

SCHOOLS BACKING VOLUNTEER WORK

Study of Public High Schools Finds 70 Percent Offering or Requiring Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23 (AP) — More high schools are providing programs for students to do volunteer work in hospitals, nursing homes and other places, a Carnegie Foundation study has found.

A survey of 1,000 public high schools found that 70 percent of them had community service programs, and 20 percent forced students to participate, the foundation reported Sunday.

A past study indicated that girls outnumbered boys 3 to 2 in volunteer programs, in part because boys were reluctant to serve in hospitals, nursing homes or child care.

The Carnegie study said few service programs were tied directly to instruction, and it suggested that may be because teachers were never approached to help run the programs "or rejected involvement as one more addition to an otherwise heavy load."

The report, written by Charles H. Harrison, former executive director of the Education Writer's Association, said that both teachers and parents might need to be convinced that volunteer service was a learning opportunity and not, as one parent in South Brunswick, N.J., put it, "wasting kids' precious time for nothing."

In 1973 South Brunswick High School began sending some its students each day to community service sites and internships. The initial motive was to help cope with overcrowding.

The school no longer lacks space, but it still requires juniors to spend one day a week outside school as volunteers or in outdoor education projects. In Maryland, the state school superintendent tried to make volunteer service a graduation requirement two years ago, but was rebuffed.

Of Duties to Community

Atlanta and Detroit already require some form of community service. Atlanta calls it "Duties to the Community, Course No. 959050." Students, starting with the Class of 1988, must perform 75 hours of unpaid volunteer work, then write a 500-word essay on their experiences.

Detroit's "Outside of Class Learning Experience" offers 10 hours of credit toward the 200 hours students need to graduate. Students can volunteer for political campaigns as well as charity.

Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Princeton, N.J.-based Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, wrote in a foreword that the study found "a strong and surging trend toward community service programs to be required for students and faculty."