

Americans today will recognize the term "service learning," a phrase made familiar by the two-thirds of public schools that have integrated community service into the educational curriculum (Howe and Strauss). However, according to Neil Howe and William Strauss's book *Millennials Rising*, the term only came into our vocabulary with the newest, or "Millennial," generation of Americans. In the past, people simply "volunteered." Creating a new policy to enforce an age-old practice seems superfluous, and studies show that it actually discourages high school students from performing public service. Because mandating public service is unnecessary and can have a negative effect on students' attitudes, schools should encourage students to participate in community service without making it mandatory for graduation.

Even without a service learning requirement, today's youth have shown that they are enthusiastic about serving the community. Howe and Strauss indicate that five out of six Millennials "believe and would accept additional 'civic duties' to bring about needed change. Indeed, students are investing themselves in service activities for reasons other than to fulfill a school requirement. A *Detroit News* article introduces us to thirteen-year-old John Pruteer, for example, who began volunteering at an assisted-living home when his great-grandmother became a resident there. Pruteer had "always [been] close to" his great-grandmother, and this genuine, personal investment in his work, the article tells us, was what made the experience meaningful for him. Pruteer's example demonstrates that the most beneficial service experiences — for the individual and the community — are those that students can and do choose for themselves.

It has also been shown that making public service compulsory can extinguish the natural spirit of volunteerism. According to two studies published in the journal *Psychological Science*, harsh requirements mandating community service "can have negative effects on students' intentions to volunteer freely in the future." The same studies also found that students were more likely to volunteer in the future if they began volunteering out of "free choice." Furthermore, the sense that service learning is "required" not only to graduate high school but to get into a good college has driven many students to volunteer out of self-interest rather than altruism. "Many young people said that their motive in becoming involved was to make a stronger case to please college admissions officers,"

The writer provides several sentences of discussion of the source being cited.

A second source brings up another dimension to the assertion in Topic Sentence #1.

Topic Sentence #1 focuses on the author's first point and makes an assertion that will be supported by sources.

Discussion of the evolution of the terms — from "service learning" to "volunteering" — leads up to the thesis.

Topic Sentence #1 raises a point — the negative consequences of "making public service compulsory."

Quotation made in the supporting sentence.

Thesis statement indicates argument making point of service.

reported an article in the *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*.

High schools should not support this distorted mind-set by explicitly requiring public service; rather, they should allow authentic enthusiasm and encourage service projects of the students' own choosing.

Second source supporting the topic sentence. The writer integrates quotations into her own sentences.

Topic Sentence #3 raises a counterargument.

Proponents of mandatory service learning programs may argue that whether a student chooses it for himself or not, the spirit of service is important to learn and to teach. The Dalton School, a small private high school, phrases it hopefully in the mission statement, which speaks of "empowering" students and "situating our moral center." It continues on to argue (rather ominously) that "we must engage in community service because . . . we need our communities to survive." The strong goals stated in this argument are certainly attractive, but their loftiness seems far removed from

The opening clause is a concession to the counterargument.

The last two sentences refute the counterargument.

what a student might practically aim to achieve. In this regard, the Dalton School's teaching goals are admirable but impractical because they seem to forget the individual student. And as Prueter's case demonstrates, individual interest and personal investment are essential for service experiences to truly last.

On both sides of the debate, we should agree that the ultimate goal of "service learning" is precisely that—teaching an experience that will last. Even the Dalton School admits to the reality of school as a stop along the way to what happens when

The conclusion opens with common ground.

Writer returns to one of her sources to emphasize the importance of choice in community service activities.

"an individual goes out in the world." The issue thus concerns not just how to get students started volunteering, but how to maintain that desire to serve. At thirteen, John Prueter already knows that "his dream job . . . is working where he volunteers now." His story, along with the data supporting "free choice" in service projects, proves that the surest way to have students volunteer in the future is to allow them experiences that are personally valuable. Those experiences will come not from any heavy-handed school requirement, but from support and, most important, the freedom of choice.

The concluding paragraph answers the "so what?" question. The writer goes beyond simple repetition of the thesis. Note that the writer returns to the terminology—"service learning"—from the opening paragraph.

Culminating Conversation

The Dumbest Generation?

Students today live and learn in a world with vastly more complex technology than that of previous generations. Many people see this new technology as a way to expand and distribute knowledge. They call it the information age. Others lament