



**SODEXO FOUNDATION-YSA SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT
CHILDHOOD HUNGER INITIATIVE
PUBLIC INFORMATION BRIEF, SUMMER 2013**

This information brief presents selected findings from the RMC Research Evaluation Report, based on data collected during the 2012-2013 school year.

The Sodexo Foundation-YSA School Engagement Childhood Hunger Initiative is a partnership between Sodexo Foundation, representing one of the largest food services and facilities management companies in the world, and YSA (Youth Service America), an organization dedicated to improving communities in the United States and other countries by increasing the number and diversity of young people, ages 5 to 25, serving in substantive roles.

The Sodexo Foundation-YSA School Engagement Childhood Hunger Initiative engages teachers and students, Grades K-12, in learning about the incidence of childhood hunger in their communities, and in leading meaningful activities that facilitate access to nutritious food for all children, especially those most at risk. The program is designed to address the need for every child in the United States to grow up with access to enough nutritious food. The strategies used to engage students include:

- **Awareness and mobilization campaigns** designed to encourage youth-led learning and specific youth-led actions to address childhood hunger in the community;
- **Grants for teachers** to engage their students in acting on their knowledge through specific activities or projects; and
- **Development of educational resources** to support the implementation of high-impact, semester-long service-learning programs that ultimately are used by youth to reduce the rate of childhood hunger in the United States.

Interested educators from K-12 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia were invited to apply to YSA in the spring of 2012 for grants to support service-learning projects related to the topic of decreasing childhood hunger and increasing access to nutritious food. For the 2012-2013 academic year, YSA chose a total of 11 school sites as grantees; all grantees conducted service-learning programs that extended throughout the academic year. Sodexo-Foundation-YSA School Engagement sites were located in the states of Arkansas, California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas.

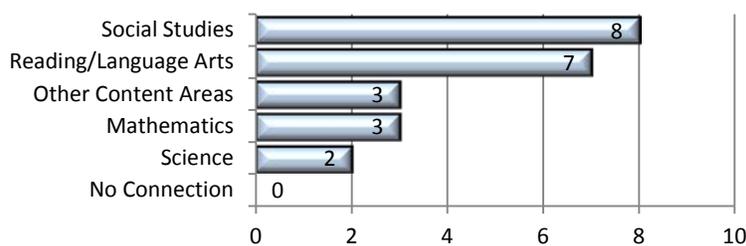
Staff of YSA provided 3 days of professional development for grantee educators during the Youth Service Institute national conference held in Houston in October of 2012. Trainings included information on qualities of effective service-learning programs, implementation of academic and career readiness standards, integration of youth voice, and conduct of the evaluation process.

RMC Research Corporation carried out an evaluation of the Sodexo Foundation-YSA Childhood Hunger Initiative utilizing a pre/postsurvey design for participating middle and high school students. Comparison pre/postsurveys were administered to students who did not participate in service-learning activities but who came from the same grades, subject areas, and demographic groups as the service-learning students. Only matched pre/postsurveys (surveys completed by the same students) were used for the analysis of data. Classroom teachers who implemented service-learning and representatives of community partner organizations took post-only surveys. Surveys were completed by 297 service-learning students, 132 comparison students, nine teachers, and eight community partners.

SELECTED FINDINGS

- **Teachers reported that projects addressed all standards of quality service-learning programs.** Teachers strongly agreed that they aligned their practices to all measured standards. Highest teacher ratings were given to the standards of promoting youth voice, providing meaningful service, establishing community partnerships, and creating links to the curriculum. Teachers assigned the lowest rating to fostering diversity.
- **Students generally thought that their service-learning programs were of good quality.** Students shared agreement with teachers that service activities were meaningful. Other areas in which students perceived high levels of quality were in expectations of showing respect for others during service-learning activities, learning skills from Semester of Service activities that will be useful in the future, and perceiving service-learning activities as being important.
- **The majority of service-learning projects lasted between 21 and 40 weeks.** All but one teacher indicated that service-learning projects had lasted at least 14 weeks, the typical length of a semester, and most teachers said that their students were engaged in projects for substantially longer periods of time.
- **Service-learning projects were aligned with a number of different content areas, although most projects were reported in the social studies and reading/language arts subject areas.** While most projects were associated with social studies and/or reading/language arts, several were done in conjunction with other content areas.

SUBJECT AREAS WITH WHICH SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS WERE ASSOCIATED, AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS (N = 9)



Note. Respondents could select more than one category.

- **Relative to nonparticipating peers, service-learning students were more academically engaged, gained more workforce readiness skills, had more positive civic dispositions, and increased their educational aspirations over time** Scores for service-learning students, shown in the Exhibit below, rose in all areas; scores in workforce readiness, civic dispositions, and one educational aspiration item were statistically significant. Comparison students had statistically significant scores that went in a negative direction for all subscales except for workforce readiness and one educational aspiration item.

**STUDENT DIFFERENCES OVER TIME ON SURVEY
OUTCOMES FOR GRADES 6-12 SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENTS**

Measure	N	Presurvey		Postsurvey		Mean Difference	Cohen's <i>d</i>
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Academic Engagement	294	3.18	.42	3.23	.45	.05	.11
Workforce Readiness	290	3.16	.44	3.26	.45	.10***	.22
Civic Dispositions	288	3.22	.53	3.33	.57	.11**	.20
Aspiration Items							
I am likely to graduate from high school.	280	3.80	.48	3.87	.40	.07	.16
I am likely to continue my education beyond high school.	272	3.72	.56	3.83	.44	.11**	.22
I am likely to graduate from a 2-year college, community college, or technical school.	210	2.67	1.13	2.70	1.20	.03	.03
I am likely to graduate from a 4-year college or university.	245	3.71	.59	3.74	.59	.03	.05

Note. Responses were rated on a 4-point scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

- **Teachers believed that there were several strong impacts on students as a result of service-learning activities, particularly in the areas of increased awareness of community issues, increased leadership skills, and increased ability to collaborate with others.** Other areas that were rated highly included increased engagement in school, increased commitment to working on social or community problems, increased belief in making a difference, increased empathy and desire to help, increased problem-solving skills, and improved ability to express ideas.
- **Both teachers and community partners strongly believed that service-learning activities positively impacted the community.** Teachers and community partners assigned high ratings to all three items, which included the service-learning impact on the community, on organizations within the community, and on community members' views of young people.
- **Students increased their knowledge of issues related to food insufficiency and proper nutrition.** As displayed in the Exhibit below, students perceived that they had the largest knowledge gains in learning about the effects of childhood hunger and understanding why

some people are unable to get enough nutritious food to eat. The lowest knowledge rating was in understanding the importance of local farming.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT OF SERVICE-LEARNING ON STUDENTS

	Grades 6-12		
	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Overall Knowledge	292	3.41	.51
I learned the importance of eating breakfast.	289	3.29	.73
I learned about nutrition.	291	3.37	.65
I learned about the effects of childhood hunger.	291	3.60	.56
I learned why some people are unable to get enough nutritious food to eat.	291	3.57	.56
I learned about the importance of local farming.	277	3.17	.78
I learned how to increase community access to nutritious and affordable food.	281	3.34	.70
I learned about the causes of childhood hunger.	292	3.54	.63

Note. Responses were rated on a 4-point scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree.

- **Community partners viewed the service-learning partnership as highly beneficial for their respective organizations.** Community partners perceived the most positive aspects of the service-learning partnerships as the help given to mobilize the community to act on community issues; assistance given to school or after-school personnel in better understanding community needs and resources; and the creation of a sustained relationship with the school or after-school program with which they had partnered.
- **Teachers' participation in YSA trainings strengthened their ability to implement service-learning programs.** Teachers agreed or strongly agreed with all items related to perceptions of knowledge and skills gained during the trainings. They were more likely to know or understand the role of students in selecting, planning, implementing, and/or evaluating the service-learning project. They also became more familiar with the IPARD/C planning strategies.

NEXT STEPS

YSA is currently gathering interviews with participating educators from all 3 years of the Sodexo Foundation-YSA School Engagement Childhood Hunger Initiative to document their processes and outcomes in a resource module designed to be disseminated to other interested educators around the United States. To facilitate their engagement with the development and promotion of this resource, funding will be awarded to the same teachers/school sites involved in the 2012-2013 initiative.