Mandated Citizenship: Facilitating and Reflecting on the Development of Citizenship through the Ontario Mandated High School Community Service Requirement

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Abstract

Civic education and community service are widely viewed as worthwhile educational pursuits. Recent Canadian studies have shown that youth are now engaged in voluntary service more than any other age group in Canada. A key contributing factor to youth involvement has been the development of community service requirements for high school graduation; Ontario is a current example. This research sought to develop a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Ontario high school community involvement program through a qualitative case study of one Northwestern Ontario high school. Multiple sources were accessed including: civic educational philosophy, academic best practices, curriculum documents, and interviews with key high school educators. A particular interest was dedicated to identifying the factors within the Ontario program that promote and inhibit community-based learning and civic education. The following key findings are offered as a result of this case study investigation:

- Emphasis is often placed on only one type of responsible citizenship,
- Tension exists between the initiative's written purpose and how it is practiced,
- The program is inconsistent in offering meaningful opportunities for all students,
- Guided reflection has been overlooked as an integral program requirement,
- A need exists to renegotiate the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders,
- The program's structure must be revised to support its written purpose.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal Introduction

I entered high school during the 2003 – 2004 school year, immediately following the double cohort year which brought extensive changes to the Ontario curriculum. Key curriculum alterations included removing the OAC year (Ontario Academic Credit, or grade 13), shortening Ontario secondary schools to a four-year diploma model, and the addition of a 40-hour community involvement requirement. At the time, I understood the community involvement initiative to be just another requirement which I had to complete in order to graduate. I had little concern for how or when I would complete the hours because I was actively involved extracurricular school activities (including athletics, music, drama, and scouting). As a result, my service hours were quickly completed and submitted to the guidance office before the end of Grade 10.

At the time, I did not think to inquire why I was being compelled to volunteer my time. I cannot recall educators describing the purpose for my service or what lessons I was to learn from participation. My involvement in the scouting movement had already defined volunteering as a worthwhile initiative. As for my friends, what meaning they took from helping out at the Salvation Army, cutting a neighbour's grass, and volunteering at the local theatre remained a mystery. Although my friends and I were able to successfully complete the requirement, it was not without its own struggles. Difficulties included planning time around homework, part-time job schedules, and household responsibilities. I lost my record of completed hours twice; resulting, in some hours having to be re-accounted for and other hours being permanently lost. After completing the requirement, I did not feel compelled to continue documenting my involvement with community activities.

It was not until later that I questioned why every student in Ontario is mandated to participate in community service, but there are no measures in place to determine what understanding is developed. As a teacher and outdoor education enthusiast, I actively advocate for experiential education. Furthermore, I understood the educative value of guided experience and structured reflection. It appeared unusual the Ontario requirement had overlooked what I understood to be essential educational practices. This study was conducted to better understand what aspects are working well and to identify areas for future growth within the Ontario program.

Statement of the Problem: A Program in Need of Review

Mandatory community involvement has been a fixture of the Ontario high school education since the 1999-2000 school year and will remain a component for the foreseeable future. Whether compulsory service programs are able to achieve their civic-minded goals is the subject of considerable academic debate. Even proponents who claim such programs can increase the rates of subsequent volunteering or civic engagement argue that the effects are conditional (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014). Specifically, the effectiveness of the Ontario mandatory community involvement model has remained inconclusive (Padanyi, Baetz, Brown, & Henderson, 2010).

Studies have demonstrated that community service is not a prominent feature in secondary schools across Canada (Brown, Ellis-Hale, Meinhard, Foster & Henderson, 2007; Hall, Lasby, Sayer, & Gibbons, 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2007). Provincial guidelines, where they exist, are vague and it is generally left to the individual boards or schools to develop the program. This is true even in provinces, like Ontario, where community service is a mandated requirement for graduation (Meinhard & Brown, 2007). It is a widely held belief that an official

program evaluation by the Ontario Ministry of Education is long overdue (Brown, Ellis-Hale, et al., 2007). Little, if any, reform of the Ontario program has taken place since its launch.

To date, previous Ontario focused studies have relied on a sample primarily drawn from *university students* who are recent high school graduates (Brown, Pancer, Henderson, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Henderson et al., 2014;Padanyi, Meinhard & Foster, 2003; Padanyi et al., 2010). The inherent limitation of this research is that the experiences of university students are not representative of *all* high school graduates (Padanyi et al., 2010). A need exists to speak with key informants who have been overlooked in previous studies. Consultation with multiple stakeholders may lead to concrete ideas for improvement and foster a greater commitment to implementing meaningful student volunteerism programs (Meinhard, Foster & Wright, 2006). Finally, within the current program, there remains a need to better educate students, parents, and other stakeholders about the goals and objectives of mandatory community service at the secondary level (Padanyi et al., 2010). Further qualitative studies are required in order to provide a deeper understanding of how community service programs can produce desirable outcomes (Meinhard et al., 2006; Billig, 2000).

Purpose and Research Questions

This research sought to develop a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Ontario high school community involvement program by reviewing: civic educational philosophy, academic best practices, curriculum documents, and speaking with key informants at the high school level. Insights leading to the development of a more effective program may be obtained by speaking with principals, vice-principals, guidance counsellors, and department chairs. These individuals have operational, administrative, and educational knowledge of the Ontario community involvement program and how it is delivered. Interviewing key informants will

provide knowledgeable insight which may be used to establish a benchmark for how well the program is running.

At the core of this research project was an interest in identifying the factors within the Ontario program that promote and inhibit community-based learning and civic education. It is in the best interest of students to ensure the program is reviewed, and if necessary revised, to ensure it is successfully achieving its mandates. The following key questions guided this research:

1. How can Ontario high schools continue to connect student learning to the community?
   a. How can high schools continue to encourage student civic development and strengthen their civic responsibilities through community-based learning?
2. What does the community service program look like within Ontario secondary schools? How are students connecting to community-based learning?
   a. Are the goals of the Ontario secondary school community involvement program being met?
   b. What aspects work well within the program?
   c. What improvements might be made and/or what deficiencies exist?
   d. Which best practices are recommended?

Significance and Importance of the Project

It is important to understand how effective the program is in achieving its mandate, as young Canadians ages 15–24 currently volunteer more than any other age group (Volunteer Canada, 2010a). This trend was first noticed in 2004. Volunteer Canada's (2010b) "Bridging the Gap" survey has been recognized for having dispelled the myth of disengaged youth. Canadian youth can no longer be viewed as disinterested and uninvolved. It is imperative that the Ontario program, which is mandating student volunteer service, be reviewed to ensure that it is providing the best approach to ensure educative experiences. This research was conducted to investigate a gap in the current literature.

Previous studies regarding the Ontario community involvement program have not captured the truly heterogeneous high school student population or the multitude of program

stakeholders. This research sought to gain further information from high school educators who are knowledgeable and familiar with the implementation and intricacies of the program. This study ultimately asks whether the goals of the program are being achieved and the desired results are being produced. This is an exciting opportunity as the Ontario community involvement program is a pre-existing mandated program which, if reviewed, might provide greater opportunities for community, place and environmental learning, as well as further encourage the development of civic values and responsibilities. The following section introduces the key terms associated with youth civic education that will be used in this study.

Key Terms to Be Used In the Study

One difficulty in approaching this topic is that there is no one universally accepted definition for community service or service-learning. These terms, while often sharing similar ideas, vary in their use. The differences in definitions have been noted as a possible source of confusion, which has increased the difficulty of generalizing study findings (Billig, 2004; McLellan & Youniss, 2003). In the past, community service and service-learning have been used interchangeably (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). The following definitions will be used to describe the meaning of key terms communicated in this study.

Volunteer/Volunteering: The Ontario Federation of Labour describes volunteering as an activity that is undertaken by choice, in service to an individual informally or through organizations, to be completed without salary or wage. People who are required to do unpaid mandatory service placements such as community service orders, co-op placements, workfare assignments, etc., are not volunteers (as cited in Volunteer Canada, 2006, p. 7). Proponents for volunteer service programs advocate that volunteering will develop attitudes and characteristics that are conducive to democracy. While volunteering, it is expected that students will

simultaneously learn the essential skills and characteristics required for supporting the voluntary

sector.

Citizen -(ship): a citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights

and assumes the duties of membership (Leydet, 2014). While the rights of citizens are protected

by law, the responsibilities are ambiguous even to most educators (D. Greenwood, personal

communication, June 26, 2016).

Service-Learning: an educational approach that links community service directly to the

school curriculum (Meinhard et al., 2006). Service-learning programs are usually well-integrated

into a course or school curricula while community service programs involving community

service commitments by students are largely stand-alone (Pancer, Brown, Henderson & Ellis-

Hale, 2007).

Service-Learning Program: a community service program, but one for which the

service is integrated into an academic course or curriculum; as such, the service has clearly stated

learning objectives, and there is an opportunity as part of the course for students to engage in

reflective critical analysis (Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

Community Service Program: a program in which students, without pay, perform

service designed to benefit a community; the program is non-curriculum based, may be

mandatory or voluntary, does not usually include explicit learning objectives or organized

reflection, and may include activities that take place on or off the school grounds (Meinhard &

Brown, 2010).

Mandated Community Service: Volunteer Canada (2006a) defined mandatory

community service as unpaid (or paid less than the prevailing wage) work that is undertaken in

the community, usually to benefit the community in general or specific members of the

community other than those performing the service. Mandatory community service programs

typically involve stiff penalties or denial of vital benefits for those who fail to meet service

requirements. It is the *compulsory* nature which is of the greatest interest here.

Mandatory community service programs differ significantly from one another with

respect to target populations, objectives, sponsorship, and delivery methods. The longest-

standing and best-known mandatory community service programs in Canada are government

sponsored:

- the criminal justice system (e.g., alternative sentencing programs that require court-ordered community service instead of time in jail);
- The education system (e.g., a minimum number of hours in the community as a graduation requirement);
- The social service system (e.g. community service required to receive or top up welfare benefits, disability pensions or forms of transfer payments.

This research used mandated community service to generally describe volunteering activities in

which the participant has not freely chosen to be involved; rather, they are compelled to

participate. The motivation for service is applied by a source of power outside of the individual

which exerts substantial force to compel service. Service is compulsory.

Community Involvement: A phrase used by the Ontario Ministry of Education and

Training (1999a; 1999b) to describe the goals of the mandatory Ontario high school service

diploma requirement. Service was not to take place during the regularly scheduled class time and

cannot be part of a school course. School boards have the freedom and responsibility to

independently define what activities may be considered eligible or ineligible forms of

community involvement.

While the curriculum guidelines (Ontario Ministry of Training and Education, 1999a) and

Memorandum 124a (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b) provide a broad

definition of the program, neither provides a clear definition of terms to accurately describe

community involvement. The Ontario Ministry of Education does not use the terms volunteer, volunteering, or community-service to describe their community involvement requirement in either the Memorandum 124a policy or *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 – 12: Program and Diploma Requirements* (1999) curriculum document. The Ontario "community involvement" requirement meets the Volunteer Canada (2006a) description of a mandatory community service program. The ministry may have elected to use the positive wording of "community involvement" as a euphemism instead of directly describing the initiative as a mandated community service program.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in civic education and is influenced by the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. Dewey and Freire both advocated for pedagogies that encourage community involvement, develop consciousness of civic values, and inspire commitment to future participation in civic involvement. These pedagogies are dedicated to developing future citizens and making schools more responsive to teaching students about citizenship. The theoretical foundation of this thesis is rooted in Dewey's description of experiential and civic education, and Freire's description of problem-posing education.

These philosophies are compatible with the Ontario program's goals of encouraging civic responsibilities and promoting community values within students (Ontario Ministry of Education Backgrounder, 1998). The Ontario program has also sought to encourage youth participation in both political and community life (Henderson et al., 2007). Both pedagogical perspectives may offer further guidance for developing and improving the Ontario program by reflecting the traditions of civic and experiential education.

Dewey: *Democracy and Experience*. Dewey (1916) argued in *Democracy and Education* that immersing students within their communities engages students with the subject matter of life experience. He believed that the student's school and community provide ideal sites for the development and encouragement of political and/or democratic action. If a democratic environment was created within the school, it could influence the relationships between adults and students as well as prepare students for future participation in more democratic political systems.

Dewey felt that schools could be micro- or "embryo communities" (1916, p. 174) within which students could become engaged with practicing democracy and making decisions through democratic processes. This would provide students with experience making decisions that affected their lives while also encouraging them to become involved with their school and community. While students are encouraged to become active with meaningful challenges and decision-making, Dewey does acknowledge that teachers and administrators should be the ones responsible for making pedagogical decisions as they have more firsthand experience with the processes of education and the abilities of their students.

In Dewey's (1910) *How We Think,* he claims that students should participate in both typical classroom activities and engage in "active inquiry and careful deliberation in the significant and vital problems" that confront their communities (as cited by Crittenden & Levine, 2013). Ideally, the process of obtaining an education should include both classroom and community learning. To fulfill this vision, educators are responsible for ensuring that students are given age appropriate tasks and pursue experiences that will provide them with meaningful learning in the wider community.

In his short text *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) criticizes traditional education for its failure to get teachers and students out into the community to become intimately familiar with the physical, historical, occupational, and economic conditions that could then be used as educational resources (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). Dewey (1938) also criticized progressive schools, which at the time focused too much on enabling the unconstrained impulses and interests of the learner. Dewey regarded neither system as adequate. In their place, Dewey develops a theory and pedagogy of experience. At the core of Dewey's argument for experience-based learning is the development of an experiential continuum that might be used to determine worthwhile and non-worthwhile educational experiences. Dewey wanted to promote experiences that would ensure healthy growth; namely experiences that generated a desire to learn and keep on learning while building upon prior experiences (Crittenden & Levine, 2013).

Dewey (1938) postulated that education is very closely linked to students engaging in rich experiences. However, not all experiences are educational; as Dewey says, some may actually be miseducative. For example, any "experience that prevents or distorts the growth of further experience" (p. 25) cannot be said to inspire healthy growth and future learning. This might be said of some volunteer experience, recognizing that not all volunteer experiences will provide students with quality opportunities to engage with healthy growth and promote future learning and civic engagement. Ensuring the quality of student experiences through meaningful volunteer placements is of considerable importance in this study. Criteria must be established to help discern between educative and miseducative experiences. Dewey argued that educators should know "how to utilize their surroundings, both physical and social, to fully extract from them experiences that would prove worthwhile and educational for students" (Dewey, 1938, p.40).

Dewey places an important emphasis on the educator to evaluate the learning potential of experiences and to remain actively involved in shaping the direction of students' learning through experience and reflection. Dewey (1938) believes educators should make it their business to be "alert to see what attitudes and tendencies are being created" and "be able to judge what attitudes are actually conducive to continued growth" (p. 39). Educators carry the primary responsibility of not only shaping the educational experience by "environing conditions" but also being able to recognize what "surroundings are conducive to experience that lead to growth" (p. 40). Teachers need use both their physical and social surroundings to extract from them worthwhile experiences.

With regard to worthwhile community service experience, this means that educators must be both aware of student involvement with community service, and what attitudes and perceptions are being formed. To meet Dewey's standards, educators must first be familiar with their students' attitudes, interests, and abilities. They must then use this knowledge to mentor students by guiding them to compatible and worthwhile learning opportunities. To assist teachers with discerning what experiences are worth pursuing, Dewey proposes criteria based on continuity and interaction.

Continuity and interaction are described as the two significant principles that intercept and unite with each other as the "longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 44). Through the principle of continuity, all experiences are carried forward and influence future experiences (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). Interaction represents both the "objective and internal conditions of experience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 42). Students may obtain educative interaction by obtaining experience independently with objects or socially with other people. The experience develops as a result of the transaction between the individual and the environment that surrounds

the individual. The environment consists of whatever objects or people interact with the individual's personal needs, desires, capacities, and purposes (the internal conditions) that create the resulting experience (Dewey, 1938, p. 44-45). United together, these two principles determine the educative value of an experience (p. 44-45). Ideally, teachers, as well as students, may share this knowledge to discover worthwhile experiences.

Based on Dewey's experiential pedagogy, there are two main limitations we can discern in the Ontario program. First, staff members play a limited role in influencing and guiding students. Second, educators do not monitor whether students are engaged in meaningful experiences which constructively build upon prior experiences. Dewey may suggest that in order to make the Ontario program more reflective of experiential pedagogy staff ought to provide guidance and assistance throughout the requirement. Formal debriefing and reflection led by staff would further assist students in making meaning of their community-based experience.

Paulo Freire: *Problem-posing education and liberation education.* Freire believed that knowledge comes through invention, reinvention, and perpetual inquiry (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). After critiquing and rejecting the traditional *banking* approach to education, Freire (1968) advocated that a more conscious, mutual and world-mediated approach to education should be considered. Freire's solution was to use problem-posing education as an instrument for liberation. Problem-posing education involves the constant unveiling of reality, the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality (Freire, 1968). Freire's liberation education sought to acknowledge the unfinished character of human beings and their continual potential for growth. He critiqued the traditional "empty vessel" educational perspective, which regarded students as vessels into which knowledge was to be poured.

Freire believed the transformational nature of reality means that education must be an

ongoing process-based activity. Problem-posing education affirms that people are aware of their

incompletion, in a likewise unfinished reality, and encourages them to engage in the process of

becoming more fully human (Freire, 1968). Since people do not exist apart from the world,

Freire's model of problem-posing education focuses on education beginning with the human-

world relationship:

> Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the
> world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that
> challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within
> a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be
> increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge
> evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students
> come to regard themselves as committed. (Freire, 1968, p. 62)

Freire argued that pedagogy should be considered as a method through which students engage

themselves with the world that surrounds them. A pedagogy that is based upon this principle

seeks to teach within a worldly context, as opposed to an isolated academic context. Community-

based education programs often seek to employ pedagogical approaches like Freire's to develop

citizenship characteristics and to promote civic involvement as a worthwhile life-long pursuit.

At the heart of Freire's liberation pedagogy is praxis: the idea that people cannot gain

knowledge of their social reality through dialogue alone. They must act together upon their

environment and participate in critical reflection. *Conscientization* describes the process of

developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Action is

fundamental because it is the process which changes reality. Learning in this way is a critical

process which depends upon uncovering real problems and actual needs. It is not enough for

students to simply question; they must act as well (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). Reflection is a

key component that is to take place in dialogue with others who are likewise engaged with

realization and action (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). The literature surrounding community

service learning highlights the importance of both meaningful action and reflection (Meinhard &

Brown, 2007; Billig, 2000; Conrad & Hedin, 1991).

For Freire (1968), it is important that both teacher and student be engaged with critical

and liberating dialogue, which he sometimes refers to as "culture circles" (p.63). The circles are

comprised of four basic elements: 1) problem-posing, 2) critical dialogue, 3) solution-posing,

and 4) developing a plan of action. The goal of these conversations is for both teachers and

learners to join together and overcome problems and raise the awareness and critical

consciousness of the learners. With this consciousness and improved understanding, learners will

be able to effectively take action against the oppressive elements in their lives. From a

community service perspective, this reiterates the importance of teacher/student communication,

and mutual involvement with developing and pursuing the community service component.

Ideally, Freire wanted his students to both value their cultures while simultaneously questioning

and working to change some of their culture's practices and ethos.

Overall, educators must actively facilitate educational programs and provide students

with necessary guidance. Dewey and Freire both place emphasis on guided action and

meaningful reflection as necessary components for positive educative experiences. Facilitation

must be balanced with guided reflection to ensure educative experiences and positive growth

occurs. These components are essential for any program seeking to instill civic values in

students. In this context, the absence of reflection from the Ontario program, as well as the

limited amount of staff involvement, is troublesome.

Civic education. Dewey and Freire's writing can be connected with the pedagogical

tradition of civic education. This section will provide a closer examination of civic education and

how Dewey and Freire's pedagogies relate. Crittenden and Levine (2013) note civic education refers to the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities. Civic education can be transmitted either intentionally or unintentionally through institutions, community values, and community norms. Civic education can be beneficial or used to educate people in ways that might disempower them or impart harmful values and goals. Overall, it is not limited to schooling as families, governments, religions, and mass media are just some of the other institutions that can influence an individual's civic education (Crittenden & Levine, 2013).

In most scholarship, civic education is used to describe deliberate programs of instruction within schools or colleges (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). Several reasons often justify the special emphasis placed on schools. First, many countries have an explicit mission stated in their school programs to educate students for citizenship; this is certainly the case within the province of Ontario. Gutmann (1987) argues that school-based civic education is perhaps the most "deliberate form of human instruction" (p. 15). Secondly, empirical evidence shows that civic habits and values are relatively easy to influence and change while people are still young; schooling can, therefore, be an effective way to educate future citizens where other methods might fail (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). This argument is commonly used by proponents of adolescent volunteerism.

This project grounds itself in the educational tradition of civic education and was informed by the work of both John Dewey and Paulo Freire. John Saltmarsh (2005) provides a rather succinct definition of civic education, one that is both Deweyan and Freirian:

> Civic learning is rooted in respect for community-based knowledge, grounded in experiential and reflective modes of teaching and learning, aimed at active participation in [Canadian] democracy, and aligned with institutional change efforts to improve student

learning. (As cited in Longo, 2007, p.12)

This definition captures a respect for community-based knowledge. Both Dewey and Freire advocate that learning should take place within the community through participant action. Moreover, both write that meaningful lessons are driven home through reflective thinking and discussion that seeks to debrief civic learning experiences. Through this method, students build on their prior experiences to meaningfully engage themselves in learning about issues that are affecting their communities and grow as the future inheritors of the community.

It is important to not lose sight of the fact that civic education takes place in many venues other than schools and at all stages of life (Crittenden & Levine, 2013). But schools are the only institutions with the unique ability, mandate, and capacity to reach nearly every person in the country (Longo, 2007). It is therefore widely accepted that instilling attitudes and behaviours that are conducive to future citizenship early on, through schooling, will be beneficial and worthwhile in encouraging a lifetime of participation as engaged citizens.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Canadian Community Service Programs

The following section examines how student service is used as a civic educational tool across Canada and specifically within Ontario. Civic education is prevalent across North America in the private, religious, and public school systems. However, it is not clear how service programming in Canadian schools compares to the growth that has been noticed across the United States (Education Commission of the States, 2012; See Appendix E) and internationally (Arenas, Bosworth, & Kwanday, 2006). Currently, the responsibility for education in Canada is divided into thirteen distinct program regimes corresponding to each of the ten provinces and

three territories. To date, there has been no organized effort in Canada to coordinate service programs; however, Brown, Ellis-Hale, et al., (2007) provided one of the first research reports that attempted to fill the information gap.

Recently, there has been a developing interest in creating community service programs, from both a policy and research perspective (Meinhard, 2010). This has been demonstrated by the creation of community service programs at the school, board and/or provincial level in all thirteen educational jurisdictions in Canada. Six of thirteen provincial or territorial governments have introduced service requirements as a condition for high school graduation. Across Canada, it was revealed that community service and service-learning are believed to be worthwhile pursuits (Brown, Ellis-Hale, et al., 2007). While community service programs have been a component in a number of Canadian schools for several years now (Meinhard & Foster, 1998), it has not yet become a prominent feature (Brown, Ellis-Hale, et al., 2007) and there are enormous provincial differences in how these civic education initiatives are approached. Interestingly, and with notable exceptions, the differences in programming tend to be greatest between schools rather than at the school board, school division, or provincial level(s). While schools in Ontario may have the same provincial mandate, it is possible that schools are using different approaches with varying levels of staff involvement (and support) to see that students complete the graduation requirement. A study of any one school's experience with the program will prove beneficial in identifying struggles and best practice recommendations that may be transferable to other schools in the province.

The Ontario Community Involvement Requirement

The Ontario program was developed to help schools better connect with communities and promote responsible citizenship in students by engaging them with social issues through

volunteer service (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1998). This hometown initiative was to promote civic development and wider participation in both community and political life. A further examination of the influences and goals behind the Ontario community involvement program will be provided in this section.

Influences behind the inception of the Ontario program. The Ontario Community Involvement Program resulted from a number of political influences and educational policies. As early as 1994, the Royal Commission on Learning advocated that communities and schools should have stronger links. In 1995, John Snobelen, the incumbent Minister of Education and Training, announced the new Ontario curriculum would work to promote responsible citizenship in students by encouraging them to learn about social issues while remaining grounded in their home communities (Ontario Ministry of Education New Release, 1995; Ontario Ministry of Education Backgrounder, 1998).

In 1997, the Premier's Advisory Board recommended the Ontario government take action to "impart the value of voluntary action to youth through the school curriculum" (*Sustaining a Civic Society*, Voluntary Action in Ontario, 1997). This was to be achieved by introducing voluntary action learning to schools as either a mandatory *or* elective credit for high school graduation. In 1999, then Premier Mike Harris introduced forty hours of unpaid and unsupervised community involvement as a graduation requirement for obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). To further scaffold student learning, a mandatory civics course was also introduced to the curriculum. This course was meant to educate students about their rights and responsibilities as Canadian citizens and community members. Combined, both changes were designed to develop students' awareness and responsibility to civic duty.

A set of guidelines and templates, titled PPM No. 124a (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b), was drafted by the Ministry of Education and Training as an outline for educators to use. In general, this document described the purpose of the community service program and a suggested guideline for determining ineligible activities. PPM No. 124a briefly describes the roles and responsibilities of: the school board, principal, students, students' parents, and community sponsors. Several sample forms are also included for school boards to use with tracking students' service hours. Despite the community involvement initiative being provincially mandated, no additional funding was supplied and the logistics of how the program should be implemented fell to individual school boards to organize and administer.

Invent a crisis scandal. Unique to Ontario is the scandal that preceded the 1999 curriculum change and the implementation of the community involvement requirement. In September of 1995, a video was leaked to the Canadian press of John Snobelen, then Minister of Education, telling a closed-door meeting of civil servants that before cuts to education and other unpopular reforms could be announced, a climate of panic needed to be created by leaking information that painted a more dire picture than he "would be inclined to talk about." He called it "creating a useful crisis" (How to Invent a Crisis, *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], 1995; Fine, 2001). This controversy provoked several calls for his resignation, and further unsettled the relationship between the government and the teaching community.

A similar climate of civic panic and good intentions may surround the current community involvement requirement for Ontario youth. Specifically, civic engagement is often cited as a marker of maturity, and civic inactivity is attributed to youths' lack of interest, knowledge, or cognitive sophistication (Condor & Gibson, 2007). If adolescent populations are perceived to have withdrawn from their civic duties (for example, by not volunteering or voting in elections),

these actions, or lack thereof, may be considered an indicator of young people's indifference or

"bankrupt sense of citizenship" (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). There is a prevailing and

increasing perception within liberal democratic nations that young people are chronically

disinterested, incapable, or apathetic about fulfilling their civic duties (Kennelly & Llewellyn,

2011).

Original goals of the Ontario program. In response to this perceived disinterest in civic

engagement, the wording of the original 1999 Ontario Ministry of Education document stated the

"community involvement requirement" was designed "to encourage students to develop

awareness and understanding of civic responsibility and of the role they can play and the

contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities" (Ontario

Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). The new legislation was, in part, an effort to

increase the level of youth involvement within their community. While it was widely recognized

that students would be actively contributing to their community, the main focus of the policy was

on increasing students' civic development and responsibilities, while strengthening their

community connection (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b).

The program was designed to aid with students' civic development, promote community

values within students, and raise students' awareness of what contributions they could make to

their communities (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b; Ministry of Education

Ontario Backgrounder, 1998). This would be achieved by building student responsibility and

strengthening the qualities that were assumed to drive individual success (Gomez, 1996;

Henderson, Brown, et al., 2007; Schwarz, 2011). These objectives were designed to halt the

perceived decline of civic involvement by young people by encouraging youth to participate in

community and political life.

A Need to Ensure Educative Experiences Occur

Recently, The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (2010a) found that young Canadians, age 15-24, have consistently participated in volunteering more than any other age group over the entire decade (Volunteer Canada, 2010a). The findings were consistent with the landmark "Bridging the Gap" (2010b) research study, which initially dispelled the myth of disengaged youth by proving they are now more engaged with volunteering than any other age group.

Canadian youth can no longer be viewed as disengaged. Ruth MacKenzie, President and CEO of Volunteer Canada, commented "these findings show how critical it is to ensure young people have positive experiences when volunteering. Meaningful experiences can instill civic participation as a core value which can then lead to people being actively engaged throughout their life" (Volunteer Canada, 2010a, para. 7). In order to ensure the Ontario program is successful in achieving its civic educational goals, it is imperative a formal review be completed.

Adolescent Volunteering and Mandated Community Involvement Programs

The following section will consult a wider body of literature examining adolescent volunteering. Several common arguments for adolescent volunteering will be outlined and examined. Following these arguments, a discussion of several prominent criticisms for service programs will be used to showcase the uncertain effectiveness of mandated youth service programs. This section will conclude with an evidence-based focus which will highlight best practices obtained from an extensive literature review.

Overview: Adolescent community service programs in schools. Community service programs are often created and designed with the best of intentions in mind. Proponents of adolescent volunteering often base their argument on three main premises. Firstly, orientations

and behavioural patterns acquired during adolescence can be influential in developing adult values and behaviours (Henderson et al., 2014). Few researchers disagree with this point as a number of socialization studies have demonstrated that adult attitudes and behaviours are influenced by experiences that stem from the formative years of childhood (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Conrad & Hendin, 1991; Hall, McKeown, & Roberts, 2001; Pancer & Pratt, 1999; Planty & Regnier, 2003). Dewey believed that youth should be afforded the opportunity to practice civic values throughout their education so it might influence their adult engagement in civic life. Connecting volunteer service to the curriculum is often used as a method for providing students with first-hand experiences that are directed at achieving civic education goals.

The second major premise is that volunteering produces good citizens. A number of studies have shown a link between adult volunteering and social or political engagement, and the overall development of social capital (Eley, 2001; Hart, Donnely, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Perry & Katula, 2001; Planty, Bozick, & Regnier, 2006; Quall, 2001; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004). Volunteering is believed to be highly correlated with attitudes and behaviours that are indicators of good citizenship. It is commonly believed to assist with developing dispositions and behaviours that are reflective of responsible citizenship, strong communal values, and positive collaborative behaviour. This connects well with Dewey's argument for using the school classroom and community involvement to teach citizenship alongside and through the curriculum.

Politicians and educators have long argued that community involvement activities can decrease young people's so-called *democratic deficit* by imbuing them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for participation in democracy (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Schwarz, 2011). Youth's active engagement in the local community is hypothesized to have a *trickle-up*

effect, whereby student participation in volunteer service for local organizations will result in a

greater sense of duty toward the national and global communities (Condor & Gibson, 2007).

Action for the purpose of community betterment is representative of Freire's problem-posing

approach to education. Freire (1968) believed that as students are increasingly posed with

problems relating to themselves and the world, the individuals will feel increasingly challenged

and obliged to respond.

Thirdly, it is broadly recognized that education is the primary tool to increase awareness

of the voluntary sector and to create the values needed to support future volunteer service

(Meinhard, Foster, Brown, Ellis-Hale, & Henderson, 2007). Without education, "the ethos of

giving [and volunteering] will fail to develop" (Salamon & Anheier, 1996, p. 126). The structure

of the education system might be conducive to encouraging students to develop familiarity with

the voluntary sector and further foster the values necessary to support community service

(Meinhard et al., 2007). Together, both aspects seek to sow the seeds of desirable traits in youth

which will later germinate into an active citizenry engaged with community issues. Many of

these goals and aspirations are inscribed in the Ontario program.

Overall, community involvement activities are typically described having a dual-purpose:

benefitting both the individual and the larger community (Schwarz, 2011). As Volunteer Canada

(2010c) notes,

> By caring and contributing to change, volunteers decrease suffering and disparity, while
> they gain skills, self-esteem, and change their lives. People work to improve the lives of
> their neighbours and, in return, enhance their own.

These activities may be viewed as active methods for teaching and socializing youth about

citizenship, instilling lifelong involvement as an aware and active community member, as well as

assisting the local community and voluntary sector. It is not difficult to see why volunteering

might be encouraged among youth by educational institutions, civic organizations, and political

parties; often in the name of creating young citizens.

      Mandated adolescent volunteering has conditional success at best. The evidence

collected to date is mixed as to whether adolescent volunteering will have similar impacts on

attitudes and behaviours as adult volunteering. Unfortunately, the evidence collected from adult

volunteering studies does not directly correlate with youth. Additionally, there is a considerable

amount of division within the existing youth volunteering literature. Some studies have argued

that there are successful cases of mandated youth service leading to future service. Critics have

made the counter argument that mandatory service programs are a disservice that could *poison*

the well and discourage future service. Other studies have highlighted that results may be

conditional at best. The overall impact that mandatory youth community service has on

subsequent volunteering or more general future civic engagement is divided (Henderson et al.,

2014).

      A number of studies have noted adolescent programs can, under certain conditions,

produce elevated levels of civic responsibility (Locke, Rowe, & Rochelle, 2004), political

efficacy (Niemi, Hepburn, & Chapman, 2000), subsequent volunteering (Brown, Pancer, et al.,

2007; Henderson et al., 2007; Metz & Youniss, 2005), and political engagement (Hart et al.,

2007; Henderson et al., 2007). Yet, it appears as though the relationship between youth

volunteering and future civic engagement is entirely conditional. Conditions that may influence

students include both program design and the way that youth fulfill their service requirement.

      There is a consensus that well-designed programs are more likely to have both short and

long-term impacts on students (Billig, 2000; McLellan &Youniss, 2003). Authors, such as

Meinhard and Brown (2010), note that identifying key features for program success is often

made difficult as a result of the variety in purported goals and expected outcomes. Placements that offer students a broad exposure to public action (Riedel, 2002) or enable students to feel that they have made a contribution to an organization (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Reinders & Youniss, 2006) are associated with higher rates of subsequent volunteering. Unfortunately, little research has been completed to help understand how young people develop positive evaluations of their service experience. In Ontario there is no requirement at the school level to observe or monitor students' experiences; students must simply complete the requirement. This current practice is at odds with both Dewey and Freire's suggested level of direct teacher/educator involvement.

Often it is argued that students should engage in regular and sustained service (Niemi et al., 2000), or, more specifically, that they should engage in one activity over the course of one year or more (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2007; Padanyi, Baetz, et al., 2010). This extended exposure is thought to encourage and promote future commitment. As a result, both the length and type of volunteering experiences are considered to be important features. Hart et al. (2007) note that students only demonstrate higher levels of engagement if they completed more than the standard number of hours required by their schools. This suggests that many schools may be setting the required commitment hours too low to achieve any meaningful results. This may certainly be the case in Ontario where the graduation requirement asks for only forty hours across four years.

The clearest results are often indicated in the area of student satisfaction, with authors often arguing that meaningfully structured programs lead to greater student satisfaction (Meinhard et al., 2006; Pancer et al., 2007). A meaningfully structured program would: encourage regular communications between the school and community agencies, create programs of sufficient duration, involve adults (parents, teachers, volunteer coordinators), be

reviewed as part of systematic program evaluation, and have clearly identifiable program planning and educational goals (Meinhard & Brown, 2010). Authors, like Brown, Pancer, et al. (2007), have commented that a student's positive evaluation of her/his service experience is a clear mitigating factor that will influence future engagement. This suggests students who have negative feelings as a result of their service experience, will be less likely to achieve elevated social or political engagement, thereby failing to arrive at the desired program goals. Taylor and Pancer (2007) encourage greater attention to the volunteering experience and the perceived impact of the experience in order to better understand why adolescent volunteering affects adult behaviours. There is a need within the Ontario model to pay closer attention to the structure of the program and to students' volunteer experiences.

Critics and criticisms: Mandated service *is not* the same as voluntary service. Studies across the extended literature highlight that the positives of mandated volunteer service appear to be balanced with conflicting studies that argue the programs are not functioning optimally and are not achieving their primary goals (Padanyi, et al., 2003; Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). Critics often focus their arguments on two main points of contention. First, compelling students to participate will erase any benefits that might have occurred as a result of voluntary service (Brown, Kenny, Turner, & Prince, 2000). This argument illuminates the inherent oxymoron of *mandatory volunteerism*. The second argument often focuses on the negligible or null influence that mandatory volunteer programs have on inspiring future volunteerism.

Several international studies have highlighted that the mandated nature of compulsory service programs undermine the very benefits that volunteering is supposed to produce (Bessant, 2000; Brock, 2001; Brown, et al., 2000; Deci & Richard, 1987; Goodin, 2002; Nietz, 1999; Turnbull & Fattore, 1999). Warburton and Smith (2003) noted that mandated participants

consistently reported that "compulsory programs are not the same as volunteering" (as cited in Henderson et al., 2014, p. 780). Warburton and Smith's (2003) study highlighted that the typical student's reaction to the service requirement was a sense of exploitation, negativity, and an overall lack of enthusiasm. Stukas, Snyder, and Clary (1999) reported that mandating students to volunteer has the greatest negative effect on those who had previously engaged in voluntary community service. Stukas et al. (1999) found that the perception of choice was a large determining factor for influencing the future likelihood of volunteering for those who were initially not inclined to volunteer freely. Researchers have expressed concern that mandating participation may devalue volunteering for students by undermining the self-perception that tends to sustain future volunteering (Henderson et al., 2007). The danger is that if students come to see volunteering as something that is done only when required or rewarded, they will be less likely to continue their service once the requirement or reward is removed (Henderson et al., 2007).

The second main point of contention by critics is that mandatory programs have no discernible impact on the indicator traits that the service requirement is supposed to improve. Key indicator traits may include: subsequent volunteer rates, participation in political action and activities, levels of political awareness, and awareness of community issues. Those who claim compulsory programs have little to no effect often focus on examining the volunteering rates following the completion of the program (Niemi et al., 2000). This again follows the line of thinking that volunteerism develops many characteristics that reflect good citizenry.

Padanyi, Meinhard, and Foster (2003) argue the Ontario program has an almost negligible effect on inspiring future volunteerism as it does not exert an independent impact on the likelihood of future volunteering. Padanyi and her colleagues found that many students

reported a low level of satisfaction after completing their mandated service. It was plausible that

the more positive the volunteering experiences of the students, the mandatory nature of the

program notwithstanding, the greater the likelihood would be for students to continue

volunteering in the future (Padanyi et al., 2003). However, because the Ontario program, as it is

currently mandated, does not have what Meinhard and Brown (2010) describe as a meaningful

structure (which includes: regular communications between stakeholders, is of sufficient

duration, involves adults, regular reviews, and clearly identifiable planning/educational goals), it

is unlikely to benefit students and communities in substantial and measurable ways.

Niemi, Hepburn, and Chapman (2000) have argued schools with community service

requirements do not achieve significantly higher levels of student volunteering when compared

to schools that did not have service requirements. Findings did not support that experiential

learning had occurred with only a minimal amount of service. Even regular service in small

doses seemed to be of limited value for influencing outcomes. Only regular sustained service

was effective in ensuring the desired program outcomes were achieved. Similar findings have

been observed by Keeter et al. (2002a, 2002b). Volunteering alone may not be an effective

means of mobilizing young people to become more active and engaged as citizens (Padanyi et

al., 2010).

Overall, most programs are not structured in a way that might promote student success or

the achievement of the program goals (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). This may be attributed to the

fact that: 1) the programs are inadequately funded and staffed, 2) the current service

requirements only make negligible demands for student participation, 3) the impact of service is

diminished by confusing job preparation with volunteerism where students become focused on

developing employable skills instead of recognizing their growth as citizens, and 4) service-

learning is greatly overlooked as a teaching/learning strategy. Finally, and significantly for this study, there is little evidence that Ministries of Education have invested additional resources to ensure the maximum value of their community service initiatives (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). This is problematic as unfunded mandates can mean little at the school level. Unfunded initiatives are arguably not closely reviewed, do not have a budget to allow for staff to receive training, and often do not allow for additional staff to be hired to help administer the program. The result is that existing staff are asked to do more with no additional support.

Authors have wondered if the Ontario program would have been more successful if it had been more structured, included building partnerships with voluntary agencies, provided opportunities for students to share their experiences with others, and helped students understand the context for their volunteering (Meinhard & Foster, 1999; Foster & Meinhard, 2000; McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Raskoff & Sundeen, 1998; Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999; Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994). The Ontario community involvement requirement is a program that is not functioning optimally and is not achieving its primary goals (Padanyi et al., 2003; Pancer, Brown, et al., 2007).

Best Practices

A number of possible best practice recommendations exist within the literature to provide guidance for implementing youth volunteer service programs. Meinhard and Brown (2010) noted even after an extensive review of the international literature regarding best practices, "it is still not clear what best practices are absolutely essential, while others provide only slight value-added benefits" (p. 223). It is possible that a "critical mass" of features must be present to positively affect a program's outcome.

To date, two comprehensive studies have attempted to describe the best practices for community service programs. These suggestions were collected from an international literature review and interviews with key informants from across Canada. The first study was completed by Meinhard, Foster, Brown, Ellis-Hale, and Henderson (2007) and relied on an in-depth literature review of 205 published articles, web documents, books, reports, and manuscripts for descriptions of community service and service-learning programs from around the world. Key informant interviews were then conducted with five administrators of exemplary community service programs in Canada: three administrators from private schools, one from a religious school board, and one from a public school board. This study was revisited in a second study, by Meinhard and Brown (2010), where the original respondents from the 2007 study participated in a longer and more detailed interview. In both studies, the authors did not differentiate between community service and service-learning, as the terms are often used interchangeably.

The overall international literature review, conducted by Meinhard and Brown (2010), focused primarily on articles published within the last 10 years which identified successful community service program features. Their final literature review focused on 22 comprehensive articles that were explicit in their consideration of best practices. The authors acknowledged that while they could not have exhausted all literature sources, they did reach a point at which they were no longer able to add new program features to their list (Meinhard, Foster, et al., 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

In both studies, four separate themes relating to program success were revealed. Those themes included: the quality of student experience, reflection and relevance, program structure, and support for teachers (Meinhard & Brown, 2010). Under each of these four themes, were twenty features that described the themes in greater detail. Each feature was ranked based on its

prevalence within the literature. The Meinhard and Brown (2010) study and the table they

prepared to summarize their findings have provided an astute benchmark of the current literature

surrounding the best practices of effective community service programs. This provided

profoundly influential for this study and was identified as a preliminary data source. The

information provided by Meinhard and Brown's (2010) study, represented in the table, is crucial

for informing the effective implementation of community involvement programs and it should be

used to inform both practice and policy development. An overview of all features supporting and

informing the four independent themes presented in Meinhard and Brown's (2010) study is

represented in their **Table 1** (see the following page**).**

     The most prominent features of best practice are "giving students responsibility" and

"providing opportunities for student reflection" (Meinhard & Brown, 2010). Each of these items

is frequently cited within the literature and emphasized as a key aspect. The authors conclude it

is important to ensure the quality of students' experiences with volunteering. The subtext of this

statement is that service requirements should not exploit students by giving them mundane jobs,

but rather, "engage them with responsible and challenging tasks, and allow them [students] to

take initiative" (Meinhard & Brown, 2010, p. 221).

     The second theme, reflection and relevance, is discussed in extensive detail within the

original texts. This theme seeks to build on prior knowledge and link service to the curriculum

and/or courses. It is believed meaningful reflection may be derived by linking the two

components. Reflection, an essential component for both Dewey and Freire, is of considerable

importance to experience-based education. Reflection does not necessarily have to take place in

the formal classroom, but may be potentially encouraged by the volunteer organization, recorded

in a personal diary, and need not be related to a specific course (Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

Table 1: Essential Features of Community Service Programs as Reported in 22 Articles

TABLE 1 Essential Features of Community Service Programs as Reported in 22 Articles

Features for success	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	Total
Quality of students' experiences																							
Giving students responsibility	x	x		x			x	x				x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		14
Providing meaningful work/challenging tasks	x		x	x	x		x		x					x	x		x					x	10
Opportunities for student leadership/decision making	x									x				x	x		x				x	x	7
Matching placements with students' interests	x		x			x	x								x								5
Listening to and considering students' ideas	x		x												x					x			4
Helping students choose placement	x						x												x				3
Matching placements with students' abilities			x	x											x								3
Engaging in direct service work	x			x									x										3
Providing training/preparation for student volunteers		x		x																			2
Reflection and relevance																							
Providing opportunities for student reflection	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x			x	x			x	x	x			14
Building on prior knowledge, linking to curriculum	x	x		x										x	x		x		x				7
Providing feedback and indicators of progress				x										x	x		x				x		5
Pointing out benefits of volunteering						x									x				x				3
Program structure																							
Regular communications between school and agencies	x	x		x	x				x							x	x	x	x		x		10
Creating programs of sufficient duration	x	x		x	x						x					x				x			7
Involving adults (parent, teacher, volunteer coordinator)						x								x	x			x	x		x		6
Engaging in systematic program evaluation	x	x		x		x														x			5
Program planning, educational goals		x		x		x					x										x		5
Support for teachers																							
Support: Financial, administrative, and collegial			x												x		x	x			x		5
Professional development and training			x	x											x				x	x			5

Note. Authors: 1 = Billig (2000); 2 = Billig (2002); 3 = Billig and Welch (2004); 4 = Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005); 5 = Billig (2007); 6 = Clary and Snyder (1999); 7 = Conrad and Hedin (1987); 8 = Conrad and Hedin (1991); 9 = Eyler and Giles (1999); 10 = Flanagan (2004); 11 = Kahne and Westheimer (1996); 12 = Maybach (1996); 13 = McLellan and Youniss (2003); 14 = Meinhard, Foster, and Wright (2006); 15 = Melaville, Berg, and Blank (2006); 16 = Melchior (1998); 17 = Sanders (2003); 18 = Shumer (1994); 19 = Shumer (1997); 20 = Shumer and Belbas (1996); 21 = Stoneman (2002); 22 = Sundeen and Raskoff (1994).

Image from: Meinhard and Brown (2010, p. 222).

Dewey and Freire may argue that the educator plays a key role in the facilitation of each student's reflection. Formal and informal debriefing experience through reflection is a key requirement for capturing the full educational potential of lived experiences. As such, reflection should occur as an explicit component of the service program.

The third theme, program structure, pertains to creating and maintaining functional structures that will help to ensure the quality of student experiences. Key features include "regular communications/partnerships between schools and agencies," ensuring that the program is of a sufficient duration which provides immersive exposure, and "ensuring adult involvement" to help support student service. Finally, program planning and evaluation were infrequently mentioned as features that influence structural success. This theme suggests measures that may be taken to troubleshoot the existing Ontario program structure.

The final theme, support for teachers, addresses the need to provide assistance to the educators and administrators responsible for overseeing and facilitating the implementation of these programs. "Providing financial and administrative support" and incorporating aspects of "professional development" are two distinct features that are mentioned in the literature to help teachers and administrators implement a successful service program.

Meinhard and Brown's (2010) review of the literature revealed there is a consensus that the quality of student experience, reflection, integrating experiences with prior knowledge and current learning are all important aspects of an effective community service program. When compared to the essential features of community service programs as reported in 22 articles, the Ontario program falls short of being an effective program for civic education. Greater improvement may be made in each of the four key best practice areas identified by previous

studies (Meinhard, Foster et al., 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010). The revision or addition of several program features may contribute to creating more positive student experiences.

Previous Studies Focusing on the Ontario Program

The methodologies used by previous studies have contributed to the incomplete and sometimes divided body of knowledge surrounding adolescent volunteerism (Henderson et al., 2014). Many studies have sought to only survey students at one point in time; usually immediately after participation in compulsory service programs (Metz & Youniss, 2005). These studies often ask about students' intentions toward future volunteerism, but rarely follow up with students at a later time to observe if there was any concrete change in their behaviours or attitudes.

Alternatively, other studies waited too long after the volunteering experience to conduct their investigation. It is increasingly difficult for researchers to establish the causal links between volunteering and subsequent behaviour if there is too much delay between students completing their service hours, and the researcher beginning the subsequent study (Hart et al., 2007). This difficulty increases if the researcher does not have an accurate baseline for comparison to later attitudes.

Previous studies faced challenges interpreting the variety of volunteer opportunities available to students. Henderson, Brown, and Pancer (2012) argued this has presented researchers with an *apples and oranges problem*, as volunteering means different things to different individuals (as cited in Reinders & Youniss, 2006). There are many different opportunities available to students to fulfill their service hours. Possible examples include: cutting a neighbor's grass, camping with the local scout movement, and serving meals in a homeless shelter. All are uniquely different experiences that might cause students to evaluate

their experience differently from their peers. Similarly, surveys have been used in a number of other studies to collect and conduct data analysis (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, 2012; Henderson et al., 2007). While this provides the opportunity to gather a large amount of information, it does not begin to cover the depth that may be accomplished by using more qualitative methods (Henderson et al., 2014).

Many studies completed with an Ontario focus have used a sample population drawn from recent high school graduates who were enrolled as University students (such as: Padanyi, Meinhard, & Foster, 2003; Meinhard, Foster & Wright, 2006; Pancer, Brown, Henderson, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Padanyi, Baetz, Brown, & Henderson, 2010; Meinhard & Brown, 2010; Henderson, Brown, & Pancer, 2012; Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2014). Drawing almost exclusively from university students cannot provide insight into the truly heterogeneous high school student population, as university students are thought to be more likely to volunteer in high school whether mandated to or not; and they often come from wealthier families.

Lastly, there is a shortage of studies that relate directly to the unique circumstances of the Ontario program. Much of the writing currently available on the Ontario initiative remains derivative of previous studies, with several of the key studies dating back over several years. Furthermore, the Ontario community involvement requirement has not fundamentally changed since its inception; it has not been revised, or even formally evaluated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. A real need exists to further expand the understanding of the Ontario community service model.

Conclusion: What Makes an Effective Service Program?

The literature has demonstrated that mandated community service programs are becoming more prevalent, often as a graduation requirement for a secondary school diploma. This is currently the case within the province of Ontario. Service programs are often created and implemented with the objective of developing desirable civic behaviours and attitudes in youth, which will inform their future participation as an adult in civic life. A considerable degree of division exists within the current literature on adolescent volunteerism. Studies that highlight the positives of mandated service are balanced with conflicting studies that argue mandated programs do not achieve their primary goals. Despite the uncertainty of what influence mandated adolescent service will have on future attitudes and behaviours, there is some consensus within the literature as to which program features and best practices are required to create meaningful and educative service experiences.

Based on the available literature regarding adolescent community service and the theoretical foundation of this study, it is clear that several positive program features may be absent from the Ontario program. These critical components are: understanding student's prior experiences, guiding them to meaningful service opportunities, educating students about the benefits of community service, reflecting and debriefing of the student service experience, financial support, and assistance for staff. Currently, the program does excel at encouraging student responsibility—one of the most significant and highest ranked criteria. Yet, it appears to be unguided with staff playing only a minimal role. Reflection also appears to have been overlooked as a pedagogical practice. A need exists for staff members to monitor student participation and provide guidance in order to ensure students find, engage in, and reflect on

worthwhile service experiences. Above all, the involvement of knowledgeable staff members is needed to direct, coordinate, facilitate and monitor the mandated community service program.

The implementation of the Ontario program has been an administrative challenge for many school boards due to the increased expectation on staff and the absence of financial support. It is worthwhile to perform a qualitative review of how the program is currently progressing and consider possible changes to ensure schools continue to encourage and strengthen community-based civic education.

Chapter 3: Method and Methodology

An Introduction to Case Study

As a research strategy, case studies contribute to the in-depth knowledge and understanding of an individual, group, program, organizational, social, political, and related phenomenon (Yin, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Simmons, 2014). As a result, case studies are often used for the evaluation of publicly supported programs, such as federal, state or local programs (Yin, 2003). This study made use of a single case approach, which is an effective method to understand a typical school's experience with a program. A single school can provide insight into unique and/or exceptional qualities that can promote further understanding or inform practice for similar situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Yin, 2009). This study focused on one Northwestern Ontario school's experience with the Ontario community involvement graduation requirement.

A Unique Case Study Opportunity

A case study is distinct in how it defines the boundary of what is to be studied in the case (Simmons, 2014). It is most appropriately used to understand complex social phenomena by

allowing the researcher to conduct a focused investigation that retains the holistic and

meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009). The Ontario program offers a unique

case study opportunity because it has several exceptional features that distinguish it from

comparable programs in Canada and the United States (Brown, Ellis-Hale et al., 2007;

Henderson et al., 2014). The first key feature of the Ontario program is that it requires only a

small amount of service from students. Compared to other service learning requirements in North

America, forty hours is a remarkably low threshold.

Service requirements may be substantially longer in the United States, such as in the

District of Columbia where students must complete 100 hours of service to fulfill their

graduation requirements. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which is offered

internationally and in many Ontario high schools, requires that students complete: 50 hours of

service to the school community, 50 hours of service to the community outside of the school, and

finally 50 hours of leadership training in just *two years*. The low threshold of hours required in

Ontario means that the program is unlikely to have meaningful short and long term effects on

high school participants (Henderson et al., 2014).

The Ontario program is further distinguished from other service programs as it is not an

example of service learning. Service learning, at its core, relies on balancing volunteer service

with classroom reflection that explicitly discusses student service initiatives (Ash, Clayton, &

Moses, 2007). The Ontario curriculum offers a grade 10 half-credit civics class; however, it does

not reinforce lessons that might be learned during the fulfillment of the volunteer requirement

(Henderson et al., 2014). Instead, this class serves as an introduction to the political history and

decision-making in Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011). Moreover, student service is

not facilitated through any structured classroom setting, and it is not necessary for students to critically reflect on their service or connect it to the rest of their school learning.

Third, the type of service students may perform varies greatly. Although school boards have been charged with creating lists of approved activities, the amount of guidance provided by the Ministry of Education is very general: "Community involvement activities may take place in a variety of settings, including businesses, not-for-profit organizations, public sector institutions including hospitals, and informal settings" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999a). The Ministry provides greater detail listing several activities that are strictly prohibited. This list includes: any activity that would happen for a course credit, during school hours, or would expose the youth to unnecessary risk (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999a). Beyond these restrictions, it is up to the individual school board to identify a list of eligible activities.

The final aspect that distinguishes the Ontario program is the level of autonomy schools and school boards have for directing and implementing the program. Currently, there is no standard protocol to guide schools or school boards with facilitating student access to volunteering opportunities. As Henderson et al. (2014) note, "in practice, this means that it is possible for boards across the province to offer similar services or resources, but there is no *requirement* for comparable access to such sources" (p. 122). Ultimately, student success is determined only by the completion of forty hours of community involvement. There is no further measure in place to gauge the quality of the experience or whether the requirement is achieving its goals.

These four aspects separate the Ontario program from other service-based programs across North America. This qualitative case study sought to examine, through complementary

data sources, how an Ontario school helps connect students to learning in the community and what the service program looks like in practice. A knowledge gap exists as a result of no official program review being completed to date by the Ontario Ministry of Education and a rather limited body of literature relating to the consultation of multiple stakeholders connected to the Ontario program. This research project addresses the knowledge gap in the current literature by examining the Ontario program through a qualitative case study analysis relying on multiple sources of data.

Sources of Data

This study made use of four sources of evidence (curriculum documents, interviews, educational theory, and research-based best practices) to establish a comprehensive understanding of the program policy, how the Ontario program was running from an administrative perspective, and what an ideal program might look like. Case study has been previously noted as an effective approach for in-depth exploration of multiple perspectives (Simmons, 20009; Yin, 2003). It has the distinctive ability to present the complexity and uniqueness of a policy, institution or system within a real life context (Simmons, 2009). The implications of curriculum, educational policy, and educational theory enabled a richer description of the graduation requirement and, when balanced with interview responses, provided a stronger foundation for analysis.

Curriculum Documents. Ontario Curriculum documents were examined to trace the history of the program, the political ideas that motivated its inception, and what the current policy documents dictate. It was important that this study include a detailed description of the context in which the study was conducted as well as a description of the background/historical developments (Torrance, 2007). Doing so provides a more comprehensive understanding of the

curriculum documents' implications, both overt and subtle. The goal of using curriculum documents was to provide a baseline measure that could be compared and contrasted with how staff actually experience, participate, and facilitate the requirement.

Interviews. To draw on educators' first-hand experiences, this study completed three semi-structured interviews with educators who described their professional involvement both administering the Ontario program and teaching. Individuals were intentionally chosen based on their role as either a teacher, guidance counsellor, or principal. Each role is often involved with facilitating the requirement and ensuring that students are successful at completing the mandated hours. Interviews were sought to provide a first-hand description of how facilitators and participants each experience and engage with the requirement. They proved beneficial as an additional data source which permitted comparison/contrast between perceived responsibilities, how each educator fulfills their roles, identifying barriers and constraints, and offering best practice suggestions for how the program is and/or should be implemented.

Theoretical Foundation. The theoretical foundation used in this study was greatly influenced by the educational philosophies of Dewey, Freire, and the pedagogic tradition of Civic Education. Further insight was obtained from best practices which have been identified previously by academic studies. This proved beneficial by organizing a template for a meaningful service program and identifying essential program features. Theoretical propositions, argue Sutton and Staw (1995), provide "a hypothetical story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur" (as cited in Yin, 2003, p. 29). Torrance (2007) notes it is important to discuss the ideological perspectives/values/and policies that guide research as it ultimately influences how data is received and analysed, further influencing the validity of policy studies (an extensive review of the theoretical foundation is offered in Chapter 1).

Many of the best practices identified in the literature were congruent with the recommendations put forward by the theoretical foundation. Dewey and Freire were wise to recognize that civic education can, and should, take place in the community alongside the regular curriculum. Both education theories and the literature review identified what roles educators should play, how schools socialize youth to participate as adults within their society, and how best to educate students to be active future members in the community. Yet provincial guidelines, where they exist, are vague. It has generally been left to the individual schools to develop programs, and the effectiveness of programming varies widely from school to school across the country (Brown, Pancer et al., 2007). It is not practical to expect schools to educate in isolation from the community. Doing so puts too much pressure on one single institution and dismisses the impact that many other community institutions have on civic education, and the connections between them (Longo, 2007). The result is a failure to make communities real partners in civic education (Longo, 2007).

The theoretical foundation was helpful to create a benchmark against which the current program could be measured. This foundation provides a framework which later becomes the main vehicle through which the results of the case study can be generalized (Yin, 2003). Based on this theoretical structure, the multiple data sources can provide a comprehensive blueprint for what a quality service program would look like and how it could be run. Both theory and literature argue that a meaningful program would ensure that students participate in quality educative experiences. The program should be appropriately structured so that adults and educators are present to guide students through sustained involvement and reflection. Both financial and administrative support needs to be present for educators.

Sample Selection

This study sought to draw on sources which would aid in providing a more comprehensive picture of how one school participates with the community involvement requirement. Both documents and individuals were intentionally selected based on how they directly related to or supported the community involvement requirement.

Selection of documents. A number of current and archived curriculum documents were accessed for this study. These documents were used to trace the inception of the community involvement requirement, as well as to further describe the goals and purpose of the service requirement. Each principle document is listed below.

The Royal Commission on Learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1995) was one of the first provincial government commissions to publish a document that noted schools and communities should have stronger links connecting each other. After exhaustive public consultation, the Commission released its report, entitled *For the Love of Learning*, in January 1995. The report suggested a vision and action plan to guide the reform of elementary and secondary education. This would include values, goals, and programs for schools; as well as, systems of accountability and educational governance.

Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements 1999 (OSS) (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999a) was the original document that described the community involvement initiative, civics, and careers classes as recent additions to the curriculum. *OSS* pertained only to Ontario secondary schools. *Policy/Program Memorandum No. 124a (1999) (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b)* was later released to further compliment the OSS document. PPM No. 124a further describes the roles and

responsibilities of stakeholders who are to be involved in the initiative. Templates are provided

to assist administrators with creating the documents used to track the graduation requirement.

Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011

(OS) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016a) offered a much boarder description than the

original *OSS* document. Greater detail is used to describe how students will interact with schools

from enrolment and their first day, through to graduation. It was developed to consolidate in one

document the broad range of policies and programs that affect the educational experience of

students in Ontario schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

A specific guide of grade 9–12 course descriptions can be found in *The Ontario*

Curriculum Grades 9 to 12, Course Descriptions and Prerequisites (Ontario Ministry of

Education, 2016b)*.* The document exists to assist students, with the help of their parents and

guidance counsellors, in selecting the courses that will put them on the right path to their

postsecondary goal.

Finally, this case study examined the local school boards' *Community Involvement*

Handout and *Community Involvement Website Page (2016).* Both outline the goals of the

program and provide several examples of acceptable and unacceptable service. On the website, a

template is provided for the student to use to document his/her completed hours. Administrators

then use this form to track and approve completed hours (see Appendix A).

Selection of participants. Participants were purposefully selected based on their role

within the school and their direct involvement with either administering or supporting the

community involvement requirement. Interviews were completed with a vice-principal, a

guidance counsellor, and a teacher. This helped to ensure multiple perspectives were collected

from individuals who have diverse roles and responsibilities within both the school and the

community involvement initiative. All were senior educators with considerable educational experience. Each offered a unique perspective on how the program is run and how it relates to them as educators and administrators. The diversity in roles provided further grounds for discussion among participants and proved to be valuable later in data analysis. Each participant was over the age of majority and actively working as an educator.

This study did not attempt to speak with students or parents. This is due to the number of studies that already focus on student experiences and perspectives. Staff and community members who are not involved in the service program were also excluded.

Selection of research site. The names of the school board and school have been changed - pseudonyms are used instead. The Northern Birches School Board is located within a largely urban Northwestern Ontario area. The Northern Pines High School is located within the city limits and is a medium sized school with a student population between 800 – 1200 students. The high school offers an advanced academic and community service focused program, in addition to providing a co-op stream for students who were looking to gain direct workplace experience. As a result, the curriculum meets the needs of both academic and workplace pathways. This helped to ensure staff members could comment on the experiences of academically diverse student populations. Finally, the high school adheres to the mandated community involvement requirement.

Sampling Method

Before research could begin, permission had to be obtained from the Northern Birches School Board to conduct this study– as per their research code of ethics. Once approval was obtained, potential participants were identified based on their level of engagement with the mandated community involvement initiative. The snowballing method, where one individual

identifies and recommends further participants, was used to acquire interview participants. The author, having already established a personal network with educators in the school board, made use of "gatekeepers" to make the initial contact with potential participants. Creswell (2008) defines gatekeepers as "individuals who have an official or unofficial role at the site, provide entrance to the site, help researchers locate people, and assist in the identification of places to study" (p. 640).

Following the introduction by the gatekeeper(s) to the school staff, the author made initial contact with willing participants via telephone and/or email (based on the potential participant's preference). This provided an opportunity to describe: the study, the author's interests, data collection techniques and to confirm that the individual was interested and available to participate. A meeting was then arranged for a mutually agreeable date in the near future, at a private venue where the interview participant could speak in confidence about his/her experiences. At the meeting, participants were provided with a formal written letter of invitation as well as a letter of consent (see Appendix D). In the end, three participants completed interviews.

Participants

In this case study, the participants were a vice-principal, a guidance counsellor, and a teacher - who was also serving as the current Chair of Social Sciences. All interview participants were educators at the same medium sized Northwestern Ontario public high school. Coincidentally, two participants had a strong background training in the social sciences.

Paula is a vice-principal with a background in Special Education. She provided great insight into how the program is administered by the high school, what roles and responsibilities staff have, and how the school is connected to the wider community. Paula's administrative

experience helped to describe what activities the student may participate in and how students may approach teachers and administrators about becoming further involved in their community.

Terry is the Social Sciences chair of the high school and has considerable experience teaching both the Civics and Careers courses. As a teacher, he has both aided and observed a diverse population of students engage with the community involvement requirement. He spoke about how the service initiative connects with the curriculum, specifically in both the Civics and Careers classes. Furthermore, he has a considerable amount of experience running clubs and events that helped to promote: leadership, community awareness, altruism, and youth activism within the high school student population.

Giselle, a passionate guidance counsellor, has worked in this role at a number of schools within the Northern Birches School Board. She has a professional background as a social sciences teacher and has been involved in a number of supplementary roles, including: running the co-op program, directing the alternative education program for students who cannot attend high school (for a variety of reasons), and leading the student council. Her primary role as a guidance counsellor means she is often the first point of contact for students; she frequently plays a large role in helping students plan their academic pathway. Counsellors may also play a role in coordinating with community partners and agencies to inform students of volunteer activities that exist within the community.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study relied on accessing each of the multiple data sources described above. Data collection began with reading and reviewing: educational policy, pedagogical theories relating to civic education, and Canadian curriculum guidelines. After establishing a theoretical foundation and obtaining ethical approval, participants were contacted

for interviews. The following describes the specific data collection practices and procedures for each data source.

Documents and studies. A number of policy and curriculum documents, academic studies, books, and newspaper articles were collected as part of the data analysis for this study. Fortunately, almost all were available either physically or electronically through the Lakehead University Education Library. Several texts created the formative foundation for this study. The pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire's Problem-Posing Education, as presented in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), and John Dewey's pedagogy for experience, as described in *Experience and Education* (1938) each describes how a meaningful program for civic education is to be structured and what role educators and students should play.

Several principle studies formed the literature backbone of what aspects should be present in an effective community service program *(*Meinhard et al., 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010; Henderson et al., 2014). The best practice recommendations in these papers (as shown in Table 1: Essential Features of Community Service Programs as Reported in 22 Articles) and previous in-depth interviews with administrators (Meinhard & Brown, 2007; Meinhard, Foster et al., 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010) were used to draft questions to be used in semi-structured interviews. These studies were accessed through the Lakehead University Education Library and are cited in the references section.

Current and archived Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum and policy documents (described above in the Selection of Documents subsection) were used to investigate the provincial mandate of the community service program, its purpose, and goals. These documents were accessed via the Ontario Ministry of Education's electronic archives as well as both physical and electronic searches via the academic education library at Lakehead University.

Pertinent archived newspaper articles were accessed from the online databases of the *New York Times, Toronto Star,* and the *Globe and Mail.* The author made use of an electronic filing system to organize and store all recorded data obtained from documents. This information was then backed up and stored in a secured electronic folder.

Interviews. Each individual participated in a semi-structured interview that lasted on average one hour and twenty-five minutes. A total of three interviews were completed. All participants signed the consent forms (see Appendix D) before engaging in the interview. Before beginning, individuals were reminded: their responses would remain confidential and pseudonyms would be used, they had the right to withdraw from the interview/study at any time, and there would be no negative consequences as a result of non-participation or withdrawal from the study. In order to aid with transcription process, an audio recording of each interview was made with the permission of each participant. Prior to each interview, participants were asked to state their name, position, experience and background as an educator, and their current role. While participants were encouraged to speak openly, they were advised they could refrain from answering any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. No participants chose to withdraw from the study data.

The questions used in the interviews were reflective of the literature and two previous studies (Meinhard, Foster, et al, 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010) which provided a well-defined interview template. Questions were organized into five subsections: 1) program details, 2) teacher/staff involvement, 3) school-community liaison, 4) student experiences, and 5) advice for best practices (Meinhard, Foster et al., 2007; Meinhard & Brown, 2010). The questions were intended to investigate how schools can continue to support community-based learning for high

school students' civic education. The questions asked what the community service requirement looked like at that particular school, and how successful the program was.

At the completion of each interview, an alphanumeric code was assigned to each participant and was consistently used for all future files and documents. Pseudonyms were later used for all direct quotations–ensuring both privacy and confidentiality. Alliteration was used in choosing pseudonym names, which aided in creating a mnemonic device that would help aid readers with remembering interview participant's roles (e.g. Paula the Principal, Giselle the Guidance Counsellor, Terry the Teacher).

Data Analysis

In case study, subjectivity is understood to be inevitable and desirable for both participants and the research (Simmons, 2014). Rather than viewing subjectivity as a potential bias or something to counter, Simmons (2014) advocates that it is an intelligence that is essential to understanding and interpreting the experience of stakeholders. In order to control subjectivity, a disciplined coding system was used for participant interviews to identify major themes (Simmons, 2014). Repetition of idea and themes helped to identify major concepts. This study relied on multiple perspectives to further aid in creating a rich understanding of one particular phenomenon. Making use of diverse perspectives or positions is a common approach and one which this study used to further aid in framing validity (Torrance, 2007).

Document analysis. This study made use of discourse analysis "to make more visible [the] opaque aspects of discourse" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). The occurrence and context of keywords, as well as participant roles and responsibilities, were evaluated based on the theoretical framework presented by this study. Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) argue this approach can bring to light the often "hidden ideological effects of the inclusions and exclusions

implied by the supposedly neutral language" (p. 898) in curriculum regarding active citizenship. Curricular documents and guidelines, while making up only a portion of the educational curriculum, arguably played a role in establishing the norms and boundaries of acceptable educational discourse (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). While they are primarily written for teachers, they are one avenue through which the ideological elements of schooling for citizenship can be discerned (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Using this knowledge, the implications of document wording was considered and then contrasted with how an ideal program should be run (as per the theoretical foundation and research-based best practices).

Interview analysis. Interview responses were transposed verbatim and then analysed through structured content analysis. Statements were linked to a code system that synthesized preceding theory and literature with emergent themes from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mayring, 2002; 2003). This process involved three distinct stages: 1) making sense of initial findings, 2) identification of themes and 3) examination of patterns and relationships that might exist between themes (Simmons, 2014). This type of formal analytic approach requires that data be broken into segments or data sets (coded and categorized) and then reordered and explored for themes, patterns, and possible propositions (Simmons, 2014). In practice, similar ideas and comments were grouped together into larger themes. These themes then informed how participants viewed the program. Multiple repetitions of the same, or similar, ideas from different participants suggested a dominant theme that was often mirrored in the literature (for example, the need for direct staff involvement).

Chain of evidence. The raw data collected by this study was further organized by using a chain of evidence. Later, during data analysis the chain of evidence helps to transparently trace the author's arguments and reasoning (Kyburz-Graber, 2004). This provided support for the

larger themes that were identified using an open coding system (described above). The chain of evidence provided a helpful way of connecting data obtained through interviews with corresponding data from the curriculum documents, educational theory, and research-based best practices.

   Validity. In the field of policy studies, some believe it is a necessity for scholars to compare their research reports with the work of prior reports, and for comparing settings with other settings (Hammersley, 1992). To further ensure validity, Altheide and Johnson (2011) argue a dual approach must be taken:

> Firstly) expectations exist for the researcher to show readers the grounds for trusting their report in conjunction with a measured and realistic skepticism by readers, secondly) to place the claims of any given research report in a context of many other reports, even one's life experience.

This study has sought to remain transparent in presenting and contrasting both document data and first-person experiences gained at the Northern Pines High School. Together these data sources complement each other and provide reasonable grounds for identifying what aspects of the Ontario community involvement requirement were running well and what improvements might be made. The discussion section of this paper reflects on how this study compares with prior studies.

   Generalizability. Yin (2009) states that ultimately the goal in reporting a case study is to do a generalizing and not a particularizing analysis (as cited in Lipset, Trow, & Coleman, 1956, p.419-420). However, a balance must be achieved between the abstract and the specific. The goal of case study is to provide a rich description of the content and context in a way that enables the reader to connect and recognize events that are portrayed, creating the possibility for inferences to be made (Simmons, 2014). This is believed to make it more likely the case findings will be relatable to individuals in similar situations. It is, therefore, possible for readers to learn

vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher's narrative description (Stake, 2005). For this reason, Erikson (1986) argues it is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to her/his particular context. Ideally, the standard for qualitative case studies is that they should provide enough detail to describe how people act during events and to show that the author's conclusion makes sense (Firestone, 1987, p. 19). It is likely that educators (such as principals, guidance counsellors and teachers) share similar experiences and challenges administering and supporting this graduation requirement across Ontario.

Ethical Considerations

Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board granted approval for this research project as it has been described. The permission form is attached in Appendix B.

Conclusion: Why Case Study

A case study approach was effective in examining the key research questions presented in this document. These questions sought to investigate how community-based learning and civic education can be established, or why it fails. As a mandated graduation requirement, school boards and schools must comply with the provincial expectations. Ultimately, case study proved to be an ideal approach for examining, in rich detail, one school's experience within the Ontario program.

Chapter 4: Results
Uneven and Unequal Experiences

Introduction

The community involvement requirement is currently structured in a way that creates uneven and unequal experiences for students. The staff of Northern Pines High School described a reality where some students complete the requirement with ease while others struggle. It was a

common perspective that the requirement is a student responsibility to complete. Student success

was primarily defined as meeting the forty hours requirement. This section examines how

students experience and interact with the community involvement requirement. Examining this

information helps to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of policy as it is put into practice

at the high school level. Ultimately, the program is inconsistent as it offers positive experiences

for some and negative experiences for others. Staff assistance is largely reactive and may only

become focused if a pupil has failed to complete the requirements independently.

Multiple Factors Influencing Success

This study sought to understand how the initiative operates within an Ontario High

School and how students are connecting to community-based learning. The staff at the Northern

Pines High School identified several factors that contributed to driving student success. As a

result of these components, many students were successful in exceeding the required number of

hours.

Highly motivated youth with supportive parents. Some students excelled and

completed the requirements without difficulty. Vice-principal Paula described these individuals

as "highly motivated students who are self-motivating, doing well in school, and are usually

enrolled in academic courses." Giselle, a guidance counsellor, reaffirmed this:

> Highly motivated kids or kids who have parents who are highly motivated. You start to
> see them gaining hours in grade 9 and often these kids tend to get their volunteer hours
> over and done with at the latest by grade 11.

For these individuals, both students and parents are aware of the requirement prior to entering

high school. Furthermore, these students have parents who help with arranging opportunities, are

supportive, and play an active role in monitoring their child's progress. In her own words,

Giselle describes them as such:

> Kids and their parents have heard prior to coming into high school that the 40 hours are
> important and to start as soon as you can – even the summer before you even enter high
> school. So often parents are arranging opportunities or telling their [children] to go into
> the guidance office and find opportunities. And like I said, they tend to be…the ones that
> we don't have to worry about their community hours. They are on par.

Immediately, two aspects are identified as key roles for student success. First, the student is self-motivated or ambitiously task-orientated. Giselle, felt "if you are telling them you have to do this, this, and this. Highly motivated kids, who are university-bound kids, are going to do it because that is just how they are." Secondly, these students have at least one parent at home who is supportive and available to assist their child.

Already involved. The initiative's stated purpose is to "encourage awareness and understanding of civic responsibility as well as the role students can play in contributing and strengthening their communities" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). Interview participants agreed the initiative provided students with an opportunity to become engaged in their community. Paula commented that students have the opportunity to "try something they have never experience before." Terry, a teacher and the chair of social sciences, believed the program may be an effective way to get people civically engaged in a way that is perhaps outside of their comfort zone. Both Giselle and Terry believed the program could offer an opportunity for students "to work with people and groups that they may not otherwise encounter," which is beneficial in encouraging youth to try new things.

However, the reality of where and how students complete their hours is directly connected to whatever pre-existing networks they may have. Many students are already participating in activities that could be considered community hours. Paula provided the following example of a hockey family:

> Much of the time, it is based on the kids, their parents, [and] their connections; it is what
> they do. For example, we have kids who are hockey players, they keep time [at the

arena]. Their little brother is on a hockey team, they are at the rink anyway, and so, "I may as well help with the time keeping and get some community hours."

To reinforce this point, Terry and Giselle both felt students would have been involved in some type of community involvement even if they were not already being mandated to do so. In the information bulletin, the Northern Birches School Board (2017) concedes that community involvement is something that a lot of students already participate in (See Appendix A.2). With the high level of autonomy students have in choosing where they complete hours, it is not uncommon for them to gain recognition for activities they likely would have participated in any way.

In short, where and how youth participate, according to Paula, "is based on the students' interests, what they want to do, and what opportunities come their way." Successfully completing service is reliant both on students having opportunities available to them (outside school hours) and the ability to pursue what interests them (support from parents). For those fortunate enough to already be engaged in activities it is easier to complete their requirement.

True altruism. It was not uncommon, Paula noted, for students to participate in community involvement initiatives because they are being driven by their "moral, helpful, giving nature." She explained further:

> There are a lot of teenagers whose motivation goes well beyond their graduation requirements or what their parents want them to do. They are at the age, especially going into Grade 11 [at] 16 and 17, where "this is a part of my world, I want to make it a better place." Social injustice, I'll be honest is a huge factor for teenagers.

For some students, Paula noted they take "pride in their community, pride in their schools, pride in themselves and [in being] a contributing member." They have a desire to participate and be a positive influence. This may manifest through students helping to clean up their community or, as Paula had also witnessed, to organize initiatives within the school like a clothing or food drive for a family in need.

Career/future orientated. Other students participate because they are motivated by their future ambitions. These individuals are successful in completing the requirement – sometimes by considerably large margins. Paula believed these students have incredibly high standards and expectations. In her own words:

> Now, these kids are *highly, highly* motivated. Typically [they] have marks in the high 90's and have thousands of community hours. They are a student who has extremely high expectations of themselves and where they are headed.

Similarly, some students were thought to capitalize on exploring possible future pathways for selecting school courses, possible careers, and personal interests. Paraphrasing a student's thought process Paula remarked:

> Is this something I want to study? Do I want to go into medicine? Do I want to spend time in a hospital? Is this a good fit for me? Let me volunteer, let me spend time here and see whether this is something that I can do.

Giselle, a guidance counsellor, explained this further:

> The ones that see it as a learning opportunity, are the ones that you will see have 75 to 110 hours of community involvement and they would have done that regardless. Whether that program was there or not.

The service requirement may also be used as a stand-in for other more experiential classes. Paula felt that the volunteering and community involvement program may be especially beneficial to academic students who do not have time in their schedules to explore co-operative education placements. As she described:

> Volunteering allows them to do almost the exact same [thing as coop]. They're not doing it for an entire course, but they are [exploring options like] "I want to go work with animals, I want to go see if this is where I want to be." It helps them in building up their skills and their interests and helping them along their pathway.

This high number of accumulated hours can be beneficial later when students are applying for their first jobs or to post-secondary school programs. The community involvement provides some measure of evidence to their interest or experience which they can include in their

applications. Exploration is important to students because, by grade 10, Giselle explained, typically students at Northern Pines High School have to make a decision about what academic pathway they will follow. Through service, students can participate in diverse experiences to provide clearer insight into possible future careers or studies. For many, the primary purpose may be to gain future/career orientated experience.

Competition. Terry, a social sciences chair, noticed some "kids that are reveling in trying to hit 300 or 400 hours." He proposed another perhaps simpler motivation possibility – competition:

> Your high initiative kids often turn it into a race to achieve even 3 or 4, or even 5 times the amount of hours. Just to outdo their compatriots. It really becomes about the accumulation of how many [hours they can get]. So they have a friendly competition.

Aside from completing the mandated hours, there is no further measure of success or additional incentive(s) to encourage continued participation. What meaning students make or attribute to their involvement is open to individual interpretations or motivations. When asked what students think about the program he remarked, "The kids find it very easy, a bit of joke, to be honest, their words, not mine." It is possible that for some students the requirement is too easy and the number of mandated hours too low?

Analysis of Roles

The policy appears to work well for students who are self-motivated, have clearly defined future ambitions, and pre-existing support networks available to them outside of the school. These networks include having parents/guardians support and already being connected to at least one social group. However, if the program structure is critically examined it may disproportionately favour more privileged participants. This is evident in how the policy defines and allocates roles and responsibilities.

The role of students. Policy/Program Memorandum No. 124a, the document that defines

the roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders (specifically: school boards, principals,

students, parents and community sponsors) emphasizes that the student complete the requirement

independently from the school and with assistance from their parent. Youth and their parents are

to identify activities they are interested in, communicate their intentions to the school, and

complete the requirement (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). If an activity is

not on the pre-approved list (see Appendix A.2; Northern Birches School Board, 2017), students

may propose it to their principal in order to obtain signed consent to participate in it. Regardless

of what activity the student selects, they are individually responsible for choosing how, when and

where they will complete their service requirement. Unlike any other diploma requirement, this

is to be completed outside of school and without teacher supervision -- creating, on paper, only a

minimal administrative burden. Students are also responsible for seeing that the corresponding

paperwork is completed properly and submitted in a timely manner (which may be arbitrarily

defined by the principal). Once the student has submitted their completed form and it has been

accepted by the principal, they have fulfilled their responsibility to the requirement and by

extension to their community.

The role of parents. The policy dictates that parents play a role in assisting their child

with selecting an appropriate community involvement activity (Ontario Ministry of Education

and Training, 1999a; 1999b). Parent and guardians may also be encouraged to communicate with

the community organization supervisor and/or the high school principal if they have any

questions or concerns about the program. Next to the child, parents are described as the primary

facilitators of their child's community involvement. The parent must also sign the corresponding

paperwork to confirm that their child completed the initiative. This implies that parents are to be

involved in monitoring their children's progress. The policy assumes and relies on parental

support to be available to the student at home. This is emphasized in the caveat that service is to

take place outside of school hours. Giselle and Terry both felt that more could be done to educate

parents about the requirement and its purpose. Without the active support of a parent, guardian,

or pre-existing connections to community networks, it is likely that the student will experience

greater difficulty with completing the program.

The role of secondary school principals. The policy describes the principal -- the only

staff member who has a definite and direct responsibility for the program -- as a strictly clerical

position. Their primary concern is to provide information about the community involvement

requirement to parents, students, and community sponsors. The principal is also responsible for

ensuring that students are provided with the forms needed to complete the community

involvement requirement (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). Finally, the

principal has the authority to permit a student to participate in an activity that is not on the pre-

approved list or to veto any completed participation that does not meet the program standard.

After a student completes forty hours of community involvement and submits the required

documentation to the school, the principal then decides whether the student has met the

community involvement requirement and, if so, records it as completed on the student's official

transcript (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). No further roles or

responsibilities are described for staff members at the High School level. Whether it is implied or

just common practice, the principal may delegate this clerical obligation - often to the student

services office. The result is that staff members are detached from the aims of the requirement,

and may not believe it is their duty to oversee the program, especially since the policy defines it

as a student-directed initiative which should have parental supervision.

The role of the community sponsor. Community sponsor is a term used to refer to any person or organization who hosts the student while they complete their hours. Further reinforcing the absence of the school in playing a facilitative role, the policy states it is the community sponsor's responsibility to provide training, equipment, and any other special preparation that may be required. While the Ministry stresses it is crucial that students fulfill their community involvement requirement in a safe environment, it does not play an active role in teaching students about their health and safety rights as Canadian Citizens. The final responsibility that the community sponsor has is to verify the date(s) and the number of hours completed by the students on the appropriate form.

Systematic deficiencies propagating uneven and unequal experiences. The Northern Birches School Board describes the community involvement initiative as a "student-directed program" – See Appendix A.2 (Northern Birches School Board, 2017). The policy presents a procedure for the student which is idealistic in proposing a nearly autonomous learning experience that will create only a small administrative impact for the school. The lack of staff oversight is emphasized by the fact that the requirement is to be completed outside of school hours and independently. Only a minimal number of interactions are necessary with staff. All that is required is for students to notify administration where they will complete their hours and when they have done so. Finally, the student bears the responsibility for selecting and completing the requirement with some guidance and monitoring from their parents.

Dewey and Freire have each posited and defined the requirements of a purposeful experience-based community involvement program (examined in greater detail later in Chapter 5: Theory into Practice, p.99). An effective program would ensure that students have support and guidance in place to ensure they are able to engage in meaningful educative experiences. The

goal of providing students with community experiences is that all will learn in the process of living (Dewey, 1916). While the Ontario program mandates that all students participate in forty hours of community service, it does not guarantee all participants have equal access to meaningful community placements. The program does not produce consistency but rather propagates uneven and unequal experiences. The policy may favour students who are privileged to have greater access to social networks, support and time. Giselle described this succinctly, stating that "equity does not mean equality." While this can work well for some students, it is not a practical approach for the entire high school student population. The following section will demonstrate that many students bear an unfair responsibility for the completion of their hours. These struggles are amplified by numerous factors which can cause some students to struggle more than others. A need is identified for students to have similar supports in place to help catalyze their success.

At-risk/Disengaged/Disadvantaged Students

Interview participants identified a number of students who struggle to complete the hours and meet their graduation requirement. The keyword *at-risk* was used by interview respondents to refer to 1) students who are struggling to complete their hours and/or 2) individuals who have a higher probability that they will not be able to complete their hours independently without active staff intervention from the student services office. Examining in closer detail who struggles and why reveals the systematic deficiencies which exist within the policy as they are made manifest in the program/school.

Who it is that struggles. There are certain student groups within the school that struggle disproportionately with the requirement. Students who are already struggling in school or lack individual motivation were reported to experience difficulty completing the requirement. This

cross-section of students also includes: those with learning disabilities or mental health issues,

cultural or language barriers, or youth who generally do not have a pre-existing network in the

community. For many, the result is an increased difficulty trying to locate a service opportunity.

This was made evident by Giselle, who noted that the students who struggled most with the

requirement were:

> More of your at-risk students, and when I say at-risk that includes your unmotivated kids but it is also kids who are struggling in school, ELL [English language learners] and true ESL [English as a second language] students who have immigrated from another country, but also First Nations students.

Giselle went on later to clarify why this can be a difficult requirement:

> I taught a boy from Lebanon and a young girl from China, so English as a Second Language kids and English Language Learners. Northern First Nation communities, [so students] who are leaving their very small northern community . . . often without family support, [and staying] in a boarding home. Sometimes the boarding homes are good, sometimes they are not. So there are housing issues, on top of [the student] adjusting to being in a larger city, and adjusting to a high school of six, eight, to one thousand kids; and unfortunately sometimes there are gaps in education. Now on top of that, you want them to find a volunteer experience in a city that they don't know and they don't feel comfortable in.

It can be a lot to ask of these students to complete this requirement independently. Reflecting on

her personal and professional experience, Giselle expanded on what causes some students to

struggle with completing their hours:

> I have six nieces and nephews that are bright ladies and men who have two parents who are career driven and are very involved with their families. They started [collecting] their hours early and exceeded their 40 hours. But they also don't have to deal with any kind of mental health issues, don't live in poverty, or have unsupportive parents. So we can easily say those 40 hours – that is nothing. . . . But 40 hours for some is like climbing Mount Everest.

It is evident there may be multiple factors that further influence the student's ability to complete

their graduation requirement.

For other students, it could simply be a matter of time. Giselle and Paula both noted that some students do not have a lot of time available outside of school because they babysit while their parent(s) are at work. In some cases, if the youth is old enough, they may also be expected to earn a wage to help contribute to the family income. However, the Ontario program does not allow any paid position to count as a form of community involvement. Giselle commented:

> It is hard with your students who are at risk because there are other things going on, there are issues at home, there are mental health problems, [and] there are food issues. There are so many kids who don't have enough food at home and so what's more important getting food or getting 40 hours of volunteerism?

Many aspects can influence why students struggle and for a lot of children the explanation goes beyond the fact that they were simply not motived to participate. These general risk factors can contribute to, or be compounded by, the student's attendance at high school. If a student is absent from school in combination with the above risk factors, Paula commented they are unlikely to be completing their community involvement hours as well as the credits required for graduation.

The program appears to be structured in a way that favours those who are well connected, have support at home, and ample time to participate. Students who lack proficient supports can be immediately put at a disadvantage by this student-directed program. Examining how the policy is enacted reinforces how certain students are disadvantaged.

A Student's Responsibility

The Ontario policy was written in a manner that made students primarily responsible for the completion of the requirement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999b). The Northern Birches School Board reinforces the provincial mandate by stating that it is a student responsibility to complete the community engagement initiative and all the necessary documentation (See Appendix A.2; Northern Birches School Board, 2017). This has had a direct influence on how both students and staff members interpret their own roles and responsibilities. Specifically, it has

resulted in some staff members believing it is not their responsibility to see that the students

complete the requirement. Paula explained:

> For the most part, the ownership on gathering those hours and having them signed off by
> the community agency _is_ the responsibility of the student. It's not a formalized program
> that gets these hours for them [in the school]. It's the responsibility of the student to get
> those hours.

This was described by both Paula and Giselle as a common belief among staff. Alternatively,

after several years as a curriculum requirement, Giselle believed the community involvement

requirement was widely regarded as common knowledge to both students and parents.

Prior to youth even entering high school, Giselle was certain many parents and students

are aware the forty hours are important and should be completed as soon as possible in order to

graduate. Giselle explained, students often receive a general orientation to the requirement prior

to entering high school from either: 1) their elementary teacher or 2) a visiting high school

guidance counsellor who is doing a presentation on high school enrollment and requirements.

Once enrolled in high school, students may receive information through very passive

methods. For example, students may be referred to: download the documents/information

guidelines from the school/school board website, listen to announcements, look at a bulletin

board for opportunities, or check the course calendar for more program details and procedural

guidelines. Occasionally community groups, like the armed forces, will set up a volunteer

recruitment booth during lunch hour. The student services office makes an effort to make

available a wide variety of opportunities for students to become involved in, as Giselle

commented:

> Throughout the year you want to expose them to different opportunities [via
> announcements, bulletin board, etc]. So we do that. And when option sheet time comes
> around we are talking to them again. So they are always being bombarded. It's not a lack
> of "Hey they didn't know that had to get it done" or "hey we haven't provided them

opportunities."

Despite the number and variety of postings on the bulletin board, this is indicative of a very passive approach to information dissemination.

This passive approach may be linked to the fact that the program is viewed as a student-driven activity. This is problematic because the both the provincial and school board policies (as well as the general practice at the school level) begin with the assumption that *all* students have the social skills, ability, and connections to independently find their own community involvement opportunities. Staff members at the Northern Birches School were confident that students are well aware it is *their* responsibility to complete the hours, and that there are sufficient opportunities throughout the school year for students to start collecting hours.

While student independence and decision making is an important factor in a community service program, supports must be in place to ensure students who require assistance are able to easily access knowledgeable help. Designating the initiative solely as a student-centered responsibility may exacerbate many of the negative factors which disadvantage some adolescents. It is problematic that staff believe the responsibility to facilitate this program lies with either the student or the parent (as defined in the Policy/Memorandum 124a; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999b). A stronger support network within the school could prove beneficial for students who require addition guidance, have failed to complete their hours independently, or lack assistance outside of school. More substantial program structure would ensure that knowledgeable guidance is available to students. This could help to ensure that students are able to overcome the barriers which can hamper their success. Not the least of which is learning how to fulfill the necessary bureaucratic practices for completing the required paperwork.

Bureaucracy

In place of staff members being actively involved in helping students to find appropriate volunteer placements, youth are expected to notify staff in writing of how they plan to complete the initiative. Students are to learn independently how to track their hours and complete the necessary paperwork that corresponds with their community involvement. This includes obtaining the appropriate signature(s) to verify how many hours they completed. While this appears simple from a professional-bureaucratic perspective, in the end, it causes further issues for many students.

Staff described the most common obstacle preventing students from finishing their requirement was neglecting to submit the paperwork. Paula remarked:

> The majority of the time, with *many, many, many* students, the issue is this….they've done the hours, but they haven't got it signed and turned into the school. To be honest, if I had a nickel for every time I spoke to a student to say, "You've got no community hours!" "Yeah, I've got 35!" "Where is it?" "Well it's at home, or I didn't get it signed, and I've got to go get it signed."

Using a paper-based system was a source of struggle for every student group within the high school. Giselle described it as such:

> That is with all students, even your keen, and well-engaged students. They will lose their sheets or, [they will not hand] them in so we can document them. We'll say, "Get them in so we are not on your back saying: where is your volunteer hours?" They lose them.

Giselle felt this problem could be avoided if staff would "just follow up to say, 'Ok, we need it signed, let's get it handed into the school.'" However, she admitted that the student services office does not often do this at the Northern Pines High School. This policy places an extraordinary emphasis on the student (or the parent) to create opportunities, monitor progress, and self-identify to the school administration when assistance is required. Meanwhile, the staff members seem to have only a passive engagement with students and no guidelines for active

assistance. The unequal weighting of roles and responsibilities along with the challenges imposed by the bureaucratic nature of the program can prolong a student's struggles with the requirement.

Support Is Passive, Responsibility Is Loosely Defined and Often Allocated

The research literature and educational theory both identify staff involvement as a critical component of a successful program. Close examination of how the staff is currently involved provides insight as to why some students struggle more than their peers. It is important to remember the only role that is definitively assigned to staff at the school level for this particular requirement is allocated to the principal (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999b). In Giselle's opinion the "verbiage of the policy documents [does state] everything is put in place and overseen by the principal and vice-principal" but in reality "[the principal and vice-principal] are very much detached." The policy describes a cascading flow of responsibilities, as Giselle said, "it is downloaded from the province to the board, and the board shuffles it to schools. Principals don't have time and they shuffle it down" through delegation to the student services office.

The student services office often ends up, as Giselle put it, actually doing the "tracking, promotion, and getting kids involved." Yet, the guidance counsellors do not have a clearly defined set of responsibilities or role within the official policy. This is significant because it means there are no consistent guidelines in place to direct staff. The role that administration may play in overseeing the requirement was described by Giselle as limited and sometimes delayed:

> The vice-principal may say "this kid still needs their volunteer hours. It's April and they graduate in June", or at student success meetings [they may ask] "why is so-and-so still at risk?" But you know they're not a hands-on for the most part, it falls on guidance.

The student services office at Northern Pines High bears the responsibility of monitoring how students are progressing. However, due to the number of students in the high school, along with the diverse responsibilities that the student services office has to complete, one-on-one interventions may be delayed with students who are falling behind.

Close monitoring may only occur with senior year high school students. "A large portion of your students that need the community hours," Giselle commented, "sometimes just fall through the cracks until grade 11 and 12 where you are saying - 40 hours!" Paula confirmed this, saying "formally, we look at our grade 12s. So when a student is in . . . their last year, they are very closely monitored to say, 'you don't have any community hours, you need 40.'" She went on later to comment, "If it was going to be a 1-1 intervention it would be with a grade 12 student." Nothing is currently framed within the policy to guide staff on how to best monitor progress, test student/staff comprehension of the program's purpose, or reflect on what benefits students have gained through service. This lack of guidance from the policy/provincial level may allow school boards and high schools some measure of autonomy to determine how to implement the program.

To better account for the policy's shortcomings, the staff at Northern Pines High School had devised the following approach to ensure that students received some guidance each year. Due to the large number of students (800 pupils on average) and the limited number of staff available in the guidance office, the student success staff:

> All take a section of the alphabet . . . some guidance counsellors may have the A to G, so those are our kids and we try to get to know them as well as we can. But that is a lot of kids. Yet surprisingly you do get to know who they are if you interact with them. During the interview you go through everything, you look at their community hours, and you remind them to get started early.

This interview was part of a general yearly check in with students, which was taken as an opportunity to monitor their progress and encourage them to plan how they would complete any remaining hours. This approach has been working well to provide every student with some attention and guidance. However, after the interview, the means of promoting the community service requirement remains passive. It is up to the student to take the initiative to enroll in opportunities and work toward completing their hours. The policy does not do a particularly good job of structuring support: infrequent check-ins with students, passive postings of opportunities, and a highly pre-occupied staff result in a less than effective in-school support network. Assistance can be delayed if a student does not outright ask for help finding service opportunities.

Moreover, the students who need help are not necessarily the students who are visiting to make appointments, Giselle commented that at Northern Pines High, "A lot of the students who are not getting their hours, typically aren't the ones that come to guidance. They are sort of the ones that need a little bit of nudging." Typically, the kids who are often seen in the guidance office, Giselle clarified, are the kids "who want to change their timetable or are students with mental health issues." An advisor's ability to reach out and provide support may be limited by their rapport with the students that they serve. There are many students who the student services staff are unable to reach simply because they do not know the students very well. Giselle was concerned that guidance counsellors, especially those who do not teach, "Often don't know every student that is assigned to them." She said it can be difficult to approach a student in the hallway, which the guidance counsellor may have only spoken with once, "and say to them 'Hey, I just got this opportunity for volunteering' when you really do not know them."

Overall, the Ontario program may not be structured in a way that enables students to have access to the same quality citizenship opportunities and cannot guarantee that the same school support will be available. The systematic deficiencies that exist within the policy have created a program that does not provide ideal learning or teaching opportunities for students and staff. The high level of student autonomy coupled with the generally passive involvement of staff can amplify student struggles. This section has demonstrated from first-hand participant observations and document review that a multiplicity of reasons can exist which make it difficult for an adolescent to complete their requirement independently. "A lot of kids," Terry commented, "just don't have that touchstone of experience. . . . A lot of students don't even know what volunteering looks like and quite frankly a lot of adults don't know either. . . . You can't say carte blanche 'here it is, go wild.'" The students who have the preferred skill set, social supports outside of school, and who work independently are favoured by the policy. Meanwhile, those who require extra support may be left wanting. Finally, the bureaucratic paper-based approach can be detrimental for many students.

It is a Reactive Program

When these factors are considered as a whole, they indicate the initiative has a reactive design. The structure of the program is based on a wait-and-see method of facilitation where staff wait to see who is struggling. This ultimately indicates that the policy/program is lacking the foresight and good consideration that would be indicative of a much more effective educative program or service-learning initiative.

Terry felt that the program "is at cross purposes to begin with," because it is oxymoronic - mandated volunteerism. "Everyone wants to be educated to make free choices," he said, "yet, here we are putting in a structure that mandates you donate your time." Giselle was very

unhappy with how the current program fails to support many of the students who need it the most. "I think it is very reactive as a situation arises and then we react. Oh my God Adam is in grade whatever! Why didn't we address this?" She felt uncomfortable with students receiving the same generic spiel year-after-year, "don't forget your volunteer hours" and it being common practice for staff to wait until grade 11 and 12 to assist those kids individually.

For any number of reasons, a student may delay or be unable to collect their hours during their first two years of high school and then become a higher priority for staff to assist – triggering the first intervention by staff. Giselle said it was not unusual for guidance counsellors to sit down with higher at-risk students to say:

> Ok so and so, you don't have your 40 hours you are graduating this year, you have all your requirements [you're on track with your classes] but you don't have your hours. What are you going to do? Let's sit down, let's make a plan.

During this interview, she would ask them -- "what do you like to do? Have you thought of this?"-- with the hope that a plan could be made for the student to then enact. Occasionally, Giselle would contact a business or community group and ask, "Hey can you use someone there on a volunteer basis?" This type of intervention was limited to what contacts the guidance counsellor had, as well as their willingness to make the call on the student's behalf. This would likely occur if a student was short on hours and approaching graduation.

Terry felt that there was always going to be a demographic of students who did not buy into the program, resisted completing the requirement, or for one reason or another did not complete any hours. He described these as the special cases:

> Typically mid- to low-achievement kids that really aren't engaged in the process at all as well as their own academic achievement. So they become your panic student because that [community involvement requirement] is of course tied to their success, their graduation, and it's *sort of* our responsibility to mitigate that [as teachers].

In some extreme cases, Terry shared, a student's lack of hours "becomes a problem and you have teachers, and guidance counsellors, and principals scrambling to make an opportunity." Giselle gave the example of asking certain at-risk students to help unload the truck for the national ballet which was putting on a presentation at the school. "So you know, an hour here and an hour there and you try to get their hours in."

Often guidance will send a hand-picked student to a teacher if they know the teacher is running an activity or has a connection to the community. This is a common way for a student to be given an opportunity to make up hours if they are falling behind. Terry lamented, "it falls on me as the conduit, as the nexus point to create this volunteer opportunity, which then I sign off on." He went further to say:

> You'll see a lot of teachers, guidance counsellors, and principals try to put together programs that will try to meet those needs. So maybe you're doing the Christmas cheer and food drive, maybe you're doing something for the elderly, whatever it is, litter pickup, we'll find something, some sort of initiative that will hopefully accommodate what we would call the volunteer hour.

Terry worried arbitrarily assigning students to activities in order to complete their hours it can deprive them of a meaningful learning opportunity. This is a task a teacher will complete despite having no written obligation in the policy. In his words:

> We would take that on as our responsibility because that is our job to help make that happen. But I guess the scary thing part is *when it becomes a crutch*, when we design the initiative to solve that problem. Versus there is an opportunity there for that person.

He felt that there was "a whole nuance at the education level that frankly isn't there." In his mind, confusion was arising between how the program was currently being facilitated and what actual purpose of the community involvement requirement was meant to accomplish:

> In respect to the volunteer commitment it's very simple in my mind: what is the definition of volunteership, how do we meet the requirements of the province, is it working for society, and is it working for the student?

Terry identified a tension that exists in the Northern Pines School between challenging students to be engaged in worthwhile service activities and settling for those who have completed just enough to qualify for graduation.

Terry's insight begs the question: how can the quality and integrity of the service be maintained if the staff is solely focused on, and continually reacting to, a student's shortage of hours? When the only measure for success is that students achieve the forty hour threshold, a concern should be raised about where and when the students are learning about altruism, civic engagement, and community mindfulness. This raises doubts on whether the program is achieving its goals. Of equal importance, educators should be concerned with understanding how students' experiences are influencing their understanding of volunteering, community involvement, and civic responsibility. Lastly, there is the concern of whether students are actually providing a beneficial service to the community. Each aspect is not directly addressed by the current policy or the practices that the policy has influenced at Northern Pines High School.

A Confusion of Purpose

This section identifies the origins of the program policy. Curriculum documents reveal the policy was rooted in a movement that advocated for community education and later for imparting the value of volunteer service in youth. Interview participants comment on their understanding of the program and how it is facilitated at the Northern Pines High School. A tension is identified between the programs stated purpose and how it is enacted in practice by students and staff. Contrasting the policy goals with how youth and staff engage with and understand the program reveals misconceptions that distract from the program's true civic and altruistic purpose.

Policy as a Living Document

The following section traces how the community involvement requirement became a province-wide mandate through archival curriculum and education documents. Examining the documents reveals several changes in emphasis on why youth should be engaged in their community. Of particular note, policy changes and stakeholder roles have had the most significant influence on how the program was intended to be delivered. The result has been more limited supervision than was initially conceived. With no change to the program since its inception, it continues as a product of the political time from which it was enacted.

For the Love of Learning: **Connecting schools with communities.** The origin of the community involvement requirement begins four years prior to it becoming a provincial mandate. Initially, The Royal Commission on Learning published a document titled *For the Love of Learning* (1995), which made 167 broad recommendations to produce a sweeping change in the Ontario education system. For learners age 15 – 18, it was specifically suggested a mandatory community service diploma requirement be created for students. As one of four main themes, a particular focus was dedicated to providing recommendations that would aid with community education. This was described as a priority for all schools, which must foster "the development of all students by harnessing the various resources of the communities they are a part of" (*For the Love of Learning, 1995)*. It was suggested that community resources (like parents, community organizations, etc.) must share the non-academic tasks of enhancing students' intellectual competence. Meanwhile, schools should work to improve and develop community alliances.

The next step toward the implementation of the mandated community involvement requirement occurred in 1995. John Snobelen, the incumbent Minister of Education and Training

and a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, further expanded on what community

education might entail. He announced the new Ontario-wide curriculum would work to promote

responsible citizenship in youth by encouraging students to learn about social issues while

remaining grounded in their home communities (Ontario Ministry of Education New Release,

1995; Ontario Ministry of Education Backgrounder, 1998). The policy was designed to immerse

students in their hometown and have communities share an active role in fostering learning.

The final step toward the mandated requirement implementation occurred in 1997. The

Premier's Advisory Board adjusted the focus by recommending the Government of Ontario take

action to "impart the value of voluntary action to youth through the school curriculum"

(*Sustaining a Civic Society*, Voluntary Action in Ontario, 1997). This was intended to introduce

voluntary action learning (or community service) to the curriculum as either an elective or

compulsory credit for high school graduation. The initial proposition suggested students

complete a minimum of twenty hours of service per year (two hours per month). This was to be

actively facilitated and monitored by the school. Service may occur either inside or outside of the

school. This expanded on the initial place-based education program that was proposed in *For the*

Love of Learning with a more purposeful and direct initiative.

Grades 9 – 12: Program and Diploma Requirements (OSS). In September 1999 the

Government of Ontario, under the majority power of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party

and led by Premier Mike Harris, made several changes to educational policy as a whole. This

was colloquially described as the new curriculum. On the topic of youth community

involvement, *The Ontario Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements OSS*

(Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999a) states students were required to complete

forty hours of community involvement activities as part of their Ontario Secondary School

Diploma (OSSD). This reduced the 1997 Premier's Advisory Board suggestion of the

appropriate number of hours by half (initially suggested 20 hours per year X 4 years = 80 hours

collected during high school). Moreover, students were free to complete their hours at *any* time

during their high school enrollment. Hours were to be completed only outside of school hours

and staff would play more of an administrative rather than a facilitative role.

At the time these curriculum changes were implemented the Progressive Conservative

Party's Common Sense Revolution policy was well underway within Ontario. The common

sense revolution was based on a conservative political policy platform designed to lower taxes

and balance the provincial budget by reducing the size and role of government. Ultimately this

resulted in cuts to government programs and services. After several integral changes over a four-

year period, the mandated community involvement initiative would be enacted at a time of

budget cuts and reduced government oversight. No funding was allocated and no provisions for

review were attached to the program. The result was an initiative which mandated students

participate in community involvement outside of school hours and at no expense to the Ministry

of Education.

The Ontario curriculum: self-learning vs. service-learning. The New Curriculum of

1999, which was implemented by the Harris government, also incorporated two mandatory

courses in addition to the community involvement requirement to further support students' civic

learning. First mandated course was titled Civics and Citizenship, which was designed to educate

students about their rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen and community member.

Specifically, the current curriculum states the Civics course was intended to explore "what it

means to be an informed, participating citizen in a democratic society" (Grades 9 to 12: Course

Descriptions and Prerequisites; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016b). In the course, students

are to learn: the elements of democracy in local, national, and global contexts, political reactions to social change, and the political decision-making processes in Canada. This is supposed to help students explore ideas about civic topics, learn to think critically about public issues and react responsibly.

The second mandated course, Career Studies, focusses on teaching students how to develop and achieve personal goals for future learning, work, and community involvement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016b). In the course, students were to assess their interests, skills, and characteristics -- before investigating the current economic and workplace trends, job opportunities, and ways to search for employment. The course explores postsecondary learning and career options, prepares students for managing work and life transitions, and helps adolescents focus on their goals by developing a career plan.

Both mandatory half-credit courses, Civics and Careers, must be completed to graduate and to receive an Ontario high school diploma. Students are encouraged to complete the credit while in grade 10. However, there is no stipulation that the community involvement hours need to be completed before, during, or after either course. Both classes have a focus on community involvement, developing awareness of student's personal skills and interests, and making community connections. However, neither course has an explicit connection to the forty hours of community involvement.

Administrator and Staff Understanding of the Program

Interview participants acknowledged the purpose of the policy is to help foster civic engagement within the community and that these ideas are embedded in the curriculum and community involvement requirement. However, participants comment when the initiative was put into practice, educators were not consulted or trained. Interview participants remarked there

is no uniform understanding amongst staff and students on the program's purpose. In this next sub-section, staff members explain that the message youth receive depends largely on who is doing the talking. This has a direct relationship with how the program is run at the school level and to what extent it has been successful in achieving its goals.

Policy into practice. Terry, a social sciences chair, felt there was a connection between the community involvement requirement and the two courses that were added to the curriculum. Based on his experience teaching both the Careers and Civics classes he felt that "the intent of the program still stands: you still want people to be civically engaged." He compared this with the curriculum saying, "The themes are all the same. Volunteer civic engagement is one of the common themes connecting those two courses [Careers and Civics]. So that is the embedded piece of the legislation." However, when the new curriculum was introduced by the Progressive Conservative Harris government, educators were not consulted on how best to implement or teach it. No policy was put in place by the government or the Ministry of Education that routine assessments of the program would be required to measure the program's outcomes or success rate.

Staff did not receive any training on how to teach these classes, and no restrictions were placed on who could teach – to ensure proper expertise for instruction. Terry commented from his personal experience:

> Many of the teachers who were put in those courses had no experience with that particular discipline. So, not to pick on the math teachers, but that is an easy one, they stick the math teacher in the class and say, "teach civics" and the poor math person is floundering and grasping at whatever they can get their hands on.

There has been no change in policy to ensure that staff is trained and proficient in teaching civic education. Terry was frustrated with how the courses are currently run. He felt that there was no consistency in meaning, purpose or challenge:

> I set up my lessons at a 70 to 75 percentile of achievement. That is the way I am thinking of how hard they are, that is the subjective part that is completely on me. Whereas if you measure that same thing next door all of their kids are getting 90's and 100's like candy and it makes me look bad. And I am now under the pressure to make my course easier. There is some pressure there to follow the flock.

Terry believed there was "a similarity" between the courses and the community involvement requirement.

When Giselle, a veteran guidance counsellor, was asked if the student services office or any of the guidance counsellors at Northern Pines High had received any training she responded simply, "No, none at all." Staff members were not briefed on the purpose of the program or how best to aid students with completing the community involvement requirement. Giselle emphasized the staff members who are most involved with the requirement are "*very well educated teachers* who are teaching civics, or other teachers like me, who are involved with student's council or guidance." She described these individuals, like herself, as educators who "spearhead and encourage students to get involved." Opposite to the engaged staff, Giselle described more apathetic staff who felt "'It's not my problem', right, 'the kids know what they have to take' and they let it go by the wayside." Just like the Careers and Civics teachers, there are staff members guiding students and administering the community involvement requirement with no previous experience teaching social sciences or civic education. Both the unclear roles and responsibilities of staff, as well as an inconsistent amount of formal training on this subject, create a confusion of the initiative's purpose amongst staff.

It depends on who is doing the talking. These split/misunderstandings have a real impact on how staff put the policy into practice. This is evident in how staff members introduce the requirement to the students of Northern Pines High. According to Giselle, "it all depends on who is doing the presenting." She felt:

> Just like civics and careers teachers, there are guidance counsellors who will say "Okay you have to have 40 hours or you're not going to graduate, you can have 90 million classes and pass the literacy test, but if you don't have your hours you are not passing. *So get it done and over with*.

Paula shared a similar comment when asked what the community involvement requirement looks like at Northern Pines High. She noted the program is structured such that, "it's the responsibility of the student to get those hours. . . .If you want to graduate, you do your 40 hours. That is the motivation.**"** Giselle felt that the individuals who held this attitude and/or described it to students in this way "were taking away from the whole reason why the government instituted this requirement in the first place." The result is the intended civic engagement lessons can be overshadowed by an erroneous emphasis on completing the mandatory hours in order to meet the graduation requirement.

Some staff members held a more civic-minded view of the program and attempted to promote that vision with the students they work with. Giselle explained, "On the opposite end you have the other guidance counsellors who will say, "This is a great opportunity to give back to your community, as well as develop your skills and interests." Terry felt that participants could use the hours as an opportunity to "become more community minded, explore new pathways, and become a better volunteer if challenged appropriately." Giselle believed the program offered students with "the opportunity to become more holistic individuals." She described it as a way to "provide opportunities to students who may not necessarily be engaged

in school to see that they have skills in other areas, boost their confidence - which would allow them to re-engage [in school]." Overall, staff opinions regarding the program represent "a huge continuum," explained Giselle.

Examining the conflict that exists between the community minded and passive perspectives reveal a problematic tension. This conflict is between the program's stated purpose, of promoting altruism and civic engagement, and its reality as a student-directed mandatory graduation requirement. It has a compound message: 1) *this is something that you have to do,* but the caveat is 2) *you should participate in a positive way within your community*. Giselle saw great value and potential in the community involvement program but did not feel that "the government has done a particularly good job of educating parents and educational workers." The message that staff relay to students is reliant on their training and personal understanding of what purpose the program serves. Without a common understanding, there is no consistency in message. While there is a written purpose stated in the policy, what meaning students and staff make of community involvement is left open to individual interpretation, which varies widely.

What is the intent? Perhaps the greatest source of confusion is how 40 hours is supposed to encourage students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility. Terry felt, "there isn't anything altruistic in 40 hours." Terry believed the initiative was not structured in a way that would encourage, measure, or demonstrate learning. In his words, "When you're talking about civic engagement translated into hours, actual volunteer hours, that just becomes a way to track for completion. But what does it mean? It's like statistics unfounded." In practice, this is akin to moving the goalposts. It is similar to asking a student to learn about mathematics but the only measure for comprehension is they demonstrate how many

hours were spent on self-instruction. When the policy, staff, and students all focus on the process of accounting for hours, the actual purpose/goals can be easily forgotten.

Confusion can then stem from just what exactly students are to make of their experiences. Terry was critical of whether such a program can truly be said to accomplish its goals:

> You only get to be a better volunteer if you are challenged by doing it. Not necessarily by doing a 30-hour famine where you are hanging out with your buddies. Which is a good experience too, but it shouldn't be the only experience. With the community [involvement] part again I'm falling back to what is the intent?

Terry's comments highlight that not every experience carries the same educative value. Yet, all experiences are measured similarly: by the duration of the engagement. Success is not defined by the policy aside from the obvious completion of hours. The lack of review, reflection, or monitoring of students' growth in understanding demonstrates a policy that is concentrated on action rather than reflection.

A need for review. At the Northern Pines High School, staff was unaware of any program review, audit, or evaluation having ever been completed at the school, school board, or provincial level. "From my particular role", Terry stated, "I don't think anybody is coming in to look. Or to see what is or is not working." Giselle confirmed this:

> To be perfectly honest I haven't heard anything from the ministry in terms of checking in with the program at the high school level, there hasn't been anything official from Northern Birches School Board as far as I'm aware of. There has been no sort of program implemented or anything that has changed the structure of the status quo.

The only review that has taken place was described to happen informally at the peer-to-peer level. Guidance counsellors and teachers were described to talk to each other and ask "is this effective, how we can really get the message out to students?" Specifically, Giselle wanted staff to play a role in changing what she described as a broken mindset. In her words, "Kids have this broken mindset and we try to change it by suggesting they approach their 40 hours of community

service as more of an opportunity rather than an obligation." As Giselle mentioned earlier, this "broken mindset" is also shared by some staff members. Interview participants' concerns highlight that it is overdue to review and reflect on what emphasis is being placed on the program's meaning.

Perspective influencing practice - lowering the bar. When altruism and civic mindedness are replaced in favour of completion, it has a rippling effect on how the program is run. Giselle noted the Northern Pines High School had previously been stringent on what counted as volunteering. She commented that, "they took those restrictions and loosened them a little bit" as to where hours could be completed. Giselle believed the restrictions had been lessened "because they want the graduation rates to go higher." Tracking graduation rates is an important task that is assigned to the student success office. She explained the information is "submitted and published so the government can see how well we are doing." This has become a detriment to the school, Giselle commented, "because boards are comparing graduation rates and parents are looking at that as well when deciding where to send their children."

As a result of this unwanted comparison, Giselle noted staff members are doing "everything we can, not just academically [to encourage student success]. But these 40 hours for many are the one sticking point as to why they are not graduating." Terry echoed this in saying that in some extreme cases, the hours can become a barrier that blocks some from graduating. Giselle felt the result was that the staff members at Northern Pines High School are "getting a little bit more freedom for what we can count as volunteer hours." As an example, Giselle said "Now my nephew for example, who has all his hours, he could go shovel his grandparent's snow, right. And grandma and grandpa can go and sign the sheet saying he did three hours of

snow shoveling." Before it was the policy at Northern Pines that doing anything for family

members was strictly taboo.

Terry was uncomfortable with the trend of educators lowering the bar for students. He

believed this was linked to the program not having a clear message of intent or measure for

defining success. In his own words:

> So then you start acquiescing and making things very easy for the student to meet their
> mandate whether it be refereeing a floor hockey game at the school or score keeping at a
> volleyball tournament, whatever. Again it goes back to the terminology, what is a
> "volunteer?" Does it have to have an altruistic component to actually work? Does it have
> to be a set number of hours to be entrenched in someone's mind?

Terry gave examples of school-wide initiatives (like open houses, food drives, and participating

in community events) where students would be hand selected to participate. He described these

simple initiatives as a common practice for ensuring that students complete their hours. Giselle

acknowledged, "There is a fair bit of that through the school year where we need support in

running an event and kids come and volunteer." Terry's contention was "If we created it for

them is it truly volunteering?" The underlying tone is that the program cannot be said to be truly

successful if students are not engaged in educative experiences or do not comprehend what

benefit their actions have had.

As a result of this acquiescing, Terry had developed a critical attitude towards how the

program is currently being run. He explained, "You don't want this volunteer hour type thing

which is supposed to make society better become nothing but a statistics gathering job." He

feared that the noble and purposeful intentions of the policy have become a buzzword practice

that does not result in anything of substance. "I'm a little jaded when we start throwing the idea

of social engagement," he commented, "because it has become such a buzzword and such a

candy piece, a news clip that it loses its focus and its intent." Terry was unhappy with the

program because it has the potential to turn meaningful service into something disingenuous. In

his words:

> You have a social driven agenda. Well let's all get together and pick a cause, let's do
> homelessness, or let's do Pride and Gender or whatever you want to do. I don't care or
> fault you for it. But now it becomes the flavor of the day.

The tension continues to exist as to how and when students are to learn about altruism and

community engagement. Staff members suggest there is no uniform understanding of the

program's purpose which is promoted at the school level. In this uncertainty, the program is

reliant on what meaning individuals make of it. In practice, the program is not placing the

emphasis on the correct civic-minded goal as defined by the curriculum and the corresponding

theoretical foundation put forward by this study. No practice is in place to ensure that students

understand why they are being asked to participate or to ensure that educative experiences occur.

This is further highlighted in the honour system approach that the program follows.

An Honour System

Interview participants described a practical reality where staff has too many

responsibilities and not enough time to be directly involved with facilitating the initiative. Some

students may choose to take advantage of this by being dishonest or exaggerating the number of

hours they have actually completed. Staff members do not have the time, training, or in some

cases even the inclination, to ensure the honesty of students and integrity of service experience.

As a result, the program runs largely as an honour system.

Staff: too many responsibilities, not enough time. The total student population at

Northern Pines High School fluctuates between 700 – 1000 pupils from year-to-year.

Administrators have neither the ability nor the personnel to closely monitor the community

involvement initiative. "We just don't have the time to follow up on everything," was how

Giselle explained the Student Services Office lack of program oversight. She went on to describe the many roles that guidance plays which divides their attention and time. Guidance counsellors are often involved in a number of public initiatives, acting as attendance trackers, or providing career and credit counseling for students, and are often the first general point of contact for students. They are also directly involved in dealing with students' mental health issues. Giselle commented that even the student services secretary, "who inputs all of this into the computer, has so many other duties to do. Realistically, she just has the time to key these into the computer." Simply put, Giselle felt that "Everything is downloaded on to the guidance counsellors."

This has a direct impact on the level of assistance and oversight the Student Success Office is able to provide. This limited amount of availability further restricts the time staff has to act as quality assurance monitors. Northern Pines High School staff rarely had the time to follow up with a community organization to ensure the integrity of student participation. This involved checking student honesty - with hours and participation. Giselle explained with all of her other responsibilities, "You don't have time to pick up the phone and question - if you have a stack of volunteer forms sitting there in front of you." She confirmed it was uncommon for the school to contact community members/sponsors to verify the honesty of student's reported hours. This opens a large opportunity for students to be dishonest or cheat at completing their hours.

In order to detect and curb student dishonesty, Giselle described trying to balance what she knew of the student with what the student was telling them. She gave the example of a boy who had submitted a sheet claiming that he had completed 100 hours at the local curling rink which the principal was not going to sign off on. The principal believed the boy had likely only completed 10 hours and later adding another 0 to the form after the community sponsor had

signed it. Giselle ended up vouching for the student based on her knowledge of the individual.

She even offered to call the curling rink to verify the time, but the principal said that was not

necessary if Giselle was certain the hours were legitimate. Giselle explained that even though she

did not follow through with the phone call, "there is always that opportunity." However, it is rare

for staff to do so.

      The above story reinforces the fact that the principal does have the final say as to whether

a student's hours will be accepted or vetoed (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training,

1999b). In many cases, principals may also end up using their best judgement when assessing

what has been presented to them on paper. However, principals are also busy. Giselle was critical

of principals actually taking the time to seriously consider what was put in front of them. She

exclaimed:

> Forget the principal - when it comes across their desk and it is time to sign it, they are in
> meetings and they're running the school, if it has gotten to them at that point, unless it is
> something glaring like 100 hours on one sheet, they are not going to question it.

Although the schools keep a record of how many hours have been spent on community activities,

they may not closely monitor the breadth or extent of cheating. Perhaps the largest factor that

limits their ability to monitor dishonesty is time. Furthermore, not every staff member believes it

is their responsibility to perform this role. As cited earlier, the school board defines this as a

student-directed program. Paula and Giselle both described it as predominately the student's

responsibility to complete and/or the parents to monitor (Ontario Ministry of Education and

Training, 1999b; Northern Birches School Board – See Appendix A.2). These factors, as well as

the knowledge that too few hours will prevent students from graduating, can persuade

administrators to accept what has been submitted to them at face value.

Student cheating: the ultimate path of least resistance. Students are likely aware that staff members are not diligently following up on their submitted hour's sheets. Giselle gave the example of one girl, who she witnessed say in front of a group of students and teachers, "My dad will sign that for you. Just say you helped him out in the yard or something." Giselle was optimistic in thinking that only a small percentage of students would attempt this, but she was not sure whether or not anyone had ever acted on it.

When asked why some students may not be engaged by the program, Terry responded "they don't have the inkling, motivation, or connection" to do so. He felt this could also be connected to what value their parents saw in volunteering. Terry believed:

> What has happened with education is that we have fulfilled a need, I think in the absence of parenting, to the best of what we can do, but really, there is no substitute for an engaged parent - we all know that. So, we run into the type of people who don't have the time of day to help people and they may help fabricate some volunteer opportunities.

In some cases, students may not fully understand the requirement or how to correctly fill out the paperwork. This may be unintentional, as Giselle explained, because "sometimes students aren't sure who can sign for their hours," or they are uncertain as to what can or cannot count. While this may or may not be overtly cheating, it can fall short of meeting the desired level of integrity.

Since it appears to be unlikely that staff will be checking, some students may believe it is an acceptable risk to falsify their paperwork by exaggerating or outright forging their hours. This practice completely circumvents the purpose and any potential benefits that may be derived from service. Since there is no other measure of success outside of submitting a completed time sheet, cheating may be an appealing option.

Best Practice Recommendations from Interview Participants

Participants identified a number of barriers they felt impacted success, including: reduced home support, the uncertainty of personal skills or interests, fewer contacts, cultural or language barriers, fear/social anxieties, disabilities and/or mental health issues. There are also systematic deficiencies present at both the policy/program and school level. The reason why some students fail to complete their hours was, as Giselle believed, "not for a lack of trying." She explained:

> I know every guidance department at every school has the same issues when looking at our graduation rates and kids not graduating because they didn't have their 40 hours. "How can we re-engage them to get those hours?" Every high school is experiencing that, and we've all come up with different kinds of ideas, so it's not like we're saying: "This is the way we do it and let's be stagnant about it." But we just haven't found anything that works 100%.

Giselle felt every school struggled to promote student success and ensure that students were eligible to graduate by completing their hours. She believed these issues are not likely isolated to the Northern Pines High School. Participants identified several best practices that could help improve the program and the likelihood of student success. For example, more could be done to help disengaged students if the onus for participant responsibility was shared between students and staff. This would require staff to be engaged and offer more support from within the school. All stakeholders need to be better educated. A further benefit could be gained if the Ontario Ministry of Education allowed planning for, or participation in, service hours to occur during school hours *provided* they are served in a manner which benefits the community. Interview participants identified all of the above as aspects that would greatly improve the effectiveness of the program – each will be examined in closer detail below.

Renegotiating Responsibility (Shared Between Students and Staff)

Both Terry and Giselle agreed somebody should be made accountable to the program at either the school or board level. Terry believed the guidance department should be made more

accountable. Each year a formal meeting should occur between the guidance office and the

student to ensure they are on track and have a plan for completing their hours. This would

replace the current practice of delaying intervention until the student is in their senior year.

Giselle felt that it was not fair to dismiss accountability as one department's responsibility. In her

own words:

> I think again it is because it is that narrow focus that it is one department's job. It is like
> that old thinking that English is responsible for a literacy, and so what is it that the
> English teachers are not teaching students that they're not passing the literacy test. I think
> the same thing for 40 hours, it can't just be the guidance department.

She pointed out that currently teachers, student support personnel/educational assistants

(SSP/EAs), custodians, and other members of the school community are greatly underutilized

and could be utilized as possible allies.

A common ground may be found between the perspectives. Each is arguing a better

understanding be clearly defined for who is ultimately accountable for the program. Participants

felt that it is both unfair and unrealistic to make students individually accountable. As Giselle

commented, in terms of "best practices, we have to be more structured. You cannot put this on a

14-year-old kid." Expanding on what good structure would look like, Giselle felt "there needs to

be someone who, this is their job." She described the need for an educator who would work at

either the school or board level and would be directly responsible for overseeing the program.

This would require more direct oversight than the current responsibilities which are attributed to

the school principal. Giselle suggested the individual in this new position "might work to create a

program for the community hours and have several opportunities laid out." This program could

then, in Giselle's words, "be funneled down to the teachers," creating a more organized service-

learning or classroom-based initiative. This service-focused staff member would work to ensure

an attainable program was in place for the students, and/or educators were available within the school to assist students.

Terry agreed there needs to be a mentor present to help the students. He described the need for educators to be "a little more holistic in our thinking." Terry asked, "how do the volunteer hours holistically fit into the person? Not just the program." He explained this idea of holistic thinking to describe community involvement initiatives that were mutually beneficial to both the student and the community. What is missing in the current structure is the role an educator should fill in the currently largely autonomous initiative. Terry commented, "that is the human part; you need to have that human finger on the pulse to see if they are getting something back from it." There ought to be somebody present who is "developing a plan for implementation" as well as "routinely checking in to see how the student is progressing."

These changes each require a shared sense of responsibility between students and staff. Staff members describe a program where students would similarly continue to be engaged in community involvement. The key difference is that staff must become more actively involved in facilitating student learning. In this model, students receive more support from within the school instead of being isolated to complete the requirement independently (with their parents) outside of the school.

A Formal Curriculum-based Program Structure

Within the school, there exists the possibility of definitively connecting the community involvement requirement to classroom learning. There are already pre-existing possibilities within the Ontario curriculum which could provide further structure to the community involvement requirement. In Giselle's words:

> I think social sciences, civics, and careers [courses] especially, lend itself to trying it, and you'll be able to capture, not all, more of that [at-risk] population. Because the ones who

are already getting their hours these would just be extra hours and they might be able to try something they have never experienced before.

Tying the requirement to a course would plausibly provide enough structure to help students who were having difficulty getting motivated and finding placements. It would also ensure an educator is present to assist students as well as monitor their participation/learning. Giselle drew a parallel between the mandated literacy test and the mandatory community involvement hours. She described a situation where the mandated test structure was not compatible with a lot of at-risk students who would repeatedly fail the test after each attempt. However, when the students were placed into the literacy course they have an improved opportunity to meet the requirement via a much more supportive and structured approach.

Terry felt that if the 40-hour requirement was connected to the course, and taught with intent, it could result in a meaningful learning initiative. In his own words:

> If done with intent, and what I mean by that if you look at the civics and careers together as somehow a bridge throughout the students' lives, then they can fit pretty well. If you go with the civics, and that is my specialty, I bridge my last unit as civic engagement/active citizenship. That lends itself nicely into how you can fit into a community, how you can self-actuate as a person and that goes into your careers curriculum. What you like to do, what you can do, what is the volunteer thing about, how it can help you and so on.

If the community involvement was part of a course and connected to the curriculum, participants believed students should complete the course during their junior or senior year. Terry commented in their senior high school years students are "intrinsically more worried about the future of things." Both Terry and Paula noted that students are more involved during their later years in high school. As a result, this may be a more beneficial time for the course and the community involvement requirement.

Reflecting On Students Experiences

Participants noted there was little, if any, follow-up with students, to ask them to think about, reflect on, or evaluate their community involvement experiences. In the professionals' opinions this could be meaningfully incorporated if it was connected to civics class:

> You know I think in terms of evaluation and feedback - I think the civics course if you have a good civics teacher, a lot of your points are hit there. Because part of the civics program they talk about civic mindedness. (Giselle)

Young people can have a difficult time with critically thinking, about something in their past, reflecting on their experiences, and connecting how all the experiences have influenced them, if at all. Terry recognized this as a challenge for some youth:

> So I have gone through something, now I have to go back and look at it critically, and think about how it changed me. That is a tough one for a person, especially a young person.

This may highlight the uncertainty of what meaning or value students are learning from their experiences. Terry also commented that leading students in meaningful reflection can also be a difficult task to accomplish. He was hesitant about teachers becoming the focal point for leading and analyzing youths' service experiences.

Doing so would be difficult for the teacher because it requires they "subjectively assess a student's work; one of the hardest things to objectively ask of a teacher" (Terry). In place of this practice, Terry suggested facilitating a program where students had increased time and exposure to the activity, as well as time to reflect in-between experiences. In his own words:

> I would submit to you that you try to quantify and measure the growth. So it wouldn't be sufficient in my opinion to do a journal, or three or four, it would be much more sufficient to do the journal and wait months and reread the journal and write a reflection of that journal. Now you have tied the learning back to itself. Which can demonstrate growth, or not, depending on what they write down.

Terry emphasized the need to tie learning back onto itself – students need to reflect on their actions and make further meaning of them. A balance needs to be found between action and reflection. Furthermore, students have to be significantly engaged over a prolonged period of time for community involvement to be effective. Implementing the 40-hour requirement in this way could provide a more precise way of determining if it has been successful in achieving its intended purpose.

Meaningful Program, Meaningful Service

Giselle felt that a meaningful program begins with the staff. In terms of best practices she commented, "I think if we start with the staff and we change their mindset to a can-do mindset and get to know your kids - I think you will [be able to reach] more kids." Paula echoed the importance of having an involved and engaged staff. In her words:

> My recommendations would be to create as many opportunities as possible for students to get their community hours, starting with our grade 9 students. Many students also like to be with their friends, so having groups of students volunteer together is a good option. I have found that students don't need a lot of recognition when they do something good for the community. But it doesn't hurt to recognize their efforts and try to get some media attention for their efforts.

Terry commented that a meaningful program would take students outside of their comfort zones. He explained this as:

> Participating in exploring new things in their community, meeting and working with new people that you wouldn't encounter otherwise, and seeing students placed in helpful roles that benefit, and don't hinder, the community agency that is hosting them.

All participants felt that a meaningful program would successfully encourage students to go out and try new things.

Examples of Well Run Programs

It would be beneficial for students if they were able to complete their community involvement requirement during school hours. Giselle believed that "there has to be some flexibility. With this [rule] the government needs to give us some slack." Participants gave examples of successful community involvement initiatives which were completed during school hours.

In Giselle's example, the school's First Nations (FN) tutor had worked with FN students to establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee. As a group, the committee decided they would: organize an FN hockey tournament and harvested cedar (one of four sacred medicines traditionally used by Ojibwe people) to be placed in all of the classrooms. The students made a presentation to the principal, and later again to their peers about the cultural significance of cedar and why it was important for creating a more inclusive learning environment for FN students. Cedar was collected from a culturally significant site and posted in every classroom. This was widely hailed within the school as a success both for the committee members and the school population in general.

Terry's example was drawn from his experience running the Youth in Action program. He recalled one particular initiative where approximately forty students were fundraising money and food for the local food bank. Students were responsible for managing the money and planning how best to spend it. In consultation with the food bank, items of absolute need were identified and purchased by the youth. At the grocery store, Terry would hand each student a portion of the money they had raised and instruct them to spend it as best as they could until nothing was left. Later, the items were delivered to the food bank by the students who then stayed to prepare a meal with the goods they had provided.

What each example has in common is students worked with staff to create, plan, and participate in a positive community involvement. While service occurred during school hours, students still gained first-hand experience learning about what impact they can have on their community. Staff members play a role as facilitators but enable youth to make their own decisions. Staff involvement ensured they were able to closely monitor students' participation and success. Students were encouraged to work collaboratively and were appropriately challenged making decisions that would influence the success of their project.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented key findings from this case study investigation. Multiple factors were identified which can contribute or prevent students from achieving success. An analysis of each written role and participant insights highlighted systematic deficiencies within the Ontario initiative which propagate uneven and unequal experiences for all student participants. The result is a number of students struggle to complete the initiative and staff may not be available to aid students.

Moreover, there is no universal understanding of the program's purpose or mandate amongst staff and students. Personal understandings exist instead, many of which are contradictory to the program's written mandate. Cheating is a predictable outcome of a poor program structure which has a focus on data collection and program completion. Participants identified several best practices which may be implemented to improve the quality of the initiative. The following section will explore these key findings in greater detail and discuss how this study's results connect with the wider body of Ontario-based academic literature.

Chapter 5: Key Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

This research sought to better understand the effectiveness of the Ontario high school community involvement initiative and how students are connecting with community-based learning. A single case study approach was used to investigate a Northwestern Ontario high school's experience. Multiple sources of data were used in this study including: civic education theory, academic literature on community involvement programs, pertinent curriculum documents, and participant interviews. The diverse sources helped to determine how the program was running and if it was achieving its goals. Finally, these sources assisted with identifying program factors which worked well, identifying program improvements which might be made, and identifying program best practices. The following key findings were uncovered by this case study investigation:

- Emphasis is often placed on only one version of responsible citizenship.
- Tension exists between the Ministry's stated program purpose and how it is practised by students and staff. The result is a confusion of purpose.
- The program is inconsistent in offering meaningful educative opportunities to students. Experiences are positive for some and negative for others.
- Guided reflection is an important structural component which remains absent from the Ontario community involvement initiative.
- A need exists for a commonly shared understanding of roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders with the direct purpose of ensuring that students are engaged in educative service experiences.
- The structure needs to be revised to reflect and support the program's written purpose.

This section will revisit the pedagogies of Dewey and Freire to provide commentary of the current status of the Ontario initiative. A discussion of this studies key findings and implications will be considered within the context of previous studies. The methodological strengths and limitations of this study, as well as its contributions and significance, will also be examined. Finally, areas for future research will be suggested.

From Theory into Practice: Informing Ontario's Community Involvement Policy

Introduction. From the perspective of foundational educational theory, it is insightful to discuss how the Ontario program compares to Dewey and Freire's criteria for meaningful community involvement initiatives. This section will examine key factors that are advised by both education theorists. Further discussion will examine what constitutes meaningful citizenship and community involvement. Emphasis will be placed on key benefits and factors that Dewey and Freire advise for a meaningful program. These factors are used to provide contrasting commentary on the current practices of the Ontario initiative.

A Mutually Beneficial Pedagogy. Students are often encouraged to participate in the community in order to nurture community consciousness. In Freire's (1968) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, problem-posing education aims to teach students to value and take pride in their culture, while simultaneously questioning and working to change some of their culture's practices and ethos. Dewey writes in his *Ethics* (1908) the aim of community-based activity is "general social advance, constructive social reform, not merely doing something kind for individuals who are rendered helpless from sickness or poverty" (p. 349). Much of the civic education literature has argued community involvement is an effective way to stimulate learning and social development, as a means of reforming society and preserving democracy, and as an antidote to the separation of youth from the wider community (Conrad & Hedin, 1991). This is an experience-based pedagogy that is built upon a balance of meaningful action and critical thought.

The current Ontario initiative argues that the requirement will benefit communities, but its primary purpose is to contribute to students' development rather than to social reform (Ontario Ministry of Training, 1999). In practice, the result has been an action-based approach

which does not directly encourage critical thought or reciprocal student-community experiences. Dewey and Freire's writings may therefore be read as a critique of the program for not emphasizing or ensuring that community experiences are mutually beneficial. To meet Dewey's (1916) standard for an educational experience, initiatives need to have a clear social purpose that is served by individual learners.

Shared Responsibilities Between Educators and Staff. Currently, the Ontario program is unique in the amount of autonomy it permits students. While freedom is important, Dewey and Freire would argue that support is needed to make meaning of student experiences. The Ontario initiative does not have a structure in place or a formal plan to ensure that students make the most of their community involvement. Dewey (1916) and Freire (1968) each envisioned a more reciprocal relationship where both students and teachers are committed to creating a context for learning. Both authors would critique the minimal support that is offered by the Ontario policy. A more meaningful program would have educators actively engaged as co-creators of experiences. This means that while students ought to maintain the responsibility to act within their community, their educators have an active role to play in guiding and ensuring quality learning opportunities are pursued. Developing a more supportive network would enable staff members to better aid students who are unable to complete the requirement independently or have experienced difficulties locating meaningful service opportunities.

To guide educators' decision making, Dewey offers two broad criteria (continuity and interaction) for determining what should count as worthwhile experiences. The best kind of experience will encourage future action and when undertaken, will work to break down the divisions between individuals (Dewey, 1916). Experiences which are aimed at overcoming social divisions should be distributive, mutual, and reciprocal relationships or they will by definition

perpetuate the barriers they set out to destroy (Dewey, 1916). Conrad and Hedin (1991) comment that the weaknesses of experience-based learning is that it has a less efficient presentation of information and the inherent danger that students will not draw out principles and generalizations from practice. To counter this weakness, teachers must be knowledgeable of the criteria which make up educative experiences (Dewey, 1916). This would imply that educators need the appropriate training in order to enhance their professional decision making and provide knowledgeable support to their students. Dewey and Freire's writings suggest that this is a crucial area for future improvement within the Ontario initiative since not all educators have a professional understanding of experience-based learning or a shared understanding of the purpose of the program.

A Disconnect Between Classroom and Community. Bridging the gap between the classroom and community can legitimize learning that takes place outside of the classroom, recognize multiple learning styles, and value learning which is based on experience (Saltmarsh, 1996). Dewey and Freire have each argued for a pedagogy that connects the school with the community which surrounds it. In practice, experience-based learning has been noted to remove the abstraction of classroom instruction by placing information in context, with the real-life nuances and applications that any fact or principle must have if it is to carry genuine and useful meaning (Conrad & Hedin, 1991). Experience can also aid in the retention of knowledge because learning is made personal and applied in action (Conrad & Hedin, 1991). However, Dewey (1916) argues that one can only contribute to the degree that they have been afforded opportunities to reach their full capabilities in life. This accents the role that staff members have in defining meaningful experiences and providing an organized structure for guiding student experiences, especially in a population of diverse learners.

The current disconnection in the Ontario program between service and classroom learning would be problematic for both Freire and Dewey. For many students, the classroom can offer a structured environment which ensures meaningful learning occurs as well as the opportunity to connect and share ideas with peers. This encourages a balance between action and thoughtful reflection, as well as collaboration with others. The Ontario initiatives' largest deficiency is the absence of reflection, which has resulted in a pedagogically unbalanced program.

Reflection. The Ontario program has overemphasized action and underutilized reflection as a meaningful and necessary pedagogical tool. The program may be improved if it fully utilized action, reflection, and classroom learning to their full pedagogic potential (Dewey, 1932; Freire, 1968; Saltmarsh, 1996; Meinhard & Brown, 2010). Freire's (1968) concept of *praxis* suggests that classroom learning—or some type of facilitated group reflection—should complement community-based action because people cannot gain knowledge of their social reality through action alone. *Conscientization* is a term which is used to describe the process of learning through balanced action and reflection (Freire, 1968).

Dewey's theory of educational experiences also provides a theoretical basis which supports the pedagogical connection between practice and theory (Saltmarsh, 1996). Dewey (1932) believed experience could link action with knowledge and understanding. He believed the two were complimentary and worked best when paired together. Saltmarsh (1996) explains,

> Reflective learning breaks down the distinctions between thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and authority, ideas and responsibilities. Reflection as a mode of inquiry is central to experiential learning and is the critical connections in service-learning between service-activity and the learning associated with it. (p. 18)

Without fostering reflective thinking, learning cannot move beyond conditioning, beyond the classroom, or beyond formal education (Dewey, 1916; Saltmarsh, 1996).

In sum, once the action is completed, it must be put into context through reflection. To guide learning through collaborative discussion, Freire (1968) provides a detailed and extensive description of how teachers and students are to play a mutual role facilitating reflection and community-based learning through culture circles. Reflection is an essential component for formulating the connection between thought and action, without it the whole philosophical scheme collapses (Dewey, 1910).

Structure for Positive Experiences. Freire and Dewey each recognized education as an on-going process-based activity. As a result, the 40 hours of loosely structured and unguided community participation may not provide enough exposure to ensure the emergence of a civic consciousness through critical intervention. Freire (1968) argues that continued exposure to community challenges will encourage and oblige students to respond to those challenges, resulting in comprehension that tends to be increasingly critical and less alienated. It is imperative that community experience be concerned with "breaking down barriers of social stratification which make individuals impervious to the interests of others" (Dewey, 1916, p. 129). This approach allows educators to act as instruments for liberation and social change (Freire, 1968).

In order for this change to occur, students must rate their experiences positively (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007; Henderson, et al., 2014; Volunteer Canada, 2010a). Dewey's theory of experience may serve as a cautionary message to the dangers of miseducative and negative educational experiences. The principle of continuity argues that each experience a person has will influence his/her future experiences, for better or worse. Both the long term and short term

quality of educational experiences matter. The Ontario program could be improved by having

educators play a stronger role supporting students. Educators must be available to assist students

who require extra assistance and to ensure that students find meaningful placements. If done

correctly, students will be afforded the opportunity to continue to learn through their ongoing

community experiences. As Dewey wrote, "to make the conditions of life such that all will learn

in the process of living, is the finest product of schooling" (Dewey, 1916, p. 56).

   Summary of Theoretical Pedagogies. The pedagogies of Dewey and Freire stressed that

community-based learning should be mutually purposeful for both the student and the

community. In order for a program to function purposefully, staff and students need to have

shared responsibilities which ensure action results in quality. Staff members must be

knowledgeable of the criteria for worthwhile experiences and exercise their professional

knowledge to support students with finding and completing worthwhile experiences. Reflection

is a necessary pedagogical practice for experience-based learning which is best used in the

classroom to encourage collaborative learning and ensure that actions are placed within an

educational context. This is an essential feature because it can be used to help ensure that

students are engaged in positive experiences which will encourage ongoing participation in

community involvement. Each of these insights may be applied to the Ontario initiative.

Key Findings and Recommendations

   Building on links between theory and practice discussed above, the following sections

will outline in greater detail the key findings of this study. Further recommendations will be

offered based on the theoretical foundation, interview participant's suggestions, and best

practices obtained from the pertinent literature.

Emphasizing Only One Type of Responsible Citizenship

This study has demonstrated youth are often mandated to participate in community-based initiatives as a remedy for their perceived lack of democratic character. The Ontario initiative's primary mandate is to develop students awareness and understanding of their civic responsibility, the active role they can play in society, and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening communities (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999a; 1999b). This study supports Schwarz's (2011) argument: the language used in the finalized Ontario policy suggests the requirement was designed to build on students' responsibility and to strengthen the qualities assumed to drive individual success. Authors have remarked there has been a notable shift in priorities to the Ontario curriculum, which since the start of the new millennium has come to emphasize active citizenship over students passively learning of legislative procedures (Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Giro´n Molina, & Suurtamm, 2007). This is believed to be a reaction to the perception of young people as inactive (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011).

However, my literature review questions whether such programs are successful; precisely how to influence subsequent civic engagement continues to be the subject of much debate (Henderson, et al., 2014; Padanyi, et al., 2010). In Ontario, part of the problem in terms of assessing success may be connected to the fact that the Ontario Government did not consult with educators at the time its program was being implemented. Participants in this study noted educators were not involved with developing the Ontario community involvement policy. Notably, they were unaware of any past or present consultation. Of historical significance, the Ontario program was legislated into effect at a time of political turmoil between teachers and the Progressive Conservative (PC) Government of Ontario.

The unease between teachers and the government came to a head in 1997 (as the new curriculum was being introduced) when 126,000 public and Catholic school teachers, principals, and vice-principals walked out resulting in 4,742 schools closing, resulting in the largest teachers' strike ever in North America. The walkout affected 2.1 million elementary and secondary students. Educators were protesting the provincial government's proposal to overhaul the education system by weakening local school boards and giving the government the power to determine class size and tax rates. The strike lasted two weeks and ended with the PC government ruling it was illegal. Despite the mass job action, teachers were unsuccessful in lobbying for changes to government policies and the proposed legislation was passed. The problem, as with other areas, was the government showed a preference for confrontation over a more inclusive approach.

The newly introduced provincial program placed an overwhelming demand on students to volunteer and acquire characteristics of good citizenship - all at no expense to the government. While educators were not initially consulted, this study has emphasized that they possess professional wisdom which may be used to evaluate the existing Ontario initiative and inform future civic education practices. Interview participants noted the current provincially enacted program does not guarantee beneficial experiences even for the most actively involved students. The result has been an emphasis on unguided active community involvement. No measure is taken to ensure or evaluate what meaning actions have had. As a result, students may not become aware of how community organizations function, what the organization's needs are, or if their personal actions have had an impact on their community.

Furthermore, a recent critique of Canadian educational documents has argued the Ontario curriculum emphasizes only one vision of responsible citizenship and does not instruct youth

about other meaningful civic duties, responsibilities, or rights (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Adolescents are not described in the curriculum as citizens who have the potential to become collective dissidents, or activists, who perform the necessary challenges to the state when policies run contrary to public values (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Instead, actions like voting and volunteering are highlighted as the primary manner in which good citizens can express their commitment to the state. Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) argue this is an education for active compliance, not citizenship. Notably, civic learning rooted in neoliberalism (as cited in Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011) imagines active youth as law-abiding persons who make individualized choices for success (Mitchell, 2003) and reduce their claims on the state (Rose, 1999; Brown, 2005).

Combined, the current program is deficient in both theory and practice. The program does not clearly identify how unguided action is to form the student into an ideal community-minded citizen. Furthermore, the Ontario initiative does not provide a comprehensive education of civic duties and responsibilities. The literature suggests improvements can begin to be made if the program adopts a more inclusive definition of responsible citizenship (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Redefining the image of responsible citizenship may include curriculum topics such as activism, collective dissident, and developing an understanding of how community organizations function and what their needs are. Interview participants felt this may be best approached by connecting community-based experiences with classroom teachings. In practice, this could prove a solution to the unguided, and perhaps state-biased, approach to teaching responsible citizenship which is currently emphasised.

A Confusion of Purpose

Interview participants agreed community involvement can be a positive learning experience for youth; however, there is confusion around the actual purpose of the Ontario initiative. In practice, a tension exists between the competing purposes of completion (in order to graduate), civic community-based education, and other ascribed personal meanings. The issue is rooted in the fact there is no widely accepted belief amongst stakeholders regarding the purpose of the requirement. The lack of a universal understanding was reported to undermine how staff understands, advocates, and requires students to participate in beneficial experiences. Currently, the program's purpose remains open to personal interpretation for both staff and students. Within one school, students may receive many different messages from staff. Study participants noted it all depends on who is doing the talking. What meaning a staff member makes of the program is contingent on their individual values, individual training, and individual understanding of responsibilities.

While the initiative is founded on good intentions, competition between plural understandings and individual meanings has confused what purpose the program should have. Due to this ambiguity, the primary written purpose of the initiative may go overlooked. The lack of common understanding and training has resulted in difficulties facilitating and completing the program for both students and staff. The participants in this study made two poignant suggestions: 1) a universal understanding of the program's purpose needed to be adopted, and 2) there ought to be greater buy-in (i.e. school-wide involvement) from staff members. The overall lack of staff training and accreditation was identified as a key factor which contributes to confusing the program's purpose.

As a next step, it would prove beneficial for educators to receive opportunities for

professional development and training in order to better teach civic education (Billig & Welch,

2004; Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005; Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006; Schumer, 1997; Schumer &

Belbas, 1996). Training would be an initial step toward orientating staff members and

developing a shared understanding of the program's purpose. This knowledge may then be used

to help inform staff, student, and parental decisions on what constitutes an educative community

involvement experience.

Unequal and Uneven Experiences

The Ontario community involvement requirement uniquely allows for a considerably

high level of autonomy. With the suggested aid of a parent, students are responsible for selecting

and completing their community involvement placements outside of regular school hours. While

all students have to complete an equal number of hours (40), interview participants noted that

students do not have equal access to meaningful community involvement placements. Youth

may be restricted by their social networks and other barriers, such as a lack of time and access to

transportation. Interview participants noted further barriers for students may include: their mental

health, their social ability and capital, and their spoken language (in the case of English as a

Second Language and English Language Learners). These common barriers may be exacerbated

by the minimal role staff members play. For example, interview participants felt many educators

believed it was the student's responsibility to complete the community involvement requirement.

Yet, without staff guidance, many students experience difficulty overcoming the program's

innate paper-based bureaucratic approach to accounting for completed hours. The results of this

investigation reinforces Schwarz's (2010) findings: while the option to self-select appears to

accommodate youths' diverse needs, some students' choices are limited.

The one-size-fits-some practice means the Ontario policy does not accommodate every student. Some authors argue civic educational policies have failed because active citizenship curricula are unsuccessful in expanding access to civic participation for all – one of the fundamental goals of citizenship education. One such study by Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) argued the vague language used in Canadian curriculum documents (including the Ontario curriculum) may actually contribute to limiting rather than expanding youth engagement, especially for particular segments of the population. Specifically, groups excluded from the language of citizenship curricula (as cited in Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011) include: sexual and gender minority youth (Loutzenheiser, 2004; Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004; Monro & Warren, 2004); ethnic minority youth (Bannerji, 1997; Joshee, 2004); Aboriginal youth (Battiste & Semaganis, 2002; Orr, 2004); working class youth (Kennelly, 2011; Schutz, 2008); and youth with disabilities (Hehir, 2002). No official assistance has been offered to aid members of these groups in overcoming structural barriers.

Respondents in this study reported several students who represent the groups listed above have experienced more difficulty completing their community involvement requirement. As a result, participants felt educators need to be present in order to aid students with transcending the barriers which prevent them from active community-based learning and informed citizenship education. Schwarz (2010) noted several low-income students were willing to trade some of their autonomy in order to gain access to the knowledge and resources of their schools' staff members. Overall, many low-income students desired more guidance from school staff members in order to locate and complete their community involvement activities.

As a result of the disparity that occurs due to unequal and uneven experiences, this study supports Bickmore's (2001) argument that citizenship education programs, "cannot effectively

ignore the ways gender, race, economic inequality, and other factors have influenced the opportunities that various individuals may, or may not, have to exercise their skills and to carry real citizen influence in the wider society" (p. 150). Similarly, this investigation supports Schwarz's (2010) argument: "unfunded mandates such as Ontario's community involvement requirement leave in place (or even reinforce) inequalities among diverse students" (p. 127). This study has argued that in order for the program to become more meaningful, it must first acknowledge and address the disparities between students. Greater balance must then be found between the shared roles of all stakeholders.

Renegotiating Balanced Roles and Responsibilities

Presently, schools and educators are only minimally involved in students' experience of the program. While the Ministry describes parents as playing a key role in guiding students to find placements, parents remain peripheral in implementation. This study has argued that the Ministry of Education has assumed parents are actively involved in assisting their children. In reality, parental support is case-by-case and cannot be assumed to be universal. Moreover, some parents may not be aware of their assumed roles and responsibilities. Interview participants believed the school effectively communicated both the mandatory need and expectations of the community involvement requirement to parents and students. However, after several interviews with parents and external stakeholders, Harrison (2008; 2012) reported that the program was not well understood by those who were outside of the school system.

This study has argued the lack of engagement from educators can further exacerbate the barriers and difficulties experienced by students who: do not have support at home, the social skills to independently find placement, the opportunities to engage with pre-existing networks, or the motivation to pursue opportunities independently. Moreover, the lack of staff engagement

can reinforce the wrong message with youth by misinforming them that their community involvement is not meaningful. Schwarz (2010) reported students who received virtually no guidance perceived this lack of support as a general lack of concern for their civic engagement.

To resolve this issue, interview participants argued there needed to be a common understanding and shared responsibilities amongst students, parents, and educators. Respondents felt it was unfair for students to be solely responsible. Similarly, it cannot be overstated how effective active staff involvement can be for supporting a student's success. The literature has argued that the extent to which adults (parents, teachers, etc.) were involved in the program, as either a resource or a support figure, is an essential component to an effective community service program (Meinhard & Brown, 2010; Schwarz, 2010; 2011). Redefining roles and responsibilities would be an effective first step towards addressing an area staff members identified as having the highest needs.

Specifically, the interviews highlighted a need for more engaged staff members. Participants felt there should be improved oversight by school staff to ensure students both understand and progress through the program. At least one educator ought to collaborate with community partners to aid with providing service opportunities for students or to develop learning resources for other educators to use. Henderson et al. (2014) have suggested similar changes to the administration of the program including: having staff play an active role helping students locate volunteer placements, improving supervision of the way hours are spent and recorded, and creating an annual requirement for hours rather than accumulating 40 hours over the course of one's high school career. Above all, this investigation has emphasized that all stakeholders need to be involved and concerned with students becoming engaged with educative experiences. Educators have an equal and active role to play in teaching civic education.

Imbalance of Action and Guided Reflection

Guided reflection is an important component to active learning and it remains glaringly absent from the Ontario community involvement initiative. The Ontario initiative is so focused on active engagement it appears to have overlooked structured reflection as an effective and necessary pedagogical practice. It is important because, without reflection action quickly loses both direction and purpose (Crittenden & Levine, 2013; Freire, 1978). Due to this oversight, there is a great uncertainty surrounding what meaning or value students are taking away from their participation.

Both the theoretical framework of this study and the literature heavily stress the importance of guided reflection as a crucial pedagogical practice for community involvement programs (Billig, 2000; Billig, 2002; Billig & Welch, 2004; Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005; Billig, 2007; Conrad & Hedin, 1987; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Freire, 1978; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Meinhard, Foster, & Wright, 2006; Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006; Shumer, 1994; Shumer, 1997; Shumer & Belbas, 1996). It is an essential process for making meaning of actions. Smith, Knapp, Seaman, and Pace (2011) argue "when students undergo a careful process of reflection, an event in life is often transformed into a meaningful and memorable experience that can be applied more easily to similar situations in the future" (p. 2). The inclusion of guided reflection provides a platform for students to make sense their personal experiences and explore the social problems that underlie the need for community involvement (Schwarz, 2011; Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1968).

Participants felt that introducing an organized curriculum component to the community involvement requirement could prove beneficial. An improved emphasis could be placed on helping students to develop an understanding of social problems through community-

based *and* classroom learning opportunities. To date, there is no formal connection between the

community involvement requirement and the complimentary Grade 10 Civics curriculum.

Respondents believed if the two were joined, a more meaningful learning experience could be

provided. Preparatory orientation (such as researching the program) and follow-up activities

(planning future activities and doing a self-analysis of completed work) are often directly

connected to the curriculum and complement a student's guided reflection of their service

experience (Billig, 2002; Billig, Root, Jesse, 2005; Harrison, 2008; Harrison, 20112; Schwarz,

2011). Connecting the Ontario program with a class could also set aside time within the school

for students to become exposed to educative community experiences. This provides the

opportunity for reflection to occur both alongside and after community engagement activities.

Within the classroom, students would have time to reflect, discuss, and absorb what they have

seen and done, as well as what it means to them (Harrison, 2012). All the while, an educator

would be present as their guide. Currently, how students engage and make meaning of their

experiences is conditional at best with no guarantees for the thoughtful reflection necessary for

deep learning.

Structure for Success

The program appears to have been structured in a way that would not financially or

administratively burden the Ministry of Education. This investigation uncovered the following

structural highlights:

- Currently, the program does not provide funding to school boards or schools to support community engagement.
- No prerequisite training, expertise, or common understanding is required of staff who are working to support students and to implement the program.
- Only minimal support is provided for student engagement. Often passive methods are used to promote service (such as bulletin boards and announcements). Students are expected to self-motivate and work independently to complete the requirement.

- While students are not prohibited from collaborating with peers, they are not encouraged to do so. Unintentional emphasis may be placed on independently working outside of regular school hours.
- Students are individually accountable for completing a highly bureaucratic paper-based system to account for completed hours. Youth may struggle to understand or comply with this approach.
- Minimal administrative support is offered to students. While the student success office is often the first point of contact for youth, staff are often engaged with other duties and responsibilities that lie outside of the community involvement requirement – many of which are viewed as a higher priority.
- Staff members may play a passive role in administrating the program. Some interview participants felt educators were out of touch with the service requirement and the meaning students were taking away from it.
- Students may have yearly or irregular appointments with the student success office to discuss their general high school progress. However, staff intervention with the community involvement requirement may be delayed until a student's senior year(s). As a result, the program may wait too long to aid students who are falling behind or struggling.
- Participants believed that if the program was funded, it would have closer monitoring and more measurable outcomes.
- Cheating is a predictable outcome of a poor program structure which is focused on data gathering and completion.

This investigation has argued the community involvement initiative does not have a structure that is conducive to successfully achieving its mandate. The Ontario program meets each of the criteria that Brown, Pancer, et al. (2007) list for why community involvement programs fail to succeed. The authors argue most programs are not structured to promote student success or the achievement of the program goals (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). This may be attributed to: 1) programs are inadequately funded and staffed, 2) the current service requirements only make negligible demands for student participation, 3) the impact of service is diminished by confusing job preparation with volunteerism where students become focused on developing employable skills instead of recognizing their growth as citizens, and 4) service-learning is greatly overlooked as a teaching and learning strategy (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). As a result, the Ontario initiative is not likely to promote student success or the achievement of the program's goals.

In order to be successful, the structure must reflect and support the program's true mandate. The current standard for the Ontario community involvement requirement is that it only asks for completion, not comprehension. Reinders and Youniss (2006) call for greater attention to the development of community service requirements: "If the purpose of service is to facilitate the development of active citizenship, then it needs to be couched in a program relevant to that outcome" (p. 10). Meaningful change for the program could begin with an official program review by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

To date, no form of official program evaluation has been completed by either the Ministry or the local school board. Only a peer-to-peer level of review was reported to have occurred by interview respondents. A need continues to exist for the program to be officially reviewed (Allmendinger, 2006; Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007; Meinhard et al., 2006). Participants suggested the Ministry create criteria outlining future guidelines for regular program evaluation and assessment. Furthermore, more meaningful measures ought to be identified to aid with gauging student success. This may be accomplished by collecting student feedback via reflections. Richer qualitative data would result to augment the pre-existing quantitative data.

Success may also be enhanced through funding. To date, the lack of funding has prevented adequate staff training and sufficient staff hiring. Consequently, fewer trained staff are able to connect with students. Therefore, the program fails to engage youth in meaningful dialogue, inquiry, and reflection. The literature has noted both financial and administrative support for teachers are essential components which can influence the success of a community involvement program (Billig & Welch, 2004; Melaville, Berg & Blank, 2006; Sanders, 2003; Schumer, 1994; Stoneman, 2002). However, there is little evidence that the Ministry of Education has invested additional resources to ensure the maximum value of their community

service initiatives (Brown, Pancer, et al., 2007). As a result, this study supports Schwarz's (2010) concerns regarding the sincerity of the program: "The large differences…within individual students' access to resources, and the varying extent of school staff members' support, raises questions about the government's commitment to all students' opportunities to learn and to practice active citizenship" (p. 127). The lack of funding and oversight, as well as the minimal time requirement, suggest that the learning objectives of this initiative are a low priority. Actively funding and restructuring the program would be a concrete commitment toward improving the quality of civic education in Ontario. If the future of civic engagement in Canada is contingent on the quality of the volunteering experiences, then greater effort should be placed on providing the necessary elements and infrastructure to ensure that this will be achieved (Meinhard et al., 2006; Padanyi et al., 2003; Pancer et al., 2007).

Strengths and Limitations

Previous research has often relied on quantitative rather than qualitative approaches. For this reason, a qualitative approach was used to 1) capture a more accurate understanding of the Ontario program and 2) add further meaning to quantitative studies. To aid this investigation, a sample of educators were drawn from a mid-sized school of 800 – 1200 pupils located within an urban Northwestern Ontario community.

Staff members were intentionally selected based on their position and experience as seasoned educators and administrators. Two participants had a background and trained expertise teaching social sciences. This study was successful in examining what meaning staff members make of the initiative and reporting staff observations of student participation. Of unique importance, respondents were able to comment on a wider demographic of student participants – not just high achieving academic students.

While all three participants were from the same school, their different positions offered a nuanced perspective of how the program is run. Their responses cannot be thought to encompass the experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of all educators. However, they were sufficient in highlighting that diverse perspectives exist within the school. Ultimately, this provided an opportunity to compare and contrast roles and identities as they are defined by the policy and data collected from other sources staff. This permitted a rich exploration of how the program is functioning and what benefits/barriers may result due to its implementation.

Using a single case study approach provided rich detail of one school's experiences with the community involvement initiative. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to describe how the program is run at their school and for emergent data to occur. This study took several concrete steps to address the issues of reliability, external validity, and generalizability. Multiple data sources were accessed, in addition to drawing from diverse perspective, to further aid in framing the validity of this study. Several insights are provided based on the theoretical foundation, policy documents, and the literature review--all of which further support what a meaningful community involvement program may look like. Congruence was discovered between the results of this research and prior studies which have focused on Canadian youth involved in community service programs (Meinhard & Brown, 2010) and the Ontario community involvement requirement (Harrison, 2008; 2012; Henderson, et al., 2014; Schwarz, 2010;2011).

The results obtained from studying how the policy interacts with the Northern Pines High School cannot be thought to represent all high schools in Ontario. However, it is likely that school boards, schools, and staff members experience similar difficulties as the interview participants. Therefore, readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the

researcher's narrative description (Stake, 2005). Furthermore, Erikson (1986) argues that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to her/his particular context. This research may be used to inform policy and school practices as well as be a catalyst to encourage future research.

Study Contributions

This study contributes to the small body of Canadian literature reporting on students' mandated community involvement activities in Ontario. Since the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the requirement in 1999, there has been a sparse amount of research conducted on this policy. This thesis contributes to a largely unexplored topic and is relevant to contemporary citizenship education within Ontario. It has a particularly meaningful relevance to: secondary school students, school staff, school boards, the Ontario Ministry of Education, and the communities which are engaged with this initiative.

Existing research literature on school-based community involvement has predominantly focused on university students. These individuals, as well as university-bound students, are believed to be more likely to volunteer and are typically from families with greater access resources/networks which are often cited as predictors of volunteering and civic engagement (Henderson, et al., 2014; Schwarz, 2010). This study supports earlier work which has argued the traditional discourses on community involvement assumes that servers are of privileged status and is structured in a way that favours privileged youth (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011; Schwarz, 2010). Unique to this study is its focus on educational theory, policy, and educator observations. School administrators and educators have previously been an overlooked and greatly

understudied population. Observations made by interview participants reflected on a wider, more diverse, group of students than has been captured by previous studies.

This study supported previous research which concluded similar structural shortcomings exist within the of the Ontario community involvement initiative (Allmendinger, 2006; Brown, Henderson, et al., 2014; Meinhard, et al., 2007; Meinhard et al., 2006; Meinhard & Brown, 2010; Padanyi, et al., 2003; Schwarz, 2010). Staff described how some students experience greater difficulty with completing the requirement and identified a number of barriers that can hinder success. Emphasis was placed on the notion that many high-achieving students likely would have volunteered anyway. Furthermore, many students will complete their hours doing activities they were already involved in. This study reaffirmed educators ought to play a pivotal role in influencing a student's success. This is can be best accomplished when knowledgeable staff members actively help guide students to participate in and reflect on community-based experiences. In order for this to be accomplished, all stakeholders (students, parents, and staff) must clearly comprehend the program's mandate through a shared understanding of purpose.

Currently, staff members were described to have a mixed understanding of the program's intent. What meaning staff made of the program was connected to their: personal experience, knowledge, understanding of participant roles, and perception of responsibilities. This may be remedied by ensuring universal training and accreditation for all staff members involved with the initiative. Improving staff member's interpretation will further aid with improving both student and parent understanding of the community involvement requirement.

Training may also help to address two of the largest structural shortfalls. Both guided reflection and structured learning, two crucially important aspects, have been notably overlooked by the Ontario Community involvement initiative. In order to implement both, staff members

must first develop the professional expertise. Funding may be required to provide staff with the necessary materials and opportunities to develop understanding. Staff members, as professional educators, should take the initiative to actively teach civic education. It is unfair to expect students develop their own understanding in isolation.

Finally, the program cannot be said to effectively provide all students with an equal and meaningful civic education. Interview participants contested the required number of hours are too few and the supports too sparse for the initiative to effectively engage all students.

Future Studies

This research captured the experiences of three urban educators from a Northwestern Ontario city. Future studies may seek to draw on a broader sample including both rural and urban educators. The experiences and knowledge offered by rural administrators, youth, and community organizations may further expand the knowledge of how schools enact the Ontario mandated community involvement requirement in small population centres. These populations may experience unique regional constraints such as a limited number of service opportunities and fewer transportation systems. It may also prove beneficial to examine how schools, in geographically diverse communities, can help connect the student to community-based learning.

Guided reflection and structured learning have been repeatedly identified as crucial program requirements. Future studies may seek to identify how a program may successfully incorporate these features. Close examination of how educators have facilitated meaningful student community participation and reflection may be used to inform future practices. Research may also investigate how the classroom can be expanded to include community-based experiences. Currently, there are similarities but no formal connection between the program's mandate and the Ontario civics curriculum.

To date, very little research appears to have been completed which focuses on the experiences of community individuals/organizations who work with mandated youth. Further work could be done to consult with community partners on how well the current program is running, what influence it has had, and what an ideal program may look like. Additionally, future studies may examine a wider, more representative sample of the student population. A particular focus may be lent to understanding low-income, or at risk students, to understand how personal and institutional experiences influence personal engagement.

Conclusion

Youth are not the future but rather the present. Their current opinions, experiences, and understandings will shape our future. One cannot hope that things will improve without first putting forth the effort to teach. This study has sought to challenge policymakers to rethink their approach to civic education and community involvement. An opportunity existed and still does, for experience gained through service to be related to classroom learning. The current structure offers a unique opportunity, which if conceived of in a meaningful way may provide an effective approach community-based civic education.

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Appendix A: Local School Board Community Involvement Documents and Forms

A.1 Website

HOME   ABOUT US   SCHOOLS   PROGRAMS   BUSING   CAREERS   STAFF   CONTACT

Home » Secondary Overview » Community Involvement (Volunteer Hours)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (VOLUNTEER HOURS)

Every secondary school student is required to complete Community Involvement (40 hours over 4 years) as a requirement for completion of their high school diploma. This is a provincial requirement to encourage students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility, to increase awareness of the role they play and the contribution they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities, and to develop a positive image and a greater sense of identity within their community.

The 40-hour requirement is to be completed outside students' normal instructional hours. Community involvement activities are to take place during lunch hours, after school, on weekends or during school holidays.

<Image Removed>

A signed Community Involvement form to verify hours must be completed. This form is available for download at the bottom of this page.

Want to volunteer but you're not sure where to start?
Try the following:

- *http://www.volunteer._____.com/*
- City of _____ Community Recreation
- The _____ Journal, Monday column: Helping Hands

Be sure to check the guidelines regarding your choice of community involvement activities:

Eligible Community Involvement Activities

These activities are non-paid and out of class-time, and not part of a course (and must not be court-ordered). This list contains examples of acceptable activities that are eligible for Community Involvement. Other activities not on this list may be eligible.

In the community...

- Fundraising
  canvassing, walk-a-thons, special events and sales
- Sports/Recreation
  coaching, Special Olympics, pool assistant

<Site Continued on Next Page>

<Site Continued From Previous Page>

- Community Events & Projects
  helping to organize the winter carnival, summer fairs, Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, 4H Activities, seasonal events
- Environmental Projects
  recycling program, community clean-up, planting
- Seniors' Residence Assistance
  serving snacks, helping with crafts, visiting, reading
- Committees
  advisory board, neighborhood associations, regional associations, School committees
- Cultural & Religious Activities
  art gallery, playing music, library, museums, and heritage site volunteer activities, babysitting, youth activities, children's programs, special events, clerical tasks
- Children & Youth Programs
  drop-in centres, breakfast programs, after school programs, Winter Break programs, summer playgrounds and camps, child care centres
- School – Non Credit Extracurricular
  Organizing and assisting with school activities
  Grade 9 welcome, Students' Council, school art shows, sports events, drama festival, fundraisers, food drive, science fair, guide for Parents' Night, Special Events authorized by Student Services/Principal

Activities to Assist Individual

- helping seniors shop
- shoveling snow
- reading buddies
- tutoring
- chronic care visits
- preparing web pages

Activities that are NOT Eligible

- cooperative education requirements, any portion of a course, job shadowing, or work experience.
- activities that take place during the time allotted for instructional program during the school day.
- activities in a mining or logging environment when students are under 16 years of age.
- activities that take place in a mill or factory if the student is under 15 years of age.
- activities that involve the operation of a vehicle.
- activities that involve the administration of medication or medical procedures to other persons.
- activities that include the handling of hazardous materials or substances.
- activities your parents would normally require you to do at home.
- court ordered activities.
- activities requiring the knowledge of a tradesperson whose trade is regulated by the provincial government.
- activities that involve banking or handling of securities, jewellry, works of art, antiques, or other valuables.
- personal recreational activities
- activities that involve the operation of a vehicle, power tools, or scaffolding

Community Involvement (Volunteer Hours) Form

Contact Us

<Contact Removed>

Important Phone Numbers

Absence Reporting:
Communications Office: <Phone Numbers Removed>
Community Use:
Emergency Closures:

A.2 Student Handout
   Front of Student Handout

Community Involvement

Community Involvement is a formal graduation requirement that encourages students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility, to increase awareness of the role they play and the contribution they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities, and to develop a positive image and a greater sense of identity within their community.

Community Involvement and the accumulation of your 40 volunteer hours is a student-directed program. You will be responsible to explore and connect with community agencies and activities as well, you will be responsible to ensure all required documentation is completed and signed following the each volunteer activity (See the back of this information flyer). Student Services in all   Public High Schools will have information posted to assist students with finding community agencies that require student volunteers. Check with your school to where you will hand in your completed volunteer hours agreement forms.

Community Involvement:
· is a graduation requirement;
· is a commitment of a minimum of 40 hours, starting in the summer prior to students entering Grade 9 with completion prior to Graduation;
· is a set of student-directed activities;
· activities where students do not receive pay;
· can be completed after school, at lunch, on school holidays, on weekends or summer holidays;
· activities where students do not replace paid workers; and
· something a lot of students already do!

These are examples of the types of activities that are **not eligible**.
- cooperative education requirements, any portion of a course, job shadowing, or work experience.
- activities that take place during the time allotted for instructional program during the school day.
- activities in a mining or logging environment when students are under 16 years of age.
- activities that take place in a mill or factory if the student is under 15 years of age.
- activities that involve the operation of a vehicle.
- activities that involve the administration of medication or medical procedures to other persons.
- activities that include the handling of hazardous materials or substances.
- activities your parents would normally require you to do at home.
- court ordered activities.
- activities requiring the knowledge of a tradesperson whose trade is regulated by the provincial government.
- activities that involve banking or the handling of securities, jewellery, works of art, antiques, or other valuables.
- personal recreational activities.
- activities that involve the operation of a vehicle, power tools, or scaffolding.

Getting Started
When you begin to plan, think about activities in your community, school, or with an individual that you have a interest in.

Contact local volunteer organizations for current activities and special events where assistance will be required, or
· public institutions
· regional or local governments
· private enterprise
· volunteer activities through your school
· service clubs
· local library and information centres for a list of agencies in our community

Here are some ideas of acceptable Community Involvement activities:

Fundraising
· canvassing, walk-a-thons, special events
Sports/Recreation
· coaching, assisting with Special Olympics, pool assistant
Community Events & Projects
· helping to organize the events and festivals (winter carnival, summer fair, etc.)
· Food Bank, Meals on Wheels, 4H activities,
Participating in Environmental Projects
· recycling program, community clean-up, planting
Seniors' Residence Assistance
· serving snacks, helping with crafts, visiting, reading
Committees
· advisory board, neighbourhood associations, regional associations, school committees
Cultural & Religious Activities
· art gallery, playing music, library, museums and heritage site volunteer activities
· babysitting, youth activities, children's programs, special events, clerical tasks

Children & Youth Programs
· drop-in centres, breakfast programs, after school programs, Winter Break programs, summer playgrounds and camps,
Assisting Individuals in our Community
· helping seniors shop, shovelling snow, reading buddies, tutoring, chronic care visits, preparing web pages
Non-Credit Extracurricular
· Organizing and assisting with school activities
· Grade 9 welcome, Students' Council, school art shows, sports events, drama festival, fundraisers, food drive, science fair, guide for Parents' Night
· Special Events authorized by Student Services/Principal

The Role of Parent/Legal Guardian
Your support of your child's Community Involvement activities is an important part of the success of this venture. Review and discuss the expectations of the mandatory Community Involvement diploma requirement. Help plan the kinds of activities that best suit your child's interests and abilities. Young people need to be made aware of situations that they may encounter. In selecting appropriate activities, the following should be considered:
· health and safety
· hazardous materials or substances
· harassment
· age appropriate activities
· location of activity
· activities that require a police check

<Image Removed>

Back of Student Handout

<School Board Name Removed>   **Community Involvement**

The requirement is to be completed outside students' normal instructional hours – Community Involvement activities are to take place in students' lunch hours, after school, on weekends, or during school holidays.

COMPLETE AND RETURN TO HIGH SCHOOL

_____ of
                        Student

_____**Secondary School** _____.
      School   Telephone

will fulfill, in whole or in part, the graduation requirement of 40 hours of

Community Involvement by:

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY SPONSOR NAME _____

BUSINESS/EVENT/ACTIVITY _____

SPONSOR TELEPHONE _____

As the "Supervisor", you will be asked to agree to the task identified above by signing below to verify the completion of the task.

TOTAL HOURS COMPLETED _____

DATE COMPLETED _____

Student Signature   Date

Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

Supervisor Signature   Date

Insurance
The Board's liability insurance will protect the students and community sponsors for liability law suits for damages or injuries to a third party that may arise from the student's volunteer activities in the Community Involvement program for the 40 hours required.

Note:
· Board liability insurance does not cover negligence on behalf of the community sponsors involvement in the program; Sponsors are responsible for ensuring that their own liability insurance is in place

· Students are not covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in the event of a personal injury.

· It is expected that community sponsors will provide students with safety instructions, safety equipment (if necessary), training and supervision of students.

· Students are encouraged to participate in the Student Insurance Plan which is part of their registration package in September.

Freedom of Information
Authorization for the collection and maintenance of this information is the Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E. 2, S. 266; Ontario Student Records Guidelines 2000; and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990. c. M.56.

Users of this information are principals, vice principals, teachers and secretaries at the school. The information will be used to document the mandatory Community Involvement activities. Questions regarding the collection of this information should be directed to the school principal.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
In this student-directed Community Involvement component, school personnel must authorize the completion of this Agreement.

School Authorization   Date   Data Entry ☐

Appendix B: Lakehead University Research Ethics Board Approval Letter

Research Ethics Board
t: (807) 343-8283
research@lakeheadu.ca

December 11, 2015

Principal Investigator: Dr. David Greenwood
Student Investigator: Thomas ADAM Young
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
955 Oliver Road
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1

Dear Dr. Greenwood and Mr. Young:

Re: REB Project #: 103 15-16 / Romeo File No: 1464904
Granting Agency: N/A
Granting Agency Project #: N/A

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project titled, "Mandated Citizenship: Facilitating and Reflecting on the Development of Citizenship through the Ontario Mandated High School Community Involvement Initiative".

Ethics approval is valid until December 11, 2016. Please submit a Request for Renewal to the Office of Research Services via the Romeo Research Portal by November 11, 2016 if your research involving human participants will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Access the Romeo Research Portal by logging into myInfo at:

https://erpwp2.lakeheadu.ca/

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lori Chambers
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/scw

955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON, Canada, P7B 5E1 | lakeheadu.ca

Appendix C: Research Questions Used In Semi-Structured Interviews

Program Details:
1. Tell me about the volunteer program at your school? What does the service requirement look like here?
2. How/when do students first hear about the program?
3. Where can they go for more information should they have questions about the service requirement or opportunities?
4. Is the program evaluated? How is any feedback about the program conveyed?

Teacher/Staff Involvement:
5. Who is involved with the program and youth volunteer service?
6. What is the relationship like between the staff who are involved and the students? (Teach, guide, debrief, record, etc.)
7. Is there a connection between the volunteer initiative and the careers/civics course?

School- Community Liaison:
8. Are students able to find a good setting to complete their hours?
9. How do students connect with service opportunities?
10. Does the school monitor where students volunteer?

Student Experiences:
11. How do they find placements?
12. Are efforts made to link students with their interests and career goals?
13. Do you evaluate student's community service? Would it be valuable if you did? How would you assess?
14. Do you get feedback from your students about their experiences?
15. Do students have an opportunity to discuss their experiences? Who should they/do they speak to?

Your perceptions of student experiences:
16. Do you think students appreciate the value of the community service initiative? / Is there value in the student service initiative?
17. Are students aware of the goals of the program?
18. What would you say the benefits are of this type of initiative?
19. Are students challenged? (explore new ideas, learn new skills, gain sense of accomplishment, make a difference, does it interfere with their school)
20. Will they continue to volunteer based on their experiences?

Best Practices:
21. What best practices would you suggest for implementing this type of youth service initiative?

Appendix D: Letters of Information and Consent
D.1: Letter of Information

Mandated Citizenship: Facilitating and Reflecting on the Development of Citizenship through the Ontario Mandated High School Community Involvement Initiative

A Letter of Information

You are invited to participate in a study which seeks to identify factors in the Ontario high school-mandated community service requirement that promote and/or inhibit civic education for adolescent youths. The study is being conducted by Mr. Adam Young, a graduate student in the Lakehead University Master of Education program. Your professional position and your knowledge/experience of administrating the Ontario high school-mandated community service requirement make you an ideal candidate for this study. As a potential participant, you will be invited share your experience in a semi-structured interview which will not exceed 1 hour in length. The interviews will seek to better understand how the Ontario service program is running and what, if any, improvements may be made. Participant's responses will be recorded via audio recording and then coded to be examined for emergent themes, which will then be contrasted against the theoretical foundation of this study for analysis. Your professional feedback will be used to help benchmark how the program is running and to develop suggestions for future development which could enhance the effectiveness of the program locally and provincially.

There is a risk that participants in this study may be identified due to the small number of individuals being recruited from the same school board. Furthermore, this study may ask participants to recommend other individuals who may be interested in joining the research project. Therefore, there is also a risk that participants may be known to each other. To counter these risks, all personal information and identifiers will remain completely confidential to protect the anonymity of all Lakehead District School Personnel, as per the Lakehead District School Research Ethics Guidelines. By consenting to participate in this study, your responses will be kept private by an alphanumeric code name which is only known to the researcher. Only the researcher will know the identities of interview participants. All data collected will be securely stored in an encrypted and password-protected file on the researcher's computer for a period of 5 years; after which it will be completely deleted.

Although it would be greatly appreciated if you would answer all questions as frankly as possible, you should not feel obliged to answer any question(s) that you find objectionable or makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time during the interview, you may decline to answer a question or to have your response excluded from the study project. If you withdraw prior to completing the interview all data recorded will be permanently removed. Your identity will not be recorded and therefore your anonymity will be protected. You may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Your participation in this study in entirely voluntary. By

selecting "yes" to the consent decision below, you will have agreed to volunteer and participate in this study. There will be no adverse consequence of choosing not to participate in the project.

The results of this research will be published as a graduate thesis at Lakehead University and may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences. Any publications/presentations will report only aggregated findings, which in some instances may be illustrated by short quotes which are protected by pseudonyms that have been carefully selected so as not to breach individual confidentiality.

Any questions about the study or participation may be directed to Adam Young at 807-472-9209 or tayoung@lakeheadu.ca. Dr. David Greenwood is supervising this study and may be contacted at 807-766-7193 or david.greenwood@lakeheadu.ca. This study was approved by Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the study findings contact Adam and a copy will be delivered upon completion. Again, thank you for your interest in participating in this research study.

Appendix D.2: Letter of Consent

Mandated Citizenship: Facilitating and Reflecting on the Development of Citizenship through the Ontario Mandated High School Community Involvement Initiative

Consent Decision

By signing next to "I agree to participate" you confirm that you:

1. Understand what is required based on reading the letter of information.
2. Understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.
3. Understand an audio recording of the interview will be created and used for data analysis purposes only.
4. Understand the potential risks/benefits of the study.
5. Understand the provisions for confidentiality and that you will remain anonymous in all publications/presentations that come as a result of the research findings.
6. Understand that all data collected will be securely stored in a locked drawer on an encrypted and password protected flash drive on Lakehead University property in the supervisor's office/department for a period of 5 years; after which it will be completely deleted.
7. A copy of research findings will be available to you at the completion of the study upon requesting them from Mr. Adam Young.

Please Sign:

I agree to participate in this study

Print   Sign   Date

Appendix E: Community Service and Service Learning in the United States of America

Community service and service-learning requirements are increasingly common among high schools, universities, and colleges, presumably as a continuing strategy to encourage community participation. Many school districts throughout the United States have established community service graduation requirements (Education Commission of the States, 2001). There also exist several nationwide school-based service learning initiatives such as *Learn and Serve America* and the *Corporation for National and Community Service*, which continues to work to better coordinate and integrate service learning nationally.

In 2010 and 2011 the National Centre for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC) conducted a review of the 2001 Education Commission of the States study. Together these two studies have provided a comprehensive overview of legislation across 50 states that relate to service-learning, community service, and student service initiatives that are connected to education. Their results indicated 42 states mentioning service-learning in state policy and 18 states awarding credit(s) toward graduation for service-learning or community service. Both details represent drastic increases over previous studies (Education Commission of the States, 2012).

Overall, this review noted a distinct rise in service-learning, community service and student service in education throughout the United States. While service-learning and community service requirements differ from state to state, the overall increase demonstrates a growing nationwide commitment to developing this education practice. Many states have moved toward institutionalizing service-learning, yet the efficacy of such programs remains dependent on the individual practitioner at the school level implementing a service-learning or community service program (Education Commission of the States, 2012). This highlights that educators can play a significant role in influencing the effectiveness of a civic education program and that their role as a pedagogical agent cannot be overlooked.