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An evaluation of a service learning program for at-risk charter high school students

Jessica Hutcheson

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

AN EVALUATION OF A SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM

FOR AT-RISK CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Jessica Hutcheson

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Diana Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Jessica Lauren Hutcheson

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to
and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Diana B. Hiatt-Michael, Ed.D., Chairperson

Jack McManus, Ph.D.

Thomas R. Johnstone, Ed.D.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents Robert, Deborah, Diane, my loving husband Caudley, the amazing blessing God gave to me in the form of a son, Seth Scott Simon, my Little-Big sister Tonica, my little sister Jasmine and my brother Don'te.

Moms and Dad, this dissertation and all of the work that went into its production is my sincere appreciation for your true love, dedication and commitment to raising me up into the woman I am today. Your love has propelled me to live without fear and strive to always do my very best in everything I set out to accomplish. I am truly humbled by all of your sacrifices and appreciate you three for all that you have done to support me. I am truly blessed to have three AMAZING, PHENOMENAL and LOVING parents. Thank you guys for never setting limits, always encouraging me to live big and do what is honorable, noble and right. Although you did not understand this journey, you have been my ROCKS, my prayer warriors and my true supporters. Without each of you, I could not have completed this endeavor. Thank you immensely!

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VITA

Jessica Lauren Hutcheson

EDUCATION

Pepperdine University　　　　　　Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership　2017

Boston University　　　　　　　　M.A. in Criminal Justice 2007

University of California, Riverside　B.A. in Political Science 2003

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Los Angles Education Corps
Principal　　　　　　　　　　　　2011–Present

Children Uniting Nations
Senior Director of Programs　　　　2009–2011

Children Youth and Family Collaborative　2007–2009
Program Director

The Girls Club of Los Angeles　　　2004–2007
Director of Youth Development

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

Youth Development for At-Risk Youth in Charter Schools
Paper presented at charter school consortium conference　　2014

"Designing and Implementing an Effective Adult Learning Training Program for Mentors of Foster Youth: People Uniting Kids"
Paper presented at Pepperdine University Comprehensive Exams-Awarded Honors　　2013

Gender Specific Boys Program in LAUSD
Guest Speaker at National Alliance for Black Educators Conference, Atlanta, GA　2008

ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods case study examined the impact of a mandatory service-learning intervention college preparatory elective class on at-risk students in a Southern California charter high school. At-risk was defined as, disadvantaged high school students from low income families and possessing poor health, cognitive problems and/or behavior issues that might hinder educational attainment. The embedded design analyzed two years of archival data from four student cohorts ($n = 133$), all of whom had the same instructor, who was trained to lead the class. The study included a quantitative survey taken by the students at the program's beginning and end, demographic information, students' GPAs, attendance records, and reflective journals and notes from the teacher of the class.

The examination of academic achievements of participating students found that student participants increased their school attendance and overall GPA following completion of the class. Including student voice in instructional activities and reflection in writing journals contributed to developing the students' understanding of leadership capabilities. These leadership capabilities included their change in self-awareness that they and their friends could assume positive leadership roles. Following the class, female students significantly increased their participation in clubs and organizations on campus.

During data analyses, the data coders noted that over the course of the study, the instructor became more focused and included more activities into the class. In year one more than 50% of students were unable to participate in the service-learning project (SLP) prior to the semester's completion. In year two, the program instructor decreased the time spent on formal curriculum to allow students the opportunity to increase their time spent working on actual SLP. Since then, the service-learning program has been embraced by students and administration as

these at-risk students build relationships with their peers and identify student leaders based on their experiences in the ACT program.

Recommendations include that the SLP increase hands-on activities and seek formal opportunities to engage students in diverse communities. In that process, the SLP should garner student input in the implementation and design of the SLP to ensure that the curriculum, activities and projects remain relevant to at-risk SLP students.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background of the Study

High schools have the responsibility of successfully preparing students for life beyond their confines. This purpose comprises successful academic attainment of a secondary degree and skills to compete in the nation's workforce. Conversely, by today's standards, schools are now tasked with providing increased academic rigor through higher education, leadership development and career exploration opportunities outside of the school setting so that students can compete in a global economy (Conley, 2002). In 1990, the California Department of Education created a funding stream with the Corporation for National and Community Service. This initiative provided funding to schools to implement SLPs as an instructional method. The success of these programs prompted new program innovations and various other instructional methods. Unfortunately, this funding was eliminated in 2012 and school districts and schools were left to determine creative ways to continue offering service-learning programming on their campuses (California Department of Education, 1999).

Recently, schools have begun to take a special interest in supportive curriculum and programs that aimed to prepare students for post-high school expectations. Many schools across the United States have begun to institute service-learning requirements as a mandatory part of the high school graduation requirement. The Corporation for National and Community Service (2004) reported that 20% of elementary, 25% of middle and 35% of high schools had some form of a service-learning program (SLP) included in their school curricula (Klelsmer, 2011). According to Skinner and Champman (2000), more than 64% of K–12 schools are actively arranging the inclusion of SLPs in their schools. This is a vast increase since 1979 when 15% of K–12 schools reported service-learning or community service programming in these schools.

Service-learning is an instructional practice in which students participate in learning about themselves as leaders through continuous self-reflection and executing community projects that are planned to both foster curriculum-related and course-related learning, while providing service in selected societal settings (National and Community Service Act of 1990; Service-learning Act of 1993). Schools have quickly come to realize that merely making the requirement mandatory does not facilitate the successful completion of the service-learning requirement. School districts have adopted learning standards, much like standards in academic core classes, which outline the specific focus and objectives for SLPs. The growing popularity of the experiential pedagogical strategy has also led to a rapid increase in significant research that seeks to explain and understand service-learning as a pedagogical strategy and its impact on K–12 students.

Thus, many schools have purchased service-learning curriculum that is taught within the regular school day schedule and meets the educational learning standards outlined by the California Department of Education. However, this research is limited and does not discuss the impact of SLPs on high school students, especially those students who are at risk of dropping out of school or who attend alternative education schools. Researchers have investigated questions such as these: Do these programs have positive long term outcomes for high school students? Are student acquiring the skills needed to become successful leaders in their communities? What other mandatory coursework is being impacted so that mandatory service-learning classes can be taught?

Many SLPs have now become a mandatory requirement for high school graduation. Over 64% of all public schools and 83% of public high schools now organize various forms of service learning for students (Billig, 2000). Utilizing service-learning as an educational strategy

was introduced to improve student academic performance, enhance community involvement and build students' civic commitment. This strategy interlinked service with academic activities and core curriculum and it has proved to be an effective instructional practice in countless K–12 academic settings (Herczog, 2014). Furthermore, research of SLPs has suggested the potential of positively connected SLPs in schools to help in closing the achievement gap for low socioeconomic students, students of color and other students with disadvantaged backgrounds (Nelson, 2008).

Schools have made various efforts to implement these programs with limited financial resources and staff. Today, most administrators are seeking the support of nonprofits and other community agencies that would support the implementation and monitoring of SLPs within their school. Further research is needed to support whether effective SLPs have the ablity to decrease the dropout rates among at-risk high school youth. In addition, implementing SLPs in alternative charter high schools is a relatively unexplored phenomenon, especially at schools that service underserved youth in South Los Angeles.

Youth Academy High School (a pseudonym) in South Los Angeles was selected as a site to pilot the Acts of Caring Teens (ACT) Service-learning program. The service-learning intervention was designed to augment mandatory academic coursework with service-learning experiences in lieu of elective courses. The service-learning participants engaged in activities designed to increase their social awareness, work-related skills and social relationships, as well as to provide meaningful connections to the school.

Research Problem

Research suggests that enriched service-learning experiences such as the ACT Service-learning program have potential to increase the likelihood that the students will internalize

positive values associated with learning and thereby increase the probability that they will remain in school and potentially graduate from high school. Yet it has not been clearly shown that the program's implementation meets the needs of this small charter school by providing low-cost professional development and packaged service-learning curriculum that supports the schools. In addition, very few efforts have been made to implement 21st century learning curriculum to enhance students' growth, development, in preparation for life after high school and becoming productive members of society. Without evidence of the program's benefits and lack of impact, the program might not be improved and might not be continued, which would be unfortunate. Underserved students in low income urban areas have few opportunities to participate in positive leadership roles in their schools or communities. In addition, underserved students are rarely afforded the chance to develop or enhance their leadership skills and in turn are not equipped to affect changes in their immediate communities. Over time, this can cause a lack of leadership and real-world skills in underserved communities.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was examine the impact of a mandatory service-learning intervention elective class on at-risk students by (a) examining the academic achievements of participating ACT students considered at-risk, (b) identifying the practices perceived as contributing to effectively developing the students' leadership abilities by students and teachers and (c) examining the overall effectiveness of this service-learning program in supporting the leadership development of at-risk high school students. Data was collected from students and the program's non-credentialed teacher facilitator. This collected data provided a depth of information that determined if the service-learning program met its program goals and assisted at-risk students in academic and leadership development.

The goal was to investigate how at-risk student participants were affected by their service-learning experiences as taught in a mandatory elective course in their high school. The overarching goal was to assist Youth Academy High School (YAHS) in avoiding a waste of financial resources in programming that may not be meeting the essential needs of its students and to modify the existing program (if needed) to enhance the positive outcomes for at-risk student participants at YAHS.

Significance of the Study

Historically, research on factors that inhibit a student from succeeding academically and becoming at risk of dropping out of high school focused on economic disadvantage, socioeconomic issues and race or ethnicity. Today, researchers and policy-makers have begun to recognize the importance of including social and academic programs that enhance the educational experience for at-risk students and thus promote the replication of programs that promote social emotional well-being, academic growth and reduce the factors that contribute to students' failure to complete high school.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the existing body of literature regarding SLPs among other instructional strategies and programming that support efforts to reduce the number of students who are at-risk of dropping out and promote positive leadership skill building among the at-risk student population. The school has contributed greatly to its local community by supporting former dropout students and students at risk of dropping out of high school. This research is intended to determine what essential elements of a high-quality service-learning program contributed the most meaning, relevance and real-world opportunities for student participants.

Little research has been conducted that includes the voices of at-risk students regarding their growth and experience (Poplin & Weeres, 1992). The results of this study may help other students who are considered at-risk to know that in spite of the challenges they may face, with access to quality SLPs, they can become leaders in their own communities and effect positive change. Educators in charter schools may gain insights into the actual lives of at-risk students and be able to provide more inclusive, personalized and comprehensive learning environments in their classrooms. This study may provide insights for key stakeholders in the charter school and district. Stakeholders may be able to use findings from this study in their decision making regarding the future allocation of school resources, school programming and teacher professional development. Other stakeholders may gain insight and knowledge needed to advocate for systematic wide scale changes within the education system that will positively impact the lives of at-risk students and truly prepare them for the demands of the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework

This study applied a component of Stufflebeam's model of program evaluation as a guide in assessing the effectiveness of the service-learning program for at-risk youth (see Figure 1). This comprehensive framework was created in the 1960s to improve the accountability of school programs, especially those that were implemented in inner city schools in the United States (Stufflebeam, Madaus, & Kellaghan, 2000). In particular, the study was framed utilizing Stufflebeam's input evaluation framework. This method is often used to assist in prescribing a program, project or other intervention by which to improve services to intended beneficiaries. An input evaluation assesses (a) the proposed program, project or service strategy and the associated work plan and (b) the budget for carrying out the effort (Stufflebeam et al., 2000). The researcher focused on reviewing the program in the context of Billig's key indicators for

quality service-learning (Billig, 2008). The researcher investigated two groups of stakeholders throughout the course of this study. The students and the non-credentialed teachers of the SLP.

Figure 1. Components of effective service-learning programs.

Research Questions

- What differences, if any, exist between students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Service-learning Student Survey by item and by gender?

- What differences, if any, are there in students' academic performance at the start of the ACT program and the completion of the program?

- How are Billig's components of an effective service-learning program present in the ACT's program?

- How do students assume leadership in their service-learning assignment?

- How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of and the completion of their service-learning experiences?

Key Definitions

- ACT: Pseudonym used for the service learning program studied in this in this research.

- At-risk students: "Children who have any type of disadvantage that might hinder them in their education. These students may be considered disadvantaged because of low income, poor health, cognitive problems and/or behavior issues" (Foster & Wellman, 2009, p. 122).

- Attendance: The daily record of students presence at school as determined by their attendance to 1st period (where attendance is taken) each day throughout the duration of a 16-week semester.

- Beneficiary: The recipients of the service-learning project performed by students involved in the service-learning program.

- Charter school administrator: A California certificated administrator who has signing authority and holds a significant leadership role in the charter school management and operations.

- Charter school: A public school that may provide instruction in any combination of grades (kindergarten through Grade 12). Parents, teachers or community members may initiate a charter petition, which is typically presented to and approved by a local school district governing board. The law grants chartering authority to county boards of education and the State Board of Education, under certain circumstances, such as the appeal of a petition's denial by a school district governing board or the direct approval of

countywide benefit or statewide benefit charter schools (California Department of Education, 2016).

- Experiential learning: "A recursive cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting, they can increase their learning power" (Kolb, 2009, p. 297).

- Experiential learning: A "process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

- GPA: A student's cumulative grade point average on a 4-point scale as determined by final grades at the end of each 16-week semester. This GPA is weighted and based on all courses taken by the student in each of the 16-week semesters.

- Non-credentialed teacher: A teacher hired at a charter school who has not completed any of the basic California teacher credentialing requirements to be a state-sanctioned certificated single subject or multiple subject teacher in a self-contained classroom.

- Service-learning: A pedagogy intended to enrich a student's world, "providing new experiences and challenges. Through planning, service and reflection, students are encouraged to examine the tasks at hand, to develop plans for dealing with the obvious and unexpected, to take action and to consider how these actions are understandable given other academic and life knowledge. Service-learning is neither passive nor solitary. Rather, students deal with real-life activities in naturalistic settings. It is these features that make service-learning unique compared to most other types of learning" (Hecht, 2003, p. 27–28).

- Student: High school (9th–12th grade) student participants in the ACT program or same-aged students within the control group.

- Traditional public school: A centralized and bureaucratic public school institution governed by school districts. The focus is on standards-based education achievement in core subject matter areas for grade levels K–12.

- Youth leadership development: (a) The youth's learned ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of other people and show the way by example (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998); and (b) the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals and have the confidence to carry them out. This includes the ability to identify and use community resources, not only to live independently, but also to establish support networks to participate in community life and to create positive social change (Adolescent Employment Readiness Center, n.d.).

Limitations

Limitations identify potential weaknesses in a study (Creswell, 2003). The following are the recognized limitations of this study:

- The population studied is limited to one charter high school. Therefore, the study is limited to the specific characteristics of the South Los Angeles area and the sample size is relatively small. Generalizations regarding the population are precluded.

- Some of the data collection methods are based on the individual participants' perceptions of the service-learning program and their abilities, which could therefore be biased or exaggerated.

- At-risk students tend to be highly transitory throughout the duration of their education. Because of this, some of the samples were excluded, because students were unable to complete the entire SLP course.

- The study focuses on short-term effects of the SLP program. Students studied are currently in high school. The SLP's long term effects cannot be determined for students who completed the program and left the charter school. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized beyond the current student population.

- Survey design: some questions/vocabulary may have been confusing or too advanced for students.

- Survey design: of the 22 questions, 20 were designed so that a positive response would be *agree* or *strongly agree* (e.g., I have a lot of be proud of in my life). But 2 were inverted, so that positive responses would be *disagree* or *strongly disagree* (e.g., I feel my life is out of my control). Students may have not realized this distinction or ignored it or been confused by the switch.

- Level of effort in completing surveys may have varied.

- Sample size: small number of matched survey pairs (28) renders it virtually impossible to find statistically significant differences in this group of data.

- Sample size: the smaller the sample size, the larger the variance in responses. This means that even results that appear to be statistically significant may simply be caused by random variation in responses.

- Selection bias: the 28 students who completed both surveys may be inherently different in some systematic way from the other students for whom we do not have complete data. They may be more motivated or better students in general or had a different teacher, etc.

- Unmatched sample analysis: the researcher cannot draw reliable conclusions about anything other than average responses, because she cannot eliminate any other potential sources of "noise" in the data.

Delimitations

The following are the delimitations for this study:

- The study is limited to one charter high school in South Los Angeles and is using a pilot curriculum SLP. The findings of this study may not represent other charter schools servicing at-risk students using SLPs.

- The study is limited to a small target population of pre-selected students programmed into the mandatory service-learning class

- The program duration is limited to the 16 weeks in a single school semester, as mandated by the charter school academic calendar.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for this study:

- SLPs promote the development of healthy skills that are essential for adolescent development and those skills acquired are beneficial to both the student and society at large.

- All the participants in this study would answer the interview, focus group and survey questions honestly and without coercion.

- The participants would feel comfortable with the researcher and would be honest and candid in their feedback and participation.

- The tools used to capture the data related to this study would be accurate and valid.

- Students and the teachers who participated in this study would respond truthfully and accurately regarding the practices used in the SLP.

- An adequate number of students were enrolled in the SLP over the course of the study period to generate a sample size that would enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings.

- The instruments used to gather data for this study would be reliable and valid.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

The primary focus of this literature review was to explore the current research that relates to SLPs in high schools and their effectiveness on at-risk high school students. To support this objective, the literature review discusses the history and definition of service-learning, effectiveness of SLPs, theoretical and pedagogical frameworks related to SLPs, high school dropouts, benefits for students in SLPs, leadership development opportunities in SLPs, the importance of student choice and perspective in planning of service-learning projects, the history and benefits of charter schools and the Stufflebeam model of evaluation.

The History of Service-learning

The roots of service-learning have a long and rich history that is interlinked with various cultures and traditions. As a tradition, generations of Americans have willingly served both at home and overseas, especially during times of nation-wide need. People freely have given of their time, resources and other means in support of others (Terry, 2008). As described in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Service-Learning Guidebook, the 1800s were an influential period of time in America's history of service-learning. This period gave birth to a host of private and public groups such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross and the Community Chest, all with the interest of actively providing service and goods to its citizens. During the era that followed, the school of thought shifted and organizations were created under the premise of creating non-military programs, such as those lead by Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps. These efforts were an attempt to help America recover from the Great Depression. Young men without jobs were called to service and supported the building of bridges, parks and many national landmarks in America (Terry, 2008; Wade, 1997). Following this period, the focus shifted to the creation of various other groups in the 20th century, such as

the Junior League of America, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, United

Way and the Girls and the Boy Scouts of America (Los Angeles County Office of Education,

2004).

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), in 1966 the

term *service-learning* was introduced to refer to a project that bridged students and faculty of

Oak Ridge Associated Universities with local partnerships in the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Following this period, in 1969, the term was used at a conference hosted by the Southern

Regional Education Board to represent a pedagogical practice, as opposed to a practice in

activism, describing service-learning as "the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human

needs in combination with conscious educational growth" (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999, p. 4).

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed into law the National and Community Service Act,

which authorized grant funding for schools to support service-learning projects in primary,

secondary and collegiate schools. Following this period, President Bill Clinton formalized the

government's service branch through the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

From this effort spawned the AmeriCorps program and the Corporation for National and

Community Service. What had been previously known as the Senior Corps now became the

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) and Learn and Serve America. Each of these service

programs provided direct funding and support to K–12 educational institutions with SLPs. In

2001, the education system changed dramatically with the introduction of the No Child Left

Behind Act, which is described as follows:

> First, it represents a more systemic approach to achieving reform and improvement, tying
>
> together a variety of requirements and incentives in areas ranging from student testing,
>
> school safety, and reading instruction to professional development for teachers and

technical assistance for low-performing schools. Second, it significantly raises the stakes—for states, districts, and schools—for failure to make steady, demonstrable progress toward improving student achievement. (Wanker, 2006, p. 58)

Included in this act was the inclusion of service-learning as a recognized component of academic programs that would meet Federal demands. In a 1999 study, it was noted that 83% of secondary schools and 64% of all K–12 schools were actively participating in community service activities for their students (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). In 2001, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated that more than13 million students in the United States grades K–12 were involved in service and service-learning with their schools.

The development of service-learning initiatives has been accompanied by a renewed interest in progressive education and in the philosophy of John Dewey. His writings address the active nature of understanding and the benefits of and conditions for participatory democracy. His work provides an early theoretical foundation for a pedagogy that involves students cooperatively engaging with actual social problems (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Service-learning is a philosophy of "human growth and purpose, a social vision, an approach to community and a way of knowing" (Kendall, 1990, p. 20).

According to Dewey, service-learning is a pedagogy that is:

grounded in experience as a basis for learning and on the centrality and intentionality of reflection designed to enable learning to occur. This pedagogy has expanded the work of researchers and theorists on learning, besides Dewey, including Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, Donald Schon, and David Kolb, who believe that we learn through combinations of action and reflection (Jacoby, 2003, p. 242).

Billig (2000) cited a report issued by the NCES in 1999, showing the growing popularity of SLPs across the country in high school, with 64% of all public schools and 83% of public high schools organizing some form of community service for their students. A third of all schools and half of public high schools provided service-learning programs (Billig, 2000).

Increasingly, educational institutions across the United States have expanded their school curricula to include service-learning pedagogical practices. The Corporation for National and Community Service (2004) reported that 20% of elementary, 25% of middle and 35% of high schools had some form of a service-learning program included in their school curricula (Klelsmer, 2011). According to Skinner and Champman (2000), more than 64% of K–12 schools are actively arranging the inclusion of SLPs in their schools. This is a vast increase since 1979 in which 15% of K–12 schools reported service-learning or community service programming in these schools.

The presence of SLPs in U.S. schools has shifted pedagogical practices and helped support student engagement in schools. In a study by Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), 75% of students who participated in SLPs became more interested in their other school courses, and students found their courses more interesting. In addition, 64% of the students reported that they felt that service-learning programming could decrease the dropout rate among high school students. Furthermore, research of SLPs has suggested that there is the potential of positively connecting SLPs in schools with closing the achievement gap for low socioeconomic students, students of color and other students with disadvantaged backgrounds (Nelson, 2008).

SLPs have grown in popularity in the as a viable version of experiential learning, one that is applicable from kindergarten to graduate school (Roberts, 1997). Billig (2002) reported a yearly increasing number of academic institutions adopting SLPs and implementing them as part

of educational reform that supports student's educational goals and social development. New

national curriculum standards have caused schools to place a high priority in helping students

obtain academic and social proficiency in preparation for the 21st century (Wanker & Christie,

2005). Service-learning offers schools the opportunity to integrate students' real-world

experiences with academic curriculum in order to support their academic and social

development. In addition, within the last 10 years:

> legislative initiatives have responded to and galvanized a growing national emphasis on
>
> increasing students' involvement with their local communities and linking this service to
>
> academic study through service-learning. Examples of initiatives that have mandated
>
> support for service-learning activities in elementary and secondary schools include the
>
> National and Community Service Act of 1990, the Serve America program, the National
>
> and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 and the Learn and Serve America program.
>
> (Kleiner, 2000, p. 3)

Teachers and administrators alike have noticed the profound effect service-learning has

on students' overall school achievement. According to Astin (2000):

> Service-learning represents a potentially powerful form of pedagogy because it provides
>
> a means of linking the academic with the practical. The more abstract and theoretical
>
> material of the traditional classroom takes on new meaning as the student 'tries it out,' so
>
> to speak, in the 'real' world. (p. 1)

Today, many high schools are integrating SLPs as a required course for student graduation.

Metz (2003) found that schools that mandate 40 hours of service as a graduation requirement had

a significant increase in students who reported that the service requirement strengthened their

relationship with other students, the school and the community.

Service-learning Versus Community Service

One of the most commonly used definitions of service-learning is by the Corporation for National Service, which defines service-learning as a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that meets the following criteria:

- Is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;

- Is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education or community-service program and with the community;

- Helps foster civic responsibility;

- Is integrated into and enhances the (core) academic curriculum of the students or the educational components of the community-service program in which the participants are enrolled; and

- Provides structured time for the students or participants to reflect on the service experience (Billig, 2000).

While many researchers and practitioners disagree on the exact definition of service-learning, most have come to a common agreement on the innate differences between service-learning and community service. Service-learning provides benefits to the community and increased knowledge or skills to the participants serving, whereas, community service is only of benefit to the community. In addition, there is the belief that service-learning extends beyond community service, because it has a potential to improve the participants' academic and social competencies (Billig, 2000; Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2001; Wade & Saxe, 1996; Yamauchi, 2006). According to Pritchard (2002), statistics on SLPs are possibly skewed and

misleading based on these differing definitions and practices. The pedagogy of service-learning is not standardized and lacks appropriate measures for student outcomes and impact. Due to these facts, Pritchard argued that service-learning needs to develop distinct criteria that distinguish service-learning from community service (Pritchard, 2002).

Kendall noted that, as of the year 1990 there existed 147 various definitions of service-learning in the literature (as cited in Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 3). Although researchers cannot seem to agree on one central definition for service-learning, most agree that a distinction must be made between service-learning and volunteering. The term *community service* is more commonly used than service-learning and covers a broader range of service activities (Furco, 2002). Supporters of service-learning often resist the term *community service* when describing service-learning, for three reasons. First, they believe that community service describes a social obligation and a moral superiority over those performing the activity. Secondly, community service is often linked to convicts or disciplinary mandates for performing a service to pay back a debt to society. Lastly, supporters of service-learning resist the term because they believe it describes activities in which a person gains personal gratification but no learning occurs (Furco, 2002). Conversely, service-learning is said to be a mutually beneficial activity for both the learner and the community. More specifically service-learning is distinguished by a set of explicit criteria:

1. Clearly identified learning objectives

2. Student involvement in selecting or designing the service activity

3. A theoretical base

4. Integration of the service activity with academic curriculum

5. Opportunities for student reflection (Furco, 2002)

Over the years, the necessity of effectively defining service-learning universally has become a primary focus for many researchers. According to the Cooperation for National and Community Service, service-learning is defined as any method of teaching and learning that connects classroom lessons with meaningful service to the community (Dymond, 2008). A crucial element of this definition is the relationship between the school's service-learning curriculum and the service activity.

Another competing definition of service-learning "is the principle that community service can be connected to classroom learning in such a way that service is more informed by theoretical and conceptual understanding and learning is more informed by the realities of the world" (Dana & Dornslife, 2014, para. 2). Here, service-learning is related to the students' realities that they experience in the real world setting:

> 97% of students who participated in service-learning activities participate in a formal process of reflection on their service/civic engagement experiences. The most frequent ways that students reflected on their service/civic experience, conducting classroom presentations, participating in regular class discussions and perform daily and/or weekly journaling assignments. (Campus Compact, 2004, p. 2)

According to Felten (2011), the range of definitions for service-learning has merged to include several core characteristics. Service-learning experiences:

- Advance learning goals (academic and civic) and community purposes

- Involve reciprocal collaboration among students, faculty and staff, community members, community organizations and educational institutions to fulfill shared objectives and build capacity among all partners

- Include critical reflection and assessment processes that are intentionally designed and

  facilitated to produce and document meaningful learning and service outcomes (Felten,

  2011).

    According to the literature, there is no consensus among researchers or practitioners

regarding the specifics of the pedagogy related to service-learning. Table 1 represents the

fundamental pedagogy behind both service-learning and community service.

Table 1

Pedagogy Behind Both Service-learning and Community Service

Characteristics	Community service	Service-learning
Primary intended beneficiary	Recipient	Recipient and provider
Primary focus	Service	Service and learning
Intended educational purposes	Civic and ethical development	Academic and civic development
Integration with curriculum	Peripheral	Integrated
Nature of service activity	Based on a social cause	Based on an academic discipline

Note. Adapted from *Service-Learning: The Essence of the Pedagogy*, p. 24, by Furco, 2002, Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Effective Service-learning Programs

    According to Pearson (2002), the following are components of effective SLPs:

- Flexible use of time, such as block scheduling. Flexible use of time, in some cases

  block scheduling, provides the time necessary to explore a project or visit a

  community to gather data.

- Opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life situations, problems or projects. The opportunity to apply classroom academic skills to a problem, situation or project within the school community or local community allows students to develop a deeper connection with the lessons they are learning. Simply providing information for students to ingest is not as powerful as allowing them the opportunity to use or apply the information in a tangible or contextual way.

- Address local community. The community or school community is the partner or audience that will receive the benefit of the service-learning project or activity. Although a service-learning project or activity should be developed to help those in the community, it can also be designed to focus on the school community, such as other students, a group of teachers or parents.

- Include objectives for developing civic skills and competencies. Contributing to the common good is the essence of service-learning. The development of students' civic skills and competencies is a natural outcome of most service-learning activities and projects.

- Allow students to play a role in planning curricular activities. Allowing students to be involved in designing the learning process empowers them and encourages the highest level of student interest and input. Service-learning activities and methodology engage students in the development or planning process.

- Allow teachers to use a variety of learning materials other than textbooks. This flexibility allows educators to reach out to other sources such as trade books, manuals

and material gathered from a class visit to a museum, animal shelter, business, community center, etc.

- Allow teachers to use alternative teaching strategies. Increasing the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning and the use of Socratic discourse to encourage students to discuss and think through a problem are highly successful teaching strategies seen in service-learning.

- Instructional methods include project-based learning. Project-based learning is the instructional process that drives a service-learning activity, project or method of teaching. Indication of this within a model's design shows strong signs of compatibility. Also, the use of applied learning or contextual learning is a promising sign of compatibility.

- Allow teachers to use interdisciplinary team teaching and experiential learning methods in teaching. Interdisciplinary team teaching aligns math, science, social studies, English language arts and other studies around a common theme or project. Interdisciplinary teaching allows teachers to plan units of study together, bringing a sense of continuity and connectivity to the student's learning experiences.

- Alternative assessments such as rubrics provide guidelines for the level of quality in a student's work. Developing rubrics with students can enrich the learning process. When a teacher consults with students during the development of a rubric, they discuss and learn what acceptable quality among their peers is. They develop a clear understanding of what an *A* looks like. Portfolios allow students to showcase exceptional work through their school career. Students can store exemplary work created during a project, such as letters written to elected officials, poetry,

photographs, examples of applied math and documents written, edited and produced using computer software. Presentations and projects provide opportunities to polish skills needed in everyday life.

- Address school or district policies regarding students' ability to leave school for outside learning activities. School and district policies must be considered regarding students' ability to leave school grounds. This was the most difficult question on the survey for school models and schools to answer.

- Provide time for student reflection through journal entries, classroom dialogue or discussion. Reflection seals in the learning that happens during an activity or project. It allows teachers to discover what students know and facilitates honest discussion about what was learned, how things could have been improved, what went well, where details could have been added or deleted and other significant insights.

Service-learning Theoretical and Pedagogical Frameworks

Research by Dwight Giles and Janet Eyler discussed that it is imperative to develop a theoretical framework for service-learning in order to effectively build the body of knowledge surrounding service-learning. A theoretical framework established a solid research base for service-learning and created a guide for effective pedagogical practices (Giles, 1994). Service-learning offers students a powerful alternative that supports student learning by allowing them the opportunity to master and gain understanding of concepts, while simultaneously contributing to their communities (Billig, 2000). One of the theoretical perspectives that support service-learning is experiential learning. John Dewey is one popular theorist who has been given credit for developing the service-learning theory. Those who ascribe to viewing service-learning from an experiential learning perspective believe that students derive unique understanding of the

world from reflection of their personal lived experiences (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Utilizing this approach, teachers are better able to prepare lessons that support students in accessing knowledge based on their individual experiences. This in return creates a more in-depth meaning and understanding for the student (Dewey, 1938).

Embedded within Dewey's (1938) theory is the principle of morality. Dewey's belief was that in education nothing is more important or useful in the educational setting than public opinion and social order, both of which can only be truly observed and understood in the context of real world exposure and application. Dewey believed that children should be given many opportunities to form judgments and exercise those judgments through opportunities to act. Only then could children create habits of relating their ideas to their experiences and inevitably learn. Overall, Dewey's experiential educational theory derives from the ultimate belief that student's experiences are what it takes to derive value from their education and that their life experiences are only a result of student's interaction with the environment. Dewey carefully describes student learning that is not a direct result of the lesson being taught as *collateral learning and* according to his theory of service-learning, this is the foundation of student learning (Carver, 1997). Dewy firmly believed that there exists an interdependency between the learner and the environment, in that learning cannot occur if it does not exist within the environment (Dewey, 1938; Hutchinson, 2000).

Dewey has also been credited for his theories on contextual learning. This idea stems from the premise that learning does not happen in a "vacuum, but it should somehow be connected to real world attributes to make sense to the learners" (Westera, 2001, p. 201). Connecting learning in the class setting to real-life situations creates meaning and value for the learner and perpetuates the learning process. Today, contextual learning is a common practice in

a variety of settings, such as at social service agencies, in action learning, internships, externships and other training programs (McGill & Beaty, 2001). Dewey's ideas on contextual learning are important because they frame the pedagogical practices of service-learning, placing real-world situation settings in a high place of importance for authentic student learning.

Kolb, a 20th-century educational philosopher, had a theoretical model that closely ties into the experiential model of Dewey and added that "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Kolb expanded on an experiential model of learning and developed a cyclical model of cognitive development by which the learner begins with a concrete experience, moves to reflective observation, on to abstract conceptualization and finally moves to active experimentation (Dunn, 1997; Kolb, 1984). In the classroom, Kolb's experiential learning theory is often employed, utilizing a host of instructional practices that encompass Kolb's model. Students might be asked to share past experiences as a part of concrete experience. Journals and debrief reflections are generally used for reflective observations. Active experimentation can be done utilizing role plays, scenarios and mock activities. Abstract conceptualization often can be demonstrated by using resource materials, readings and lectures that coincide with the topic. As a theoretical construct, Kolb's model of the experiential learning process is important for understanding how students are affected by their learning experience as they move through the different stages. The essential key is that students are active participants in their own learning. In particular, examination of students' own reflections as a method of learning based on real world contextual experiences, helps to provide a rich understanding of the impact the service-learning has on students' growth and development from the perspective of the student.

Theorist Kurt Lewin has also been credited for his contribution to field of service-learning. According to Dunn (1997), the theoretical foundations for experiential learning were laid down in 1947 by Lewin. Lewin stated people's choice to create social change was a product of prior exposure and discussion. Verbalization with a group facilitator supported the sustainability of the change over the course of time. Lewin's experiential learning model comprised of four basic steps that operate on a continuum (see Figure 2).
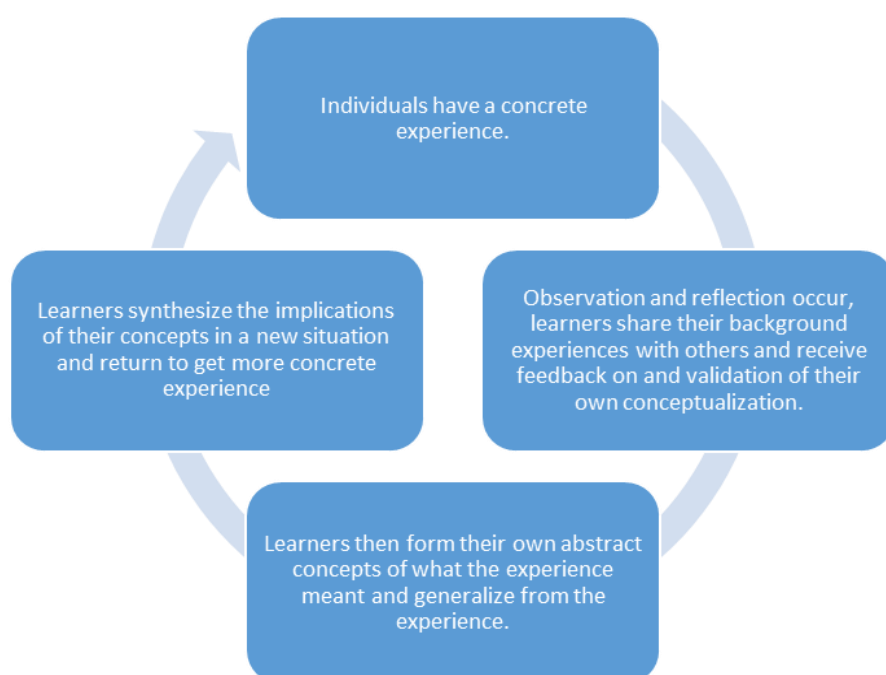
Figure 2. Four basic steps of Lewin's experiential learning model.

Another theoretical approach to service-learning was developed by Kurt Hahn. Hahn is best known for developing programs such as Outward Bound. Teachers who ascribe to the pedagogical approach based on Hahn's theory facilitate their service-learning program in a way that allows students to freely experience the curriculum and place high importance on the debriefing or processing of the activities. Processing an experience involves interpreting what

happened and reflecting on potential lessons of the experiences. This influences the nature and intensity of impact on the student (Carver, 1997).

Creswell (2009) discussed experiential learning and explains it in terms of the lens that supports the viewpoint in which people look at things, thus formalizing their ideas and transmitting a call to action. In the end, people rely on their real-world experiences to create important questions and it is these questions they form that create change (Creswell, 2009).

A common thread in many of these theoretical perspectives is the link between social justice and the education of youth. Most of the theoretical frameworks have the underlying goal of moving towards a more democratic society, where student's service-learning experiences not only serve as learning for the individual, but create awareness of abstract concepts and awareness of social structures. In the end, the experiences and learning will hopefully cause the learner to take action to change social structures that would better serve humanity.

High School Drop Outs

More than one million students drop out of school each year. This has lasting negative impact on outcomes for the individuals, their families, their communities and society at large which assumes a burden as it loses the benefit of an engaged and productive citizen. In addition, 75% of those in the state correctional system are previous high school dropouts. Other correlated expenses include loss of job attainment, the rising rate of single parent households and the poor lifestyle choices made by former dropouts that contribute to the rising rate in health costs (Nelson, 2008). In a study by Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), it was found that 75% of students who participated in SLPs became more interested in their other school courses. In addition, 64% of the students reported that they felt that service-learning programming could positively decrease the dropout rate among high school students. Further research linked SLPs

to closing the achievement gap for students of low socioeconomic status, students of color and other students with disadvantaged backgrounds (Nelson, 2008).

Service-learning in Schools

In 1999 over 56% of students Grades 6–12 in the United States were actively participating in some form of service-learning within their schools (Furco, 2002). In 2002 schools, in the United States were called to action with increased accountability towards promoting student achievement under No Child Left Behind. With this new legislation, schools became the leaders in instituting new and creative ways of learning, including service-learning, as a part of their instructional practices. In addition, the California Department of Education insisted that school districts encourage students to become more involved in community service opportunities and most instituted a community service graduation requirement. Many studies have concluded that both voluntary and required service-learning experience for high school youth promote civic responsibility in adulthood with increased voting and increased likelihood of volunteering in college and beyond. For example, in a study by Davila and Mora (2007), it was stated that young men were 29% more likely to complete college in four years if they had engaged in required service-learning during high school.

In contrast, schools also need to be very careful to consider their diverse student populations when mandating service-learning in schools. One study found that girls had more positive attitudes than boys regarding service-learning (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Wulsin, 2008). In addition, White students were more positive about service-learning than Black students. The study was careful to mention that these marginalized student groups that felt less favorable were discussing their feelings towards the mandated requirement, but when it came to their individual feelings and intentions regarding service-learning, they were shown to be more favorable. Thus,

the conclusion made was that when students had more freedom and flexibility within their service-learning requirement, this would increase the favorability and positive volunteer service-learning experience (Covitt, 2007).

According to Zaff (2010), there is significant evidence that shows service-learning experiences during a youth's high school years will lead to engaged citizenship. In addition, service learning also leads to positive youth development that far outweighs the liabilities of offering such programs. Thus, it is critical for schools, communities and parents to invest in opportunities that promote service learning as the benefits for youth far outweigh the actual costs of programming.

Service-learning as a Method of Teaching

Linking service-learning curriculum to state teaching standards is an essential alignment to creating credibility in SLPs. Service-learning in the curriculum can be implemented in several ways (Enos & Troppe, 1996). Within a service-learning course, learning will go beyond the course subject matter to include capacity building, teamwork, leadership, communication and citizenship (Faculty Service-Learning Toolkit, 2007).

Dewey founded the basic theory that service-learning was the interaction of knowledge and skills, coupled with experience and that this was the basis for learning (Ehrlich, 1996). Service-learning, as a pedagogical strategy, combines community service with reflection and debriefing opportunities before, during and after the service. Service-learning allows teachers to refrain from utilizing more traditional lecture-based activities and assignments. The key is making sure that the service-learning experiences are substantial enough to replace traditional term papers and exams (Spivey, 2005).

High Quality Service-learning Programs in High Schools

Maryland was one of the first states in the nation to require high school students to engage in service-learning activities as a condition of graduation. Each of the 24 school districts in Maryland implements the service-learning graduation requirement differently, because they tailor the specifics of their program to their local communities.

According to Billig's (2006) *K–12 service-learning standards for quality practice*, the following five indicators can provide evidence of a high quality service-learning program that includes student perspectives in planning, implementing and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults:

1. Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

2. Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experiences.

3. Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.

4. Service-learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.

5. Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

Most researchers agree that youth voice coupled with strong student written reflections are the most crucial component of an SLP (Eyler, 2002; Fredericks, Kaplan, & Zeisler, 2001; Nelson, 2008; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). The reflection component provides

the necessary opportunity for students to discuss ideas, their options and insight on service-learning initiatives. It is the bridge that makes service-learning different from community service.

Benefits for Students Involved in Service-learning Programs

One mission in service-learning research has been the examination of the effects of service-learning on special populations, with the rare inclusion of at-risk youth. Generally speaking, service-learning has been perceived as a one-size-fits-all educational method, which has produced findings that only confuse educators who are trying to determine effective programming for their students (Terry, 2008). The research on the benefits of service-learning on youth continues to be a growing body of research. Conrad and Hedin (1989) concluded a study on the quality of community service-learning and the effects on youth. In their study they found support for the increases in social and personal responsibility of youth. This included improvements in students' self-esteem, self-motivation, risk taking, ability to solve real-life problems, responsibility for their own learning, responsibility to a group or class and concern for others.

A study by Meyer and Hofshire (2003) looked at the impact a service-learning program had on middle and high school students in Philadelphia who participated in service-learning program. Based on their findings, students who actively participated in the service-learning program scored higher than matched counterparts who did not participate in the service-learning program. This was based on reviewing measures of cognitive complexity (Meyer & Hofshire 2003). Other research has discovered that student participation in quality SLPs has proven to decrease antisocial and violent behaviors, arrests, pregnancy and unprotected sexual intercourse and school failure. In addition, SLPs have increased youth assets such as motivation to engage

in protective behaviors, initiative, problem solving, decision making, self-efficacy and competency. Service-learning may increase youth motivation due to their connectedness to adults and communities and increasing protective attitudes and skills through reduced alienation, positive self-identity, identification with peer norms that support protective behaviors and self-efficacy (Banspach et al., 2005)

In addition, research has discovered that benefits for students who participate in SLPs includes decreasing rates of failure, suspension and dropping out (Allen, Philliber, & Hoggson, 1990; Supik, 1995). Moreover, Allen, Philliber and Hoggson, (1990) and Supik (1995) have cited service-learning as a contributing factor for students' academic advancement and achievements. Laird (2002), for example, explained that students who participated in Literacy Corps, a service-learning option in one alternative school in Michigan, scored higher than their nonparticipating peers on the Michigan State Assessment. Researchers have also stated that service-learning has increased student's self-esteem, self-efficacy, social responsibility and ability to connect to their school community (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Wade, 1995). According to Nelson (2008) SLPs affect these three areas the most: (a) academic development, which is critical for school success; (b) career development, because hands-on learning supports students development with work experience and self-discovery; and (c) personal and social development, which supports students in making decisions, creating goals and taking action to create change (Nelson, 2008).

Student Leadership Development in Service-learning Programs

In the *Experiential Education Evaluation Project* study by Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin, the impact of SLPs in secondary schools was studied, with more than a thousand secondary school students. The outcomes of this study found strong evidence that quality SLPs help

students feel empowered, improve their leadership aptitude, improve self-esteem and increase

student motivation to learn (Furco, 2002). Leadership development among youth is vastly

different from the leadership development of adults. For youth, developing as a leader is heavily

dependent on practicing in real-world situations. Some researchers have called service-learning

one of the most powerful approaches in youth leadership development (Des, 2000). Service-

learning has a positive effect on the personal development of public school youths, such as:

- Middle and high school students who engaged in high-quality SLPs showed increases in measures of personal and social responsibility, communication and sense of educational competence.

- Students who engaged in service-learning ranked responsibility as a more important value and reported a higher sense of responsibility to their school than did comparison groups.

- Students perceived themselves to be more socially competent after engaging in service-learning.

- Students who engaged in service-learning were more likely to treat one another kindly, help one another and care about doing their best.

- Students who engaged in service-learning were more likely to increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy.

- Male middle-schoolers reported increased self-esteem and fewer behavioral problems after engaging in service-learning (Billig, 2000).

Importance of the Students' Voice in Service-learning Programs

There is mounting evidence that demonstrates that service-learning is transforming the lives of students and the education system itself (Casey et al., 2006). Student ownership and leadership supports the authenticity of the service-learning experience (Dewey, 1938). When students engage in group projects that are predominately led by the students themselves, there are psychological implications as well. Students began developing skills in teamwork (Tuckman, 1965).

A study by Nelson and Eckstein (2008) looked at service-learning models for at-risk students. They learned from teachers that including students' voices into daily decision-making was extremely difficult because of students' discipline problems and teachers' fear of giving up control. Staff members questioned why students who were labeled troublemakers had the privilege of planning and performing service projects. Both adults and youth struggled with viewing young people as resources in the community (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). However, the study points to the necessity of quality SLPs (especially for at-risk students) and including student perspectives throughout the duration of the service-learning program. Including student perspectives ultimately increased the student's chances to develop a connection to their school, community, neighborhood and city (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). Researchers Morgan and Streb (2001) affirmed the importance of student voices in SLPs. They stated that in order for youth to have quality experiences in SLPs, it is essential that the youths' voices be included in identifying the problem to be addressed, the community to serve, planning, problem-solving and leading their reflections discussions (Morgan & Streb, 2001).

The students' experience in a service-learning program is essential to their learning. In research by Kane and Westheimer (2006), they found that students who did not feel "listened to"

by adults in their service-learning program did not feel that they were taken seriously. They reported being frustrated while taking part in the service-learning program (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). In addition, students who were previously observed as introverted and shy became quite comfortable with expressing their opinions, showed great leadership capabilities and were less shy. Students who were very active, loud and often disruptive in class began to motivate others, participate appropriately in the class and represented the service-learning groups as a leader at the project sites. Overall, students who participated in the service-learning program developed core relationships with each other and the project recipients. There was a great sense of ownership and pride in the service project (Nelson, 2008, p. 231).

Some of the most successful service-learning experiences are those that are strong in including the students' voices and perspectives in addition to a reflection component. Teachers should seek to incorporate student voice in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of SLPs. Student voice does not eliminate adult facilitation, but it does enhance the learning and overall outcome of the service-learning experience for students (Eyler, 2002; Fredericks, Kaplan, & Zeisler, 2001; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000).

History of Charter Schools

The history of charter schools begins with the passing of the first school charter in Minnesota 1991. Following a transformative report written by the Governor of Minnesota and a group of teachers, three major points were the foundation of the charter school model. First, there was an immediate need for more public school choices to meet specific needs. Second, teachers wanted more autonomy in the curriculum and classroom instruction. Third, opening up school choice would force traditional K–12 schools to become more responsive to student needs (Reichgott, 2014). Essentially charter schools have the freedom to create their own goals and

pedagogical strategies without the bureaucratic confines of a traditional public school district (Renzulli, 2005). Despite the charter school's self-regulatory abilities, all charters are bound to their specified charter agreements and federal education regulations. Chartering requires that schools live up to the outlined charter they have created, as authorized. According to Reichgott (2014), more than 2.3 million students are enrolled in charter schools in over 42 states throughout the nation.

In addition to the flexibility charter schools have, another major difference between charter schools and traditional public schools is that charter schools are licensed non-profits that are governed by a board of trustees. This board is appointed by the founder of the charter to guide the mission and vision, take on fiduciary responsibility, approve hiring, set school policy and oversee state and federal compliance.

A study about charter school reform conducted by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform found that charter schools concentrated in low income minority areas. One trend for "public charter schools in America is that their concentration in low-income, predominantly African American and Latino districts, contributes to a sense of disenfranchisement as increasing numbers of schools are privatized in these communities" (Dingerson, 2016, p. 6). In contrast, private school options are rarely found in underserved low socio-economic areas. These school options are generally found in affluent neighborhoods.

There are varying perspectives about the effectiveness of charter schools on student academic outcomes and behavior. One study that looked at charter school effectiveness in North Carolina concluded that charter schools are more effective with female students than with males. In addition, the study found that the impact on academic performance of African American and Latino males is lower than that of White students. However, Latino male students in charter

schools had higher gains in math and reading than African American and White students (Bifulco & Ladd, 2007).

Administrative Differences Between Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools

Public charter schools are a product of the deregulation efforts directed at the public school system (Baker & Dickerson, 2006). Charter schools are provided with exemptions and provisions from most education codes (California, 2012). The formation of charter schools is typically made up of a diverse body including "parents, community leaders, educational entrepreneurs and others the flexibility to innovate and provide students with increased educational options within the public school system" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, para. 5). In addition, like traditional public schools, public charter schools rely on tax dollars to fund their schools, thus making them accountable to parents, students and the larger political community. The legislation that holds charter schools accountable varies from state to state. However, there are a few key differences that exist among traditional public schools and public charter schools in California (Baker, 2006). These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Teacher credentialing. California charter schools are exempt from teacher bargaining and thus, unlike traditional public schools, most charter school teachers do not have a union unless explicitly written into their school's charter. In 1999, the State of California began mandating through legislation that core subject matter teachers within charter schools hold valid teacher credentials issued by the Commission on Teaching and Credentialing. However, unlike a traditional public school, flexibility remains in the charter schools ability to hire non-credentialed teachers for all non-core and non-college-preparatory courses. In addition, traditional public school administrators and support are bound by California State requirements to hold valid administrator, counselor and other credentials in order to remain employed at the school site.

These requirements do not apply to charter school administrators, counselors and other school support staff (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2012).

For many charter schools, there is value in hiring and supporting teachers who wish to acquire their teaching credentials. In 2004, a school called High Tech High in California became the first school in the state to open its own teacher credentialing program. It operates similarly to a medical residency program, wherein non-credentialed charter school teachers can acquire the hands-on knowledge and experiences in addition to theory and practicum while working at the charter school. Ultimately, teachers learn while they work (Robelen, 2007). Teacher retention in charter schools is higher compared to traditional schools. Charter schools have the ability to offer incentive pay and bonuses. Charter schools ultimately have more contractual leeway and its teachers are less likely to be a part of any collective bargaining group (Preston, Goldring, Berends, & Cannata, 2012).

Charter operations. Charter schools are owned and operated by independent sources, often referred to as a charter management company. A charter school must be authorized by a public school district, a board of education or a state board of education (Sherrie & Heather, 2015). Approximately 1,200 charter schools have closed since 1992, largely because they did not meet the demands of the target population. There are five particular areas around which charter schools tend to shut down: financial deficiencies, money mishandling, low academic performance, poor facilities and failing relations with the authorizer of the charter. Over 42% close due to financial struggles (Allen, Consoletti, & Kerwin, 2009).

Oversight by public charter school itself or traditional public school district. Public charter schools in California must be authorized by a valid unified school district. There are some instances when a public charter school can be approved for operation directly by the State

Board of Education, but this process includes various restrictions. Much like a traditional public school, public charter schools are held accountable by the sponsoring school district that authorizes and agrees to sponsor the charter (California Charter School Association, n.d.).

Number of charter school openings per year. School districts set a mandate each year on the total number of charter schools that can be opened that year. According to the California Charter School Association (2015), in the 2015–2016 school year, Los Angeles experienced the approval and opening of 27 new charter schools, bringing the total operating charter schools in California to 1,230. However, the California Charter School Association also notes that in spite of these new openings, there is still a large need for additional charter school options to meet the current need of 158,000 California students on charter school waiting lists (California Charter School Association, 2015).

In a study conducted by the NCES (2016), it was found that since 2013, there have been an increasing number of charter schools opening, while at the same time noting a decrease in the number of traditional schools opening. Nationwide, the percentage of all public schools that were charter schools increased from 3% to 7%, while the percentage that were traditional public schools decreased from 97% to 93% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016).

Curriculum requirement differences. Charter schools are not private institutions. Like all public schools, charters are mandated to follow federal and state school codes as they pertain to students' educational needs. In California, both public and charter schools are mandated to adhere to specific standards; however, charters can select their method and curriculum that they feel will meet state mandates, thus removing some barriers and allowing charters to implement programming and curriculum specific to attaining student social and academic advancement (Shober, Manna, & Witte, 2006). However, this must be explicitly spelled out in the school's

charter, including the design method, plan for measuring student progress and outcomes that meet the standards set by the States Board of Education (O'Brien, 2001). According to O'Brien (2001), curriculum in schools is defined as what students learn in schools and what those in power want students to learn in school. Curriculum itself is broken into four categories:

1. A school's official stated curriculum.

2. The operational curriculum (what is actually being implemented by teachers and staff).

3. The hidden curriculum (the understated values of a school that students are actually learning).

4. The null curriculum (the things that are not being taught but students' are learning anyway).

When considering the differences in curriculum among traditional public and charter schools, each of the aforementioned curriculums must be considered (O'Brien, 2001).

Parent Participation Differences Between Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools

Parental involvement is a great struggle in most public schools settings; however, traditional public and charter schools alike recognize the importance of obtaining parent involvement. The Center for Educational Governance (2008) stated that in a number of states, charter laws and charter school charters have written in parent participation. Some even include parents as a part of the board and founding members. It is assumed that charter schools have an easier time garnering parent support and involvement due to the lifted restrictions and school choice options. However, a survey of charter school leaders in 2007 noted that there exists a significant challenge for charter schools as well in obtaining parent participation (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). Some of the barriers to increased participation for both traditional public and charter schools have been socioeconomic factors, language barriers, work

schedules, poor communication between schools and parents and parents feeling invisible or unimportant to the school (Smith et al., 2011).

In a race to be innovative, many charter schools have relied heavily on integrating parental involvement in the creation and execution of charter schools. One study of a Pennsylvania charter school found that parent involvement in the decision-making process proved to be the most innovative and led to the creation of extended learning time, Saturday school and incorporating culture into the curriculum (Miron & Nelson, 2000).

Accountability Differences Between Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools

Charter school outcomes. According to the California Charter School Association's (2013) "Fact Sheet on Charter School Performance and Accountability," public charter schools have outperformed traditional public schools in a few key areas. The articles states that public charter schools had better performance outcomes than traditional public schools with subgroups that included low-income, African American, English learner and Latino students. In addition, the article stated that both public charters in LAUSD and Oakland Unified School District performed better than their traditional public school counterparts by achieving higher API scores (California Charter School Association, 2013).

New York State's charter school accountability provisions require all of its authorized charter schools to link actual percentage goals for student achievement in the state-mandated English language arts and math assessments. The New York Board of Regents for Charter Schools tracks the growth toward these goals and progress on student achievement annually. New York has been noted as a leader in creating performance-based charter contracts and comprehensive school monitoring and data collection processes that aim to hold its charter schools accountable (Bifulco & Buerger, 2016).

Charter School Financing and Reporting

Both traditional public and charter schools are funded by public dollars and are ultimately held accountable to the public to effectively educate students. Small and incremental changes to laws affecting charter schools have made for an increase in flexibility of the charter school management and pedagogy, while keeping the accountability a constant (Shober, Manna, & White, 2006).

A study by Reed and Rose (2015) stated that California charter schools spend less money than traditional public schools. In fact, most researchers have found charters schools on average spend approximately 19% less than traditional public schools and this trend has continued to grow each year since 2003 (Allen, Consoletti, & Kerwin, 2009).

The Stufflebeam Model of Evaluation

There are a variety of evaluation models that can be utilized to evaluate programs. Stufflebeam (1971) is credited for creating the *context, input, process* and *product* evaluation model or CIPP model. This model became notable in the late 1960s during the inner city school reform calling for greater accountability and outcomes from inner-city schools. This comprehensive elevation model was developed to address educational limitations through the lens of a traditional evaluation approach (Stufflebeam, 1971).

The CIPP evaluation model has grown significantly in popularity in the education setting. It is often used to evaluate education programs, curriculum and other educational services. The model provides relevant information that key decision makers can use to determine the overall benefit and needs for improvement or accountability (Zhang et al., 2011).

Using this model to evaluate SLPs can assist in developing a responsive project that can best meet the specified needs. The process evaluation component tracks the project processes,

identify possible barriers and allows for adjustments if needed. Lastly, the product evaluation component analyzes the projects outcomes, ultimately interpreting whether there is value and significance in the project and whether it should be continued (Zhang et al., 2011). The four components of the Stufflebeam's evaluation model are extremely useful in guiding each stage of a service-learning program evaluation of effectiveness:

1. Context evaluation: Typically referred to as the needs assessment, this component supports the identification of "What needs to be done?" This phase of the evaluation reviews systems, surveys, documents, interviews and diagnostic tests (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007; Zhang et al., 2011).

2. Input evaluation: Input evaluation helps prescribe a project to address the identified needs. It asks, "How should it be done?" and identifies procedural designs and educational strategies that will most likely achieve the desired results (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 64).

3. Process evaluation: This part of the evaluation takes a close look at the process of the project's implementation. Specifically, is the program carrying out procedures in the manner that it intended to? This process is monitored from both the deliverer of a program and the participants (Zhang et al., 2011).

4. Product evaluation: In this component of the evaluation, the program's outcomes are measured. The purpose of a product evaluation is to measure, interpret and judge a project's outcomes by assessing their merit, worth and importance. "Its main purpose is to ascertain the extent to which the needs of all the participants were met" (Zhang, Zeller, Griffith, & Metcalf et al., 2011, p. 66).

Using the CIPP model to evaluate a program should be for the purpose of enhancing or correcting a program in order to make sure it meets the needs of the participants. Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) clearly stated that the most important principle of this evaluation model is "not to prove, but to improve" (p. 331).

Service-learning in High Schools

There has been a significant increase in the research done on the impact of service-learning in high schools (Denner, Coyle, Robin, & Banspach, 2005; English & Moore, 2010; Wyss & Tai, 2012; Zaff & Lerner, 2010). Most of the interest in this area has been connected to the increased responsibility of high schools to adequately prepare young people to be able to contribute positively in their communities and society at large. In addition, schools are now citing the value of implementing SLPs in their schools, to have positive outcomes in the students themselves, the schools and the greater communities (Kielsmeier, Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Neal, 2004). A study by Kielsmeier et al. (2004) found that 83% of principals reported offering some form of service-learning opportunity for students on their campuses. The study surveyed principals in eight key areas of service-learning impact on students and found that principals perceived the students had positive outcomes in all eight areas: 92% of principals reported gains in citizenship/civic engagement, 91% in school-community relationships, 91% in students' personal and social development, 88% in school climate, 88% in school engagement, 85% in community's view of youth resources, 85% in teacher satisfaction and 83% in students' academic achievements.

Other researchers have noted similar findings of enhanced positive outcomes for students in high school SLPs. A study conducted by Richards et al. (2013) stated that there is a significant benefit for young people who have exposure to meaningful service-learning

experiences during adolescence. Their study evaluated a civic engagement service-learning program implemented in two separate public schools in Chicago. They found that there was a significant student improvement in leadership capacities, and students demonstrated increased civic engagement, responsibility and acceptance of diversity following their involvement in their service-learning program.

Multiple researchers agree that implementing SLPs in the context of the high school setting has its challenges. Funding is usually the larger issue. In addition, another challenge is time. Billig, Hofschire, Meyer and Yamauchi (2006) suggested that in order for a school based service-learning program to make a positive impact on students, it must involve more than 40 hours of direct student engagement. Schools that have been able to create or adopt programs that engage students for 40 or more hours of service have increased student impact outcomes.

Experiential Learning

The premise behind experiential learning lies in the students' ability to connect their own knowledge and experiences to what is being taught or discussed (Carrington & Selva, 2010; Guthrie, 2013; Kolb, 1984). In addition, experimental learning incorporates hands-on learning experiences that provide benefit to themselves as learners and others who may be benefactors of their work experience (Tapps & Lindenmeier, 2014).

Various SLPs utilize this method as an integral piece of their program design. Kolb is credited for creating a comprehensive theoretical model in 1984 for the experimental learning theory, which was comprised of a four-phase hands-on process (Petkus, 2000):

1. Concrete experience: When a student engages in the service;

2. Reflective observation: Informal or formal reflection regarding the students experience;

3. Abstract conceptualization: When the student integrates theories and concepts;

4. Active experimentation: Student utilizes theories, concepts learned and incorporates them into their lives.

In addition, experiential learning allows students to draw meaning from their prior experiences while still adhering to the structure of the curriculum and meeting expected learning goals (Paulson, 2011). Utilizing experiential learning is a relatively new phenomenon in the high school setting, although most college campuses use this method to support students in acquiring work experience while in school. Experiential learning provides students the opportunity to work collaboratively, build critical thinking skills and learn to apply problem solving techniques and skills. All of these are critical 21st century learning skills employers like to see in the workforce. Ultimately, experiential learning allows students to engage in their own learning experiences and come out with the knowledge that will effect change in their behavior and attitudes (Billig, 2006).

A study by Powell and Wells (2003) found that after studying experiential teaching approaches in fifth grade science classes, that students increased their test scores by 24% if they had previously participated in experiential science experiments. Experiential lessons support the increase of student knowledge and help support students in meeting the state content standards. Supporting other content areas in incorporating experiential learning practices is a crucial key factor in supporting students' connection to the content thus increasing their chances of retention of the material covered (Knapp, 1992).

Experiential learning causes a shift in the roles of the student and teacher. In opposition to the traditional teaching method that heavily relies on lecturing from the teacher, experiential learning builds upon the students' and teachers' shared experiences to shape the learning. One of the most crucial perquisites for this shaping of the leaning to take place is that a safe space must

be created. Methods to create this essential dynamic include shared norms, allowing open

dialogue and a commitment to active listening (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015).

Chapter 3. Methodology

Overview of Research Design

A mixed methodological embedded case study approach was used in this study to determine the impact, if any, of a mandatory service-learning intervention elective class on at-risk students in an inner-city charter high school (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2006). The researcher employed a data triangulation process to examine multiple sources of collected data to answer the research questions (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2012). The researcher then utilized information in the form of program descriptions, existing student data, review of completed student reflection sheets, as well as previously collected surveys of participants and an interview with the SLP non-credentialed teacher. The study investigated the program's effectiveness through the lens of Billig's eight key components of effective SLPs. The study examined five research questions:

1. What differences, if any, exist between students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Service-learning Student Survey by item and by gender?

2. What differences, if any, are there in students' academic performance at start of the ACT program and the completion of the program?

3. How are Billig's components of an effective service-learning program present in ACT's program?

4. How do students assume leadership in their service-learning assignment?

5. How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of service-learning and the completion of their service-learning experiences?

This chapter provides the qualifications of the researcher, the description of the school site, the ACT program description, data collections procedures (both qualitative and

quantitative), protection of human subjects, data analyses for each research question and a brief summary of this chapter.

Qualifications of Researcher

The researcher is an administrator with extensive experience in youth development who presently works at a non-profit charter high school. As the researcher and site administrator, I have a keen interest in this study. I am interested in analyzing the findings to see the impact this particular program has on students and the school's curriculum selection. We need to determine if we should continue this particular program. Thus, the board and I need to determine if this program shows a direct student benefit and to what extent there is an impact on these students' academic and personal development.

Description of the School Site

Youth Academy High School (YAHS) is a part of an alternative charter school network of six schools throughout Los Angeles County, California. YAHS is part of a K–12 school district based out of the Northern California Unified School District in Sacramento, California. Enrollment for YAHS is approximately 175 to 200 students. YAHS provides academic services to students in a low socio-economic area in South Los Angeles. The mission of the charter school is to "provide small, supportive learning communities that meet the educational and personal needs of disadvantaged students resulting in changed lives, families and generations" (CBA Watts, 2016, para. 1).

Students that turn to YAHS are those who have been unsuccessful in a traditional school setting in the surrounding high schools. They select YAHS for a variety of reasons, but the most common is behavioral issues and compliance problems in their previous traditional high schools. The school offers a complex range of services including counseling, therapy, community

programming, small class room sizes (typically 15:1) and adaptive teacher instructions. The

school is housed in a historical community re-development building that was created following

civil unrest and rioting in the 1960s. Since the school's inception in 2000, over 2,500 students

have been served by the school. The school staff consists of one principal, one dean, four

therapists, five certificated teachers, one uncertified teacher and one administrative assistant.

Ninety-six percent of the high school's population lives in the surrounding low-income housing

projects. Ninety-four percent of student families are living at or below poverty level. The ethnic

composition is that 71% (126) of students are Latino or Hispanic, 19% (34) are African

American, 2% (4) are White, 1% (2) are Asian or Pacific Islander and 7% have self-identified as

other.

Approximately 2% of students are classified as having disabilities, which are most often

learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disabilities. Only a few of the students at this

school have not been identified as having any type of disability or condition, yet they are at

significant risk for school failure due to their behavioral problems in school, their socioeconomic

issues and instability at home.

Inclusion Criteria for the Sample

For the purposes of this study, the participants were required to meet the following

qualifications:

- Be students at YAHS;

- Be students in grade levels 9–12;

- Be students who were actively enrolled between the Spring semester of 2014 and

    Summer 2016;

- Be a facilitator who was an employee of YAHS;

- Be a facilitator who was an active instructor of the ACT program.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

There were 102 (n = 102) 9th–12th graders participants in this study at YAS charter high school in Los Angeles, CA. Fifty-six female and 46 male high school program students responded to Act of Caring Teens Service Learning Program Survey. At the beginning and end of each semester Spring 2014 - Summer 2016 over 133 surveys were distributed to students enrolled in the ACT program, seven were eliminated from the study due to school disenrollment or lack of course/program completion. In addition, although 133 surveys were issued to students only 89 (only 28 matching pre and post) completed surveys could be attained for the purpose of this study. According to the school site, the program facilitators were unable to retrieve actual surveys from students as this was not a primary focus of the ACT program.

Program Design

The YAHS acquired a partner, It Works!, that supported the implementation of the SLP in its classrooms. The organization specializes in creating programming that helps to build 21st-century learning skills among students from elementary through secondary education. The mission of It Works! is to give students the skills they need to live productive and healthy lives. The initiative began with extensive research that specifically focused on the perceived educational gaps that currently exist for middle and high school students. It Works! was directly designed to fill those needs. It Works! is driven by a fundamental belief that leadership is demonstrated in many ways and takes many forms, but that at its core, leadership is about problem-solving (Community Works, 2014). The It Works! program consists of six major components: teacher training, leadership curriculum, youth mentors, student-led service-learning projects, evaluation and internship scholarships. During the school years 2014–2016, students at

YAHS were placed into this service-learning course and provided with five credits towards their total graduation credit requirement of 220, if they passed the course with a grade *D* or higher.

The "It Works!" Service learning program was offered through hands-on school and community-based activities as a part of a comprehensive high school course offering. The program was offered for at least 50 minutes twice per week for 16 consecutive weeks during the regular school day at YAHS. The service-learning program course was offered to Grades 9–12 in a contained classroom each Fall and Spring semester for the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school years. The course was a graduation requirement and students were selected and placed into the class by the school principal, unless they requested to be a part of the course. For this study, the student count during Spring 2014 was 18, Spring 2015 was 17, Fall 2015 was 17, Spring 2016 was 17, Fall 2016 was 18 and Summer 2016 was 15. Thus, this study focused on five cohorts and a total of 102 students.

The It Works! program is a comprehensive service-learning program designed to equip high school students with the skills and tools they need to discover their futures and find their voices. The program boasts seven key lesson themes (see appendix D): leadership, character, emotional intelligence, teamwork, problem solving, goal setting and service.

Prior to implementing the program at a school site, one lead teacher from the school was trained by It Works! This teacher was then responsible for implementing the program on the school site in tandem with a lead staff member from It Works! Specifically the program at YAHS was taught by one paid non-credentialed teacher who was an employee of the school and was co-facilitated by an employee of It Works! Each week the pair worked together to plan, discuss and facilitate the full curriculum for enrolled students in the class.

Data Collection Instruments

The archival data for this study was collected with the permission of the YAHS Chief

Operations Officer from the school years 2014–2016. Four data tools were used to collect the

impressions of the student participants and the program facilitator:

- A quantitative survey with 22 ratings of personal attitudes and behaviors, as assessed on a

  1–5 Likert scale;

- Four frequency measures of their leadership and school behaviors;

- Three short-answer questions on perceptions and understanding of leadership;

- A qualitative review of student journal entries;

- The non-credentialed facilitator's perceptions were also collected by a survey that

  included open-ended questions asking for descriptive information along with focus group

  questions (the same questions that student participants would receive, but modified to

  reflect the teacher's perspective).

Data Collection Procedure

The intended goal of this mixed method research design was to capture the maximum

amount of information that would efficiently answer the research questions. This study gathered

essential information from all the students who were involved in the program under study from

the most recent two years (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). These

students have left the school. The data for this study came come from one school, 102 students,

the non-credentialed teacher who works directly with this target population and the charter

school administrator who had the responsibility of selecting the SLP provider and approving the

expense of the program itself. The ACT SLP pre- and post-program surveys were distributed to

133 student participants and collected for later analysis of the impact current service-learning

program practices have on the academic performance and leadership development of

participating students. Although surveys were originally distributed to the 133 students enrolled

according to the information provided by the school, more than 30 students did not complete the

course due to class schedule change or disenrollment at the school and therefore surveys were

not collected from these students. The researcher was provided with student surveys for 89

students who completed the surveys (28 were matching pre and post surveys) and attendance and

GPA information for 102 student participants. The charter school released the student

information from their archival system for academic and attendance data for all ACT

participants. Eight data points were collected and analyzed. First, a thorough review of program

comments were collected and categorized thematically. Second, student demographic data was

collected to provide insight on student progress based on gender and race. Third, student

perceptions were collected utilizing pre- and post-program surveys to evaluate student

perceptions of their current leadership and growth. To answer the research questions, the dataset

included the sources noted in Table 2.

Table 2

Sources of Data Collected

Types of data	How data was collected	RQ				
		1	2	3	4	5
Review of program components	Data regarding the It Works! program design was collected via electronic submission from the school Chief Operations Office.				X	
Student demographic data	This data was provided by the schools registrar attendant at the directions of the schools COO and sent via electronic submission to the researcher.	X	X			
Student ACT pre and post surveys	Hard copies of the Student pre/post surveys were collected from the schools Chief Operations Officer. Names of students were eliminated from the surveys and	X				X

	numbers were assigned to each student matching pre- and post-program surveys prior to transferring the information to the researcher			
Student journals	Hard copies of the student journals were collected from the schools Chief Operations Officer. Names of students were eliminated from the journals prior to transferring the information over to the researcher.	X	X	X
Annual Facilitator Program Implementation Survey (AIS)	The researcher was provided with hard copies of the teacher's completed program implementation survey by the schools COO.			X
Student school attendance	This dataset was provided by the schools registrar attendant at the directions of the schools COO and sent via electronic submission to the researcher		X	
Student report cards	This dataset (6-wk, 12-wk and final report card) was provided by the schools registrar attendant at the directions of the schools COO and sent via electronic submission to the researcher		X	
Researcher field notes	Researcher kept detailed field notes throughout the duration of the study		X	

Protection of Human Subjects

This study was expected to gain exempt status from Pepperdine's IRB review because the

researcher was using data that was collected by the school using normal school-accepted

procedures. The students' and instructors' responses had no names or personally identifying

information associated with them and the researcher did not know all individuals. In order to

secure the anonymous data, two release letters were collected for the purpose of this study. One

letter of consent to release program materials was obtained from the SLP founder and Chief

Operating Officer (see APPENDIX A). The other consent letter was collected from the Chief

Operations Officer of the charter school (see APPENDIX B).

The student demographic and academic data without names, only numbers, was provided

to the researcher from the school's registrar at the direction of the Chief Operations Officer. All

other data was collected from the student surveys provided by the schools Chief Operations

Officer. All data was collected as part of the normal educational process. Code names were assigned to each student in the dataset. Student surveys were anonymous and the teacher, administrator and staff names remained confidential. A pseudonym was assigned for the name of the school and program. All electronic data was kept in a password-protected, secure file on the researcher's personal computer. Only the researcher had access to the password to these files.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher used trained doctoral students in the Education and Organizational Leadership program as assistant coders. This supported in the reduction of bias from the researcher. According to Oluwatayo (2012), using coders is a useful technique in reducing error and biases in research analysis. Reliability is the extent to which researchers can replicate the study. In qualitative studies, reliability is determined through establishing dependability of the researcher following the protocols and interceder reliability (van den Hoonaard, 2008). In qualitative studies, validity refers to the results' truthfulness and certainty (Hussein, 2009). Hussein (2009) also included that truthfulness is the extent to which the results reflect the true situation studied, while certainty refers to the extent to which the researcher uses empirical evidence to support results. This is all based on how the researcher collected and analyzed the data. Due to this study's usage of archival data, the researchers placed extraordinary care on the processes that supported a reduction in collection or analysis errors that could possibly reduce the validity and reliability of this study.

Limitations identify potential weaknesses in a study (Creswell, 2003). The recognized limitations of this study are listed in Chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter discussed in detail the research population at the YAHS and selection of the study participants. In addition, the study's design was discussed in detail and information on data collection and data analysis was also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this mixed method study was to examine the impact of a mandatory service-learning intervention elective class on at-risk students by (a) examining the academic achievements of participating ACT students considered at-risk, (b) identifying the practices perceived as contributing to developing effectively the students' leadership abilities by students and teachers and (c) examining the overall effectiveness of this service-learning program in supporting the leadership development of at-risk high school students. The quantitative data was comprised of 102 student participants, which represented 81% of the program's students who completed the ACT service-learning program from Fall 2014 - Spring 2016. The qualitative portion of this study was comprised of a thorough review of the program design and implementation documents, 15 student participant journals, 89 open response surveys and four teacher facilitator annual implementation surveys. Data was also collected from ACT program materials in order to gain insight on program implementation and program quality. Student archival surveys were collected pre and post, student journal entries and teacher program implantation surveys were used to measure student's perceptions of their own leadership development.

Data Analysis Process

      Survey analysis.

1. Surveys collected and matched IDs of students, checked for effortful completion (e.g., no sheets marked with straight *Agrees* or straight *Strongly Disagrees* and nothing else).

2. Numerical value assigned to responses: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. For frequency questions, the 2–5 and 6–10 boxes were assigned midrange values of 3.5 and 8, respectively.

3. Surveys coded into two Excel sheets, one for pre-program surveys and one for post-program surveys. At this point eight surveys without any indication of pre- or post- time frame were discarded. Remaining were 89 surveys (34 pre-surveys and 55 post-surveys). Note that while there were 28 matching pairs of respondents, the rest of the surveys were unmatched (that is, there was a pre-survey but not a post-survey for a particular student or vice versa).

4. Average values for each question's responses were calculated and a two-sample t test assuming unequal variances was conducted to determine whether the difference in means between pre-survey and post-survey responses for each question was statistically significant ($\alpha=0.05$) or not.

5. Responses were then analyzed by gender; averages and t statistics for female respondents and male respondents were calculated. Five surveys without specified gender were eliminated from this analysis, leaving sample sizes of 19 females and 12 males pre-program and 29 females and 24 males post-program.

6. Analysis of the matched pre/post-survey pairs was also conducted on the 28 respondents for whom data was available both pre- and post-program. For this analysis, a paired two-sample for means t test was employed.

   GPA and attendance data analysis.

1. GPA and school attendance data was collected for all students who had participated in ACT in 2014, 2015 and 2016, in the semesters of Fall, Spring and Summer. GPA was provided by semester, while attendance was provided by year.

2. In Excel, student data was recorded in the following categories: GPA by semester, for each semester from Fall 2012–13 to Summer 2015–16; GPA in semester immediately

prior to ACT participation; GPA in semester during ACT participation; GPA in semester immediately after ACT participation; number of days absent by year, for each year from 2012–13 to 2015–16; absences in year immediately prior to ACT participation; and absences in year of ACT participation.

3. Entire population of students for which there was attendance data was 102. For this group, average absence rates, absences before ACT and absences after ACT were calculated and t tests conducted for statistically significant differences in means.

4. Entire population of students for which we had GPA data was 98. For this group, average GPA, GPA before ACT and GPA after ACT were calculated and t tests conducted for statistically significant differences in means.

5. GPA and attendance were then analyzed by gender; averages and t statistics for female respondents and male respondents were calculated.

6. Analysis of the matched pre/post-survey pairs was also conducted, on the 28 respondents for whom data was available both pre- and post-program.

Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process and Product evaluation framework was utilized as the guide for reviewing the ACT program and determining if the program included (and to what extent) the components of the effective service learning program in the ACT program. In using this framework, the researcher used guiding questions to identify key components of the program effectiveness. Table 3 identifies how the researcher analyzed the program's effectiveness utilizing the CIPP model. Elements of the evaluation model in use were: context, input, process, product. The chart outlines the guiding questions and their relation to Billig's keys to effective service learning programs.

Table 3

Analysis of ACT Service Learning Program Using the CIPP Framework

Quality SLP practices	Context, input, process and product evaluation framework
1. Duration and intensity	• Input evaluation: Did projects have sufficient duration and intensity? • Context evaluation: Did students identify community needs and specify the intended project outcomes? • Process and product evaluation: Did students assess whether community needs and specified outcomes are met?
2. Link to formal curriculum	• Context evaluation: Does curriculum identify learning goals? • Input evaluation: Do projects meet learning goals?
3. Partnerships	• Context evaluation: Are students able to identify community needs?
4. Meaningful service	• Input evaluation: Design projects that is mutually beneficial and allows participants to work collaboratively to address community needs.
5. Youth voice	• Context, input, process and product evaluation: Are students involved in planning, implementing and evaluating the SLP?
6. Student reflection	• Input evaluation: Do curriculum activities and projects allow for meaningful journal reflections? • Process evaluation: Assess reflection activities through reflective journals and surveys
7. Diversity	• Input evaluation: Do projects and curriculum promote understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants and community?
8. Progress monitoring	• Process and product evaluation: Does the SLP involve students in ongoing process to assess the quality of SLP and use results for improvement and sustainability?

The researcher employed a three-phase data analysis procedure on archival data. This process included data preparation, descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. Analyses began with the researcher preparing the student and ACT program data. Student data was grouped in categories by content and by matching each research question. A matrix was created to visually keep track of all data collected (Creswell, 2013). The researcher became familiar with the

program materials, curriculum and teacher syllabus. This process allowed the researcher to gather key concepts, write notes, ideas and phrases that were possible themes (Creswell, 2013). The researcher began the analysis process by utilizing the context, input, process, product evaluation model as the comprehensive framework for identifying Billig's effective service-learning practices in the ACT program.

Qualitative analysis of students' opinion of the service-learning. The ACT service-learning required all program students to complete a pre-survey at the start of the class and post-surveys following the end of the 16 week course. The surveys offered insight into the students' opinions on service-learning, leadership and school engagement. The student surveys were broken down into five different sections in order to gather specific data in five different areas: self-reflection, problem solving, student leadership, school engagement and working with others.

For coding of the student qualitative material, the researcher utilized four trained volunteer external coders. These external coders were doctoral students who assisted with the coding of student journal entries. The four coders were provided with an initial training, which reviewed the specific coding instructions. In this training, each coder was provided with a copy of the instructions and 10 student journals. The coding session occurred in a large classroom space with white boards, and the coders employed the following coding procedure:

- Codes were assigned to the data by the researcher utilizing an open coding method, reading through the data and creating labels based on emergent themes (Saldana, 2009).

- Each trained coder received six to 10 student journals. Each journal was numbered in the right top corner of the paper.

- Each coder also received one blue pen and an identifying different colored highlighter.

- Coders then began the process of reading and highlighting in each journal looking for themes, words and phrases that were reoccurring, patterns of beliefs and statements that may be drastically different of the other journal entries read.

- When coders had completed reading and highlighting each of their assigned journal, the researcher led the process and had each coder read aloud the themes they noticed within each of their assigned journals.

- As common themes and ideas emerged, these were written on the board as headings.

- Each participant's journal entered that matched these themes were written under the column for that specific emergent theme. In addition, key phrases were written in quotations under emergent themes.

- After the coding process was completed the researcher documented all the written coding information on paper and a photo of the information on the boards was taken to ensure nothing was missed.

- Finally, the researcher carefully analyzed the materials derived from coding and determined essential themes and big ideas. These ideas were them interpreted into findings from the study.

The researcher employed a statistician to assist in analyzing data from the student pre- and post-program surveys and the academic data (i.e., grades). Data was input into the SPSS program by a research assistant or the employed statistician. The statistician ran a *t* test. Thiel (2014) stated that a benefit of conducting a *t* test is that it allows the researcher to determine whether observed differences represent a systematic difference versus a random sequence of events. The following specifically states how each piece of data was analyzed:

1. Review of program materials. The researcher reviewed a variety of ACT program materials to gain insight on the program model, its goals and the methods employed to develop leadership of student participants.

2. Student demographic data. The researcher collected this data to determine if differences existed between gender and academic performance of student participants of the ACT service-learning program by performing a t test analysis process.

3. Student ACT pre- and post-program survey. The researcher used a t test analysis to determine if students showed progress in the leadership knowledge and this information was analyzed for differences by male and female student participants.

4. This research employed mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 1998). The program was completed over a year ago. The qualitative data included student journals, which were weekly written impressions of the program. The journals were created as part of the program activity and collected by the program instructor. The researcher was not part of the program. This data was stored at the direction of the Chief Operations Officer following the conclusion of the program semesters. At the time of storage, names were removed and numerical codes were assigned. This data was analyzed qualitatively utilizing trained coders, namely other dissertation students working with Dr. Hiatt-Michael, to determine student responses to the program under study. Quantitatively, the researcher analyzed students' perceptions of the SLP, leadership development and students' overall perceptions of their own leadership growth.

5. Student journals. The researcher obtained written consent from the school Chief Operations Officer and the SLP's creator in order to use the student journals for research. Each student set of journals was assigned a code. This code was connected to a code for

the student demographic data and other quantitative data used in the study. Any student

can only be identified by the code number. The researcher analyzed the journals using

trained doctoral student coders. These security-coded student journals were previously

collected by the program's facilitator on a regular basis as part of the SLP in order to

gather insight on the student's perception of the service-learning program.

6. School attendance. The research utilized t test analysis of the student attendance data to

   determine if student leadership development has any relationship to their school

   attendance.

7. Student report cards. The data was analyzed using a t test to determine if there was a

   correlation between students' leadership development and academic performance.

8. Researcher field notes. The researcher took notes of relevant observations during the

   duration of the pilot program in 2014, tracking program implementation at the school

   site.

Lastly, the researcher interpreted the combined dataset. This process included

triangulation strategies utilizing data from quantitative statistics, qualitative coding and

researcher field notes in order to provide more validity to the researcher's findings (Creswell,

2013; Saldana, 2009). The goal was interpret the larger meaning of the data as a whole, moving

away from the individual pieces of the data and constructing an overall meaning. Data was

displayed using tables and charts. Table 4 describes the analysis used for each research question.

Table 4

Types of Analysis Used and Methods of Displaying Data

Research questions	Type of analysis used
1. What differences, if any, exist between students' pre-test and post-test scores on service-learning Student Survey by item and by gender?	*t* test was used to determine variance and significance (if any) by gender from pre to post test.
2. What differences, if any, are there in students' academic performance at start of the ACT program and the completion of the program?	*t* test was used to determine variance and significance (if any) by gender from pre to post test.
3. How are Billig's components of an effective service-learning program present in ACTs (Acts of Caring Teens) program?	Data was contextualized with the framework from Billig and compared to the ACT program components (Creswell, 2013).
4. How do students assume leadership in their service-learning assignment?	Data was analyzed using pattern analysis approach (Creswell, 2013).
5. How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of service-learning and the completion of their service-learning experiences?	Data was analyzed using categorical analysis approach (Creswell, 2013).

Quantitative Findings

Research question 1. RQ 1 asked: "What differences, if any, exist between students'
pre-test and post-test scores on service-learning Student Survey by item and by gender?" Figure
3 presents the unmatched female student's pre- and post-survey results for the 11 Likert scale
questions for the ACT program. The descriptive statistics *t* test analysis showed a statistical
significances at -2.19, $p > .05$ for females answering the question "I enjoy writing my thoughts
on paper." Although there the data acknowledges there were other gains for female students' pre
to post, no others were statistically significant.

Figure 3. Unmatched female student's pre- and post-survey results (Likert-scale questions).

Figure 4 indicates the results of the *t* test used to compare the pre and post results of unmatched female ACT students as they relate to the frequency question portion of the survey. The results of the descriptive statistics showed that there was a statistical significance level of -2.18, $p > .05$ for female students who answered the survey question "How many clubs or organizations at school are you involved in?" Although there were other statistical gains noted, no other questions were determined to have a statistical significance with the alpha significance level of .05.

Figure 4. Unmatched pre and post female student's survey results (frequency questions).

Figure 5 indicates the results of the *t* test used to compare the pre and post results of unmatched male ACT students as they relate to the Likert questions portion of the survey. The results of the *t* test showed that although there were some statistical differences pre and post, there were no statistically significant differences in the pre and post Likert questions for unmatched males in the ACT program.
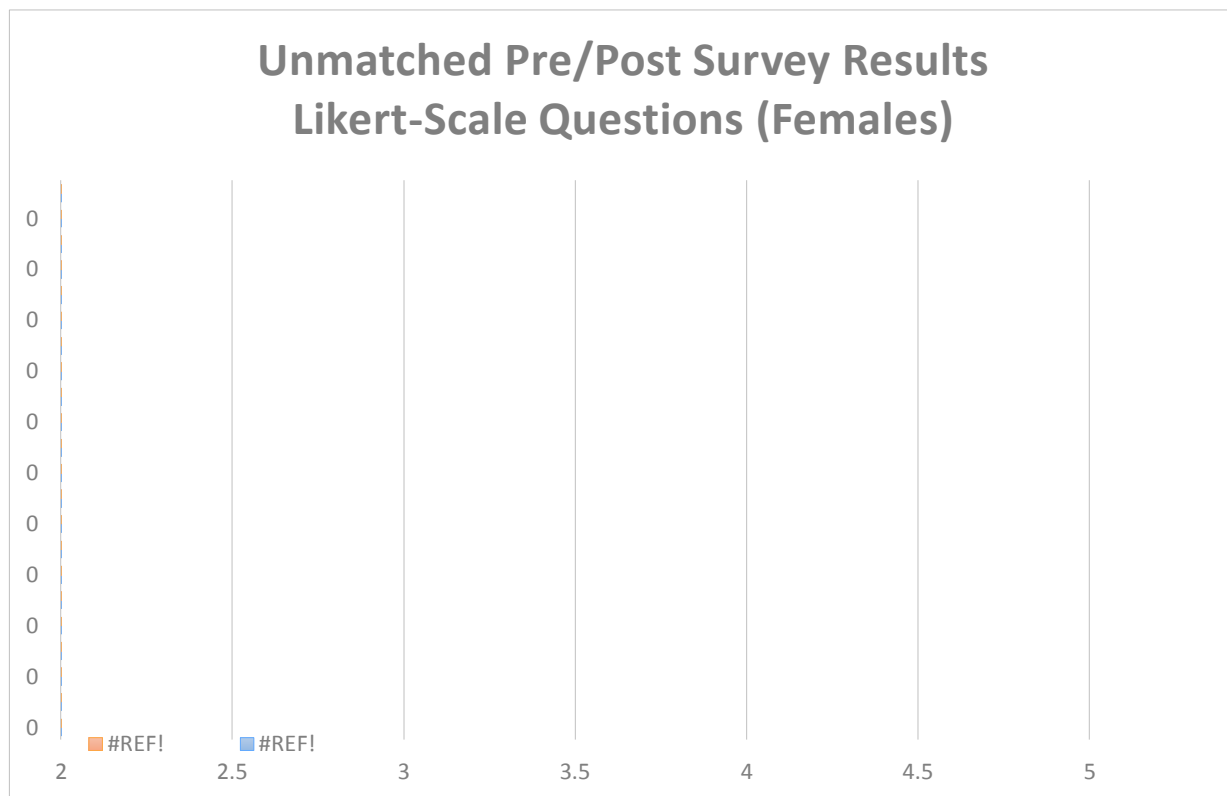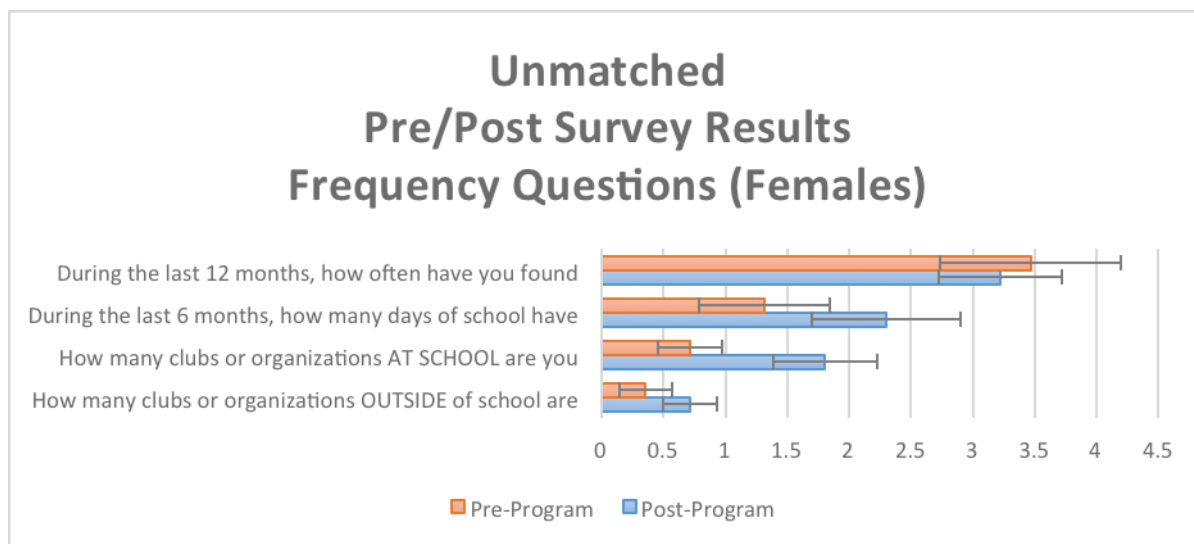
Figure 5. Unmatched pre and post male student's survey results (Likert-scale questions).

Figure 6 indicates the results of the *t* test used to compare the pre and post results of

unmatched male ACT students as they relate to the frequency questions portion of the survey.

The results of the *t* test showed that although there were some statistical differences pre and post,

there were no statically significant difference in the pre and post frequency questions for

unmatched males in the ACT program.

Figure 6. Unmatched pre and post male student's survey results (frequency questions).

Figure 7 presents the matched pre and post female student's survey results for the 11 Likert scale questions for the ACT program. The descriptive statistics *t* test analysis showed a statistical significances at -2.16, $p > .05$ for females answering the question "At school I try as hard as I can to do my best."
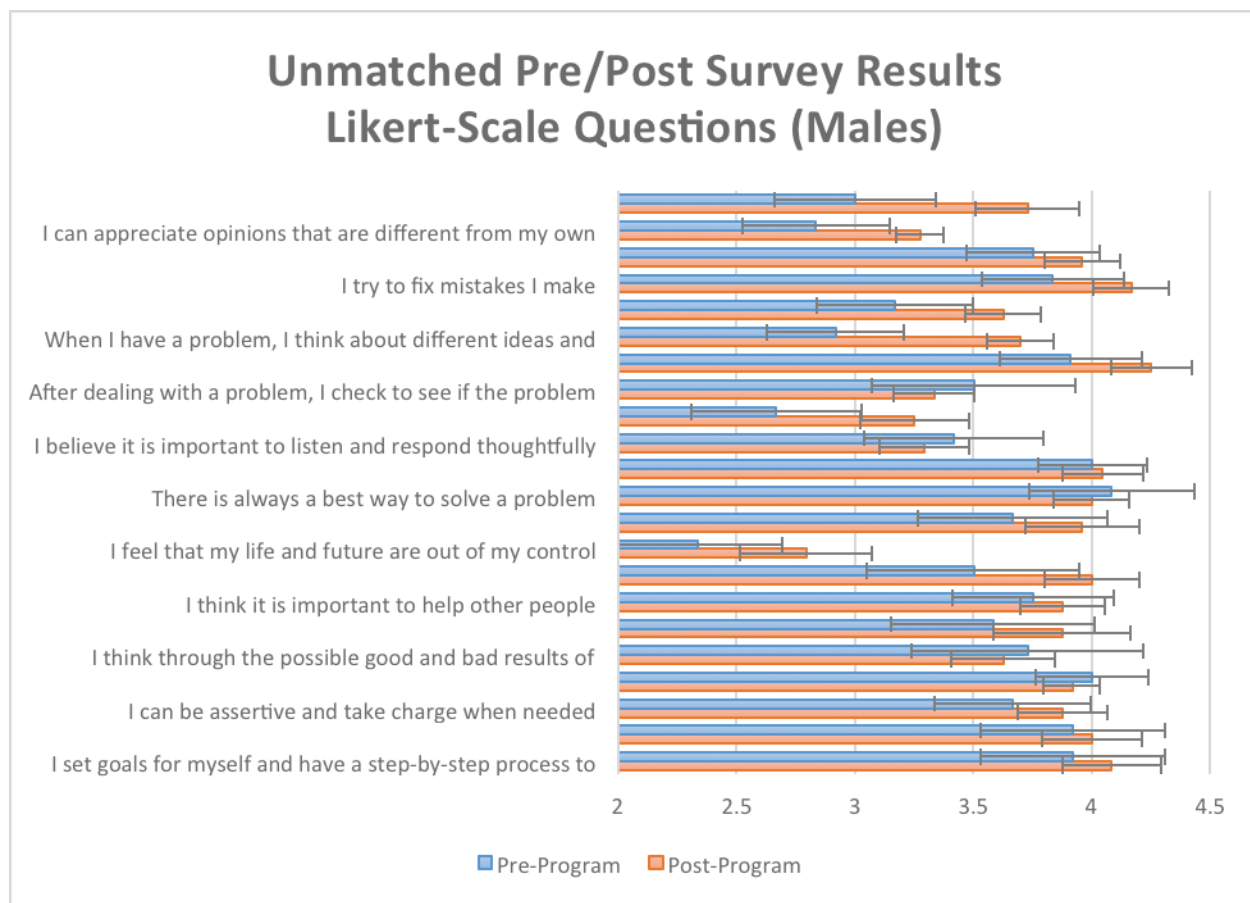
Figure 7. Matched pre and post female student's survey results (Likert scale questions).

Figure 8 indicates the results of the *t* test used to compare the pre and post results of matched female ACT students as they relate to the frequency questions portion of the survey. There was a statistically significant difference pre to post at -2.71, $p > .05$ for matched females answering the question, "How many clubs or organizations are you involved in?" In addition, there was a statistical significance at -2.47 $p > .05$ for females answering the question, "How many clubs or organizations outside of school are you involved in?"
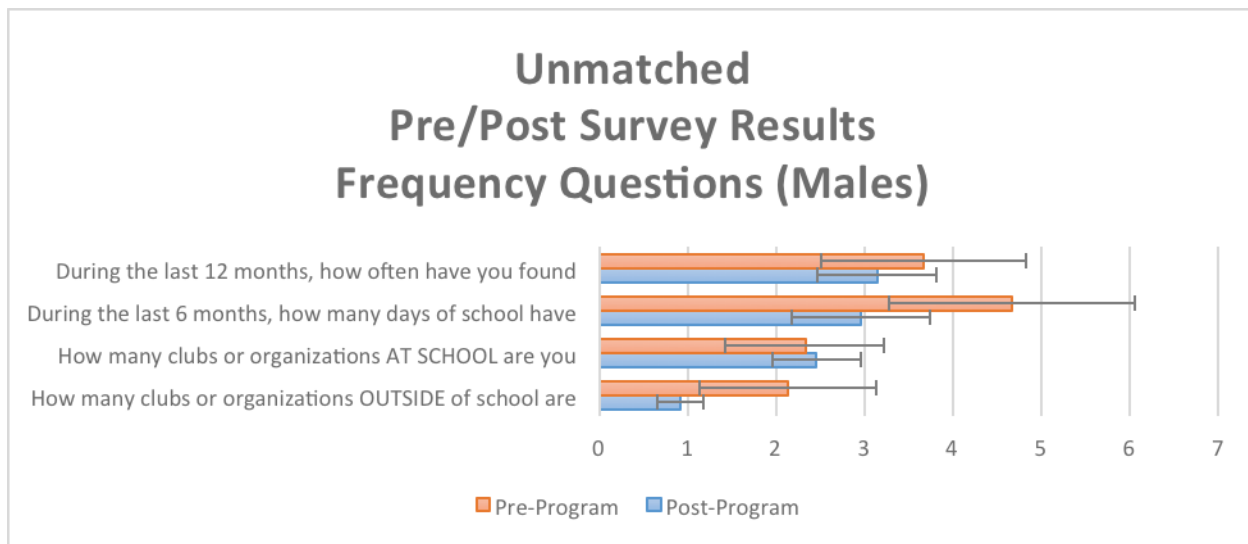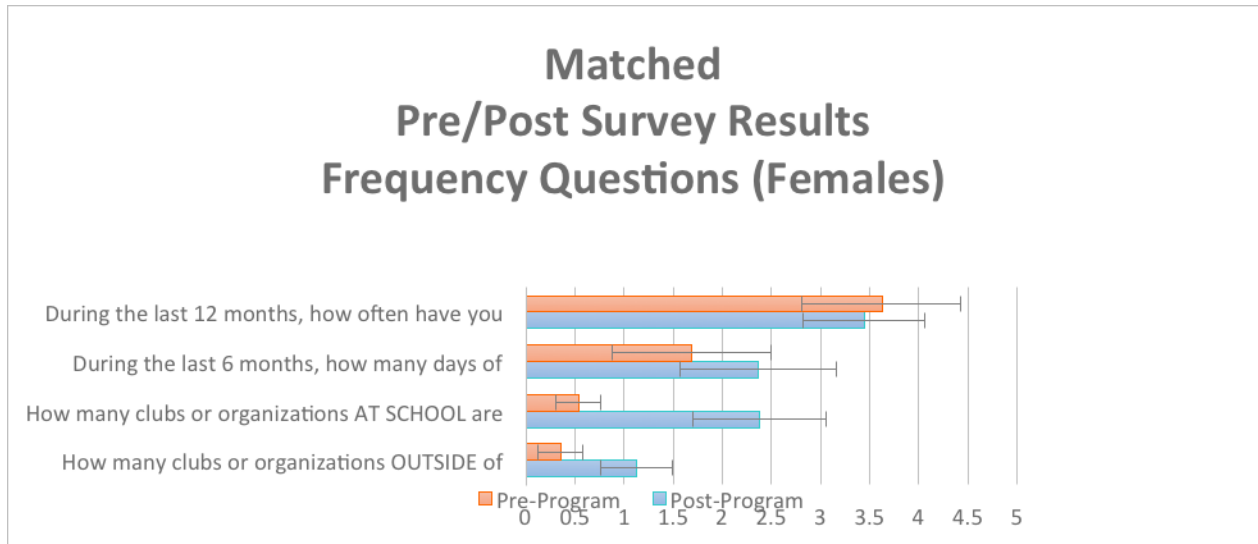
Figure 8. Matched pre and post female student's survey results (frequency questions).

Figure 9 presents the matched pre and post male student's survey results for the 11 Likert scale questions for the ACT program. The descriptive statistics *t* test analysis showed a statistical significances at -2.63, *p* > .05 for males answering the question "I think through the possible good and bad results of different choices before I make decisions."
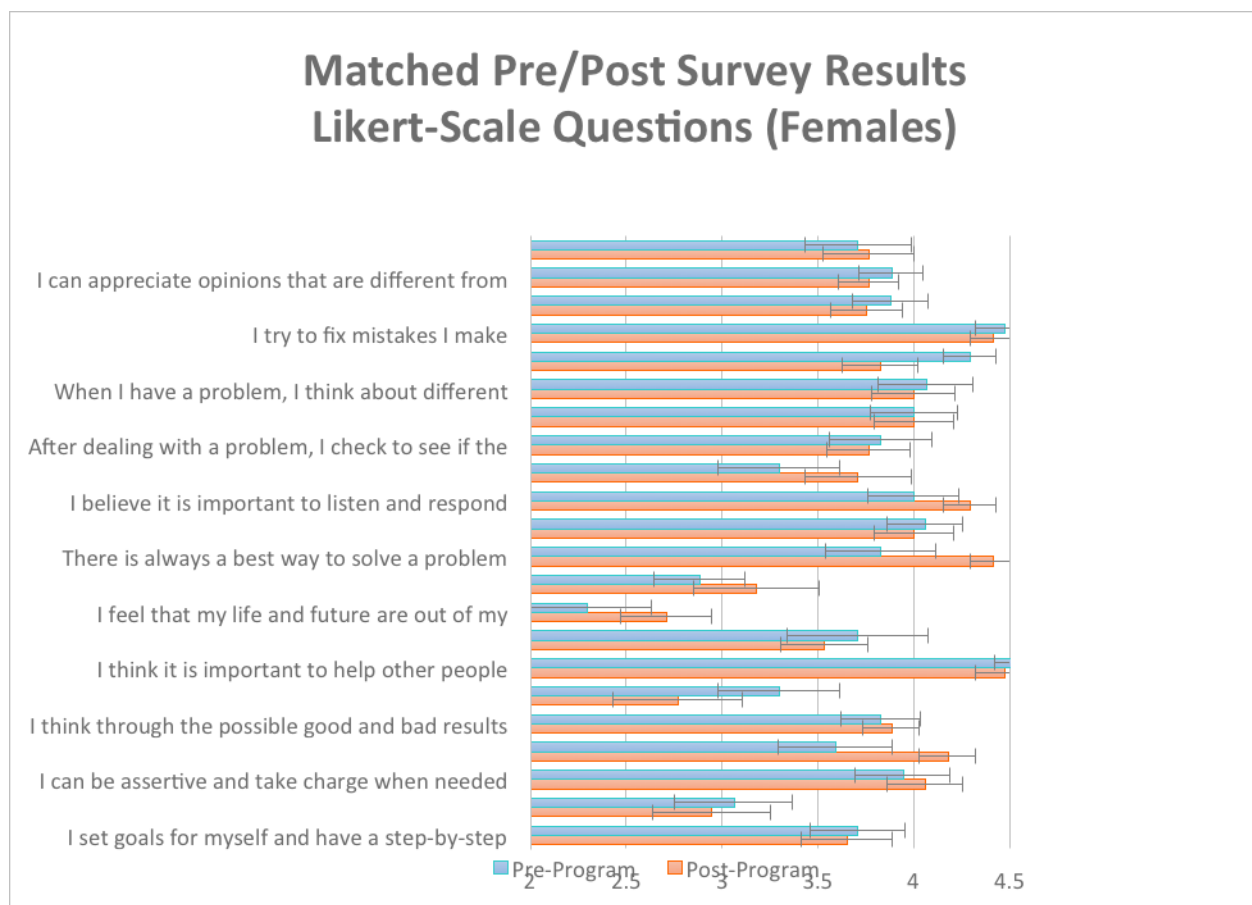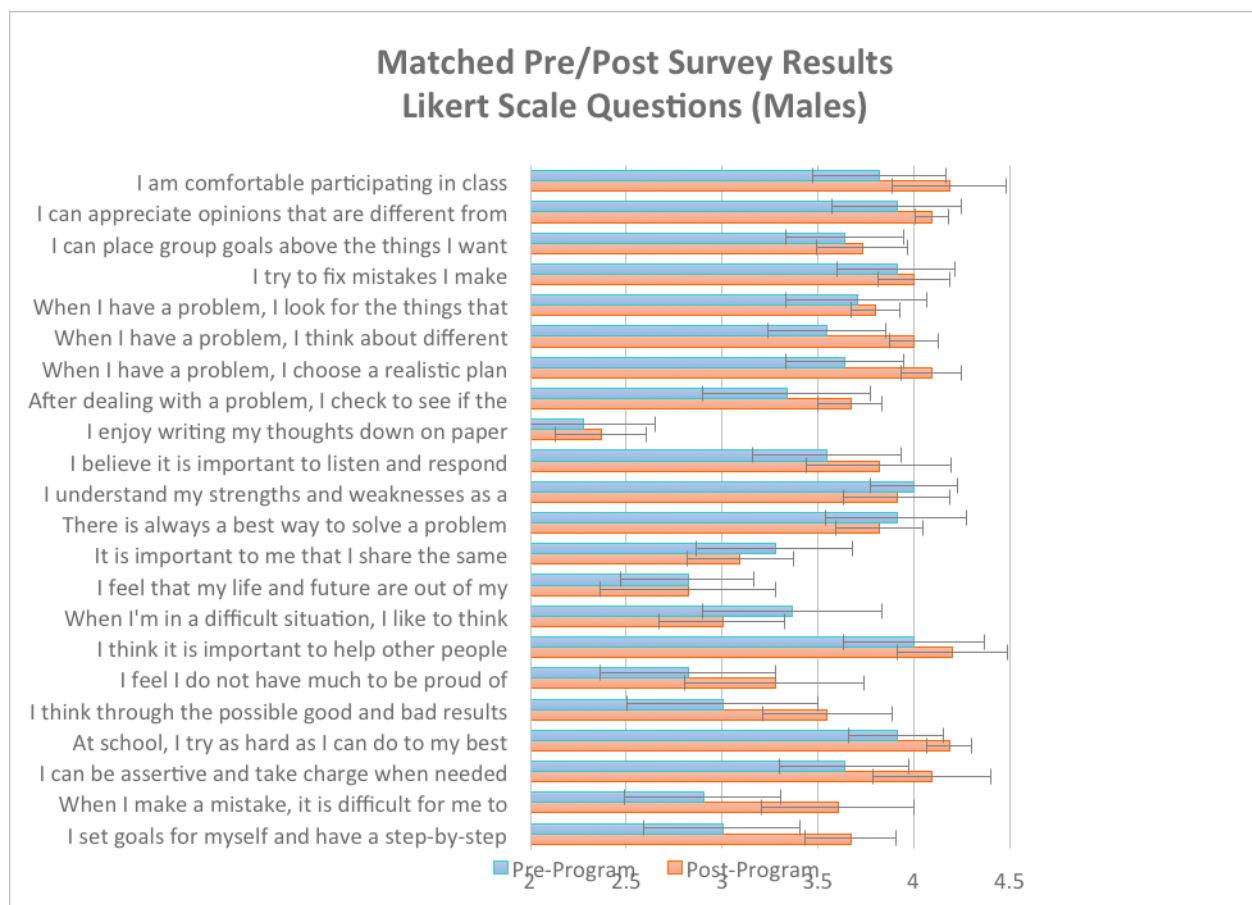
Figure 9. Matched pre and post male student's survey results (Likert scale questions).

Figure 10 indicates the results of the *t* test used to compare the pre and post results of matched male ACT students as they relate to the frequency questions portion of the survey. The results of the *t* test showed that although there were some statistical differences pre and post, there were no statistically significant difference in the pre and post frequency questions for matched males in the ACT program.
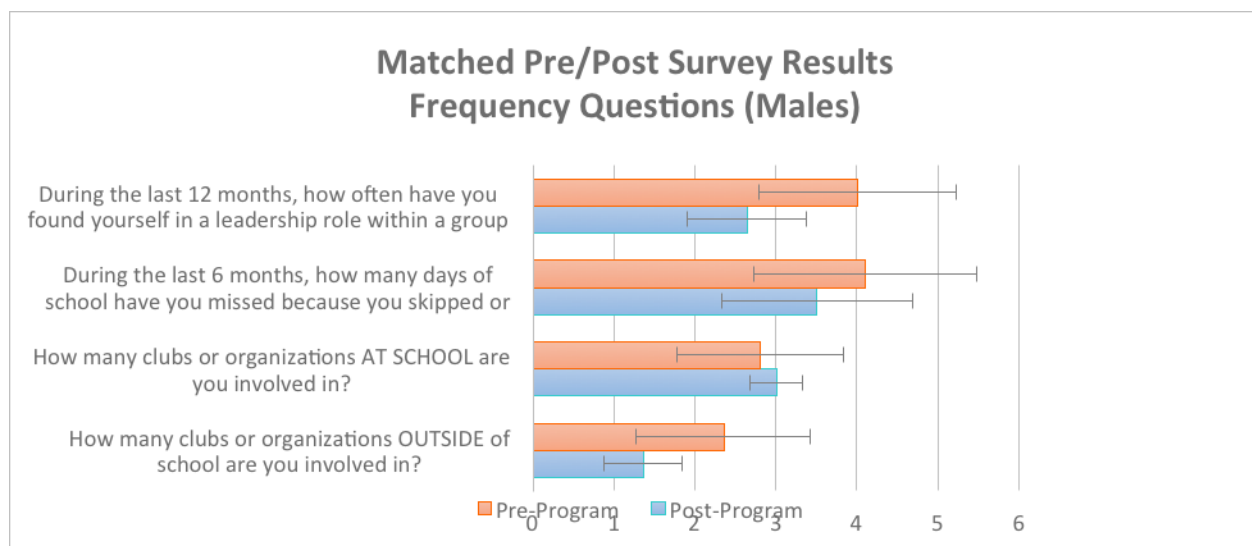
Figure 10. Matched pre and post male student's survey results (frequency questions).

Research question 2. RQ 2 asked: What differences, if any, are there in students'

academic performance at start of the ACT program and the completion of the program? Figure

11 shows the comparison of ACT service-learning students GPA's prior to the start of the ACT

program and the semester immediately following their participation in the ACT program.

Although the data showed a slight point increase for both male and female participants who were

involved in the ACT program, males had a mean of 1.65 prior to ACT and 1.80 following the

ACT program. The data showed females mean GPA at 1.88 prior to ACT and 2.02 following

their participation in ACT. However, there was no statistical significance as the *t* test for males

was -0.82, $p > .05$ and for females was -0.93, $p > .05$. Therefore the results of the *t* test indicate

no statistically significant difference in the cumulative GPA of students prior to the ACT

program and after their participation in the ACT program.
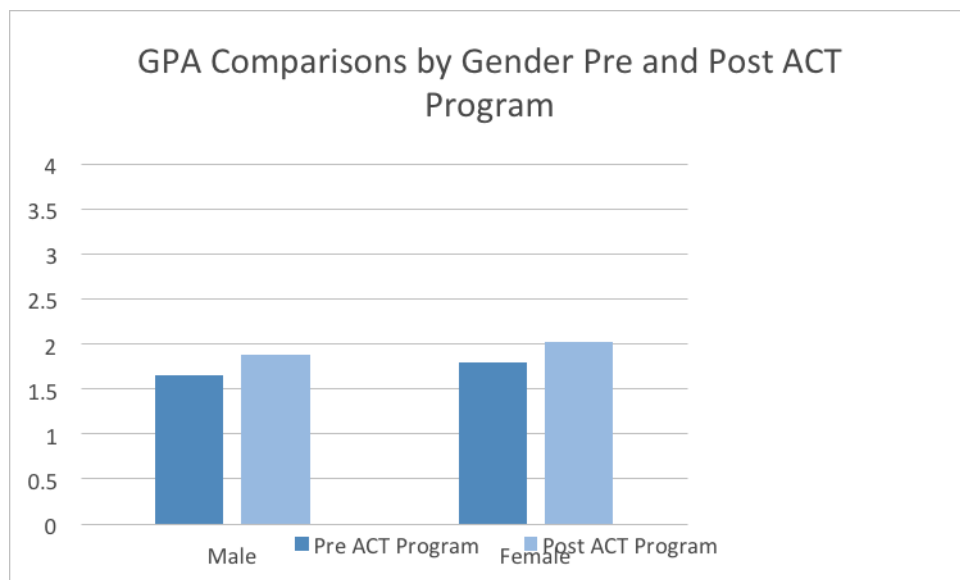
Figure 11. GPA comparison pre and post ACT program by gender.

Figure 12 shows a comparison of the average of school days missed for ACT program student's pre and post the ACT program. In addition, there were higher female absence rates, possibly due to much higher number of female observations (65). There was no statistical significance as the *t* test for males was -1.82, $p > .05$ and for females -2.44, $p > .05$. Therefore the results of the *t* test indicated no statistically significant difference in the average days absent of students prior to the ACT program and after their participation in the ACT program.
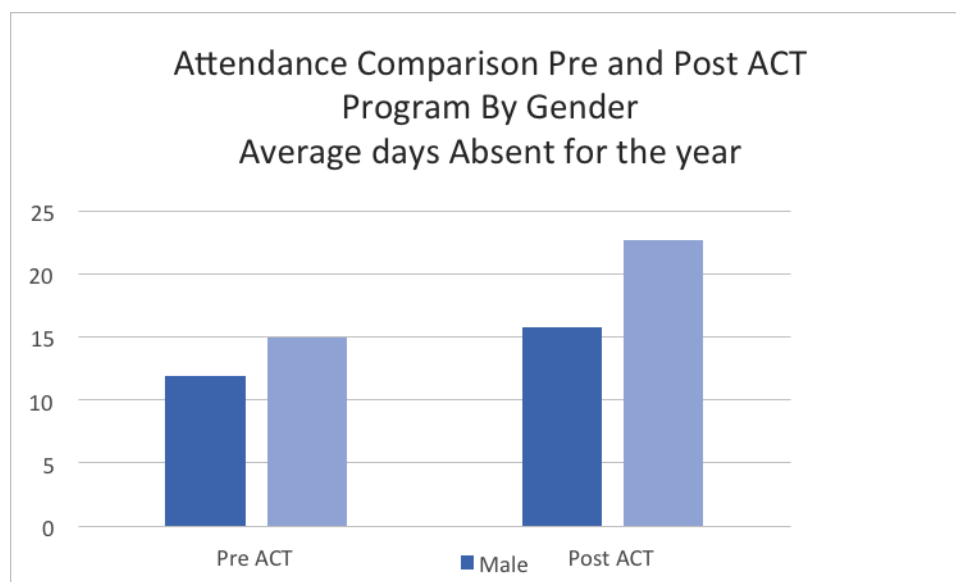
Figure 12. Attendance comparison pre and post ACT program by gender.

Qualitative Findings

Research question 3. RQ 3 asked: "How are Billig's components of an effective

service-learning program present in ACT program?" The following subsections answer RQ 3.

Duration and intensity. According to Billig's (2000) research, it is crucial for SLP

programs to incorporate adequate duration and intensity that allows for the opportunity to

address the community needs and meet specified outcomes. The ACT program offers California

standards-based specific service-learning curriculum in a packaged lesson. Each lesson is

designed to run from 45 to 60 minutes each session. At YAHS, the program was offered

Monday through Friday for 16 weeks for 55 minutes per class. Students used Fridays for

debriefing lessons and building their knowledge base on the community needs. According to

teacher training materials, program implementation materials and the Facilitators Annual

Implementation Survey (AIS) data, students were charged with participating in 16 activities that

prepared them to research, create and execute a meaningful service-learning projects within their

community. According to the AIS, the facilitator of the program stated that "More time should

be allotted for the student's actual service project completion." Although there exist strong

intensity and focus on the curriculum, students ability to actually engage and complete their

service projects was limited.

    Link to formal curriculum. Billig (2000) suggested that SLP's with formal curriculum

and that have clearly explicit learning goals and outcomes have had a positive effect on program

participants. The ACT program has a formal written curriculum called "Acts of Caring Teens!"

The company states that the curriculum has been aligned to California teaching standards. There

are 16 lessons in the curriculum and each class period is led for at least 55 minutes per lesson

and guided by the facilitator solely using the formal curriculum. Annual training is provided to

the facilitator of the ACT program and knowledge on service learning as a pedagogy and

teaching strategies that impact the SLP classes are offered to each facilitator. For four

consecutive years the ACT program facilitator reported in the AIS that the courses and service

projects have a strong link to formal curriculum. Each of the lessons identified clear learning

goals for students and had cross-curricular influences that included mathematics, language arts

and various life skills instruction.

    Partnerships. According to the curriculum, students are responsible for mapping areas

and identifying potential service partnerships within their existing school setting and neighboring

communities. The ACT program facilitator stated that students were "encouraged to use various

tools to identify community needs and possible partnerships that they could form service projects

with to meet a problem area." Based on the curriculum, program design materials and the annual

facilitator implementation survey, the ACT program lacked a formal process that encouraged

students to forge formal partnerships with community agencies and groups. The activities in the

curriculum focused heavily on student's self-discovery and leadership development. The latter part of the curriculum focused on teaching the students to develop a formal plan of action with the following components: SMART Goals, a mission statement, list of resources, logo creation, budget, transportation, timeline for project, group duties and responsibilities. However, the program facilitator listed in the AIS a few community partnerships that have been developed by student's previous projects, those included:

- Habitat for Humanity;

- Local voter registration;

- HPCA;

- Los Angeles Conservation Corps;

- Local Food Banks;

- Youth Academy Charter School.

Meaningful service. In the final section of the ACT curriculum students were asked to "define the meaning of service." The facilitator mentioned in the AIS that most lessons were led orally and students were allowed to have group discussion without writing down their thoughts. This lesson in particular seemed to guide students along a journey of discovering their ideas on service projects that would truly impact their communities. Student 0029 wrote in his journal "I never thought about helping anyone outside my family. Now I guess I should." Impacting both the student and the community seemed to be an essential element of the ACT program curriculum. Students were often instructed in the lesson prompt to be "thoughtful" when making decisions about their service-learning projects. The facilitators reported the following as some of the service projects students were able to complete:

- Food insecurity on campus. Students wanted to bring awareness to their school about food insecurity. They organized a canned food drive and donated it to their local church. They also made breakfast for the entire school and served it to the school

- Beach cleanup. Students organized a beach cleanup through Habitat for Humanity. They sent in applications and organized various days through the year to go and clean up local Southern California beaches.

- Voter registration. A group organized a mass voter registration event here on campus. We have many students who are 18 years and older and not registered to vote. This group was able to register over 15 students on campus including staff and some community members.

- School cleanup. A group organized a restoration of the lunch area here at the school. They cleared up the brush and weeds, planted new plants and painted old plant pots. Tables and seating areas were also replaced and increased allowing more students to enjoy their lunch in the outdoor area.

Youth voice. According to Billig and Conrad (1997), SLPs that encourage student dialogue promote student learning, school engagement and growth. In the ACT student's service projects, students are prepared to fully create their teams, map their community needs and design their projects (including post service evaluations) for their respective service projects. The curriculum allows for full inclusion of student voice in their projects by guiding them with a structure for guiding their projects. Upon review of the program materials, the ACT student journal and based on analysis of the facilitators' AIS it was noted that the ACT program places extreme focus and value on incorporating student voice throughout the entire program.

Following each lesson, students were given a prompt and encouraged to speak openly

about their thoughts and growth based on the lesson. In addition, youth voice was also very present in the students' creation and development of their service-learning projects. All projects are led by the students' vision and design. Students have the opportunity to discuss their project choices, pitfalls and redirect their project intentions at any point during the project timeline. Although, the facilitator may have been able to design a polished service-learning project, the facilitator was very strategic about the support offered to students to allow for students' full ownership of their projects from start to completion.

Student reflections. Student reflections played a crucial role in the ACT program. Students were encouraged to present orally their reflections following each daily lesson and write reflections in their program journals at the end of the lesson. In addition, students were encouraged to choose their media types for reflection. Students used various methods including picture collages, videos, drawings or other creative methods. However, many students failed to participate in regular reflections because of poor school attendance and the inability to participate in the preceding activity that would have been required to complete the journal reflection entry. The ACT facilitator stated the following:

> Many times students are absent especially in the ACT classes. They are here one day and not here the next. They then cannot finish their reflection journals since they did not participate in the project or activities for the day. They cannot make up that activity because usually it involves group activities and competitions. Also many times students express their experiences and feedback orally and not their journal.

Although written reflections were limited in this study, the researcher was able to gather a few written reflections in the collected journal. Students could have felt that the reflections

were important enough to be written into their journals even beyond the oral reflection period. Some of written reflections included the following:

- Student 0034: From today's lesson I learned that I am empathetic, in control of myself and self-aware. I've had many dilemmas that I solved depending on the situation. Without my moral convictions and what I believe to be right, I might have done the wrong thing.

- Student 0041: Today's lesson was how to be a good leader. It is important because in order to be a good leader, you need to have good qualities. Because, if you do not have this then you can be a leader.

- Student 0033: After today's lesson I realized that my strengths are, I guess, being prepared most of the time. Creativity and I am a pretty good problem solver. Things I need to work on are caring, adaptability and cooperation. I do need to work on adaptability because to me it isn't easy to adapt to things.

Diversity. According to Billig (2000), diversity in a service-learning program is explained as one that promotes understanding and a mutual respect for varying ideas and perspectives. Based on the researched analysis of the program materials, the ACT program incorporated very few opportunities to develop students' connection to diversity. There were no lessons that directly spoke of diversity and none of the journal reflection prompts challenged students to speak on the topic of diversity. However, according to the facilitator training, facilitators are trained to encourage students to offer varying perspectives during reflection and debrief of activities. In addition, several students reported in their journal entries thoughts about accepting other people's ideas during group interactions as well as challenging ideas of stereotypes and preconceived ideas about race, culture and identity.

Progress monitoring. Following the completion of the service earning curriculum

students met in their service learning teams. According to the facilitator training manual

progress is checked via face-to-face group meetings with the team. The facilitator was charged

with meeting regularly with student project teams to review their goals and progress on their

respective projects. The ACT program facilitator stated the following regarding monitoring and

tracking student project progress:

> I would have weekly check-ins to monitor students' progress. Once a week I would have
>
> groups report out on their progress. Then the student group leader and I would set
>
> weekly goals for each group. They would have to have certain things finished by the
>
> next time that we met.

> Overall, the student's projects were monitored continuously throughout the course of the

semester to verify progress towards goals, and objectives and students were afforded support in

making adjustments and improvements to their specific service learning projects. One noticeable

finding is that, if students were unable to start or complete their project during the course of the

ACT class semester, there does not currently include a process for tracking or monitoring group

meetings, progress or SLP completion.

Research question 4. RQ 4 asked: How do students assume leadership in their service-

learning assignment? Following the conclusion of the ACT program's formal lessons, students

were instructed with the following parameters to begin working on their service projects:

> The leadership skills you have been learning in this program, are going to be helpful from
>
> this point on. Now you will begin solving problems, working as a team, using
>
> communication skills and setting goals to change the lives of others. This will be your
>
> service project. You will need to define your goal, create a plan to accomplish that goal

and a timeline to help keep you on task. Every group needs to create rules and delegate

roles and duties to each member. (MfM Student Workbook, p. 175)

In the facilitator's training manual, facilitators are instructed not to deviate from the

instructions above. Following formal lessons, the facilitator seemed to become more of a

sounding board for student's questions and needs for support. The facilitator is also trained to be

a guidance of student learning and engagement and not to interfere with the development of

projects or group interactions.

According to the facilitator's AIS:

Leaders naturally emerge in the service project planning process. Certain students

naturally take the lead and start delegating work. This usually takes a few days to

happen. Students start playing around and not working then a couple of people naturally

emerge and begin the leadership process.

One of the central themes found in students' pre and post surveys of the ACT program

that pointed to students' leadership development was that students seemed to develop a new

perspectives that their peers, as well as they themselves, were in fact strong leaders. Four

students pointed out specific students in their classes as a strong leader. According to student

journal entries, students identified leaders in their class who were good listeners, patient, caring

and good writers.

Student 0022 mentioned that her classmate was a good leader by stating the following:

"My classmate is always patient, listens to what other have to say and she steps up when no one

else is doing anything, she steps up to get things done." Student 0040 stated: "My classmate is a

great leader because he is a good friend. He gives great advice, examples, loyal and brave."

Research question 5. RQ 5 asked: How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of service-learning and the completion of their service-learning experiences? A number of themes emerged from the researcher's coding analysis of three open-ended questions that ACT students were asked on their pre- and post-test surveys. The themes identified addressed the research question and measured student's leadership growth over the course of the ACT program. The following subsections answer RQ 5.

Students' shift in perceiving leaders as authoritative to transformational leaders. The ACT Program Open Ended Survey Question 1 asked: "List three characteristics of an effective leader. Write one sentence for each characteristic, explaining why it is an essential quality of a leader." There were 39 different leadership qualities noted by students in their pre- and post-surveys. The following themes were derived from the coding analysis process. Initially during the pre-test phase (which occurred prior to the ACT program), a large number of students stated their belief that an effective leader was a person who is assertive, takes charge and tells others what to do. Essentially, student belief that an effective leader was a person that others "had to" listen to was the emergent theme. Also, the idea that a quality leader is increasingly about the leader and no one else. The leader is the central focus of being effective. This could likely be due to students' experiences as young people where most of their leadership interaction is not by choice, but instead out of necessity or force. Whereas on the post-test (following their full semester in the ACT program) students' perception shifted and a theme clearly emerged that showed students now believed that effective leadership was embodied by those who were respectful, responsible, showed integrity and courage. Their experience in the program shifted their perception of quality leadership to considering strong leaders as those who exhibit selflessness. One student identified three characteristics of an effective leader as the following:

Student 0011: A good leader show confidence, it is important that people can see you as reliable. Strive to be a good/effective leader you must be determined. Humble, as an effective leader you must be concerned of others aside from just yourself.

Looking for leadership within instead of looking at others as leaders. The ACT Program Open Ended Survey Question 2 asked: "Name someone who you think us a good leader and explain how he or she demonstrates good leadership." During the coding process it became clear to the coding team that there was an evolution in student perceptions about who they saw as quality leaders. Many at the pre-test phase noted various people including celebrities, athletes, well-known government figures and parents. However, this changed at post-test and students began to identify themselves as leaders in the post test. Initially when answering this question, most students used language like "they" and "those" to describe an effective leader. In contrast, the post-test surveys showed a majority of students using "I" and "We" when referring to effective leaders.

- Student 0006: I think I'm a good leader to my little sister and brother because I show them the right thing to do and not the wrong thing.

- Student 0021 wrote: An effective leader has integrity, doing what the right thing and being honest with everything. Having strong moral principles. An effective leader has self-control. Strong leaders know that their ability to stay calm is crucial, event at worst conflicts. An effective leaser is a caring individual, Strong leaders can never take the place of those we lead. If so, those we lead will think we do not care. Leaders show a caring attitude about their presentation.

More males identified "mothers" than females. Based on the survey data, 61% of male students listed their mother as a person they saw as a strong leader. Below are a few of the comments male students made about their mothers:

- Student 0021: I know my mom is a good leader because she motivates me a lot on doing better and trying to become someone way better. She motivates me on everything that I do, so I won't be like other people that do not become anything.

- Student 0005: I think my mom is a leader and someone to look up to because no matter how hard it gets, she never gives up and finds a way to solve it.

Mothers as strong leaders. A large number of student identified a relative as a person they said was an effective leader. Mothers were described as strong, selfless, giving and caring. One student described the mother as a good leader:

- Student 0029: My mother is a good leader because even when she gets home from work, she still has a smile on her face.

- Student 0027: My mom, because she was a single mom with four kids; she still managed to go forward with anyone's help!

- Student 0002: My mom is a good leader because she tells me what's good or what's right. She tells me what not to do and looking at her she has never done anything wrong. I look up to my mom because she is smart and knows what she is doing.

Good listeners can be good leaders. This was a strong theme that emerged from student's pre surveys to post. Students began to recognize that good leaders had to be good listeners. Students recognized this as an essential attribute that supported good leaders in garnering followers and the respect of those they lead. Listening was essential to the leader's

ability to "motivate" and "inspire" followers. Overall, 31% of students pointed to listening as a key indicator for those they perceived to be good leaders.

My peers as leaders. Several students used common words or phrases that gave rise to another emergent theme in the student survey data. Initially in the pre surveys a variety of students noted adults and parents as strong leaders. However, following the ACT program, a large number of student surveys listed fellow peers as leaders. Not only good leaders amongst their peers, but leaders they trusted to lead. The ACT program is comprised of a host of teambuilding exercises that may have in fact helped students build trust and identify potential leaders within their peer groups.

Think before you act. The ACT Program Open Ended Survey Question 3 asked: "Leaders are often confronted with barrier or obstacles while working on a project. Describe three ways an effective leader can work through barriers or obstacles that arise." More than 52% of student expressed in some from that a leaders ability to overcome difficult situation derives from the ability to be patient and think before acting. Students believed that this ability was an essential element in allowing a leader to plan, calm down and develop courage that would likely aid them in overcoming obstacles. A few students stated the following in response to this survey question:

- Student 0024: A good leader uses patience, time and courage to work through obstacles that will arise when working on a project. A good leader should use patience and not get frustrated with themselves or the situation. A good leader should use time to think about how they will overcome their situation or solve the problem. Lastly, a good leader needs and uses courage to believe in the fact that they can overcome anything they have a problem with.

- Student 0001: If he or she is patient, they can think of something to do. Having a clear mind makes you relax so you can think rational.

Remaining positive is essential to overcoming obstacles. Following the students' involvement in the ACT program there seemed to be an evolution in the perception of what it takes for good leaders to overcome obstacles. Over 43% of students who completed the survey used various adjectives in their surveys that represented a good leader's ability to keep calm and level-headed when confronted with obstacles. Most believed that good leaders meet these challenges with a positive attitude and patience. These leaders were also those that students saw as having the ability to always be positive and having the ability to ignore negativity and instead choose to look at obstacles with a positive outlook.

- Student 0014: Ignore all negativity and stay thinking about the things that are positive.

- Student 0010: See the bright side of situations; Have a positive mindset; Ignore negativity.

- Student 0021: A good leader can overcome obstacles by not letting them get to you! By working hard and do not get disturbed; by reacting to the situation the fastest.

Creative thinkers. Of the students who completed the survey, 77% of them articulated the importance of an effective leader's ability to approach obstacles with creativity. Students believed that strong leaders are willing and able to think outside of the confines of the typical approach and find new ways to overcome challenges. In addition, student showed a strong belief that effective leaders are those that dare to innovate, create and inspire other to act. The ACT program challenges students with various hands-on and creative activity to figure out problems, perhaps this theme derived from student exposure to these solution based program activities.

Authoritative leaders overcome everything. Another significant theme that was derived from the coding process was student perceptions regarding authoritative leaders being able to overcome any obstacles. Of students surveyed, 33% of believed that leaders that exercise their ability to "take charge" were effective and able to overcome obstacles. Leaders who were seen as outspoken, assertive and commanding followers to act, were seen as those who can overcome any challenge they may face. Students stated the following:

- Student 0016: Good leaders ask questions, take control of the situation and take responsibility.

- Student 0022: A good leader knows how to keep people in check to get their work done.

Summary of Salient Findings

The Acts of Caring Teens service-learning program implemented at Youth Academy High School was implemented Fall 2014–Summer 2016 as a mandatory course required for graduation. This study used archival data from the SLP to determine student's academic and leadership gains based on their participation in this formal SLP. Based on the quantitative data, the ACT program had an impact on both male and female participants. Female participants had a *t* value of -2.19 making it statistically significant that they enjoyed writing their thoughts down on paper more following their participation in the ACT program. It was also found with a statically significant *t* value of -2.18 that female participants increased their participation in clubs and organizations at school following their participation in the ACT program. Another finding for matched female participants was a statistical significance for females' pre to post with a *t* value of -2.16 corresponding to the question, "At school, I try as hard as I can do to my best work." In addition, this matched female group also indicated a statistically significant finding regarding the frequency questions, "How many clubs or organizations AT SCHOOL are you

involved in?" with a *t* value of -2.71 and the question, "How many clubs or organizations OUTSIDE of school are you involved in?", with a *t* value of -2.47. There was also a statistically significant finding for male participants of the ACT program, responding to the question, "I think through the possible good and bad results of different choices before I make decisions." Male matched students showed a *t* value of a -2.63.

The ACT program also impacted the student's academic performance. The data showed that both males and females had increases in their overall GPA following their participation in the program. However, there were not statistically significant findings related to students' participation in the service-learning program and their overall GPA. The researcher also looked at students' school attendance to see if there was any correlation between students ACT participation and increased school attendance, which could also be attributed to increase overall GPA. The data showed no observable trend by gender over time; however, higher female absence rates were possibly due to a much higher number of female observations (n = 65). There was no statistical significance as the *t* test for males was -1.82, *p* > .05 and for females was -2.44, *p* > .05. Therefore, the results of the *t* test indicated no statistically significant difference in the average days absent of students prior to the ACT program and after their participation in the ACT program.

Considering Billig's (2000) eight key components of effective SLPs, the analysis of the ACT program determined that the program was strongly designed and implemented the following key components: duration and intensity, link to formal curriculum, meaningful service, youth voice, student reflection and progress monitoring. However, analysis of the data found that the following components were weak in either program design or implementation, as well as partnerships and diversity. The ACT program was designed and implemented with a strong

focus on duration and intensity. The program was designed to be implemented over 16 sessions for at least one hour. The implementation of the ACT program at YAHS increased both the duration and intensity; the program was implemented for 16 weeks, Monday–Thursday for 55 minutes and Fridays for 30 minutes. Students were able to get fully involved in the curriculum and build significant relationships through the time allowed for activities and team building. Analysis of the programs materials found that there was a strong link to formal curriculum for the ACT service-learning program. The ACT program has a curriculum that was in line with California state standards and was designed with both a teacher's and student workbook. The curriculum was a self-contained workbook for each student and included stated goals for each session. Another area that the ACT program met the standard of effective SLPs was in the area of meaningful service and student voice. There was evidence that supported student ideas and student led interactions lead to projects that were very meaningful to both the student participants and the communities in which the projects were being implemented. Although there was limited data collected from students' written journal reflections, the facilitators' AIS provided in-depth information about students' ability to present oral reflections following every activity and ongoing reflections throughout the projects. Lastly, the data analysis found that students' progress was monitored using a formal process illustrated in the curriculum and the facilitator supported this format by monitoring student projects both formally via in person weekly check-ins and informally by monitoring students progressing from the research of the projects to their actual implementation and completion.

In contrast, analysis of the ACT programs showed limited evidence of the SLPs partnerships. This was likely initially due to the students' inability to actually complete their design service-learning project. When the ACT program was initially implemented at YAHS,

the students were only able to complete the formal curriculum portion of the program and the semester ended prior to their ability to implement their designed program. The facilitator noted that this improved over the years and a balance was created that allowed students to complete the formal curriculum and implement short service-learning projects in the course of a semester. However, there were very few partnerships developed formally or informally throughout the duration of the research years. Lastly, after analyzing the data it was determined that although the facilitators of the ACT program are trained in various teaching methods, no training was provided in regards to ways to incorporate diversity into the programs implementation. There were no lesson that focused on diversity and no data that supported the notion that diversity was an essential component of the ACT program.

Analysis of students' open ended survey responses and journal entries and the facilitator's AIS found that selection of student leaders for the service-learning projects happened naturally. Student leaders naturally emerged and their peers, over time, built trust for specific students throughout the course. Students also began to see the value and leadership qualities within some of their peers over time. However, it must be noted that due to the limited formal written responses in the students' program journals, very few conclusions could be drawn from this limited data.

Several themes emerged in students' open ended survey responses that pointed to their perspectives regarding effective leadership qualities. First, student perceptions seemed to shift from believing that good leaders were authoritative to the idea that good leaders were those who were seen as transformational. Second, student perceptions over the course of the ACT program moved from looking at others as good leaders to the idea that they too were solid leaders and embodied some of the qualities of a good leader. Third, students (especially male students)

identified mothers as those they perceived as quality leaders. Mothers were noted for their

compassion, consistency and strength, which made them strong leaders for students to identify.

Fourth, students identified good leaders as those who had the ability to listen to their followers.

Students believed that quality leaders had the propensity to actively listen, communicate and

engage with those who lead. Fifth, at the end of the ACT program, 33% of students identified

their peers as people they saw as strong leaders. Sixth, students mentioned that quality leaders

had the dynamic capability to remain positive in the face of adversity. In addition, quality

leaders were seen as those who take time to make decisions and were reluctant to react without

consideration for others. Finally, 17% of students noted that effective leaders were those who

could think creatively and formulate new ideas that could benefit the whole group.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Problem and Purpose

At-risk students are defined as, "children who have any type of disadvantage that might hinder them in their education. These students may be considered disadvantaged because of low income, poor health, cognitive problems and/or behavior issues" (Foster & Wellman, 2009, p. 122). One of the tasks of alternative schools, charter schools and comprehensive high schools are to seek programs that will help these students to stay in school and graduate from high school. Service-learning experiences, such as the ACT service-learning program evaluated in this study, have potential to increase the likelihood that at-risk students will internalize positive values associated with school and learning (Zaff, 2010). Thus, the intended effect of service learning programs is to increase the probability that at-risk students will remain in school and potentially graduate from high school (Powell, 2003).

The goal of this study was to evaluate various programs to determine their viability and value to promote student graduation. Thus, this study selected a service learning program that was designed for at-risk youth. The program operated for two consecutive years or four semesters. This study sought evidence of the program's benefits to determine the value of the program to meet school goals. One of the primary aspects of the program was to provide opportunities for these students to have leadership opportunities. Underserved students in low income urban areas have few opportunities to participate in positive leadership roles in their schools or communities. These underserved students may not be afforded the chance to develop or enhance their leadership skills in a competitive comprehensive high school. Thus, they are

not equipped to affect changes in their immediate communities after graduation. Over time, this can result in a lack of leadership and real-world skills in underserved communities.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a mandatory service-learning intervention elective class for at-risk students by (a) examining the academic achievements of participating ACT students considered at-risk, (b) identifying the practices perceived by students and teachers as contributing to effectively developing the students' leadership abilities and (c) examining the overall effectiveness of this service-learning program in supporting the leadership development of at-risk high school students. Archival data was collected from 102 students and a program facilitator. This study sought out data from the 2014–15 and 2015–16 school years that would provide a depth of information that would determine if the service-learning program met its program goals and assisted at-risk students in their academic and leadership development. This study utilized the following research questions to guide the study:

- RQ 1. What differences, if any, exist between students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Service-learning Student Survey by item and by gender?

- RQ 2. What differences, if any, are there in students' academic performance at start of the ACT program and the completion of the program?

- RQ 3. How are Billig's components of an effective service-learning program present in the ACT program?

- RQ 4. How do students assume leadership in their service-learning assignment?

- RQ 5. How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of service-learning and the completion of their service-learning experiences?

Methodology

A mixed methodological embedded case study approach was used in this study to determine the impact, if any, of a mandatory service-learning intervention elective class on at-risk students in an inner-city charter high school (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2006).

Youth Academy High School is part of a K–12 school district based out of Northern California Unified School District in Sacramento, California. Enrollment for YAHS was approximately 175 to 200 students. The school staff consisted of one principal, one dean, four therapists, five certificated teachers, one uncertified teacher and one administrative assistant. Ninety-six percent of the high school's population lived in the surrounding low-income housing projects. Ninety-four percent of student families were living at or below poverty level. The ethnic composition was 71% (126) of students are Latino or Hispanic, 19% (34) African American, 2% (4) White, 1% (2) Asian or Pacific Islander and 7% who self-identified as *other*. Approximately 2% of students were classified as having disabilities, most often learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disabilities. A school in South Los Angeles was a selected site to pilot the ACT Service-learning program. The service-learning intervention was designed to augment mandatory academic coursework with service-learning experiences in lieu of elective courses.

The researcher was provided with student surveys for 89 participant surveys and attendance and GPA information for 102 student participants. The charter school released the student information from their archival system for academic and attendance data for all ACT participants. Eight data points were collected and analyzed. First, a thorough review of program comments were collected and categorized thematically. Secondly, student demographic data was collected to provide insight on student progress based on gender and race. Third, student

perceptions were collected utilizing pre- and post-program surveys to evaluate student

perceptions of their current leadership and growth

The study was framed utilizing Stufflebeam's input evaluation framework. This method

is often used to assist in prescribing a program, project or other intervention by which to improve

services to intended beneficiaries. An input evaluation assesses (a) the proposed program,

project or service strategy and the associated work plan and (b) the budget for carrying out the

effort (Stufflebeam et al., 2000). The researcher focused on reviewing the program in the

context of Billig's key indicators for quality service-learning (Billig, 2008). The researcher

investigated two groups of stakeholders throughout the course of this study. The students and

the non-credentialed teachers of the SLP.

Findings

The Acts of Caring Teens service-learning program implemented at Youth Academy

High School was implemented from the Fall 2014–Summer 2016 as a required course for

graduation. This study used archival data from the SLP to determine student's academic and

leadership gains based on their participation in this formal SLP. Based on the quantitative data,

the ACT program had an impact on both male and female participants. Female participants had

a *t* value of -2.19 making it statistically significant that they enjoyed writing their thoughts down

on paper more following their participation in the ACT program. It was also concluded, with a

statically significant *t* value of -2.18, that female participants increased their participation in

clubs and organizations at school following their participation in the ACT program. Another

finding for matched female participants was a statistical significance for females' pre to post

with a *t* value of -2.16 corresponding to the question, "At school, I try as hard as I can do to my

best work." In addition, this matched female group also had statistically significant findings

regarding the frequency questions, "How many clubs or organizations AT SCHOOL are you involved in?" with a *t* value of -2.71 *and* the question, "How many clubs or organizations OUTSIDE of school are you involved in?," with a *t* value of -2.47. There was also a statistically significant finding for male participants of the ACT program, responding to the question, "I think through the possible good and bad results of different choices before I make decisions" male matched students showed a *t* value of a -2.63.

Considering Billig's (2000) eight key components of effective SLPs, the analysis of the ACT program determined that the program was strongly designed and implemented the following key components: duration and intensity, link to formal curriculum, meaningful service, youth voice, student reflection and progress monitoring. However, analysis of the data found that the following components were weak in either program design or implementation, as well as in partnerships and diversity.

Analysis of students' open ended survey responses and journal entries and the facilitator's AIS found that selection of student leaders for the service-learning projects happened naturally. Student leaders naturally emerged and their peers, over the duration of the course, built trust for specific students. Students also began to see the value and leadership qualities within some of their peers. However, it must be noted that due to the limited formal written responses in the student's program journals, very few conclusions could be drawn from this limited data.

Conclusions

Based on the findings the following conclusions have been derived:

During the ACT program, the at-risk students developed leadership skills. The ACT facilitator pointed out that she observed the natural emergence of student leaders throughout the

duration of the program. Each small group was led by one student who emerged during the process. These alternative school students may not have had such opportunities in a regular high school or formal classes at the alternative school, but these small groups presented many opportunities for these at-risk students to serve as leaders. Findings from student self-reports revealed that these ACT students developed a strong sense of self and began to see themselves as leaders. Prior to the ACT program, students noted celebrities and others outside of their peer group as leaders. Post-program data revealed that they perceived other students and themselves as leaders. Student 0022 mentioned that her classmate was a good leader by stating the following:

My classmate is always patient, listens to what other have to say and she steps up when no one else is doing anything, she steps up to get things done. Student 0040 stated: "My classmate is a great leader because he is a good friend. He gives great advice, examples, loyal and brave." It can be concluded that students who participate in the ACT program learn more about themselves and the roles of good leaders.

Following the ACT program, the students began to self-identify as leaders, thus building their confidence and self-esteem. Shaffer (1993) and Tierney and Branch (1992) noted that students who engaged in service-learning were more likely to increase their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Furco (2002) reported on the Experiential Education Evaluation Project study by Conrad and Hedin that assessed the impact of service-learning program in secondary schools. This study included more than one thousand secondary school students. The outcomes of this study found strong evidence that quality SLPs help students feel empowered, improve their leadership aptitude, improve self-esteem and increase student motivation to learn. Researchers have also stated that service-learning has increased student's self-esteem, self-efficacy, social

responsibility and ability to connect to their school community (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Wade,

1995). Conrad and Hedin (1989) concluded a study on the quality of community service-

learning and the effects on youth. In their study they found support for the increases in social

and personal responsibility of youth. This included improvements in students' self-esteem, self-

motivation, risk taking, ability to solve real-life problems, responsibility for their own learning,

responsibility to a group or class and concern for others.

The ACT program promoted student voice throughout the program

implementation. The review of program activities noted that they promoted student voice by

allowing students various opportunities to freely express themselves and derive their own voice,

opinions and direction of growth as leaders. The interview with the ACT facilitator was filled

with comments and anecdotes about how students led the direction of their work to create their

SLP. The ACT program facilitator stated several times in the annual survey the importance of

"allowing students to facilitate and direct their own learning" After the program, ACT students

who engaged in the SLP commented that they more likely to treat one another kindly, help one

another and care about doing their best.

Kane and Westheimer (2006) found that students who did not feel "listened to" by adults

in their service-learning program did not feel that they were taken seriously. They reported

being frustrated while taking part in the service-learning program (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006).

In addition, students who were previously observed as introverted and shy became quite

comfortable with expressing their opinions, showed great leadership capabilities and were less

shy. Students who were very active, loud and often disruptive in class began to motivate others,

participate appropriately in the class and represent the service-learning groups as a leader at the

project sites. Overall, students who participated in the service-learning program developed core

relationships with each other and the project recipients. There was a great sense of ownership

and pride in the service project (Nelson, 2008, p. 231). The ACT program facilitator stated

several times in the annual survey the importance of "allowing students to facilitate and direct

their own learning". This ability promoted students' self-awareness, supported students in

developing problem-solving skills and allowed students to be the leaders in developing their own

impactful service projects.

This directly aligns with one researcher's thoughts regarding the importance of quality

SLPs for at-risk students. Nelson and Eckstein (2008) looked at service-learning models for at-

risk students. They learned from teachers that including student voices into daily decision-

making was extremely difficult because of students' disciplinary problems and teachers' fear of

giving up control. Staff members questioned why students who were labeled troublemakers had

the privilege of planning and performing service projects. Both adults and youth struggled with

viewing young people as resources in the community (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). However, the

study points to the necessity of quality SLPs (especially for at-risk students) to include student

perspectives throughout the duration of the service-learning program, which ultimately increases

the student's chances to develop a connection to their school, community, neighborhood and city

(Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). Researchers Morgan and Streb (2001) affirmed the importance of

student voice in SLPs. They stated that for youth to have quality experiences in SLPs, it was

essential that the youths' voices be included in identifying the problem to be addressed, the

community to serve, planning, problem-solving and leading their reflection discussions (Morgan

& Streb, 2001). In addition, most researchers agree that youth voice coupled with strong student

written reflections are the most crucial component of a SLP (Eyler, 2002; Fredericks, Kaplan &

Zeisler, 2001; Nelson, 2008; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). The reflection

component provides the necessary opportunity for students to discuss ideas, their options and insight on service-learning initiatives. It is the component that makes service-learning different from community service.

Female ACT participants developed a sense of community among their peers. The structure of the program encouraged female participants to have more collective and group interactions that promoted their social interactions. Females moved from informal relationships—those that were basic social interactions—to personal activities done together to support a common cause or common good. The survey data showed that female students increased their participation in clubs and organizations at school. Their participation in the ACT program promoted a sense of community amongst their peers, one that moved beyond the classroom and into the school setting and the community. It is hoped that this interaction style will continue into further civic engagement in the future. Conrad and Hedin (1989) concluded a study on the quality of community service-learning and the effects on youth. In their study, they found support for the increases in social and personal responsibility of youth. This included improvements in students' self-esteem, self-motivation, risk taking, ability to solve real-life problems, responsibility for their own learning, responsibility to a group or class and concern for others. Another study by Kielsmeier et al. (2004) found that 83% of principals reported offering some form of service-learning opportunity on their campus, which promoted gains in citizenship and civic engagement, in school-community relationships, students' personal and social development, positive school climate, increase in school engagement, improved in teacher satisfaction and improved students' academic achievements.

After the program, students identified leadership qualities within their families and peer group rather than from public figures. ACT students identified members of their

families or peers as effective leaders. This theme was even more prominent for those students who noted their mothers as effective examples of leadership. One student stated, "I know my mom is a good leader because she motivates me a lot on doing better and trying to become someone way better. She motivates me on everything that I do, so I won't be like other people that do not become anything." Another student mentioned, "I think my mom is a leader and someone to look up to because no matter how hard it gets, she never gives up and finds a way to solve it." Students stated that their mothers were strong, loving, dedicated and consistent in their lives, such that they created a balance within the family unit. Many researchers have noted that mothers play a significant role in shaping the development of leaders. A study by Matz (2001) found that for most leaders, their first role model was their mother and their ability to motivate and relate to others as future leaders is dictated by this extremely important role of their mother.

The ACT program improved male participants' ability to reflect on decisions.
During the ACT program, male participants tended to acquire self-reflection skills regarding their decision making. Male students reported an increased ability to think before making good or bad decisions. One student in the study stated:

> From today's lesson I learned that I am empathetic, in control of myself and self-aware. I've had many dilemmas that I solved depending on the situation. Without my moral convictions and what I believe to be right, I might have done the wrong thing.

> Nelson (2008) found that SLPs affected students' personal and social development, which supports students in making decisions, creating goals and taking action to create change.

The ACT program requires additional implementation time to meet program objectives. The program objective included creating a small group SLP and the implementation of that SLP on a site in the community. Interview data from the ACT facilitator revealed that

50% of the students enrolled in the ACT program had the opportunity to begin implementation of SLP that they developed. The ACT facilitator indicated that the other 50% of the enrolled students may not have completed the SLP that they were developing and none of that 50% had begun to implement their SLP. Thus, from this data, students were unable to complete the actual SLP and were only involved in completing the classroom portion of the program. According to the facilitator, "More time should be allotted for the student's actual service project completion. If the student did not complete the work during the course, I had no means to track if they worked on their own." Despite the program's intentional design to prepare students for service-learning projects and then support students in implementing these projects, over the course of two school years (2014–2016) only 50% of the ACT student groups designed and began implementation of their service-learning projects. The other students did not have the opportunity to fully engage in the benefits of participating in the ACT service-learning project opportunity in their local communities.

Therefore, the ACT program appeared to implement student group development of a SLP project but not the actual community implementation. Therefore, the 50% students, those who were actively engaged in completing their SLP, were unable to apply their leadership skills and new learning to use in the community. Other service learning research suggests that the students most benefit from their work in the community. Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) found that 75% of students who participated in SLPs within the community became more engaged in their other school courses and students found their core courses more relevant and interesting. In addition, this study revealed that 64% of the students reported that they believed that service-learning programming could positively decrease the dropout rate among high school students.

Based on Billig's key component the ACT program does not have a diversity component. Seven of the eight elements in Billig's Keys of Effective Service Learning were found in the ACT service learning program. The missing element was diversity. According to Billig (2000) diversity is an essential component of effective service learning programs as it promotes mutual respect and the ability to look at different perspectives. None of the data in this study pointed to diversity as a component of the ACT program. There was no discussion or introduction of diversity in the ACT curriculum. In addition, the student-led service projects took place primarily in the classroom and the local community. Both the school and community are predominately Latino and African American. Therefore, their experiences were extremely limited in opportunities and experiences that would promote their exposure to other communities and people of diverse backgrounds.

The ACT program provided limited data for the researcher. This study was limited to previously collected data and, thus, the researcher could only analyze the extent of the collected data. The ACT program was not collecting all the data that was required by the program, such as program pre-test and post-test surveys, substantive student comments from the participating students, attendance and GPAs. Impact of the ACT program with at risk high school youth was limited by the low numbers in collected survey data of student participants. Out of 133 possible students involved in the program, this study collected survey data from only 28 matching pre- and post-test survey participants. In addition, the ACT program collected students' perceptions of ACT primarily through untaped class discussion and, thus, students' written comments were short. The researcher received 89 open-ended surveys from a possible 133 students. Attendance data was available for 102 of the 133 students. GPA data was secured for 98 of the 133 students.

This evaluation of the ACT program occurred at an alternative school in which students enter and leave throughout the year without prior notice. Thus, some students completed a pre-test but no post-test because their withdrawal from the school might occur without any request to withdraw, the facilitator is unable to collect post-tests when this happens. Others may have begun the program during the semester and were not administered a pre-test. Securing appropriate data at an alternative school remains a challenge. Such a challenge leads to limitations of data to inform student growth and successful implementation of the SLP.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and stated conclusions, the following recommendations are presented:

ACT program developers should revise the current implementation of the service-learning program during regular school day. There are great benefits to including service learning during the regular school day. The researcher recommends that the ACT service-learning program take another look at the current design and implementation of this program in the high school class setting. Although the program's current design as incorporated into the regular school day likely benefits the schools by providing an additional course offering, it was noted by the facilitator and students that the 16 weeks allotted to run the curriculum and fulfill the students project completion was not enough time. The SLP should consider (a) shortening the number of activities and formal lessons in a week and (b) offering more time to students to actually work on their service-learning projects. In addition, the SLP should consider working with the school's administration to afford students the opportunity to continue to build upon the student relationships that were developed in the ACT class. This can be done by continuing the

course into the subsequent semester with the same cohort of students or by offering an incentive to student groups that continue their service projects beyond the official ACT course.

Kielsmeier et al. (2004) found that 83% of principals reported offering some form of service-learning opportunity for students on their campuses. The study surveyed principals in eight key areas of service-learning impact on students and found that principals perceived the students had positive outcomes in all eight areas: 92% of principals reported gains in citizenship and civic engagement, 91% in school-community relationships, 91% in students' personal and social development, 88% in school climate, 88% in school engagement, 85% in community's view of youth resources, 85% in teacher satisfaction and 83% in students' academic achievements (Kielsmeier et al., 2004).

The ACT program developer should re-evaluate the tool and implementation of the program's pre- and post-surveys. The ACT service-learning program should place a concerted effort on ensuring that all students participate in the program surveys. The researcher recommends that the survey be administered within the first week of the program, at eight weeks into the curriculum and finally during the final week of the course after students present their service-learning projects. It is also recommended that each time a new student is added, they too should be given the pre-survey. In addition, it is recommended that a portion of the facilitators training have a significant focus on proper administration, collection and storage of student survey data. Finally, a target goal should be set ensuring that 95% of students who completed the full service-learning course should have a matching pre- and post-test. Other areas for consideration are (a) incorporating survey administration activities as a regular part of the curriculum; (b) shortening and restructuring the survey instrument, limiting the number of the survey's open-ended questions to ones that students may tend to respond to more thoroughly;

and (c) incorporating focus groups to gauge students' perceptions of their overall experience in

the program as another opportunity to insert student voice into the design and improvement of

the program itself. Finally, it is recommended that the ACT service-learning program test the

survey again on this age group to determine if survey structure, word choice and survey length

are appropriate for 9th to 12th graders.

Service learning placements include opportunities for student paid internships. In

addition, the researcher recommends that the ACT program seek out partners that are willing to

host students as paid interns following the implementation of their service projects. Such

partnerships could potentially motivate both students and partners in looking beyond the project

itself and create opportunities to foster student's job-ready skills. Studies by Billig (2001)

indicated that implemented service-learning projects may lead to student job skills, future

employment and interest in seeking education for job skills.

Future instructors should collect attendance for the ACT service activities. Without

attendance records, the researcher was limited in knowledge regarding the effect of the program

as student absence would affect the completion of the service-learning project. The ACT

program should look at a creating a solid process for collecting, tracking and monitoring

students' progress during the service portion of the program. This study noted that attendance

and tracking is only conducted during the students' participation in the curriculum phase of the

program. In order to track students' success with their project, leadership development and

overall impact, the researcher recommends that continuous tracking occur for the full duration of

the ACT program from classroom through actual project completion. This data could also

support future data request as the school site prepares for WASC visits and may also support

future funding support.

The program design team and marketing should provide a means so students may continuously inform program design. ACT should seek to better incorporate student voice in the program's design. It is important to keep the program appealing. Activities, topics and journal entries should be updated to maintain student interest. Student voice coupled with strong student written reflections are the most crucial component of an SLP (Eyler, 2002; Fredericks et al., 2001; Nelson, 2008, Scales et al., 2000). In addition, Morgan and Streb (2001) stated that the quality of student service-learning experiences is dependent upon their ability to be included in identifying the problem to be addressed, the community to be served, planning, problem-solving and leading their reflections discussions. Student voice is a pertinent component of student engagement in the program. Although the ACT was very intentional about its inclusion of student voice in the design and implementation of the specific projects, there was limited student voice in the class structure, design and service-learning curriculum. It is recommended that these areas be considered annually and opportunities allotted for students to offer their input in areas to improve the program's overall function.

ACT site program should include families to take part in student service-learning experiences. The researcher recommends that both the ACT SLP and the school administration look into opportunities to include the students' families in the projects, especially their mothers. This can be accomplished by hosting a project culmination activity that would allow students to present their projects and outcomes in front of their peers and families. In addition, students could be asked to incorporate their personal ideas on leaders and those they see as model leaders in their lives. These sorts of events could support students in their celebration of their mothers as positive leaders in their lives and allow mothers to have the opportunity to see their child's development over the course of the service-learning program. However, this may be a large task

and can present some obstacles for charter schools. A survey of charter school leaders in 2007 noted that there exists a significant challenge for charter schools in obtaining parent participation (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). The ACT program and YAHS will need to work together to present concrete methods and strategies that will work to build parent participation and include families as part of the student SLP final projects. ACT and YAHS may consider these types of activities:

- Host SLP project culminating events;

- Include student service learning projects as a regular part of parent-invited school events, such as Parent-Teacher conferences and Back to School Nights;

- Include videos of student SLPs on the school's website and social media;

- Include SLPs in the schools back to school nights and parent conferences;

- Work with the SLP's community parents to provide incentives and resources to parents of students who are actively involved in the SLP.

The charter school should connect the ACT course to meet the A-G college requirements. The researcher recommends that the ACT program consider a new name, one that allows for it to be considered as an actual A-G course. In California A-G courses are those that count toward high school graduation requirements. This recommendation includes working with the school's Director of Curriculum and Instruction to better integrate the course into the school's core offerings. This effort could potentially offer students a greater incentive to participate in a split course that offers graduation credits. Students could then be required to take an A portion of the course that would cover the ACT program curriculum and a mandatory B

portion of the course that could be offered in a subsequent semester when students would be required to design and implement their service learning projects.

Service learning partnerships should be developed between school personnel and community. The researcher strongly recommends that both ACT and the school take the lead on identifying and forging formal partnerships with community partners. First, the ACT program curriculum does not currently offer training or support that would teach students how to forge community partnerships. Secondly, with the short timeframe in which the course is currently being offered, it is essential that partnerships are identified well in advance and student could connect with these partners during the design and implementation portion of the course. Such partnerships would help the community as they could count on student support in their work. In turn, students would have a "go-to" community group or business to implement their service learning project. Such a project would be mutually advantageous.

Instructors should record the students' conversations during class debriefing sessions for future research. It is recommended that the program consider creating focus groups from previous and current ACT participants to gather and correlate information about the service learning experience and growth. In addition, these focus groups should be recorded using audio recording which could further assist in the revision and advancement of the program's success.

Developers of ACT program should revise the ACT program to incorporate diversity in the program model. This study recommends that the ACT program seek to incorporate more activities and opportunities to build diversity in the program model. Such activities should encourage students to discuss types of diversity and build relationships with diverse community groups and organizations for their projects. Richards et al. (2013) noted that

found in their research that programs that incorporate opportunities for diversity and inclusion have a positive impact in students' acceptance for those with diverse experiences, cultures and backgrounds. Including opportunities for student to discuss diversity and regular inclusion of promoting opportunities for students to conduct projects in diverse neighborhoods is helpful to students' overall growth.

The findings of this study reveal the need for further research regarding the implementation of service-learning with at-risk students in alternative settings. More research needs to be conducted to inform school leaders about the specific factors within service-learning that produce desired outcomes. Such research is needed to build on the crucial teaching and learning strategies that meet state standards, determine student mastery of concepts and promote overall academic improvements. According to Billig (2000), further research should be done to identify the specific dynamics that make service learning effective as a pedagogy and the types of students who respond best. Future studies on the effects of SLPs on at-risk youth should consider isolating specific subject areas (i.e., math, language arts or reading levels) to see if participation in effective SLPs has any positive effects on student academic achievement.

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APPENDIX A: Letter of Permission to Conduct Study

LOS ANGELES EDUCATION CORPS
college bridge academy · the education corps/saito high school

Letter to Conduct Study

Dear Tisha Middleton

I am currently a doctoral student at Pepperdine University, working on my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. The purpose of my study **"The Impact of a Service Learning Program on the Academic and Leadership Development of At-Risk Charter High School Students"**, is to study is to examine the impact of a mandatory service- learning intervention elective class on at risk students. This study will be **(a)** examining the academic achievements of participating My Future Matters students considered at-risk, **(b)** identifying the practices perceived as contributing to effectively developing the students' leadership abilities by students and teachers, and to **(c)** examining the overall effectiveness of the My Future Matters Service Learning program in supporting the leadership development of at risk high school students. I am sincerely requesting your permission to conduct my study of the service learning program at the College Bridge Academy-Watts.

In order to gather the evidence needed to answer my formulated research questions for this study:

1. What differences, if any, exists between students' pretest and posttest scores on Service Learning Student Survey by item and by gender?
2. What difference if any are there in students' academic performance at start of the My Future Matters program and the completion of the program?
3. How are Billig's' components of an effective service learning program present in the My Future Matters program?
4. How do students assume leadership roles in their Service Learning assignments?
5. How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of Service Learning and the completion of their Service Learning experiences?

I am requesting your permission to have access to the following:

1. My Future Matters Curriculum
2. My Future Matters program brochure
3. My Future Matters completed student pre and post surveys
4. Student Roster for Fall and Spring 2014-2016
5. Student attendance data
6. Student demographic data
7. Student grades

All written instruments, individual names, schools names, program names and any other additional information received will be kept confidential and code numbers will be used for students and pseudonyms will be used for other participants and the school.

Los Angeles Education Corps   1427 West 25th Street Los Angeles, CA 90007 Tel: 323-638-2220   www.laedcorps.org

I do not foresee that students will experience any risks as a result of his/her participation in this study.

I do not foresee students receiving any direct, personal benefit as a result of his/her participation in this study. However his/her participation will allow key stakeholders understand the benefits of effective service learning programs for at-risk youth.

I am available to answer any questions that you may have pertaining to this study. Please feel free to contact me by email at: JessicaLHutcheson@gmail.com or by phone at: (951) 662-6786. You can also contact my Dissertation Chair Professor Emeritus, Diana Hiatt-Michael at: Diana.Michael@pepperdine.edu or by phone at: (310) 663-1581.

Jessica Hutcheson

Doctoral Student at Pepperdine University

By signing this form, I grant permission for this study:

_____ July 11, 2016

Tisha Middleton, Chief Operations Officers
The Los Angeles Education Corps

APPENDIX B: Service Learning Program Consent Form

Letter to Conduct Study

Dear Loree Goffigon,

I am currently a doctoral student at Pepperdine University, working on my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. The purpose of my study **"The Impact of a Service Learning Program on the Academic and Leadership Development of At-Risk Charter High School Students"**, is to study is to examine the impact of a mandatory service- learning intervention elective class on at risk students. This study will be **(a)** examining the academic achievements of participating My Future Matters students considered at-risk, **(b)** identifying the practices perceived as contributing to effectively developing the students' leadership abilities by students and teachers, and to **(c)** examining the overall effectiveness of the My Future Matters Service Learning program in supporting the leadership development of at risk high school students. I am sincerely requesting your permission to conduct my study of the service learning program at the College Bridge Academy-Watts.

In order to gather the evidence needed to answer my formulated research questions for this study:

1. What differences, if any, exists between students' pretest and posttest scores on Service Learning Student Survey by item and by gender?

2. What difference if any are there in students' academic performance at start of the My Future Matters program and the completion of the program?

3. How are Billig's' components of an effective service learning program present in the My Future Matters program?

4. How do students assume leadership roles in their Service Learning assignments?

5. How do students express effective leadership qualities at the start of Service Learning and the completion of their Service Learning experiences?

I am requesting your permission to have access to the following:
1. My Future Matters curriculum
2. My Future Matters program brochure
3. My Future Matters completed student pre and post surveys

All written instruments, individual names, schools names, program names and any other additional information received will be kept confidential and code numbers will be used for students and pseudonyms will be used for other participants and the school.

I do not foresee that students will experience any risks as a result of his/her participation in this study.

I do not foresee students receiving any direct, personal benefit as a result of his/her participation in

this study. However his/her participation will allow key stakeholders understand the benefits of

effective service learning programs for at-risk youth.

I am available to answer any questions that you may have pertaining to this study. Please feel free to contact me by email at: JessicaLHutcheson@gmail.com or by phone at: (951) 662-6786. You can also contact my Dissertation Chair Professor Emeritus, Diana Hiatt-Michael at: Diana.Michael@pepperdine.edu or by phone at: (310) 663-1581.

Jessica Hutcheson
Doctoral Student at Pepperdine University

By signing this form, I grant permission for this study:

_____
Loree Goffigon, Executive Director
Performance Works

APPENDIX C: Student Survey Form

SAMPLE STUDENT PRE/POST SURVEY

Please answer the following questions accurately and completely. Choose the best answer for each multiple choice question. You may return the survey to the reception desk upon completion. Thank you! **Part I: Statements**	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
I am comfortable participating in class discussions.					
I can appreciate opinions that are different from my own.					
I can place group goals above the things I want.					
I try to fix mistakes I make.					
When I have a problem, I look for the things that might be causing it.					
When I have a problem, I think about different ideas and then combine some to make the best decision.					
When I have a problem, I choose a realistic plan.					
After dealing with a problem, I check to see if the problem has gotten better.					
I enjoy writing my thoughts down on paper.					
I believe it is important to listen and respond thoughtfully to others' opinions and comments.					
I understand my strengths and weaknesses as a person.					
There is always a best way to solve a problem.					
It is important to me that I share the same beliefs as my friends and family.					
I feel that my life and future are out of my control.					
When I'm in a difficult situation, I like to think about something else to take my mind of it.					
I think it is important to help other people.					
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.					
I think through the possible good and bad results of different choices before I make decisions.					
At school, I try as hard as I can to do my best work.					
I can be assertive and take charge when needed.					
When I make a mistake, it is difficult for me to admit it.					
I set goals for myself and have a step-by-step process to achieve them.					

Part II: Frequency of Action	0	1	2-5	6-10	11 or more
During the last 12 months, how often have you found yourself in a leadership role within a group or organization?					
During the last six months, how many days of school have you missed because you skipped or ditched?					
How many clubs or organizations at school (for example, sports, student newspaper, student government, school plays, language clubs, hobby clubs, etc.) are you involved in?					
How many clubs or organizations outside of school (such as 4-H, Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YWCA, YMCA, faith-based activities, etc.) are you involved in?					

APPENDIX D: MfM Program Brochure

Community Works is dedicated to giving students the skills they need to live productive and healthy lives. This innovative initiative was directly conceived through extensive research; research that specifically focused on the perceived educational 'gaps' that currently exist for middle and high school students. Educators throughout California agree that youth leadership development and character education are the #1 items that need solutions. Community Works was directly designed to fill those needs.

Community Works is driven by a fundamental belief that leadership is demonstrated in many ways and takes many forms, but that at its core, leadership is about problem-solving.

My Future Matters is Community Works' first enterprise. It is a program where students are exposed to a leadership curricula grounded in service, teamwork, and most importantly, problem solving. Students will emerge with a deeper understanding of their own personal strengths, their responsibility as active global citizens, and the importance of service. **My Future Matters** encourages middle and high school students to solve community challenges with self-directed team projects. It is a hands-on learning experience that combines modern standards-based educational practices with innovative business approaches to deliver life-changing experiences to schools with even the tightest budgetary constraints.