



STEMESTER OF SERVICE EVALUATION 2010 PUBLIC INFORMATION BRIEF

This Public Information Brief presents selected findings from the July 2010 RMC Research report, based on data collected during the 2009-2010 school year.

THE LEARN AND SERVE STEMESTER GRANT PROGRAM

The 2009-2012 Learn and Serve STEMester grant program provides funding annually to 25 middle schools situated in states with the highest dropout rates. During the 2009-2010 academic year, grant-funded sites were located in nine of these states: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, and Washington. Funding is awarded to public urban and rural middle schools with large disadvantaged populations that typically have the least opportunity to serve. The goal of the STEMester program is to engage middle school students in a semester-long opportunity to address environmental issues related to climate change, green space availability, health effects, and disaster management, coupled with the use of technology to deepen and demonstrate the results of their learning. This program is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service and administered by Youth Service America (YSA).

THE STUDY

YSA contracted with RMC Research Corporation to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of service-learning programs administered by grantees during the 2009-2010 school year. The study was designed to examine student outcomes and discover which program characteristics affect outcomes. Measures for students included academic engagement, school attachment, acquisition of 21st century skills, civic dispositions, and STEM skills. Students were also asked about their educational aspirations, quality of relationships between students and teachers, and the quality of their service-learning programs. Data were collected from 13 grantees using a retrospective pre-/post-survey with students and end-of-year surveys with service-learning teachers. Results are based on surveys of 715 students in Grades 6-8 and 24 teachers.

SELECTED FINDINGS

Students assigned high ratings of quality to their STEMester service-learning program.

Students' responses showed a high level of agreement with all items that addressed characteristics of quality programs. They held very positive perceptions of program outcomes related to showing respect for other people's opinions, having service-learning activities that were meaningful, learning skills that would be useful in the future, and experiencing a linkage between service-learning activities and academic subjects. The lowest ratings by students were for items associated with coming up with ideas for service-learning activities and talking in class about different ways to solve neighborhood or community problems.

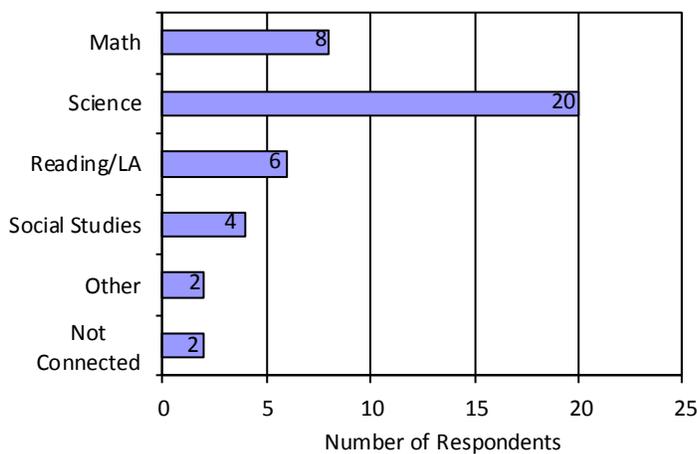
Service-learning program quality made a significant difference in academic engagement.

Moderator variable analysis showed that as the quality of service-learning programs increased, so did students' ratings of academic engagement.

Students identified several areas that were highly impacted by their participation in service-learning. Students reported that the highest areas of impact from service-learning were in work experience, mathematics, reading, writing, jobs, and computers.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, STEMester students contributed a combined total of 29,311 hours of service. According to the Independent Sector, an organization which establishes the value of volunteer time for nonprofit and governmental organizations, the current national average rate is \$20.85 an hour. By this measure, STEMester students contributed \$611,134 worth of time to their respective communities.

Service-learning projects were most frequently associated with science or mathematics content areas. According to teachers, the greatest numbers of projects were in mathematics



and science, consistent with the STEM focus of the program. A smaller number of projects were associated with language arts or social studies. Most teachers reported that service-learning activities lasted six weeks or more with an average of about 15 weeks per classroom. The majority of teachers said that service-learning activities were implemented an average of 3 hours per week.

NEXT STEPS

Results based on survey data collected during the 2010-2011 school year will be available in July 2011. Evaluation activities for the 2010-2011 grantees include a pre-survey administered in December of 2010/January of 2011 and post-survey to be administered in late spring to both service-learning and comparison students. The fall 2010 pre-survey was taken by approximately 1700 service-learning students and 550 comparison students. Post-only surveys will be administered to both teachers and community partners. In addition, to assess student impacts more fully, data is being collected from both grantee and comparison sites on state assessment scores, dropouts, disciplinary records, and attendance rates. A report addendum containing the results of this school data will be issued in September of 2011.