

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 chooses 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

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 chooses 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.