

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to service learning in the public school
 3 system; creating s. 1003.497, F.S.; requiring the
 4 Department of Education to encourage school districts to
 5 initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-
 6 learning programs, activities, and policies in
 7 kindergarten through grade 12; defining service learning;
 8 providing for department assistance to a school district
 9 that elects to implement service-learning activities;
 10 requiring development and adoption of service-learning
 11 courses; authorizing service-learning activities to count
 12 toward high school graduation or academic award
 13 requirements; encouraging school districts to include
 14 service learning as part of courses or activities required
 15 for high school graduation or receipt of academic awards;
 16 providing an effective date.

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 18 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 20 Section 1. Section 1003.497, Florida Statutes, is created
 21 to read:

22 1003.497 Service learning.--

23 (1) The Department of Education shall encourage school
 24 districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize
 25 service-learning programs, activities, and policies in
 26 kindergarten through grade 12. Service learning refers to a
 27 student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy
 28 that engages students in meaningful service activities in their

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29 schools or communities. Service-learning activities are directly
30 tied to academic curricula, standards, and course, district, or
31 state assessments. Service-learning activities foster academic
32 achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career
33 exploration and enable students to apply curriculum content,
34 skills, and behaviors taught in the classroom.

35 (2) Upon request of any school district that elects to
36 implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies,
37 the department shall provide assistance in locating, leveraging,
38 and utilizing available or alternative financial resources that
39 will assist school districts or teachers desiring to receive
40 training and other resources to develop and administer service-
41 learning programs or activities. School districts are encouraged
42 to include kindergarten through grade 12 service-learning
43 programs and activities in proposals they submit to the
44 department under federal entitlement grants and competitive
45 state and federal grants administered through the department.

46 (3) (a) The department shall develop and adopt elective
47 service-learning courses for inclusion in middle and high school
48 course code directories, which will allow additional
49 opportunities for students to engage in service learning. School
50 districts are encouraged to provide support for the use of
51 service learning at any grade level as an instructional strategy
52 to address appropriate areas of state education standards for
53 student knowledge and performance.

54 (b) The hours that high school students devote to course-
55 based service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting
56 community service requirements for high school graduation and

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57 community service requirements for participation in the Florida
58 Bright Futures Scholarship Program. School districts are
59 encouraged to include service learning as part of any course or
60 activity required for high school graduation and to include and
61 accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for
62 academic awards, especially those awards that currently include
63 community service as a criterion or selection factor.

64 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2009.