some students to understand how they learn and work best. Several students actually made a connection to their peers as well and the skills learned and the relevancy of these skills to their future life. “For me I believe that it helped me out a lot, because I used to be a type of person that everything has to be in my hands. I want to do everything on my own but with these projects, I learned that it’s not actually everything for me; I have to learn how to lead but also help everybody else with me leading them”. This quote demonstrates that when the learning experience is relevant, there is an opportunity for the students to enhance their learning by joining thought with action.

### Community Service Students

The relevance for community service students seemed to lack depth and might be appropriately summed up in the following quote, “I worked at a clinic and had to file charts and all sort of stuff”. As mentioned in the self-esteem section, students basically mentioned there was little connection between what the students were doing in school and the community service project they were engaged in. In fact, two

students from the community service focus group were specifically asked by the interviewer, “How about with your dance work and with the pregnancy center clinic work? I mean did what you did affect you and why you were learning in class at all?” Both students answered “No”.

Although relevance was lacking between many students’ service project and their classroom learning, some students did experience a service project which they felt was relevant and helped others.

At the place I worked at, I think that we made a difference because the main goal of the program was to educate the visitors of the zoo about animal conservation and sustaining wild life. Everyday we would go out in the zoo with teams and show hands on things to small kids and stuff. You know that that passes on to the kids and then they grow up learning about conservation and keeping the environment safe and healthy so yeah I think it helps.

The relevance of this student’s community service project, i.e. teaching others about conservation and keeping the environment safe, caused him to have an experience that was unique among the other community service students.

### Service Learning Teachers

Teachers spoke at length about the concepts of relevance in relation to students’ attitude toward learning. “I would say I just like the way they realized like we’re not lying that the information really is relevant in their lives”. The categories teachers spoke about included citizenship, academic enrichment, and future employment.

Several teachers listed citizenship as a major reason for doing service learning projects with their students. One teacher shared the reasons why he/she had become a

teacher and the attempts she made to pass these values onto her students. “For me, I decided to teach high school level because I really think that high school isn’t learning stuff from the books but learning to be a citizen. So that’s my underlining thought process when I’m working with the students”. Helping students see the relevance of their learning – not just with books -- so that they can become better citizens is a valid reason for employing a service learning methodology in a class. A second teacher mentioned, “We chose our program because we did it throughout the year. The one I wanted to focus on we chose with the idea that it fit with part of our curriculum and then the idea to building citizenship and service and the idea of giving back to the community”.

Other teachers spoke about the way that the service learning project helped students to comprehensively apply all the skills and knowledge they had gained over the school year to a community need. “I thought it was a really nice way for them to end the year and sort of wrap up everything that we’ve done. In a sense, they knew that what happened in the classroom but then they saw some relevance to it out in the community”.

Ultimately, one of a high school’s purposes is to prepare its students for life after high school. The vast majority of a school’s student body will end up employed in a job or career – whether this occurs immediately after graduation from high school, graduation from a 2 or 4 year college or after entering the armed forces. One teacher shared that relevancy of service learning projects helps to introduce these possible careers to the students and allows the students to explore the work that entails these employment opportunities.



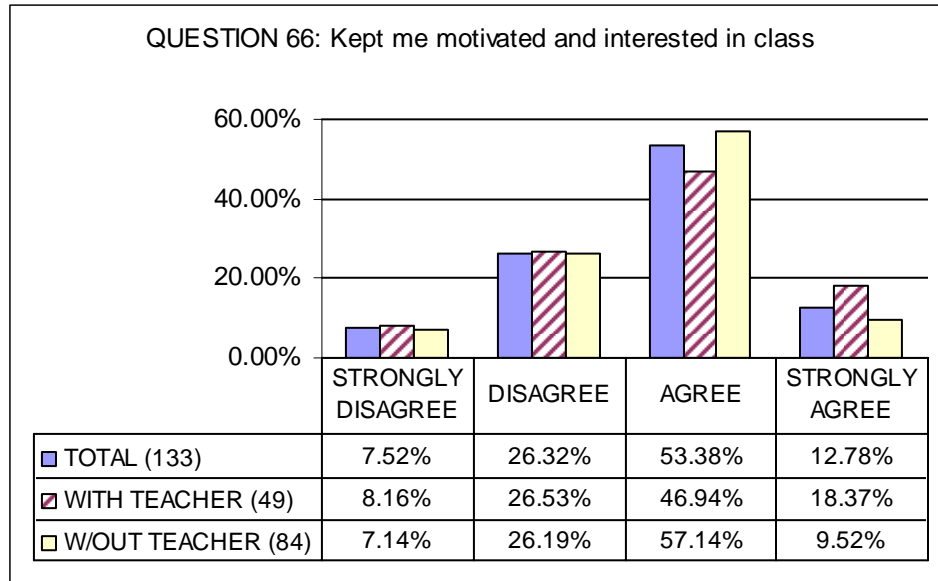
I brought in twenty five community artists who worked with the kids on a mural over two different Saturdays. So the kids were exposed to artists who were making a living doing art you know so that directly ties into and makes relevant what I'm teaching in my classroom. Students know this isn't just making pretty pictures but that if you are into it and you have the passion for it, you can pursue it as a career. You know there are different avenues for what you are learning in the classroom.

By introducing the careers that are available to the students, working on a project within these particular careers, and connecting their 'future life' with their current one, this teacher made learning relevant to his students and helped to motivate the students to learn in the classroom.

#### 4.7 Dimension Five: Believing that learning keeps students motivated and interested

One of the indicators involving the students' attitudes was that learning kept them motivated and interested. Question 66 asked the students to what degree their service learning project "kept me motivated and interested in class". As indicated in Table Nineteen, 66.1% of the total number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (53.3%) or strongly agreed (12.7%) with that statement. The table also shows that 65.3% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n =49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 66.6 % of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.287.

Table Nineteen

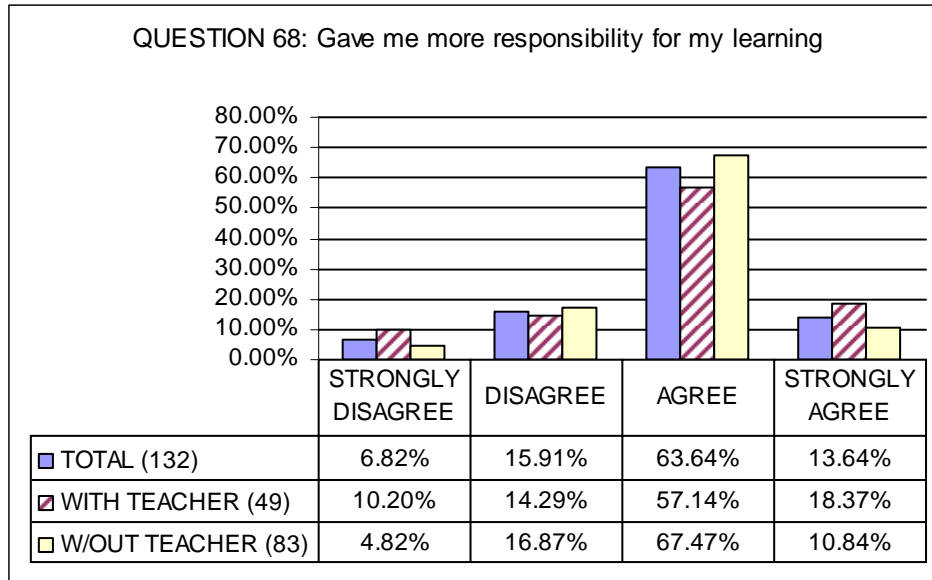


(t-score = 0.287,  $p < .05$ )

4.7.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension Five

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning kept them motivated and interested was Question 68 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "gave me more responsibility for my learning". As indicated in Table Twenty, 77.2% of the total number of students ( $n = 132$ ) who responded either agreed (63.6%) or strongly agreed (13.6%) with that statement. The table also shows that 75.5% of the students who did service learning with a teacher ( $n = 49$ ), either agreed or strongly agreed while 78.3% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) ( $n = 83$ ), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.318.

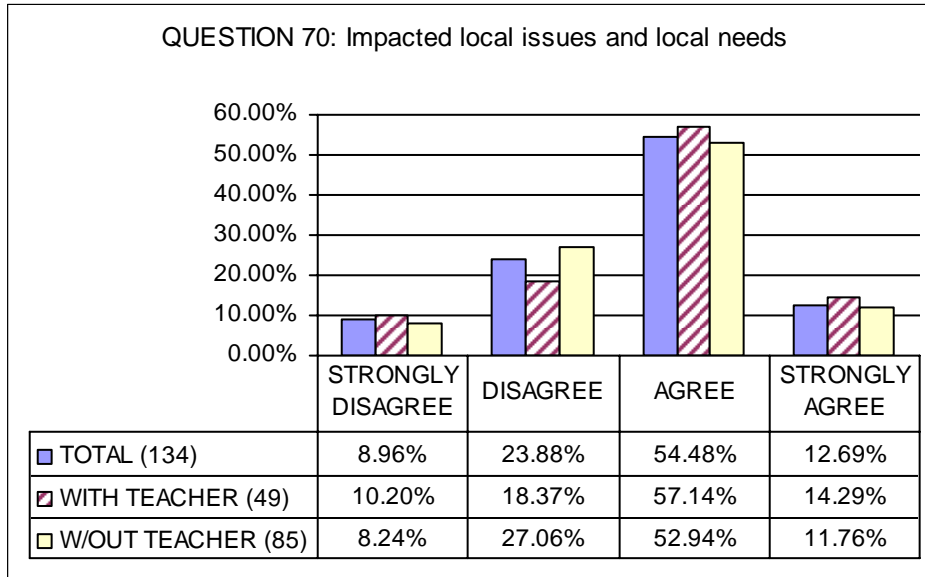
Table Twenty



(t-score = 0.318,  $p < .05$ )

The second supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning kept them motivated and interested was Question 70 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "impacted local issues and local needs". As indicated in Table Twenty-One, 67.1% of the total number of students ( $n = 134$ ) who responded either agreed (54.4%) or strongly agreed (12.6%) with that statement. The table also shows that 71.4% of the students who did service learning with a teacher ( $n = 49$ ), either agreed or strongly agreed while 64.7% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) ( $n = 85$ ), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.236.

Table Twenty-One



(t-score = 0.236, p<.05)

#### 4.7.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class.

#### Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
5. Learning keeps them motivated and interested in class	15/64 = 23%	16/88 = 18%	43/51 = 84%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 15 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class for

a percentage of 23%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 16 mentioned this dimension for 18% and for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned 43 times in only 51 responses for 84%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

### Service Learning Students

Service learning sometimes meets the challenge of motivating students who find school to be tedious, boring, and/or uninteresting. In the focus groups, several service learning students stated that they ended their projects with a feeling that learning was interesting and something that they liked to do. One student said, “I thought it was going to be something that was going to not exactly bore me but I was not going to have interest in it. But as soon as I started doing the two or three projects that I did I realized that it was something that I liked to do and it was something that did interest me”. The more interested the students become in their learning the more motivated they might become to attempt to participate in the teaching and learning process.

Service learning students said the assistance of the teacher helped the students to be the best they could be. The first student said, “I think it is very important because I believe if the teachers don’t do it with us, the students wouldn’t put as much time as they do with the teacher”. The second student stated, “I think they put a lot more of their effort when they know a teacher is there and you know they are by your side. In case they’re feeling like this is not working, they know they can talk to their teacher because their teacher is there with them”. Both these students seem to be saying that

doing a curricular service project with a teacher motivates and encourages them to do more and stay focused on getting the job done.

Overall, students who did service learning with a teacher gave more statements that suggested that they understood that they must take responsibility for their own learning. They also suggested that the teachers were responsible for getting the students started but then students actually took the lead in the service learning activity. “Well in my case Ms. Smith did encourage us to do it but it was up to us if we really wanted to do it. I could see that she really wanted to do it and she was really interested in helping the kids and their parents and doing something good for them for one day”. Another student also mentioned that this learning activity started as a regular class project and then as they took on more responsibility for their learning, the students would extend their learning. “It was a regular class project where everyone was involved in the class and then as we moved on the teacher asked who would be more interested in continuing and I and two others said yes”. It is significant when the students’ attitudes toward learning are such that they are interested in doing more than just what is expected.

### Community Service Students

Some students who did community service activities mentioned that they did it more for the rewards they got for themselves. The rewards mentioned ranged from adoration of others, completing the mandated graduation requirement, having fun or making friends. “If I were to rate my service learning I would give it a ten out of ten. I just loved it because the audience loved us when I was performing. I’m a musician; I

graduated from music school and it was just a great experience playing for free and getting my service learning hours done”. A second student stated, “The pregnancy center I volunteered at was more because I had to get my hours and I wasn’t really like thrilled about it because it’s office work”.

A third student described her project as fun. “My sophomore year when I went to my old elementary school I had fun. I was able to teach the little kids to calm down because they would go a little bit crazy. I would be like ‘that’s it. I am not going to continue reading until you guys be quiet ...and then they would start listening. They would sit down and listen while I kept reading to them; it was fun.” Finally, a community service student talked about how she made friends. “I was able to meet new people that I never met before. I didn’t know anybody because it was students from all over the city. It was a short program and by the end of it we were like real close friends”. These quotes from the community service students seem to speak to the fulfillment of extrinsic motivations being met as opposed to intrinsic motivations that would be primarily about learning and improving one’s life.

### Service Learning Teachers

Teachers repeatedly mentioned how they viewed service learning as an opportunity to involve and engage students who were not usually actively participating in class. “But it’s really cool also because you get one or two kids that you think you are failing every one of your classes but here you are at the service learning project and I think it’s kind of cool how service learning can pull in all kinds of kids not just the good diligent ones that you expect to be there but also the kids that are not doing as well as they know they should be”. This participation perhaps occurs because service learning

projects afford students the chance to become interested in the learning process by choosing a role that they normally wouldn't assume in class. "I think for my project I did the vibrating alarm clock for deaf people and then I used my engineer background to help do this project. There were different aspects of the project; we had public relations, we had distribution, we had production, and then the kids were able to pick and choose which area they wanted to work in".

Teachers also mentioned that as students acquire confidence in themselves, they begin to experience success in the classroom.

You know [student X], he went on the Chicago River clean up project last year and because we're outdoors you know every kid has different roles and stuff. Well, he actually became a leader in different activities we were doing and it really boosted his confidence. So I mean we were able to get him back in the classroom to really work on stuff and this year, I heard he's doing really and I like to think that really helped him a lot.

Teachers felt that when students had this ability to choose their roles, it often resulted in increased responsibility, in leadership opportunities and increased self-esteem. and kept these students motivated and interested in class.

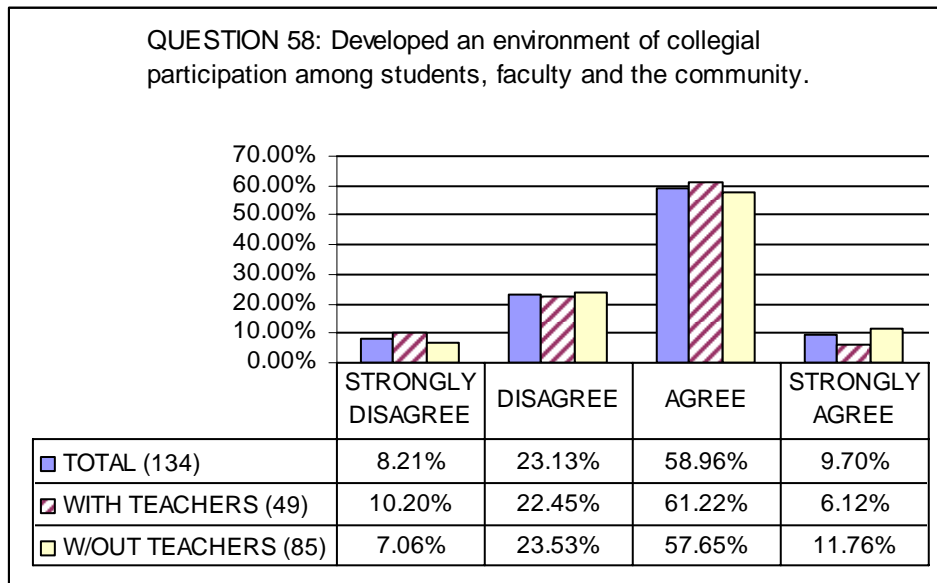
#### 4.8 Dimension Six: Believing that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty, and community

One of the indicators involving the students' attitudes was that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty, and community. Question 58 asked the students to what degree their service learning project "developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty, and the community".



As indicated in Table Twenty-Two below, 68.6% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (58.9%) or strongly agreed (9.7%) with that statement. The table also shows that 67.3% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n =49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 69.4% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 85), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.439.

Table Twenty-Two



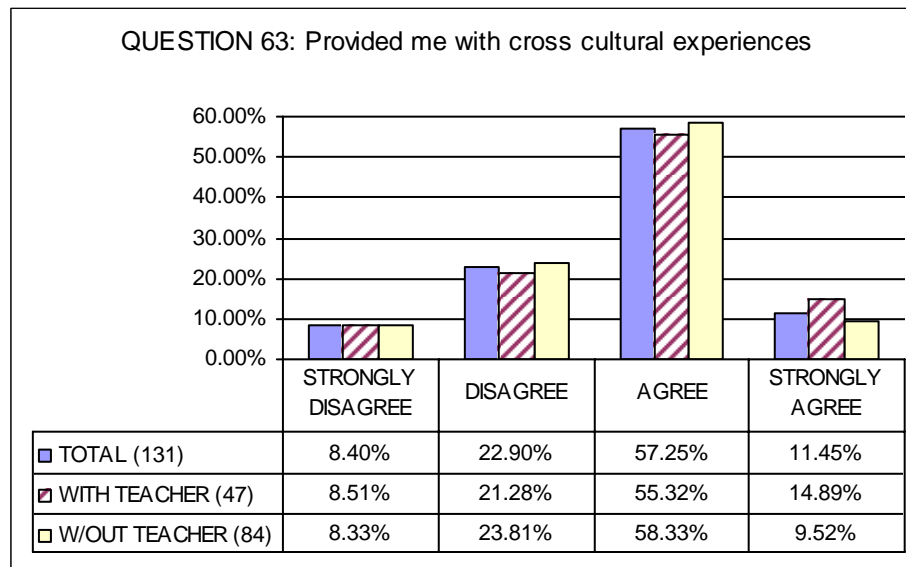
(t-score = 0.439, p<.05)

#### 4.8.1 Supportive Quantitative Data of Dimension Six

The first supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty, and the community was Question 63 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project “provided me with cross cultural experiences”. As indicated in Table

Twenty-Three below, 68.7% of the total number of students (n = 134) who responded either agreed (57.2%) or strongly agreed (11.4%) with that statement. The table also shows that 70.2% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 67.8% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 85), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.059.

Table Twenty-Three

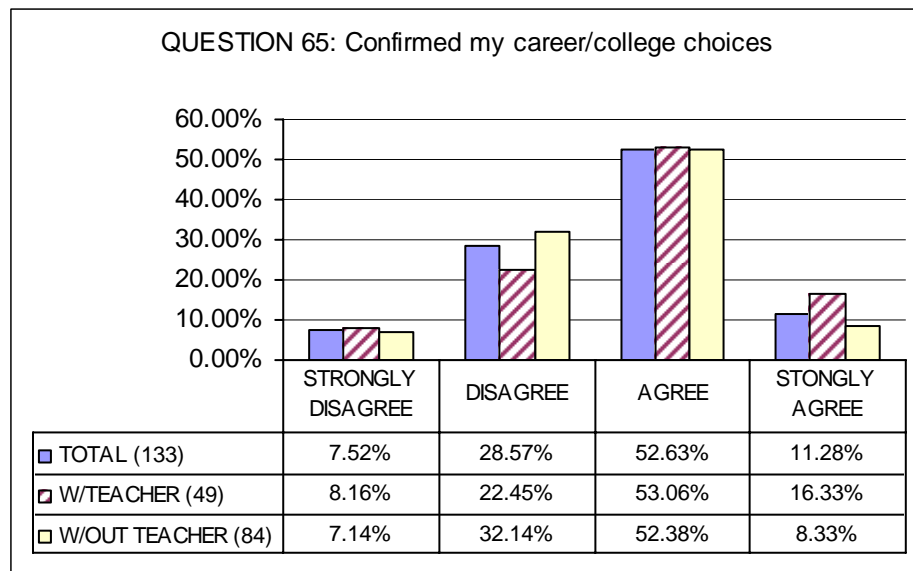


(t-score = 0.059, p<.05)

The second supportive indicator involving the students' attitudes that learning developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty, and the community was Question 65 which asked the students to what degree their service learning project "confirmed my career/college choices". As indicated in Table Twenty-Four, 63.9% of the total number of students (n = 133) who responded either agreed (52.6%) or strongly agreed (11.2%) with that statement. The table also shows

that 69.3% of the students who did service learning with a teacher (n = 49), either agreed or strongly agreed while 60.7% of students who did service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service) (n = 84), responded with agree or strongly agree. The t-score for this question was 0.265.

Table Twenty-Four



(t-score = 0.265, p<.05)

#### 4.8.2 Qualitative Focus Group Content Analysis Data

In this dimension, the chart below shows the proportion of the attitude of learning that showed that students believed that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff.

### Proportion of Attitudes of Learning Found in the Focus Groups

	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students	Service Learning Teachers
6. Learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff	21/64 = 32%	15/88 = 17%	39/51 = 76%

From the total of 64 responses by the service learning students, 21 of these responses mentioned the dimension that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff for a percentage of 32%. From the total of 88 community service responses, 15 mentioned this dimension for 17% and for the service learning teachers, this dimension was mentioned 39 times in 51 responses for 76%. Overall, this dimension was mentioned by all groups in 75 out of 203 responses for a percentage of 36%. Student and teacher responses from each focus group are presented below.

#### Service Learning Students

Students from the service learning focus group mentioned their teachers during the interviews. Teachers were mentioned in several different ways. Some students saw their teachers as partners during the project. “I would say the fact that it wasn’t just one person or a group of kids just saying ‘oh we want to change this’. We got to the point where we actually had other teachers saying they would help out and sponsor us...a group of students can change little things but I think a teacher backing us up...it will change a lot of things better”. These students were talking about the MIKVA Challenge they were doing with their social studies teacher.

Besides directly helping students with their projects, service learning students also expressed how they matured in how they worked with others. Several students who were self-described leaders, explained how this experience allowed them to be more collaborative and inclusive with other students than they normal would have been. “It helped me with patience within a group because it was a lot of us working together and everybody had to do a different task in order to get the thing done. It made me realize that everybody doesn’t have to necessarily get along but they need to put their differences aside when it comes to working on a group project to achieve your goals”. This quote speaks directly to the issue of collegiality among peers and sounds like a learning experience that goes beyond mere rote memorization of facts and figures to working collaboratively in a problem-solving manner.

Some service learning students did speak briefly about how the service project allowed them to work with others in their community. One student in particular mentioned that this project considerably changed his attitude towards others in the community. “It changed my view towards my community because I always thought that other people were so apathetic and they won’t do anything to help others”. A second quote implied that not only do the students care about the particular situations in which they come in contact with but, “I think our projects show that it’s not just CPS [Chicago Public Schools] or the teachers who are concerned about the well being of others. It shows that students care and they are trying to do something about it”. This student indicates that the service learning projects caused them to act on behalf of others with fellow students, teachers and community members.

### Community Service Students

Community service students did talk about some of the adults who worked with them during their projects. Some students mentioned these adults in the context that they helped the students to complete their hours for graduation. “For me it came up just cause one of the ladies I know from church asked me if I would help her out I said yes. I ended up liking it. I knew I had to get my hours done so I was like yeah you have to come in three hours everyday and I was like that’s fine I need it anyway”.

Other students only mentioned these adults in relation to what they asked the students to do while they worked. “The first place I did my service learning hours was at a pregnancy center and the adults basically just told me what to do and what they expected me to do. They just walked in and told me this is what needs to be done”. Finally, one student talked about how working with the adult just allowed him to finish his hours needed to fulfill the graduation requirement, “...So I’m like, I’m gonna go to my old elementary school which is by my house and I asked the vice-principal and she said ‘yeah I could help the pre-k teacher because she was new and she needed help and she wasn’t too comfortable with too many kids’. So she needed assistance and they just allowed me to help her out and like I got most of my hours done my sophomore year”.

### Service Learning Teachers

Teaches spoke largely about two benefits of service learning project with their students. The first was the idea that relationships and bonds between teachers and students were greatly strengthened due to their involvement in the service learning project. This stronger relationship was formed even if, in the case of one teacher, the

service project itself did not directly relate to what the students were studying in class. “None of the projects that I’ve been involved with have had much to do with what’s going on in my classroom; you know the actual subject that we’re doing has not much to do with English but the kind of the relationship building that you have with your students to do those kinds of projects I think helps out in the classroom later on and makes them more involved because they know you a little better you know them a little better outside of the classroom”.

Another teacher talked about how these experiences gave them an opportunity to observe students who, prior to this experience, did not exhibit in class an inclination for learning or a demonstration of the knowledge or skills they already possessed. “I agree you get to know the kids on a different level and they get to know you on a different level. Then you get to see some of their talents that might not be exposed in the classroom. My project was completely different than the regular math class so I got to see some unique talents that I normally wouldn’t see”.

One teacher also mentioned how students gained a deeper understanding of what teachers did and why they did it. “We had a program where our students were given materials to prepare to go to elementary schools kindergarten, first grade and second grade. They would become the teachers at that school and they’d go there and they’d teach about family and community... We then went into the classroom and it was great from all aspects because our students were there acting as teachers and some of them in their reflection said ‘well I really appreciate what teachers have to go through’.

Secondly, teachers talked about how service learning projects allowed students who wouldn't normally participate in class the opportunity to actively participate in class and share the work load with others. Generally speaking, these students who normally don't participate are getting poor grades; however, the teachers seemed to think that the service project gives these students the chance to perform at a comparable standard with the higher-achieving students. "I would just add that you kind of anticipate the really good kids to show up to the service learning projects. You know that they're freshman or sophomores and they've got to get their hours done and they're diligent and good students. But it's really cool also because you get one or two kids that you think you are failing every one of your classes but here you are at the service learning project and I think it's kind of cool how service learning can pull in all kinds of kids, not just the good diligent ones that you expect to be there but also the kids that are not doing as well as they know they should be".

#### 4.9 Summary

This chapter presented the data in relation to the research question posed in this study, i.e. to what degree did the service learning or community service project, regardless of the nature of the particular project, affect the students' attitudes toward their own learning? This chapter presented the quantitative and qualitative results for each of the dimensions of students' attitudes toward learning as addressed in framework of this research study. The analysis of the study results will now be discussed in Chapter Five.



# CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

*“Students as teachers; adults as learners”.*

**-- Paulo Freire**

## 5.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter begins with an overview of the research. A summary of the findings from this study is next, followed by a detailed discussion of the results for each of the six dimensions about the students’ attitudes toward learning established within the framework of the research design. The chapter then presents the limitations of the study and implications for further research based upon the analyses of the study results. The chapter ends with concluding thoughts on the results of the study and how the results contribute to the body of knowledge about service learning.

This research study was designed to examine the area of service learning and add to the growing research in this domain. This study examined whether students who participated in curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher had significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who participated in service learning projects without the guidance of a teacher (community service). In summary, the literature review showed that because there is still limited research on service learning at all grade levels to date, it is not possible to make definitive judgments about its efficacy and it is not possible to know which types of service projects most positively affect students’ attitudes, and which types of program designs most powerfully affect students’ attitudes toward learning. According to Billig (2000), "The field is clearly a messy one, and far more and better research is needed" (p. 659).

The literature review focused on three reasons why this research was significant:

- (1) a recent and substantial increase in the numbers of students participating in mandatory and/or volunteer service learning or community service activities;
- (2) a significant amount of research that provides inconclusive results as to the cognitive, emotional, behavioral and attitudinal effects participation in service learning or community service activities has on students; and
- (3) the need to distinguish between service learning and community service so that a better understanding may be gained regarding the effects that this type of learning has on students' attitudes toward learning.

This research study employed both quantitative measures -- a Likert Scale Survey -- and qualitative measures -- focus group interviews. In doing so, the study used the quantitative methods to help answer the 'what' about the effect service learning or community service had on students' attitudes about learning and the qualitative methods to help answer the "how" about the effect service learning or community service had on students' attitudes about learning. The instruments and protocols used in this study are appended to clarify the methodology so that the methodology, scope and results of this research can be replicated by other researchers with a larger sample or with a more longitudinal approach.

### 5.2 Summary and Discussion of the Study Findings

Of the quantitative data collected, the percentage of students who had their attitudes toward learning positively affected was significantly found more with the service learning students than with the community service students. On the survey, eighteen questions specifically asked about service learning and the experiences

students had during their service learning project. The questions from the survey were divided into the six dimensions of the attitude toward learning with one of the questions being the actual dimension itself. The survey questions were aligned as shown below:

1. Believing that learning is important, necessary and meaningful (#59)
  - Fill unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service that was meaningful and necessary (#54)
  - Served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place (#67)
2. Believing that learning allows them to help others (#55)
  - Exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them (#61)
  - Increased my civic and citizenship skills (#60)
3. Believing that learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence (#57)
  - Prepared me for my career/continuing education (#64)
  - Helped me learn how to get things done (#69)
4. Believing that learning assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world (#56)
  - Enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action (#53)
  - Developed a richer context for my learning (#62)
5. Believing that learning keeps them motivated and interested in class (#66)
  - Gave me more responsibility for my learning (#68)
  - Impacted local issues and local needs (#70)
6. Believing that learning involves a collegial participation among students, faculty and staff (#58)
  - Provided me with cross cultural experiences (#63)
  - Confirmed my career/college choices (#65)

Analysis of the results from the answers given on this survey show that the percentage of students answering strongly agree or agree was considerably higher with the service learning students than with the community service students. Overall, thirteen of the eighteen questions had service learning students answering more

positively than the community service students. Four of those thirteen questions had the service learning students answering between one and three percent higher; four of the thirteen questions had the service learning students answering between four and six percent higher; and five of the thirteen questions had the service learning students answering between eight and fourteen percent higher.

Two of the eighteen questions on the survey had response rates indicating that the service learning and community service students answered exactly the same percentage and three of the questions had the community service students answering at a higher rate. These three questions all had the community service students answering more positively at a rate of two percent. Table Twenty-Five below gives a further breakdown of the questions and percentages between the service learning students and the community service students. Also included is the composite score between the two groups. The questions are sequenced by the six dimensions with the first question being italicized because it is the actual dimension with the next two questions being the supportive questions of this dimension.

Table Twenty-Five -- Percentages of students answering Strongly Agree/Agree from the Service Learning Survey

Question	Service Learning Score % (Strongly Agree or Agree)	Community Service Score % (Strongly Agree or Agree)	Composite Score % (Strongly Agree or Agree)
<i>My service learning project...</i>			
<i>gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work (#59)</i>	82	73	76
fill unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service	65	60	62

that was meaningful and necessary (#54)			
served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place (#67)	78	74	76
<i>enabled me to help other, give of myself and enter into caring relationships with others (#55)</i>	76	74	75
exposed me to societal inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them (#61)	66	52	59
increased my civic and citizenship skills (#60)	71	71	71
<i>enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence (#57)</i>	73	70	71
prepared me for my career/continuing education (64)	69	61	64
helped me learn how to get things done (#69)	78	78	78
<i>assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world (#56)</i>	78	69	72
enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action (#53)	63	62	63
developed a richer context for my learning (#62)	73	67	69
<i>kept me motivated and interested in class (#66)</i>	65	67	66
gave me more responsibility for my learning (#68)	76	78	77
impacted local issues and local needs (#70)	71	65	67
<i>developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty and the community (#58)</i>	67	69	69
provided me with cross cultural experiences (#63)	70	68	69
confirmed my college/career choices (#65)	69	61	64

Community service students answered three questions more positively than the service learning students by rates of two percent. These three questions were: #66 --

*kept me motivated and interested in class; #68 – gave me more responsibility for my learning; and #58 – developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty and the community.* This trend is somewhat surprising because although all of the questions in the survey related to the topics of learning and school within the context of the students' service learning experience, only a total of eight questions in the service learning section of the survey specifically mentioned the words learning and/or some element of school (i.e. students, teachers, faculty, school, etc.) in the question itself. A possible explanation for question #68 – *gave me more responsibility for my learning* – could lie in the fact that these students felt that they had taken on responsibility for their learning by going out on their own and doing the community service project without assistance from anyone at school. This notion was alluded to by one of the student responses in the community service focus group, "I actually did it my sophomore year like because like my freshman year I got most of my hours through R.O.T.C...and I was like might as well get it over with in my sophomore year so I don't have to worry about it my junior year or my senior year. So ... I asked the vice-principal and she said 'yeah I could help the pre-k teacher because she was new and she needed help and she wasn't too comfortable with too many kids'. So she needed assistance and they just allowed me to help her out and I got most of my hours done my sophomore year". This student "got the service learning hours over with" in his sophomore year so that he wouldn't have to worry about them as a junior or senior; this sort of action definitely demonstrates that the student is taking responsibility for completing the work necessary for him to graduate.

In the other five questions that specifically mentioned the words learning and/or some element of school, the service learning students answered more positively in four of the five questions, by rates of four percent for question #67-- *served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place*; by nine percent for question #56 -- *assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world*; by one percent for question #53 -- *enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action*; by six percent for question #62 -- *developed a richer context for my learning*. The observed pattern of service learning students answering more positively the questions that actually mentioned the words learning and/or some element of school would be expected in the results. The whole process of a curricular service learning project takes place with the guidance of a teacher and some, if not most, of the planning, learning and reflecting takes place in the school itself.

Service learning students and community service students each responded exactly the same on two questions: #69 -- *helped me learn how to get things done* and #60 -- *increased my civic and citizenship skills*. This pattern is understandable when looking at each individual question. For question #69 -- *helped me learn how to get things done* -- the service learning students stated often how their curricular service learning project made them learn how to do things on their own. "It impacted my academics very much because I had to do research on the facts and create a power point presentation on what we learned so we could share it with others". It seems that at least during some service learning projects, students were guided by teachers to work on their own to prepare, implement, and reflect upon the service project. This

result was supported in the review of the literature found in Chapter Two in which service learning was defined as a method:

- (A) under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and the community;
- (B) that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for the student to think, talk, or write about what the student did and saw during the actual service activity; (National and Community Service Act of 1990).

Several community service students also felt that they learned how to get things done but it seems this was due to a different set of circumstances. As one student said, “The first place was at a pregnancy center so the adults there just basically told me what to do, what they expected me to do. I walked in they told me this is what needs to be done and they supported me I think. The main way the adults helped me was just giving me an opportunity to you know work for them”. Whereas there was preparation on part of the service learning students as they planned, implemented and reflected upon their service project, community service students predominantly just “walk into” a pre-existing job or project and do the work that is asked of them. Perhaps community service students felt they ‘learned how to get things done’ because they were doing their community service projects on their own, without their peers and without teacher support from their school. This same theme was identified earlier with survey question #68 – *gave me more responsibility for my learning.*



Regarding question #60 -- *increased my civic and citizenship skills* – one possible explanation why both sets of students would answer at the same percentage is that all students viewed their volunteerism, with or without the connection to the curriculum, as a good thing in and of itself. Both sets of students gave responses in the focus groups that both stated and implied that it is good to help others and to learn about others, so it is not very surprising that both service learning students and community service students saw their projects as increasing their civic involvement and citizenship skills. Also not surprising was the fact that teachers also felt that one of the purposes of schools should be to help young men and women develop into active citizens. As one teacher stated in the focus group, “For me, I decided to teach high school level because I really think that high school isn’t learning stuff from the books but learning to be a citizen. So that’s my underlining thought process when I’m working with the students”.

This idea of an attitude of increased citizenship in spite of whether it was a service learning project or a community service project highlights the fact that both groups of students interviewed needed to acquire their service learning hours in order to meet the graduation requirement at ABC High School. In analyzing the data from the service learning student focus group, which are also supported by the data from the teacher focus group, it seems that students from the service learning group mentioned how in the beginning of the service learning project, it was all about accumulating the hours necessary to graduate. However, after participating in their particular project for an amount of time, students had a different appreciation of the significance of the

experience beyond the accumulation of mandated hours. One service learning student said, “I didn’t think I was going to feel this way about it. I just thought, ‘Well, let me just get my hours over and done with as soon as I can’ but then I realized while I was doing the project that it is good to give back to the community and to help other people”.

Teachers echoed similar sentiments with one teacher saying, “I agree some kids do it just for the hours but then they get involved and all of a sudden they’re like ‘Oh my God, we have a river’ ... When we did the Lake Michigan clean up, they were like ‘You know there’s all these cigarette butts’ or whatever else they find. Then all of a sudden they’re awakened”. Another teacher summarized this point with the statement, “I think there’s always a percentage [of students] that just come for the hours you know. But there’s a percentage of those kids who stay because they like what’s happening”. If the idea of citizenship and volunteerism was considered a good thing by both groups of students then it is significant to discover that more service learning students actually moved beyond the “goodness of the service” and the need to fulfill a graduation mandate to something that actually helped them to learn and changed their attitude about their learning in relation to themselves and the world around them.

Ironically, the major obstacle in the way of students being able to participate in a curricular service learning project while meeting the graduation requirement of forty hours is the fact students rely completely on teachers to implement an authentic service learning activity. Although students might prefer to do a service learning activity that is connected to the curriculum, these students cannot make an independent decision by themselves that will insure that this happens. At best, students can only hope to

influence a teacher to implement a service learning project or select a course in which they know the teacher does service learning; however, they have no power whatsoever over whether or not a particular lesson or course will include a service learning project.

Indeed, the only 'service learning project' a student can *choose* to do is a community service project. This fact is especially noteworthy when, as has already been highlighted, a student attends a school where service learning hours are a requirement for graduation. In this research study, for example, students at ABC High School have to complete 40 hours of service learning in order to graduate. Of the one hundred and thirty four students who completed the service learning survey, 85 were self-identified community service students. Perhaps more students perform community service projects because none of their teachers are doing curricular service learning projects and they need to complete their service learning hours for graduation. This idea will be discussed further in the section on implications for future research.

The three survey questions with the largest difference of percentages between the service learning students and the community service students were: #61 -- *exposed me to societal inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them*; #56 -- *assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world*; and #59 -- *gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work*. All of these questions had a percentage difference of at least 9%; question #61 -- *exposed me to societal inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them* -- had 66% of the service learning students answering Strongly Agree or Agree as compared to 52% for the community service students; question #56 -- *assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world* -- had 78% of the service learning students

answering Strongly Agree or Agree as compared to 69% for the community service students; question #59 -- *gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work* - had 82% service learning students answering Strongly Agree or Agree as compared to 73% for the community service students. There are several possible explanations for the considerable differences in percentages between the student groups.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher are also defined as having the following two elements:

- (C) providing students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
- (D) enhancing what is taught in school by extending student learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. (National and Community Service Act of 1990)

All three of these questions seem to lead to the fact that students took action and did something about the learning that had occurred for them. First of all, the service project gave the service learning students *the opportunity to do important and necessary work*. As one service learning student stated, “When I did my project, I had already had all of my service learning hours done so I just wanted to do it to help out a little bit more...what I expected from it was a big successful event where a lot of people would come and learn from us about the situation”. For a student to participate in a service project after already completing the mandated hours of graduation seems to indicate that students are motivated to learn and act upon this learning if they view the work as important and necessary.

Secondly, because the service project was initiated in the classroom and then the work was implemented in the community, it helped the students to connect *the relevance of the academic subject to the real world*. One service learning student mentioned, “It helped me understand what to plan if you want to accomplish something and who to talk to and how the process should go. We actually learned how to participate and how to get your voice heard and have your voice reach the community when you want something to happen”. Bringing the community ‘into the classroom learning process’ by giving the students an opportunity to apply what they have learned gives students a relevant way to participate in the learning process.

Finally, the learning aspect of the project in conjunction with the service aspect of the project left service learning students feeling that they had been *exposed to societal inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them*. As one service learning student stated, “I think our projects show that it’s not just CPS or the teachers who are concerned about the well being of others. It shows that students care and they are trying to do something about it”. Not only do the students recognize the need for help and feel concerned about the welfare of others in their community, but they are willing to ‘try to do something about it’ because they view this service work as important and feel that they have been prepared to act. Not only did the students feel a certain way about their learning but the service project, in a way, caused them to act and get involved in changing other people’s lives. This action, in turn, caused others to sometimes get involved too as one student learned in his project. “I feel that my project did change someone’s life. We fundraised money and donated to doctors without borders. One of my friends, when I talked to him about the project, he came and he

actually performed a poem for the project because he felt that he wanted to do something about it”.

It is also significant to note that the content analysis coding had the service learning students scoring a higher percentage than the community service students in all six of the dimension of attitudes toward learning. Two dimensions, in particular, had percentages that were significantly higher between the service learning students and the community service students. The fourth dimension -- learning must be relevant -- had a 40% difference, 71% to 31% respectively. The first dimension – learning is important, necessary and meaningful – had a 28% difference, 76% to 48% respectively.

Although there were differences among the service learning students and the community service students regarding the percentages that answered strongly agree/agree or strongly disagree/disagree to the questions, the t-Test analysis showed that none of the survey results demonstrated a statistical difference when comparing the service learning students’ and the community service students’ responses to strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree. A significant score would have a t-score of  $p < .05$ ). Table Twenty-Six below shows the t-Test score for each question and is sequenced in the order of the questions on the survey.

Table Twenty-Six -- t-Test Scores for Strongly Agree/Agree or Strongly Disagree/Disagree Answers from the Service Learning Survey

My service project....	
enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action (#53)	0.329
fill unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service that was meaningful and necessary (#54)	0.256

enabled me to help other, give of myself and enter into caring relationships with others (#55)	0.165
assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world (#56)	0.254
enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence (#57)	0.306
developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty and the community (#58)	0.439
gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work (#59)	0.186
increased my civic and citizenship skills (#60)	0.319
exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them (#61)	0.458
developed a richer context for my learning (#62)	0.371
provided me with cross cultural experiences (#63)	0.059
prepared me for my career/continuing education (#64)	0.188
confirmed my college/career choices (#65)	0.265
kept me motivated and interested in class (#66)	0.287
served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place (#67)	0.252
gave me more responsibility for my learning (#68)	0.318
helped me learn how to get things done (#69)	0.393
impacted local issues and local needs (#70)	0.236

There are several possible explanations as to why there was no statistically significant difference with the responses on the survey between the service learning students and the community learning students. One possible explanation is that although the students took the survey as a senior, they might have done their service learning as a freshman, sophomore and/or junior student. In that case, these students might have had their attitude about learning via service learning positively affected in the short-term but in the three or four years since that experience, their opinion about their attitude toward learning via service learning might have changed and/or faded. Melchoir (1999) specifically notes that there have been studies that show service

learning having consistent short-term impacts on the civic attitudes of students, but these results have faded over time. “Put simply, there is little evidence that short-term, one-time involvement in even a well designed service learning program is likely to produce substantial long term benefits”. The possible positive effects of service learning perhaps might faded over time because the student never participated in another service learning project after the initial one that reinforced that positive changes that occurred.

Another possible explanation is that if there was a significant time-lag between the service learning experience and the collection of data, the students might not properly attribute the change in their attitude about learning to the service learning activity. In this sense, any particular student might be somewhat existentialist in their attitudes about learning; that is, students first exist and then later they define themselves. If the survey or focus group interviews were conducted shortly after the experience, students might have been able to more accurately attribute their change in attitude toward learning to the service learning project itself rather than some other variable.

Another factor that might have led to the insignificant results of the quantitative data from a statistical perspective was that students might have been involved in more than one service learning project and/or community service project. Each of these projects, or separate parts of these projects, was in and of themselves either better or worse than other projects or parts of projects in which the students participated. Since the survey did not strictly ask students to use one and only one service learning project to answer the questions in the survey, some of the students’ answers might not have been



completely accurate because they relied on several projects in answering the survey. As students answered the survey they might have been using different experiences from different projects to answer different survey questions. In fact, students might have consciously tried to remember a specific service project that would allow them to answer positively to each question. This possibility will be discussed further in the limitations section of this chapter.

Therefore, there is the distinct possibility that a student who participated in both a curricular service learning project guided by a teacher and a service learning project without the guidance of a teacher (community service) could have answered different parts of the survey using both experiences; that is, he/she could have been reflecting upon his/her service learning project when answering some of the questions and reflecting upon his/her community service experience when answering some of the other questions in the survey.

This scenario is a distinct possibility for the quantitative data because when analyzing the qualitative data, this event actually happened. Although the students in the community service focus group were identified by the service learning coaches as students who had participated in service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service), the analysis of the qualitative data indicates that some of these students also participated in a curricular service learning activities guided by a teacher and reflected upon these curricular service learning projects when giving responses to the facilitator's questions.

For example, during the focus groups, the service learning coaches, acting as facilitators for the focus groups, asked the students the following question, "How do

you think that your service learning experience impacted your academic learning?” In answering this question during the community service focus groups, at least two different students mentioned a service learning project they had done with one particular teacher, Ms. Holly. One community service student stated, “Well I guess, Ms. Holly’s project did a lot and we learned a lot of facts...and we actually learned how to participate and how to get your voice heard when you want something to happen”. The second community service student said, “I’ll just add that the work that we’ve done with Ms. Holly, we were basically compelled to raise awareness about other countries and the genocide in Sudan or Rawanda. For me, I learned how to write letter to politicians because we were supposed to do that to our State Representatives”. It is evident that these two student responses in this focus group clearly show that when they gave answers to the questions, they were responding with memories from their curricular service learning activities guided by a teacher instead of their individual community service project.

This event happened again at a different point in the focus group. Later in the session, the facilitator asked the students about the leadership skills that were developed as a result of their projects. One of the responses by the same student from above once again referenced the curricular service learning project that she had done with Ms. Holly. “We had to basically run the whole event...I mean everything that they had to do ended up falling on us and that was how you learned from it....Some people were responsible for design, like me with advertising, an some were doing movies, documentaries, power points and speeches”. Due to the fact that some of the responses given by the community service students show that they participated in

curricular service learning projects guided by a teacher, it is also very possible that as students answered the survey on service learning they might have been using different experiences from either a curricular service learning project or a community service project or both to answer different survey questions. This fact underscores the necessity for a clear understanding of the differences between service learning and community service.

Indeed, the survey itself does not differentiate between service learning and community service. The annual service learning survey given by ABC High School uses the term service learning throughout the entire survey. It uses the term service learning to simultaneously describe both types of projects; in fact, the survey does not use the term community service at all. The question that allowed this research study to determine whether or not a student actually did a curricular service learning project with the guidance of a teacher or a service learning project without the guidance of a teacher (community service) does not appear until the final section of the seven-section, seventy-three question survey.

In section seven of the Service Learning survey, the students were instructed to fill in the correct circle (on a bubble sheet) about their service learning project. Question number seventy one, shown below and located in the last section of the survey, sought to separate the students into the two groups identified within this research study by determining whether or not students had done their service learning project with a teacher (service learning) or whether they had done their service learning project alone (community service):

71. My service learning project was done with a teacher.

A. = Yes            B. = No

The placement of this critical question is important because as students began answering the survey they might have been using their community service experience to answer the questions found on the survey. If the students did not know the difference between curricular service learning guided by a teacher versus service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service), a distinct possibility given the results found in the review of the literature and the analysis of the focus group data, then the answers given to each of the questions on the survey might not have been completely accurate. That is, a student answered the survey while thinking upon his/her community service experiences not knowing that there was going to be a question to distinguish whether he/she did the service learning project with or without a teacher as asked for in Question 71. If this question had come in the beginning of the survey it might have helped to better the focus of the students' on that particular project. At the very least, it seems that the survey could have also explicitly instructed the students to think about only one service learning project (or community service project) when answering the questions.

Although t-Test scores showed there were no statistical differences when comparing the service learning students and the community service students that answered strongly agree/ agree or strongly disagree/disagree to the questions, on the survey, a second t-Test analysis did show that were three questions from the survey that demonstrated a significant statistical difference when analyzing only the agree

and disagree survey results from both groups of students. Table Twenty-Seven below shows the t-Test score for agree and disagree for each question. A significant score would have a t-score of  $p < .05$ . The table is sequenced in the order of the questions on the survey.

Table Twenty-Seven -- t-Test Scores for Agree/Disagree Answers from the Service Learning Survey

My service project....	
enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action (#53)	0.040
fill unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service that was meaningful and necessary (#54)	0.265
enabled me to help other, give of myself and enter into caring relationships with others (#55)	0.357
assisted me to see the relevance of the academic subject to the real world (#56)	0.147
enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence (#57)	0.042
developed an environment of collegial participation among students, faculty and the community (#58)	0.342
gave me the opportunity to do important and necessary work (#59)	0.074
increased my civic and citizenship skills (#60)	0.476
exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them (#61)	0.049
developed a richer context for my learning (#62)	0.150
provided me with cross cultural experiences (#63)	0.391
prepared me for my career/continuing education (#64)	0.236
confirmed my college/career choices (#65)	0.136
kept me motivated and interested in class (#66)	0.500
served as a tool for my reflection on the learning that took place (#67)	0.222

gave me more responsibility for my learning (#68)	0.297
helped me learn how to get things done (#69)	0.495
impacted local issues and local needs (#70)	0.214

In analyzing the data in Table Twenty-Seven above, a statistical difference between the service learning students and the community service students is present for three of the questions. Those three questions are: question #53 -- *enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action*, which had a t-score of 0.040; question #57 -- *enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence*, which had a t-score of 0.042; and question #61 -- *exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them*, which had a t-score of 0.049.

The three dimensions that these three questions related to also showed a difference in the content analysis of the qualitative data. This inferential analysis also showed a pattern of the service learning students scoring higher than the community service students in all of these three dimensions: by 40% in the dimension of learning must be relevant; by 10% in the dimension of learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence; and by 17% in the dimension that learning allows them to help others. Table Twenty-Eight displays this comparison.

Table Twenty-Eight -- Content Analysis and t-Test Differences between Service Learning Students and Community Service Students with Three Dimensions of Attitudes Toward Learning and Three Survey Questions within These Dimensions

Dimension and Question	Service Learning Students	Community Service Students
Dimension 4: Learning must be relevant  Question #53: <i>enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action</i>	$46/64 = 71\%$  t-score = 0.040	$28/88 = 31\%$
Dimension 3: Learning enhances their self-esteem and confidence  Question #57: <i>enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence</i>	$21/64 = 32\%$  t-score = 0.042	$20/88 = 22\%$
Dimension 2: Learning allows them to help others  Question #61: <i>exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them</i>	$31/64 = 48\%$  t-score = 0.049	$28/88 = 31\%$

The three questions that had a significant statistical difference indicate a pattern related with the idea that service learning students acted upon the learning that had occurred in conjunction with the need being addressed within the service project. Question #53, -- *enhanced my learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action* – speaks directly to the idea of making learning relevant and connected. In the coding of the qualitative data, there was a forty percent difference between service learning students and community service students, the largest difference found in the analysis. Students spoke to this need for relevancy on several different occasions, including very basic tasks such as filling out paperwork. “Filling out the grant for the project also helped me understand that I will most likely need to do the same thing when I apply to

college”. This survey question basically addresses the idea of connecting what was learned in the classroom and applying it to the ‘real world’, either now or in the future.

The statistical significance with question #57 -- *enhanced my self-esteem and confidence* – seems to revolve around the emotional aspect to this learning experience. In the qualitative coding, there was a similarity between these two groups; community service students gave responses in the focus group that expressed that they had emotional learning that occurred as well as the service learning students. However, there seems to be a distinct difference between the two. For example, both groups expressed that they liked the experience they had. One service learning student mentioned, “In my case the adults played a really important role because when they saw the posters put up for the Tsunami event, a lot of teachers came up to us and they just told us that it was great that we were doing something like that and they were just like telling us that they were so impressed”. Another service learning student said, “I learned a lot from it not just academically but for myself cause I know what people are going through”.

While the service learning students spoke about liking the project because of the recognition they were receiving from adults or the emotional learning they had experienced, community service students described liking the experience in the sense that they were familiar with the work or had done it before. One student said, “I know I would like it because I have eight nieces and nephews so I’m used to being around little kids. There were certain times where they would really tire me out but they were fun to be with so it was a good experience” and another student responded, “And then I traveled to Philadelphia and Detroit and played for free at the concerts performed as a



drummer, a xylophone player so it was pretty exciting”. Again, in this situation, the student thought it was exciting because the student applied a skill he already had.

The data seem to suggest that although both service learning students and community service students experienced an increase in self-esteem and confidence, these feelings were derived from very different sources. Unlike the service learning students for whom the adult (teacher) ‘pushed and encouraged’ them in the service learning experience with positive support and recognition that increased both their academic and emotional learning, the community service students felt ‘compelled’ to do work that wasn’t significantly increasing their self-esteem or confidence as much when compared to the service learning students.

The significance with question #61 -- *exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them* – was also discussed earlier when comparing the two student groups in relation to the percentage of students who answered strongly agree/ agree on the survey. This question was the one with the largest percentage difference between the service learning students (66%) and the community service students (52%). The significance of this question seems to lie in the fact service learning students really believed that the work they were doing allowed them to help others. One student stated, “And it showed that some students actually took community service [service learning] seriously not as something that they just need to get done because they needed it to graduate but some actually got into the project and did more hours than what they were supposed to do realizing that helping the community out is something good to do”.

In general, this overall difference suggests that when students experienced their learning activity it was critical whether this activity was perceived by the student as doing work *for* someone or doing work *with* someone. When these students did work for someone – whether a doctor or a teacher or some other professional—they viewed their experience less positively than when they worked with a group that they were teaching, facilitating, or helping.

### 5.3 Limitations of the Study

There were several potential limitations to this research study. Some of these limitations could have affected the outcomes of this particular study while other limitations could have affected the generalizability of the results of this particular study with other studies.

The first limitation was mentioned earlier in this chapter and it involves the real or perceived idea that there may have been a positive bias in the responses to the survey and focus groups interviews by the students and teachers due to the fact that participation in service learning activities is usually considered a “good” thing. Tuckman (1999) suggested subjects often try to ‘help’ an experimenter by providing the result they think he or she is anticipating. This limitation might have been offset due to the fact that the survey given to students clearly stated that this information was not being used to evaluate any one individual but rather it was being used to gather information about how service learning was influencing student learning at ABC High School. Furthermore, the survey was composed of two sections; one section that looked for information that was directly concerning service learning but also a second

section that was not concerned directly with service learning but rather with feelings, attitudes, and emotions about school and learning that are similar to those that would be expressed or present independent of service learning. By having both sections in the survey, it seems possible that students might have been less likely to view this survey as only a survey about service learning.

Regarding the focus groups and this identified limitation, participants were assured that this information was not being used to evaluate any one individual. Instead, the facilitators of the focus groups informed the participants that the information collected via the focus groups would give information about the service learning and community service experiences that the students and teachers had had collectively. The participants were requested to only give honest responses – good or bad – so that the analysis of the data would yield valid outcomes that would hopefully inform and improve the practice of service learning.

The second possible limitation of this research study was that the models of service learning implementation could vary depending on the classroom setting. Basically, could the results from this study be generalized to the greater educational public, i.e. other classrooms, schools, and school districts? Questions such as ‘what key elements need to be in place for a program or class to be called service learning so that results could be compared?’ and ‘what variations are in program and class components (such as length and intensity of time commitment, interest, skill of supervisors and teachers, etc.)?’ may lead to differing results from class to class and project to project. To help control for this limitation, this study attempted to be clear and concise in

detailing the study's procedures and findings in order to facilitate replication for more in-depth and more longitudinal studies in the future.

A third limitation was that the methods used to collect the data may have been inherently limited when doing research with a subject such as service learning.

According to Alt (1997), "This is a likely explanation for at least some study results: determining causal relationships for any learning outcomes is difficult, and certainly this applies to outcomes involving attitudes, intentions and higher-order thinking" (p.12). Conrad and Hedin (1991) also addressed the difficulty of research involving service learning when they stated: "The fundamental difficulty is that service is not a single easily definable activity like taking notes in a lecture" (p. 746).

Because this research study analyzed results from a survey that ABC High School annually gave to its students, there was no way to offset this limitation with the quantitative data collected via the survey. Because this survey was analyzed as deeply as it was within the current research study, it is clear that, as discussed earlier in this chapter, several changes to the survey instrument could have made it more clear for the students regarding more accurate responses to the questions be posed.

With the qualitative data collected from focus group interview questions, however, the research study did collect data by asking general questions about the service learning or community service activity (i.e., Describe your service project? and Why and how did you choose to become involved in the service project?) as well as specific questions about how the service learning or community service activity affected their attitudes or learning (i.e., How did your service project impact your

connection to school and community? and How did your attitudes about yourself and your community change through the project?).

A fourth possible limitation was that it was absolutely necessary for the researcher to remain neutral; this presented a challenge because he was an assistant principal at the school in which the data was collected. This limitation would have been offset while collecting data via the surveys, because this was an annual survey given by ABC High School and the researcher was not mentioned at all. The students and teachers only gave feedback to a survey that was being collected to give information directly to ABC High School and CPS as previous groups of students and teachers had done in the past. Since the service learning survey had been given by ABC High School for at least three years, it was believed that there existed only the slightest of chances that anyone would know that the researcher would be analyzing the data from this survey for this research study.

Regarding the qualitative data collections, participants signed a Consent to Participate in Research document prior to the focus groups being conducted. Participants were assured that only the service learning coaches would be conducting the focus groups and that the participants' names would not be associated with the data or the analysis of the data in any way. Of course, participants were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary and that there would be no concern if an individual did not want to participate in the study.

In collecting data via focus group interviews, a service learning coach at ABC High School conducted the interviews. The coach did inform the participants that the data would be used to help inform the dissertation being written by the assistant

principal/researcher but the coach made absolutely clear to all students and teachers that they should answer honestly and sincerely and not give answers that they think the school would want to hear. The service learning coach stressed with them that this study was not being used in an evaluative manner. Instead, the service learning coach stated that it was being conducted to share stories and information about the realities of the service learning initiative. The coach further emphasized for any good to come out of the discussions, only honest answers would prove helpful even if this meant giving what was perceived to be a negative answer.

#### 5.4 Implications for Future Research

Because service learning is not an easily quantifiable experience, this research study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative measures to strengthen the research and help to deepen the analysis of the data. It is strongly recommended that future studies also incorporate both types of collection methods and data analysis.

Based on the present study's research findings, as well as the aforementioned limitations, there are several areas for future research in service learning, particularly related to projects that are curriculum related. One area of future research could be to give pre- and post- surveys prior to the service learning experience of the student. The surveys given in this research study were given at the end of the students' senior year of school rather than at the end of the student's particular service learning project. It is very possible that students' memories about their service learning activities might have faded over time and therefore not be as accurate as it would be if the data was collected immediately following the experience. This more immediate collection of data might yield more specific responses that are directly correlated with the service experience itself.

If these pre- and post- surveys were given, a new research design could also give an additional survey in the distant future to determine if there was any lasting effect on the students' attitude to their learning. This type of longitudinal study would need to keep track of the identification of the students over time and remind the students of the surveys taken prior to and after the initial service learning/community service project.

Future quantitative research studies could incorporate a control group to more accurately determine the extent to which the effects toward students' attitudes toward learning were due to participation in a service learning project as opposed to some other unaccounted for variable. For example, a course could be taught by the same teacher with multiple classes all having the same curriculum, instruction, and assessment except for the classes that would have a service learning project while the other classes would not have one. This type of research design could be strengthened by having several teachers implementing the same type of design in their courses within the same disciplines or across disciplines.

Qualitatively, the focus group sessions should occur at a time more related to the actual service learning project. One limitation with this study was that during the focus groups, students were talking about projects without always directly referring to the particular project that they were talking about. Some of the students did directly reference a particular service learning or community service project but some talked about their project in such a way that it was not easy or even possible to detect whether the student was in fact talking about a service learning project or a community service project.

Additionally, there could be a research design that has multiple focus group sessions with the same groups of students. These focus group sessions could occur before the service learning project, during the project and after the project. Similar to the suggestion with the collection of quantitative data, if these focus group sessions occurred in this manner, a new research design could also give an additional focus in the future to determine if there was any lasting effect on the students' attitude to their learning.

Another qualitative design that might prove helpful to implement would be a qualitative case study of a certain number of students and/or teachers to help determine the effects that service learning had on them and their attitudes toward learning. This type of study might prove especially useful when conducted within the area of social-emotional learning, which can be significantly developed and nurtured with learning experiences such as service learning. It might also prove helpful in identifying the characteristics of teachers who implement service learning projects so that educators could help foster those characteristics to insure that students would actually have a choice between a service learning project and a community service project.

### 5.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to determine if students who participated in curricular service learning activities guided by a teacher would have significantly more positive attitudes about learning than those students who did their service learning without the guidance of a teacher (community service).



It appears that whether a student does service learning with or without a teacher the experience is a positive event in the life of the student; however, the analysis of the data collected in this study indicates that students' attitudes toward learning is more positively influenced when the service learning project is done with the guidance of a teacher. Whether the change in attitude toward learning will remain with the student is largely influenced by the service learning project itself. This limitation, however, does not negate the powerfulness of the service learning project for the majority of the students involved. The results from the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data from this study indicates that service learning significantly and positively affects students attitudes toward their learning. This study therefore suggests that service learning should be recognized as a viable methodology which should be emphasized and implemented by teachers and administrators.

This study suggests that when the teacher's actions allow for the students to participate more fully in the teaching and learning process via service learning methodologies and projects significant positive effects in student attitudes toward learning will be observed. The question now becomes are teachers and administrators prepared to take service learning seriously by viewing young people as contributors to teaching and learning? If the movement toward service learning is to maintain the highest standards of practice and grow in a sustainable fashion, it must forgo the strategy to blanket expansion through mandated service requirements and other top-down approaches (Kielsmeier, 2000). Moreover, the acceleration of service-learning participation from an estimated 81,000 high school students in 1984 to 2.9 million in

1999 is real and suggests a pattern of growth that could threaten sustainability if staff development does not keep pace (Shumer, 1999).

If, as this research study suggests, students believe they learn more and have better attitudes about learning due to their involvement in authentic service learning, what can be done to insure that students have more opportunities to participate in curricular service learning projects with the guidance of a teacher? As this research study discussed in Chapter One, service learning starts with the presupposition that the primary purpose of education can no longer be socialization and standardization, the shaping of students into clearly defined roles for a predictable future. Rather, in a world marked by pluralism, uncertainty and variability, educators need to move from the idea of students as receptacles, merely receiving deposits of information from teachers, to students as creators, disseminators, and implementers of knowledge (Collay, et al, 1998). The act of implementing service learning projects seems to meet this shift in teaching and learning methodology.

As high school teachers begin to view their students as young men and women who have something valuable to contribute to the teaching and learning process, they should begin to shift their teaching methodologies from those of teaching young children, i.e. pedagogy, to those of teaching young adults, i.e. andragogy. When this shift occurs, more and more of the teacher's instructional strategies will give these students learning experiences that are self-directing and problem-centered, while relying on the students' own experiences to construct new ideas and new skills for themselves and others. When teachers give students reasons to become actively engaged in their own learning by connecting the classroom lessons with genuine

opportunities for students' to make choices in their communities and day-to-day lives, the readiness to learn will come from the internal needs and motivations of each student.

It must be noted, however, that service learning projects require a significant amount of work by teachers. Hands-on, site-based, student centered service learning demands a high level of teacher investment and administrative support. It is often difficult for teachers to find the considerable amount of time for planning and coordinating site-specific activities, collaborating with others, thinking creatively about how to tie the service to the curriculum, and making logistical arrangements for funding, transportation, and student supervision (Wade, 1997).

One of the teachers in the focus group reflected upon this dilemma in her closing comments. She stated,

I really think that there's this lack of confidence amongst some teachers that think that they can actually integrate a service learning project into their curriculum... I mean when I go to people and talk about different service learning ideas that I have for integrating the social sciences with other disciplines with something in the community they all think it's a great idea but no one's really sure that they know how to make it work...I remember two years ago Tamara showed a video that showed work outside in the garden and I saw that and I saw like that there were all these different curricular connections and all the students did was talk about how much fun it was making learning mean something that I think that, that video might have convinced me to start looking at the possibility of service learning projects because I wanted my students to come back and say the best part of your class was when I did something that was meaningful instead of just you know learning whatever. So I really think someone had the idea of service learning and then once you have the idea, working with other people makes it, you know, makes it feasible that

other teachers would do it and would actually make service learning something meaningful rather than what little kids do, which is go sweep up the YMCA.

This study shows that service learning projects focus students' learning on more than sweeping a floor or fact retention. Curricular service learning projects with the guidance of a teacher provide students with the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be applied to real-life situations. This research study has made a contribution to the small but growing body of research by suggesting that service learning methodologies and projects allow the opportunity for students to participate more fully in the teaching and learning process which in turn has significant positive effects in student attitudes about their learning. If educators value these outcomes as much as mere fact retention, then administrators and teachers will need to develop learning communities of students and teachers in which participants both learn and teach, lead and serve.

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**Appendix A: 2004-2005 Service Learning Student Survey**

**2004-2005 Service Learning Student Survey**

We are conducting teacher and student surveys to learn more about the service learning program at Clemente. Your answers to this survey will be confidential and will be combined with those of other students to describe what students currently think, do and experience regarding service learning. The results will help to improve the service learning program in our school. Your participation is completely voluntary; if you do start to complete it and decide not to continue, you may do so. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, but we hope you will answer as many questions as you can. Thank you.

Please fill in the circle on the answer sheet that has the answer that is most true for you. You may use a pen or pencil.

- A = Strongly Disagree
- B = Disagree
- C = Agree
- D = Strongly Agree

**Section # 1: How much do you agree with the following statements --Learning is:**

1. fun.
2. boring.
3. engaging.
4. positive.
5. confusing.
6. understandable.
7. difficult.
8. challenging.
9. important.
10. easy.

**Section # 2: How much do you agree with the following statements:**

11. My teachers expect everyone to work hard.
12. I usually look forward to going to school.
13. Usually the work I am doing in my class is not interesting to me.
14. My teachers believe I can do well in school.
15. I am confident in my ability to complete class assignments.
16. Even when I study, I cannot do well on tests.
17. What I am learning in school will help me after I graduate.
18. I am confident in my ability to do my school work.
19. My teachers really listen to students' ideas.
20. Most of my work will help me in the future.
21. I wish I could go to a different school.
22. My teachers notice if I have trouble learning something.
23. I don't understand the point of most of the things the teachers make us do.
24. I am satisfied with the educational opportunities provided to me at school.
25. What we learn about in class relates to issues that I care about.
26. My teachers do not care what I think.
27. Sometimes I get so interested in my work I don't want to stop.

**Section # 3: How much do you agree with the following statements:**

28. I often find my class work difficult.
29. I often reflect upon what I have learned and accomplished.



## **Appendix B: Consent to Participate in Research Form**

### **Consent to Participate in Research**

#### **Service Learning and Its Effect on Students' Attitudes Toward Learning**

June 8, 2005

Dear Student:

I am asking you to participate in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the service learning opportunities and experiences in conjunction with the completion of my dissertation at DePaul University. You are being asked to participate because you are a senior student who should have completed your service learning hours already. You will be asked to be a participant in a sixty minute focus group where you will share your thoughts and opinions about your service learning experiences.

There are minimal risks associated with your participation in this study but to help secure your confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym to help maintain your autonomy. Additionally, only the service learning coaches will be conducting the focus groups. Since I am the assistant principal, I will not be the facilitator of the focus groups and the raw data will be transcribed by a professional service using pseudonyms before I receive the data. Your name will not be associated with the analysis in any way. Tapes used to collect information during the focus groups will be stored by the service learning coaches. Six months after the dissertation is completed, these tapes will be destroyed and disposed of. All information that you provide in this research study will be kept strictly confidential and any report of this research will not identify you personally in any way.

Although there are minimal direct benefits associated with your participation in the study, it will provide you with an opportunity to voice your learning experiences as a service learning participant. I hope the results of this study will contribute to the general knowledge about service learning and benefit future students who must complete the service learning hours requirement.

If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is entirely up to you and no one will be concerned if you do not want to participate. Even if you change your mind later and want to stop, you may withdraw your agreement to participate without any consequences. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary; Clemente does not require you to participate in the study and if you decide not to participate it will not affect your grades or your standing within the school.

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question now, you can call me directly at (773) 534-4000 or email wtconard@cps.k12.il.us

Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

Investigator's Responsibility: I have fully explained to (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_ the nature and the purpose of the above described research procedures and the risks and benefits involved in this performance. I have answered all (and will continue to answer all) questions to the best of my ability. I will inform the participant of any changes in the procedures or risks and benefits if they should occur during or after the course of this study. I have provided a copy of the consent form for the participant.

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Consent: I have been satisfactorily informed of the above described procedure with its possible risks and benefits. I agree to participate in this research study. If I have any questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research study, I may request to speak to the Coordinator of the DePaul University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants by calling (312) 362-7593. I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to stop participating at any time, without any consequences, even after signing this form. I have been offered a copy of this form.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Consent to Participate in Research

### **Service Learning and Its Effect on Students' Attitudes Toward Learning**

June 15, 2005

Dear Teacher:

I am asking you to participate in a research study because I am trying to learn more about the service learning opportunities and experiences in conjunction with the completion of my dissertation at DePaul University. You are being asked to participate because you are a teacher who might have conducted a service learning project in your class. You will be asked to be a participant in a sixty minute focus group where you will share your thoughts and opinions about your service learning experiences.

There are minimal risks associated with your participation in this study but to help insure and secure you confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym to help maintain your autonomy. Additionally, only the service learning coaches will be conducting the focus groups. Since I am the assistant principal, I will not be the facilitator of the focus groups and the raw data will be transcribed by a professional service using pseudonyms before I receive the data. Your name will not be associated with the analysis in any way. Tapes used to collect information during the focus groups will be stored by the service learning coaches. Six months after the dissertation is completed, these tapes will be destroyed and disposed of. All information that you provide in this research study will be kept strictly confidential and any report of this research will not identify you personally in any way.

Although there are minimal direct benefits associated with your participation in the study, I hope the results of this study will contribute to the general knowledge about service learning, benefit future students who must complete the service learning hours requirement and inform and improve instruction and curriculum.

If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is entirely up to you and no one will be concerned if you do not want to participate. Even if you change your mind later and want to stop, you may withdraw your agreement to participate without any consequences. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary; Clemente does not require you to participate in the study and if you decide not to participate it will not affect your standing within the school.

You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question now, you can call me directly at (773) 534-4000 or email wtconard@cps.k12.il.us

Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

Investigator's Responsibility: I have fully explained to (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_ the nature and the purpose of the above described research procedures and the risks and benefits involved in this performance. I have answered all (and will continue to answer all) questions to the best of my ability. I will inform the participant of any changes in the procedures or risks and benefits if they should occur during or after the course of this study. I have provided a copy of the consent form for the participant.

Investigator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Consent: I have been satisfactorily informed of the above described procedure with its possible risks and benefits. I agree to participate in this research study. If I have any questions regarding my rights as a participant in this research study, I may request to speak to the Coordinator of the DePaul University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants by calling (312) 362-7593. I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to stop participating at any time, without any consequences, even after signing this form. I have been offered a copy of this form.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix C. Coding Guidelines for Content Analysis**

1. An interview response was defined as all text associated with a given answer to a question posed by one of the interviewers.
2. The dimensions were not mutually exclusive. Therefore, a response from an interviewee could contain evidence for more than one attitude of learning. For example, a response could contain evidence of Relevance and Confidence/Self-Esteem.
3. It was possible to have responses that did not contain any evidence of an attitude of learning. These responses were not coded.
4. The question that was identified as the dimension guided the coding. The definition of the dimension was considered when determining whether a response contains evidence of an attitude of learning. Exact word match was not necessary, synonyms and evidence of the attitude of learning was also acceptable.
5. Codes were assigned to the response of each response using the following key: 1= Important, Necessary and Meaningful, 2 = Help others, give of self, and enter into relationships with others, 3 = Confidence and Self-Esteem, 4 = Relevance, 5 = Motivate and Interest, 6 = Collegial Participation of students, faculty and community members. N = None.

## Dimension 1

### **Meaningful**

Definition: Believing that learning needs to be important, necessary and meaningful.

Keywords/Phrases	A. Important B. Impacted C. You have to do something about it D. Meeting needs/necessary E. Learned F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service learning project filled unmet needs in the community through direct and indirect service that was meaningful and necessary.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	It impacted my academics very much because I had to do research on the facts and create a power point presentation on what we learned so we could share it with others.

## Dimension 2

### **Helpful**

Definition: Believing that learning should support others by giving of yourself and entering into caring relationships

Keywords/Phrases	A. Help other people/families/community B. Get more involved in the community C. Share time with those in need D. Give back to the community E. Take care of others F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service learning project exposed me to social inadequacies and injustices and empowered me to remedy them.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	In my opinion, I believe that service learning is very important to all of us, especially now-a-days because we all need to give to our community.



### Dimension 3

#### **Confidence**

Definition: Believing that learning should increase their self-esteem and confidence

Keywords/Phrases	A. Confident/confidence B. We could do it ourselves C. Prepared D. Independence E. Helped me get things done F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service learning project helped me learn how to get things done.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	The fact that she gave us that little sense of encouragement that we could do it just like anyone else let us know we could do it ourselves.

### Dimension 4

#### **Relevance**

Definition: Believing that learning should be of value and connect to what is happening in their lives and the local and global community

Keywords/Phrases	A. Relevance B. Leadership C. Connected D. Real life E. People are going through F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service learning project developed a richer context for my learning.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	I thought it was a really nice way for them to end the year and sort of wrap up everything that we've done. In the sense that they knew that what happened in the classroom but then they saw some relevance to it out in the community.

## Dimension 5

### **Motivation**

Definition: Believing that learning keeps them interested in class and helps students to take more responsibility for their learning.

Keywords/Phrases	A. Motivated B. Fun C. Wanted to do it/got into it D. Responsibility E. Interested F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service learning project kept me motivated and interested in class.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	Well with me I just wanted to get the service learning hours over quick but I got into it and it became fun and I ended up with over a hundred [hours].

## Dimension 6

### **Collegial Involvement**

Definition: Believing that learning should increase active the collegial involvement of students, teachers and community

Keywords/Phrases	A. Relationships with others B. Team C. Group D. Working together E. Teachers supporting F. Other...
Question from the Service Learning Survey	My service project provided me with cross cultural experiences.
Example response from an interviewee on a focus group	It made me realized that everybody doesn't have to necessarily get along but they need to put their differences aside when it comes to working on a group project to achieve your goals.

VITA

June, 2008

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