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**REGAINING OUR YOUTH,
EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES:
SERVICE LEARNING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

By Glenn D. Israel and Thomas W. Ilvento

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a development process which builds upon the strengths of community service learning and community development by providing teenagers a chance to get involved in the community while providing a valuable service leading to local action. The strategy focuses on building partnerships among students, teachers and local leaders to learn about community leadership, conduct a community needs assessment survey, and address a local need through a community development process. Experience from projects in Florida and Kentucky suggests that this strategy can help youth get involved in the community while providing a sounder basis for the community to act on its needs.

INTRODUCTION

Citizen involvement at all age levels is critical in responding more fully to longstanding community problems and emerging needs. Yet few youth truly have been given opportunities to participate in local public affairs and many have become alienated from their communities as a result. Unfortunately, few communities encourage

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their young people to develop into involved citizens, accumulate leadership skills, or interact with community members. For rural communities, which have a more limited pool of human resources and often lose their best and brightest high school graduates to outmigration (Lichter et al., 1994), the need of such experiences for young people is even greater.

By creating projects that focus on the community and soliciting students from local high schools to participate, community and youth needs can be mutually addressed. Youth can benefit from learning new skills which can be used in the community they live now or in one to which they later move; the community can benefit from youth's contributions in addressing local needs through assisting with social service programs or collecting information for decision-making. Youth can be regained by providing them with concrete leadership and civic experiences, familiarizing them with the workings of their community, and teaching them about the uses of surveys and statistics. Communities can become empowered by creating an environment where adult volunteers and community leaders can work closely with youth, facilitating a school-community relationship and providing needed information to address local problems.

The strategy discussed in this paper addresses both youth and community needs through the development and implementation of a needs assessment survey. This paper also outlines a detailed summary of pilot projects in Florida and Kentucky, analyzing Florida's approach and results in particular. Finally, after covering how students can contribute to and participate in the community needs assessment process and how local leaders can use the needs assessment information, this paper suggests ways in which other communities can adapt these procedures and ideas.

The Need for Community Development

Communities are empowered when local actors define the issues, make the decisions and carry out the action. Although local action often requires, or at least is facilitated by, expertise and resources from external organizations or agencies, such action stems from local needs, depends on local actors, and affects the local community (Christenson et al., 1989). Community development efforts usually involve leadership development in order to increase the capacity of local

actors to solve local problems (Wilkinson, 1991). However, most leadership development programs focus on a process of enhancing human capital (the skills and knowledge needed by local actors to be effective contributors to local solutions) and only inadvertently build community social capital (the network of relationships which facilitates access to both financial and human resources needed for action) (Wilkinson, 1991). This is because most leadership programs focus more on teaching leadership models and group process skills than on activities such as leadership practicums or community projects aimed at fostering working relationships among these leaders.

If the network of relationships is thin or fragmented, then local actors may only draw on a small part of the available resources and, thus, success is likely to be restricted. According to Wilkinson (1991), barriers such as inequality, dependency, gaps in the organizational and institutional structure, and limited access to resources must be removed in order to more fully develop the local actors' capacity. From this perspective, youth involvement becomes an integral component of community development by, for example, helping to investigate community views on issues and offering their views and ideas. Thus, omitting members of this age group from making contributions to community affairs on the basis of their age unnecessarily restricts a community's capacity to solve local problems.

Further, involving youth in local affairs can foster relationships between students, teachers, and other citizens and create, at least between young and old, "intergenerational closure" — a process by which norms and expectations of the community are transferred and reinforced (Coleman, 1988). Providing youth with the opportunity to develop citizenship and leadership builds a foundation for future community leadership (Israel and Beaulieu, 1990). Schools, especially those in rural areas, seem a natural place to begin such a process (Hobbs, 1994).

Community Service Learning

Public schools, particularly rural schools, are a valuable community resource that, in terms of development activities, largely have been untapped. Schools are often the major employer in rural areas and have a large number of college graduates who have specific

skills in communication, leadership, social studies, computers and mathematics. Further, the school facilities can house public meetings and the library provides access to information during evening and summer hours (Hobbs, 1994; Reid, 1989). Finally, development projects involving public schools provide excellent educational opportunities for students. Students can participate in development programs and school-based enterprises through class or club projects which create jobs and provide needed services for the community (Hobbs, 1994; Mulkey, 1992; Reid, 1989).

Historically, young people were given important responsibilities such as feeding the herd, harvesting crops, working the loom, sailing ships, and minding stores, but in recent decades, less and less is asked of youth (National Crime Prevention Council, 1988). Youth have come to be viewed more as discipline problems or dependents of adults than as a resource which can contribute to meeting community needs (Kurth-Schai, 1988). Opportunities for students to perform significant functions in the community are the exception rather than the rule. As Gardener (1987:7) observes,

Our young people are born into a society that is huge, impersonal and intricately organized. Far from calling them to leadership, it appears totally indifferent. ... It is very hard for young people today to believe that any action on their part will affect the vast processes of their society.

Developing projects involving public schools, such as needs assessment surveys, provides opportunities for students to serve their community and to better understand their community and its place in the larger society. This type of learning and community participation is called community service learning and refers to the involvement of students in service projects that contributes to the community and supplies them with valuable experience. Thus, community service learning is one way to provide experiences for students that are fundamental to effective citizenship and leadership (Anderson et al., 1991; Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991).

In recent prescriptions for reforming the educational system in the United States, a number of politicians and policy makers have called for more community service learning programs (see Conrad & Hedin,

1991). These programs emphasize performing a valuable social service while helping students gain practical experience. Coupling the advice of educational reformers with the fact that America's communities face numerous problems and needs clearly justifies the development service learning programs (National Crime Prevention Council, 1988).

Community service learning has also been touted as a method for increasing the relevance of classroom activities through "learning by doing" (Anderson et al., 1991; Briscoe, 1991; Caim and Kielsmeier, 1991; McPherson, 1991; Silcox, 1991; Swinehart, 1990). Much like practicums, on-the-job training, and internships, community service learning seeks to provide an educational experience that is tied to the "real world." Silcox (1991:759) reports, "school-based service has changed attitudes, values, and relationships and made education come alive." Students can learn more about their community and their role as citizens through service projects. Service learning projects have included school based businesses, class projects to improve the community, research projects on issues or historical perspectives, and school curriculums sensitive to community needs.

In recent years, a few community service programs focusing on community development have been implemented by schools (see Higbee, 1990; Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991; Whisman, 1989). Partnerships have been developed with the business sector, civic and social organizations, and other governmental agencies to undertake projects (Anderson et al., 1991; Silcox, 1991). These programs involved students in collective action in which they began to develop citizenship skills of the type suggested by Boyte (1991). Such projects develop leadership skills (e.g., public speaking or organizational skills) and enhance personal qualities of self-esteem, independence, and critical thinking that are necessary for effective citizenship and leadership (Ames et al., 1985; Gardener, 1987).

Although community service programs usually enhance students' personal growth, many do not build effective community leadership because a framework to integrate the service into aspects of community, community development, and local policy is often missing. As Boyte (1991:766) observes, community service refers mainly to a variety of individual voluntary efforts with local service organizations and does not usually include group decision-making, collaborative action, conflict resolution, and other elements of

collective action. Those advocating community service programs argue that projects should increase teamwork among students, teachers, and community members (Silcox, 1991); foster the ability to contribute in a democratic society (McPherson, 1991); empower students (Boyte, 1991); and redefine them as active members of a team as opposed to passive recipients of a program (Kurth-Schai, 1988). This is not easily accomplished because it changes the content in the educational program and affects relationships among students, teachers, and members of the larger community.

Needs Assessment

Among the many community development tools, needs assessment is particularly well suited for involving youth and empowering community at large. The needs assessment process can help build leadership, group cohesion, and a sense of involvement in the community, as well as create awareness and sensitivity of the community and its needs. Some methods of needs assessment, such as surveys and focus groups, provide participants a vehicle to express their opinions on community issues. Youth and adults involved in conducting the needs assessment can enhance existing skills and develop new ones.

As a method, needs assessment is a tool that helps identify unmet needs in the community, provide evidence of support for policy options, increase public involvement in policy making and plan for future development activities. It can help a community plan for and implement strategies in areas as diverse as housing for elders, business expansion efforts and youth recreation. Many approaches to community development incorporate needs assessment as an important step in the overall development plan (Fischer, 1989).

Of the many approaches to needs assessment, surveys, particularly those using a probability sample of residents, are one of the more popular strategies. Surveys are often viewed as being more legitimate or "scientific" by community leaders and the media, perhaps because they are quantitative and attempt to be representative of the community. Though surveys are not superior to other methods of needs assessment, our experience has led us to believe that community groups perceive surveys as being more legitimate and useful.

While surveys can provide excellent information for needs assessment, conducting them properly requires expertise, time, and resources. The cost of a survey for a sample of 500 subjects could cost \$10,000 from a reputable survey company or university survey center — a cost beyond the reach of a small community or a nonprofit community group. The costs stem from the rigorous procedures needed in developing a sampling frame, questionnaire design, delivery strategy (mail, telephone, face-to-face), coding, analysis and interpretation. Without knowledge of survey methodology, surveys can be poorly planned and conducted, unrepresentative, under-used, of suspect value, or not applicable to decision makers' needs. For these reasons, technical assistance is often needed to help insure the validity and usefulness of surveys.

Local groups also must be committed to using the survey or the results will be relegated to a shelf in someone's office. All too often, scientifically conducted surveys are poorly used because little thought was given to how the results might be used to address community needs. Thus, the challenge becomes one of trying to generate a local community survey that is 1) useful and relevant; 2) scientifically valid; and 3) cost effective. If this challenge can be met, most community groups would benefit from the information of such a survey.

Integrating Needs Assessment and Service Learning

This discussion suggests a model integrating community service education and community needs assessment. By involving the local schools in the survey, a community can address some of the problems of conducting a legitimate needs assessment. The high school (including students and staff) offer a source of labor, expertise in computers (and possibly statistics), a source of potential respondents, and a location to conduct the survey.

At the same time, student involvement in a community needs assessment project can provide an opportunity for students to participate actively in a community-based project while learning about their community and strategies of community development and needs assessment. Students can collaborate with community leaders and play key roles in making decisions about how the project is designed,

implemented and utilized. This approach to learning corresponds more closely to the collaborative methods recommended by a number of community action models. The key to success in terms of building leadership and group process skills is to structure the needs assessment so that:

- Students are active participants.
- It emphasizes building partnerships with other community groups and agencies.
- Materials are available so students learn about their community, community development, and needs assessment strategies.
- The project provide mechanisms for students to get involved in implementing findings after the needs assessment has been completed.

The problem becomes one of building a program model that rigorously addresses most of the issues involved in needs assessment projects (particularly scientific surveys) while maximizing involvement of students as well as other local groups. A review of a model that has been piloted in counties in Kentucky and Florida follows, including a description of each project and a table summarizing the key points. The project in Florida was modified somewhat to build upon lessons learned from the earlier Kentucky project.

IMPLEMENTING THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Kentucky Example

Martin County is a rural county located in eastern Kentucky along the West Virginia border, with 1990 population of 12,526. Its population has declined 10 percent since 1980. The major industry in the county is coal, accounting for 75 percent of personal income in 1986. During the 1970s, when the coal business was robust, the local economy thrived. In the 1980s, however, coal has been in decline and the local economy has suffered. According to coal company officials,

coal reserves could be exhausted within 15 to 20 years. Thus, a sense of urgency prevailed among local leaders looking to replace coal-related jobs in the future.

A local group of concerned citizens, formed as a part of a leadership program conducted by the Brushy Fork Institute at Berea College and calling themselves *Martin County Vision*, was assigned to complete a community project as part of the leadership training. The Martin County group decided to do a community needs assessment using a student and adult survey. The group's 15 members held a variety of positions and occupations, including a banker, a chamber of commerce representative, several teachers, two high school students, a coal company secretary, and a local government clerk. However, they had little experience in designing or carrying out a survey, so they asked the Cooperative Extension Service for help.

The group lacked the funding to hire someone to conduct a survey, but they had several assets: The group was committed and they could tap student labor through the *Community Service Credit* program. They also had access to the high school as a base of operation for a survey, as well as the support of the principal to allow students to be surveyed. For the adult survey, the group lacked any sampling frame with which to work, but a telephone survey using random digit dialing was feasible.

Martin County Vision and the Cooperative Extension Service collaborated on the construction and implementation of two surveys: an in-school survey of students and a random digit dialing telephone survey of adults in the county. The state specialist and the local county Extension agent helped provide survey expertise and continued leadership development support for the group. The local group committed to ownership of the project through their time and labor. Finally, a relationship was established through the local high school to enable high school students to be involved in both surveys.

The Student Survey

The student survey was conducted in the high school where students filled out a written questionnaire. The survey questions were developed through a series of discussions between state specialists and the Martin County Vision group. Question topics included satisfaction with local services, needs for new programs, attitudes

toward development, local shopping patterns, and problem identification. The Extension team provided expertise in question wording and survey design, as well as the sampling frame.

A sample of 232 students of a total population of approximately 650 was selected. The sampling design was a multi-stage cluster sample using English classes because it was felt that, rather than have only some students in a room filling out the questionnaire (e.g. a simple random sample conducted in homeroom), it would be better to have all students in selected classes complete the questionnaire. English classes were used because all students were required to have an English class in each grade, regardless of their academic program. In fact, the high school administration often used English class as a means of reaching all students with important forms or information. The classes were stratified by grade level and academic program (college prep versus vocational) to insure better representation. The final response rate was approximately 85 percent, with absentees accounting for most of the nonresponses. There were no known problems with administering the questionnaire, which took about 15 minutes to complete.

The student survey was coded and keypunched by the high school computer class, which received training by the state specialist. The cost of the survey was minimal; printing accounted for most of it. Though student labor was important to successful completion, only about one week of classes was required.

The Adult Survey

Because of the need to do a telephone survey, the adult component of the project required considerably more time and resources. The Martin County group as well as high school students were needed as interviewers; neither group had any experience in telephone interviewing. As a result, arrangements were made with the University of Kentucky's Survey Research Center for a one-day training in telephone surveys. The training was similar to that given to new employees at the center and included discussions on the process of a telephone survey, the need for callbacks for nonresponses and refusals, and interviewing techniques. The Martin County group attended this training, and then a similar training was given by the state specialist to students wishing to be involved in the survey.

A sample size of 300 was used with numbers taken from a list of random digit phone numbers with Martin County exchanges. This list was purchased from the Survey Research Center. Protocol was established for callbacks for unanswered phones, incomplete surveys and refusals. The strategy was to maintain a reasonable level of rigor without creating too great a burden for inexperienced interviewers. For example, we attempted three callbacks rather than the five required by the Survey Research Center. The final response rate was 51 percent.

As with the student survey, the types of questions asked were determined by the local group; the state specialists assisted with questionnaire design. The telephone survey asked many of the same questions that were asked of students. A 15 minute limit was placed on the questionnaire length to reduce the burden on the interviewer and interviewee. Approximately 20 people served as interviewers, with 10 people doing most of the interviews. The adult survey was coded and keypunch by the Cooperative Extension Service because it was conducted at the end of the school year.

Total costs for the adult survey was approximately \$800. This included the training cost at the Survey Research Center, cost of the random digit dialing list, printing, and costs for temporarily installing 4 extra phone lines. The phone lines were paid for by a grant from the local telephone company. All interviewing was done at the high school after school and during the evening hours of 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The Florida Example

Immokalee is an agricultural trade center in southern Florida, located 30 miles inland from the Gulf Coast. The town is unincorporated; its 1990 population stood at 18,066. Vegetables, especially tomatoes, and citrus are the primary commodities grown. As a consequence, substantial numbers of people are employed as low-wage farm laborers. Hispanics comprise 59 percent of the population, whites 25 percent, and blacks 15 percent (including a small number of Creole-speaking Haitians).

The needs assessment project was initiated by a small group of local leaders working with the County Extension Director. These leaders wanted to obtain information from residents before committing their limited resources to any specific project. The

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Extension Director consulted with a state specialist and began a process of developing a partnership among local leaders, Extension, the high school and other organizations. Members of the group of leaders played key roles in obtaining the interest and acquiescence of high school administrators and, later, in supporting the efforts of the students. Another partner, a local cellular telephone company, donated 10 telephones needed for the project.

After meeting with the County Extension Director and high school principal in late 1991, a flyer was developed to recruit interested students and teachers. A social studies teacher decided to have two classes (comprised of mostly seniors along with a few juniors) participate in the project. Students in these classes were to be awarded extra credit for their after-school participation. Several students from outside these classes also volunteered, but their participation was more limited. A few seventh grade students contributed significantly to the telephone interview phase. Approximately 56 students participated. Along with the social studies teacher, the County Extension Director, a rural development specialist, two Extension program assistants, and several adult volunteers helped to implement the project.

The students were involved in a series of activities, beginning in January, 1992, which were designed to provide them opportunities to make significant contributions. These included a question writing and questionnaire design workshop (conducted after school). The questions written by the students were combined with those of community leaders in developing the instrument. Students also developed materials to promote citizen participation for the survey. As part of these activities the students named the project "A Greater Immokalee For Tomorrow" (A GIFT) and developed the slogan "Don't Hang Up On Immokalee" for their promotional messages. A few students each made a presentation to local organizations to promote the survey and others assembled a display for use at the dedication of the new county Extension office. Students also participated in interviewer training sessions (in class) and conducted interviews during afternoons, evenings, and weekends. A total of 434 interviews (62.5 percent) were completed from a reachable sample of 694 telephone numbers. Fifty-six students made telephone calls, totaling 349 hours of volunteer time. Of the 434 completed interviews, the students did 287 and county Extension professionals completed 147. (Two completions could not be attributed to anyone).

Adult supervisors monitored the calling and helped students learn to deal with problem cases. During scheduled classes, students participated in discussions to better understand the survey process and issues that they faced. One student also spent in excess of 24 hours creating a computer dataset from the completed surveys. The Extension specialist conducted the analysis and organized the information in support of the planned presentations.

Despite the "well-laid" plans, there were problems: sometimes static on cellular phone connections made interviewing difficult, and four weeks into the interviewing process, the phones were stolen. In spite of these difficulties, the students persevered. That the students overcame these difficulties can be viewed as an important "real life" experience in implementing community projects: Few go according to plan. To help maintain morale, a member of the leadership group sponsored a "pizza party" for the students after half of the interviews were completed.

A recognition program was held at the school at the completion of the interviewing phase. Students who participated in the project were awarded a certificate of recognition from the Cooperative Extension Service. One leader from the group which initiated the project also attended and made a keynote speech praising the students for their help.

Benefits for Students

As described above, the students were given opportunities to make significant contributions and a few performed leadership roles (Wilkinson, 1970), by working to promote the survey, creating a database, and presenting the results to the community. Impacts on the students in Florida are described below using information from focus group interviews (see Israel et al., 1993).

Learning About the Needs Assessment Process: A number of students indicated that they better understood the needs assessment process. Many students also developed skill in interviewing, with 33 of 56 students completing 4 or more interviews. They also learned to handle a variety of situations, such as no answer, busy signals, refusals, and call backs.

Learning About Their Community: Most students were already aware of many of the problems facing their community prior to the project. By interviewing residents, some students appeared to have gained a broader view of local problems. Students' understanding of community action processes, however, did not improve. Their comments indicated that they did not know what steps were needed to solve a problem identified in the survey, although probing by moderators elicited some good ideas.

Aspirations for Future Involvement in Community Affairs: Prior to the project, few students indicated that they anticipated getting involved in community affairs after graduation and this number remained the same at the follow-up discussions. For these students, the needs assessment project was viewed as a springboard for that participation. Although most of the students graduated, a number of them expressed interest in continuing their involvement in the project and provided their name and address for notification of a follow-up meeting. Later, six attended a meeting and helped to plan presentations for various civic and governmental organizations. Three students, along with the Extension Director and teacher, conducted 14 presentations to a number of community organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, county commissioners and school board.

Feelings of Empowerment: Prior to the program, students' comments indicate a very limited sense of empowerment. Most students did not see themselves as initiators of community action. Change in feelings of empowerment appeared to be limited, based on students' comments during the follow-up focus groups (the discussions were conducted prior to the completion of the project and may have prevented observation of changes in feelings of empowerment).

Use of the Study in the Community

In Martin County, one item had an immediate impact:

The County Judges used information about support for a 911 number in their decision-making process.

In Immokalee, the needs assessment information has been used in several ways:

- The YMCA used information about recreational needs to develop a priority program for middle school youth. One student who was involved in the presentations is now serving as a member of the task force working on this project.
- The adult education division of the county's public school system used information to complete their annual plan of work.
- The business development sub-committee of the local Chamber of Commerce is using information to obtain assistance from the regional planning council and Florida Department of Commerce to support their economic development activities.
- Of 131 individuals who were nominated as community leaders during the needs assessment, 44 attended a planning meeting. Based on the survey, these leaders identified five priority issues and selected two of these as the focus for their efforts.

Characteristics of Successful Projects

As shown in Table 1, both projects shared a number of common elements which contributed to their success, including the commitment of a local leader to coordinate the project, partnerships with the school and community groups, mobilization of local resources, and the intensive involvement of students. Other criteria for success were missing or weakly implemented, including activities for students to learn about their community and reflection exercises (to better understand the role of needs assessment), plans for using the information (especially in Kentucky), and involving students in follow-up project to the needs assessment.

Table 1. Criteria and Characteristics of Successful Projects.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Kentucky Surveys: Students & Adults</i>	<i>Florida Survey</i>
1. Commitment of project coordinator	Local leadership group took ownership as their project.	County Extension Director "ramrodded" the project.
2. Active community partnership	Martin County Vision provided local support; members worked actively on the project; Leadership group reflected a wide variety of community interests.	Planning Immokalee's Evolution (PIE) supported the project, and participated in some activities; input for questionnaire was solicited from community leaders; other adults volunteered.
3. Support from school administrators and teachers/ Use of school facilities	Principal supported the project; computer science teacher involved a class in the project; facilities were made available for telephone interviewing and for administering the survey in classes; computer for data entry.	Assistant School Superintendent provided official sanction; Principal supported the project, making rooms and cafeteria available; computers for data entry; Social Studies teacher involved two classes
4. Involvement of students	Computer science class coded and keypunched data; some students help conduct telephone interview; Principal allowed for double community service credit for participation.	Two classes of seniors and juniors plus a few other students suggested questions, promoted the survey; conducted interview; a few keypunched the data and made presented results to the public.
5. Activities to learn about community development & needs assessment	Short presentation on needs assessment, not fully implemented.	Not implemented.

Table 1. (continued)

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Kentucky Surveys: Students & Adults</i>	<i>Florida Survey</i>
6. Reflection exercises	None formally done.	Classroom and small group discussions were used to help understand what they were doing.
7. Material resources	Local telephone company provided four additional telephone lines; money was required to pay for the sample of telephone numbers; small grant obtained from a local college/leadership class.	Local cellular telephone company donated phones; county Extension office copied questionnaires and provided two program assistants for interviewing.
8. Technical support	State specialist assisted with project planning, questionnaire design, obtained the sample, interviewer training, data analysis, and interpretation.	State specialist assisted with project planning, questionnaire design, sample selection, interviewer training, data analysis, graphics, and interpretation.
9. Celebration of accomplishments	Article in local paper about accomplishments; no formal celebration.	A pizza party and school assembly were held to reward and celebrate with participants. Students received a certificate of appreciation.
10. Plans for using information	Leadership group disbanded and final report was not finished; some information was used by others.	Sponsoring group planned to use the information for setting priorities; numerous groups used the survey results.
11. Students involved in follow-up to needs assessment findings	Not implemented.	One student served on recreation task force; not initially planned.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Linking community service learning with community development can be a useful strategy to begin to better meet the needs of some rural communities. As outlined above, contributions by youth to needs assessment surveys led to improved local services. This approach is consistent with basic tenets of community development by advocating a locally initiated social action process involving democratic practices and contains elements of the self-help and technical assistance approaches (Christianson, 1989). Increasing citizen involvement, enhancing leadership, and expanding the information base can enhance a local community's capacity to solve its own problems (Garkovich, 1989) by providing the workers and public support necessary to address problems, organizing people and resources, and informing participants. Moreover, the successful implementation of the community needs assessment project shows that students can make significant contributions to the development of their community and gain valuable experience. The results argue convincingly for applying this program to other communities because:

- With assistance from students, the cost of the surveys were greatly reduced. The total cost of completing two surveys in Kentucky was less than \$1,000 and expenses in the Florida project were minimal because local organizations and the Cooperative Extension Service donated the materials.

The surveys followed established scientific practices. Random probability samples were drawn and were representative of their respective populations. Response rate for the student survey was high and for the adult surveys were at a respectable level. Questionnaire design followed established practices with many questions taken from other surveys, so their validity were already established. Overall, the rigor was reasonably high given that much of the work was carried out by nonprofessionals and methods were modified to reduce burden on participants.

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- The usefulness of this project proved to be high because the questions were based on local interests, approved by the local committee, and facilitated by intense local involvement.

A key element in linking community service learning with community development is the creation of a community-school partnership. The partnership of high school students and teachers, community leaders, a local telephone company, and the Cooperative Extension Service successfully conducted the community needs assessment survey in both pilot sites. Clearly, a partnership is needed if similar projects are to succeed (see Hougen et al., 1993).

Students clearly benefitted from their involvement in the project. Any change among even a few students can be viewed as evidence of program impact. With this in mind, most students learned about the needs assessment process, especially the use of telephone interviewing techniques. A number of students also became more aware and informed about community issues and problems as illustrated by those students who said they had made a start in helping the community and hoped to put the results of the needs assessment into action.

The programs in Kentucky and Florida supports Hobbs' (1994) and Mulkey's (1992) suggestion that projects like this one can help youth develop an understanding of their community. This understanding and experience can increase students' confidence which, in turn, might lead to a more active citizenry and an earlier emergence of local leadership. These projects, however, do not meet all the necessary and sufficient conditions for creating leaders and involving citizens; they are only one step in the process.

The needs assessment also increased some local leaders' appreciation of youth's capability. As the teacher observed, "Certain power people are involved and also saw that the kids could take an active role, too. ... I think the power group maybe began to look at the kids in the community differently because they saw that maybe they aren't the only ones who have to solve all the problems by themselves." Clearly, adults can change their perception of youth from one of being a problem to one viewing youth as a resource and thereby inspire additional opportunities for involving youth in the community (Ames et al., 1985; Kurth-Schai, 1988). If leaders are

going to develop more sustained community action, they must be able to harness the energy and enthusiasm of young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the experiences in Martin County and Immokalee, it is clear that future project should be expanded in the following ways:

- Students need to obtain a better understanding of how needs assessment contributes to the community development process, perhaps by strengthening linkages with school curricula such as social studies.
- Students should be involved in a community project, which is undertaken as a follow-up to the needs assessment, to build on experience gained from the needs assessment (Hougen et al., 1993). Additional time will be required to expand a community needs assessment project to include other development projects.
- Communities must not only provide opportunities for youth to participate in these types of activities, but they must encourage graduates to continue their involvement. This means established leaders should continue to ask young adults to help, give them the responsibility for meaningful roles, and provide the support they need to succeed. The relationships which are first established during the school-based project, can be nurtured to further build the community's social capital.

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