

By Senator Fasano

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

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

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22 Section 1. Section 1003.497, Florida Statutes, is created
23 to read:

24 1003.497 Service learning.-

25 (1) The Department of Education shall encourage each school
26 district to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize
27 service-learning programs, activities, and policies in
28 kindergarten through grade 12. The term "service learning" means
29 a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning

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

38 (2) Upon the request of a school district that elects to
39 implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies,
40 the department shall provide assistance in locating, leveraging,
41 and using available or alternative financial resources that
42 assist the school district or teachers desiring to receive
43 training and other resources to develop and administer service-
44 learning programs or activities. Each school district is
45 encouraged to include kindergarten through grade 12 service-
46 learning programs and activities in proposals submitted to the
47 department under federal entitlement grants and competitive
48 state and federal grants administered through the department.

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

57 (b) The hours that a high school student devotes to course-
58 based, service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting

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59 community service requirements for high school graduation and
60 community service requirements for participation in the Florida
61 Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Each school district is
62 encouraged to include service learning as part of any course or
63 activity required for high school graduation and to include and
64 accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for
65 academic awards, especially awards that currently include
66 community service as a factor or criterion in the selection
67 process.

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