Serve InDEED

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Seasons of Service: Engaging Youth In Service-Learning Throughout the Year

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Abstract

Volunteer Tennessee, the YMCA Center for Asset Development and community-based service-learning programs organized by Bridges, 4-H, Y-CAP Chattanooga, Y-CAP Knoxville, and Y-CAP Nashville joined together to engage 3000 youth in service-learning experiences. Their goal was to share best practices and develop an asset-based service-learning curriculum for middle and high school students in youth organizations that could be flexible enough to meet their programming needs, time availability, and adapt to multiple levels of experience in service-learning. The result was a experiential and social media savvy curriculum that is proven to impact youth behaviors and build devlopmental assets in youth. For more information, visit www.TheAssetEdge.net, or e-mail cad@TheAssetEdge.net to get a free copy of the curriculum.

Introduction

In this grant, funded by Learn and Serve America at the Corporation for National Service, Volunteer Tennessee, the YMCA Center for Asset Development and community-based service-learning programs organized by Bridges, 4-H, Y-CAP Chattanooga, Y-CAP Knoxville, and Y-CAP Nashville joined together to engage 3000 youth in service-learning experiences.

The project challenge was to engage middle and high school students across the state of Tennessee in service-learning by meeting them where they were (be that no experience with service-learning or advocacy junkies who knew a lot about service-learning to living in rural areas or in well-populated city areas) and helping them move more deeply into service-learning by equipping them to lead service-learning experiences with peers or younger children.

Method

To best equip these youth to carry out their roles and inspire them towards engaging actively in service on an on-going basis as leaders, it was determined that service "booster shots" were needed: events designed around different times of the year that could help bolster programs, add "umph" and focus to keep youth engaged, equipped and excited about serving. Additionally, these events

To that end, the project determined to draw from two best practices in youth development work: service-learning and the developmental assets framework. These underlying best practices served as the core pedagogy and were intentionally woven together throughout a curricular resource package set to create rich developmental experiences for youth. To prepare for success in integrating these two practices, partners underwent coaching and training sessions in service-learning, assets and in a Train the Trainer workshops for the Change Your World curriculum. Results were tracked with pre and post youth surveys for the purpose of seeing how well we were meeting our youth development goals and to give us more data to contribute to the research in service-learning.

In response to the project challenge to engage youth as change agents and leaders in their communities, the Seasons of Service: Engaging Youth in Service-Learning Throughout the Year curriculum was designed and created. This multi-part curriculum includes info on service-learning and the developmental assets (for individuals new to both practices or to serve as core refreshers for others) as well as three independent curricular modules that help leaders meet youth where they are in experience and knowledge and then move them to where they want to be next. These modules include: Change Your World, Martin Luther King Day, and Finding Your Place to Serve. Additionally this resource package includes a printable reflection journal at the end. All of which is available as a free on-line curriculum resource package for both youth and adults to inspire and engage youth as change leaders in the community. E-mail cad@TheAssetEdge.net to obtain a free copy of the curriculum.

Seasons of Service Curriculum Overview

1. Overview for Seasons of Service - This section introduces the three asset-based curriculum resources, plus the journal, to use to engage middle and high school youth in making a difference in the world.

2. About Service-Learning and Assets – Describes Service-learning and Developmental Assets® - the foundational blocks undergirding the three curriculum pieces.

3. Change Your World - This 12-session curriculum engages youth in service-learning, helps them learn its principles, and intentionally builds their leadership skills so they can continue to change their world.

4. MLK Day: A Day On, Not a Day Off - These three half-day experiences engage youth in activism at three levels as they explore serving, equity, leadership, justice and advocacy.

5. Service Sampler: Finding Your Place to Serve - This sampling of 11 three-to-four hour service experiences provides thorough instructions and inspiration for creating service-learning experiences that best fit your youth, your organization, and your community.

6. Looking Deeper: My Service Journey - This reflection journal becomes the participants' personal record of their journey, deepening their learning and helping them see how they are indeed making the world around them a better place. Use this valuable tool with any or all of the three service-learning experiences.

Results

Of the 400+ youth involved in surveying, over 50% were between the ages of 11-13; 40% or less were between the ages 14-19. 64% were female; 51% were Caucasian, while 38% were African-American. 57% live with 2 parents and 31% received free or reduced price lunch.

According to the Tennessee Service Learning Evaluation of Service Learning Programs Cumulative Report (2011), participants perceived large increases in their leadership abilities and interpersonal competence ($g = 0.35$), in decision-making and resistance skills ($g = 0.53$), in attitudes involving helping others and justice ($g = 0.37$), and in their levels of community involvement ($g = 0.36$) after completing service-learning programs. These trends are worth noting and may indicate a positive impact from participation in quality community-based service-learning programs. It should be noted that all four of the above multiple-scale items were above 3.0 (Agree or More Important) at the pretest indicating that participants at the beginning of the service-learning program had positive attitudes, and there was not much room for improvement by the posttest.

Upon completion of service-learning programs, community-based participants reported a large increase ($g = 0.39$) in the presence of non-parental role models. This trend suggests that the duration or types of service-learning programs allowed some students to make connections with adults who encourage them to do well, provide caring and encouraging environments, and model positive and responsible behavior. In addition, participants reported a large increase ($g = 0.29$) in the presence of positive peer role models after participating in service-learning programs. This trend suggests that service-learning programs may have had a positive impact on participant students' choosing to surround themselves with friends who model responsible behavior and care about other people.

Discussion

The results from the project revealed these data points:

1) Service-learning impacts programs, youth development and behaviors:

2) Service-learning leaders may want to consider aspects of the service-learning programs that led to increases in developmental assets and ensure they implement them into their programs.

3) According to the Tennessee Service Learning Evaluation of Service Learning Programs Cumulative Report (2011), the participating students reported a large increase in leadership abilities by the conclusion of the service-learning programs. This trend suggests that service-learning programs may have had a positive impact on participant students' leadership abilities and may have also contributed to their internal developmental assets surrounding this attribute.

The table below shows a brief summary of the noteworthy trends, organized by the themes that emerged following the evaluation analysis.

Theme	*Community-Based Findings*
Choose, plan, lead activities	Participants reported a large increase in opportunities to help choose, plan, and lead activities following service-learning programs.
Community Involvement	Participants perceived a large increase in community involvement and civic responsibility at the conclusion of service-learning programs.
Decision-making	Participants reported large increases in decision-making and resistance abilities following service-learning programs.
Desire to try harder in school	Participants at the conclusion of service-learning programs reported a large increase in their desire to try harder in school.
Peer Role Models	Participants reported a large increase in the presence of positive peer role models, which was defined as friends who do well in school and care about others. On the other hand, participants reported no change in the presence of negative role models, which was defined as friends who get into trouble at school and drink alcohol once or more a week.
Pride	Participants reported a large increase in their self-confidence and sense of pride in their accomplishments as the service-learning programs concluded.
Sense of safety	Participants reported a large increase in their sense of safety during service-learning programs.
Supportive Non-Parental Adult Role Models	Participants perceived a large increase in the presence of caring and supportive adults at the conclusion of service-learning programs.

CURRICULAR SPOTLIGHT

Change Your World (CYW) is the cornerstone of the curricular set. Organized into twelve sessions, each session provides an overview, an asset intent (to make the connections between developmental best practices and what a particular activity accomplishes developmentally), time elements, supplies needed and activity directions. CYW walks youth through the I-PARC (investigation, preparation, action, reflection and celebration) service-learning stages and equips them to carry out a project of their choosing that is framed in light of their talents, interests, concerns and vision for what can be.

The goal of CYW is to develop within youth leadership skills and a sense of personal power and confidence to address their concerns in the community. At the same time, it familiarizes youth with the service-learning process and intentionally includes the developmental assets. The resulting experience is a hands-on, explorative and interactive process that equips them to take the next step: leading others.

Youth will:
• Explore commonalities and start to develop a sense of team with other students and advisors
• Gain an understanding of individual skills, passions and interests
• Identify a starting project for changing the world and assess the project's "do-ability"
• Learn how to cast a project vision and plan a project with their student team

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CYW Sample Lesson Overview: Investigating the Scene (session #6)

Focus the attention of the youth on possibilities. In this session youth begin to think about the community and envision their ideal world. Then they dig into community issues from the standpoint of what could be, contrasting the ideal with what they know of the real world. The gaps become clearer.

Picturing the World (45 minutes)
Ball Toss Discussion (10 minutes)
Narrowing the Focus of the Investigation (15 minutes)
Opposite Ends (5 minutes)

Asset Intent: To actively engage youth as resources in the vision process for a world they would like to see keeping in mind where their concerns are. Engagement includes tapping into their knowledge, values, experiences and passions as well as providing them space to learn from each other and work together towards a shared vision.

Assets: Boundaries and Expectations, Empowerment, Positive Identity, Social Competencies, Positive Values

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ABBREVIATED SAMPLE ACTIVITY: Picturing the World

Youth are given one element of the world to think about, expressed in the ideal (like NoHomelssnessville or EcoLand), and are challenged to THINK APPRECIATIVELY about it in quiet reflection recording two things they love about that part of the community and two wishes they have for that community aspect. After sharing their ideas with their team, they then VISUALIZE WHAT COULD BE and work together to draw images of the ideal, the vision they have for a better world.

After thinking about what's possible and crafting images, they CREATE POWER STATEMENTS to articulate their intent of what they want to see happen. "Our community is a place where . . ."

REPORT AND BUILD TOGETHER - Next, each group shares the world element they've worked on and begins to put their piece of the world with the other groups' pieces by taping them on the wall to build together a world view of what can be. As groups share, they listen for key themes, and add on new images or ideas.

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY ACCOMPLISHES In creating the ideal, participants craft their own personal vision of possibilities. Communities grow in the direction we think about them. In this activity, youth craft the way they want their community to grow; they participate in a bit of appreciative inquiry. The next activity helps them explore what they need to do to bring their vision of what "could be" to life; it highlights some of the gaps between the real world and the ideal world. And then youth narrow down the possibilities to where they want to focus their time and attention.

FIND OUT MORE: Get your copy of the curriculum by e-mailing cad@TheAssetEdge.net or experience it for yourselves with the Change Your World Train the Trainer. Undergo a mock CYW experience and learn insights into the best practices behind the scenes. Gain tools to harness and utilize young people's passions as we walk through this 12-session curriculum that engages youth in service-learning, helps them learn its principles and intentionally builds their leadership skills so they can continue to change their world. You can use these activities to equip youth leaders through a retreat, a class or an after-school program. We will highlight interactive tools for assessing community needs, planning projects and discovering group strengths. Learn how to access tools for running an MLK Day event and engaging youth in mini-service excursions.

Experiential learning is a key value of how CYW operates. In the CYW Train the Trainer, participants can expect to learn from each other, engage in a highly interactive process, have time to reflect and expect to:

• Gain an understanding and familiarity with the Change Your World curriculum
• Learn how to use and facilitate Change Your World
• Experience key activities within the curriculum and understand how to lead them

Lock in the learning and the richness and get the Change Your World Experience! Schedule retreat or a Train-the-Trainer event by contacting cad@TheAssetEdge.net.

References

Burgette , J., King, M., Zoblotsky, T., Gallagher, B., Huang, Y. (2011). *Tennessee Service Learning Evaluation of Service Learning Programs Cumulative Report.*
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Ragsdale, S., Saylor, A. (2012). *Seasons of Service: Engaging Youth in Service-Learning Throughout the Year.* ●

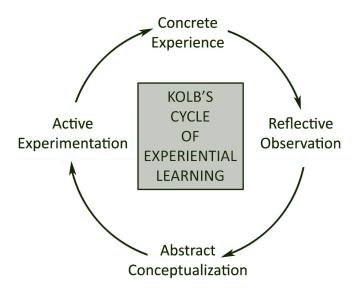# This Isn't Your Mother's English Class: Using Service-Learning Experiences to Improve Writing In the Composition Classroom

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I. What?

What We Do and Why It's Important

This interactive workshop was based on our collective experiences as university writing instructors incorporating service learning and reflective writing into our First-Year and Third-Year Writing courses. We addressed the ways in which service-learning experiences improve student writing while simultaneously informing knowledge, initiating empathy, and impelling questions about social inequality and discrimination. Following Eyler, Giles, Jr., and Schmiede's (1996) emphasis on reflection in service-learning, we demonstrated, through dialogue, writing prompts, and video interaction with a service participant, that "connected reflection links service to the intellectual and academic pursuits of the students" (p. 18). Service-learning thus evolves beyond the act of service to include multiple layers of reflection on the individual experience, the group process, and the social issues faced.

Concrete
Experience

KOLB'S
CYCLE
OF
EXPERIENTIAL
LEARNING

Active
Experimentation

Reflective
Observation

Abstract
Conceptualization

As the diagram in Figure 1 indicates, service-learning is an empirical activity that must be processed through on-going investigation involving experience, reflection, abstraction, and experimentation. All these elements must be in play if we are to engage the transformative possibilities of service-learning both inside and outside the classroom. Reflective writing, we suggest, is one of the most purposeful and effective ways of transforming the service experience into meaningful practice.

Writing About a Social Justice Issue

Prior to asking our workshop participants to respond to a specific question about service-learning, we shared a number of writing prompts used in our classrooms, including the following examples:

• Describing Service Activities and Placing them into Context: Choose a particular session at your service site that is memorable; perhaps it was your first visit to the site, or something happened during a visit that was unexpected. Your writing goal is to describe the site and the event, and to place it into context. Higher scores indicate that the writer has provided a detailed, interesting description of behaviors and/or activities; and he or she has examined that activity within the context in which it occurred.

• Meshing Personal Life and the Service Activity: For this final reflection, consider how your service activities mesh with other aspects of your life. As a result of your service activities, have you become more aware of yourself as a member of multiple communities? As you write, consider using examples from your service experiences to indicate how your awareness of social inequality and injustice has been deepened (or not).

• Considering Materials and/or Social space: Please consider the materials used in the scene and how they affect the literacy experience. What, if any, conclusions can you draw about the way in which material artifacts affect practice? You might also consider the arrangement of space at your site (how the space is organized) and how it affects the ways in which people perform activities there.

• Reflecting on the Social Problems Facing your Community Partners: All of our service-partners are working to build community solutions to global concerns; their work is specific to local needs and to international concerns. Please consider both the macro (universal) problems addressed and the micro (local) issues faced by your community partners. What are the possible solutions?

After briefly discussing how we employ writing prompts in our classrooms, we asked the participants to write for seven minutes, pen-to-paper, no thinking, just writing; we suggested, as we sometimes do in class: DO NOT STOP WRITING; allow the words to pour forth without restraint, fear, or analysis. This is the question we posed to our audience: How would you feel about students working with an ex-convict?

Video Intervention:
A Perspective from Dismas House

After the participants completed the writing exercise and discussed their answers in small groups, they watched an interview with Doc, a convicted murderer who spent 26 years in prison and is now living at the Dismas House, a transitional living facility in

Nashville partnered with Dr. Gustke's First-Year Writing course. In the video, Doc discusses what life was like for him as a young man coming of age in Memphis, the hardships and pressures of street-life, the brutal realities of prison, and the life-affirming changes he has experienced since living at Dismas. Of particular interest is Doc's description of the openness and eagerness of the volunteers, whose optimistic presence has helped him to develop communication skills and to learn slowly to trust the outside world.

Social Justice Revised

After viewing the video, participants were asked to respond to another seven-minute writing prompt: How do you feel about students working with Doc?

What Changed and Why?

Once the reflections were completed, we asked the participants to gather again in small groups to discuss and share how their writing changed between the first and second writing activities. We also included a social media channel where individuals or groups could text ideas to a projected screen. The small groups were a wonderfully productive way to allow participants to express their initial concerns and to dialogue about any preconceived notions they may have had about students working with convicts. Having established a relationship with the members of their group, participants discussed the benefits, challenges, and possibilities of service-learning activities partnered with transitional living houses. These small groups were hard to disband, but with some cajoling, the participants returned to the larger group to highlight how watching the video of Doc sparked a more authentic, empathetic, and comprehensive written reflection. We discuss the details and changes of these reflections in Part II of our paper. Social Justice Realized and Stories from the Classroom For this project, we video-archived some of our favorite student writings. These writings embody transformation, honesty, and engagement, and they delineate authentic connections between the class material and the service-learning experience. To conclude our workshop, we shared selected video clips of students reading from these works. The words, voices, and faces of students reminded our participants of the real work that is done in service-learning classrooms and the empowering possibilities of what these students do in our communities.

II. So what?

Learning Objectives for the Workshop

In planning the workshop, our professional identities, both as service-learning practitioners and as writing instructors, informed the learning objectives we set for participants. That is, as service-learning advocates, we wanted participants to learn, or to reinforce at least, key values connected to service work, and as writing instructors, we wanted participants to parlay these ideas into lessons about service writing. Our prospectus stated our learning goals as follows:

 (1) service-learning encounters create more empathy around social justice issues;

(2) service-learning encounters make student knowledge more concrete and authentic;

(3) service-learning sparks better argument, authenticity, and detail in written work.

In the following "So What?" section, we take up each goal and reflect on it in terms of participant interactions during the workshop. We are especially interested in ways that participants met

these learning goals as well as any significance they ascribed to their learning. At the root of our assertions are three key sources: (a) two pieces of writing produced by each participant, and (b) a survey completed by each participant at the end of the workshop. This survey asked participants to respond to three prompts: (a) As you look across the two pieces of writing you produced today, what changed in your writing? Why? (b) From this workshop, what ideas or strategies can you take back to your professional organizations and/or professional work? (c) How would you feel about an organization like Dismas House in your neighborhood? What about associated with your institution/organization? We paired the survey responses with the written pieces, coding them with a common number. Thus, in the accounts that follow, we refer to Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.

Service-learning and Empathy

Our first learning objective was to instill or reinforce the idea that service-learning can create empathy around social justice issues. In our service-learning classrooms, we each pair with community organizations that, for the average Belmont student, afford a window into a different discourse—whether the student is serving illiterate Nashvillians, underprivileged children, or ex-convicts in a transitional house. One of our common goals is to get students to engage in identification and to see the world through different sets of eyes—what Eyler and Giles, Jr. (1999) call "perspective transformation" (p. 129). In this vein, we find that service-learning helps students see inequity and social injustice as real, personalized, and immediate. Such themes emerge in our students' written reflections, where writers invoke human connection time and again. Take, for instance, this snippet produced by "Brian," a past student in Dr. Gustke's First-Year Writing class and a summer intern at Dismas House:

"My perspective of life has changed drastically because of this experience. All of these men have done things that they will regret for the rest of their life, but they have changed because they want to change. . . . I expected to leave the house this summer with a few acquaintances that I may never see again. But I have left with friends that could possibly last a lifetime."

In Brian's case, this parting thought was more than hollow speculation; well after his internship, Dr. Gustke ran into Brian at a local post office, where he was helping a Dismas resident with errands.

In our workshop, we used the video of Doc to humanize the category of ex-convict. During the course of this video interview, participants came to know him as a man who is sincerely repentant for his past transgressions. Participants also learned about the challenges he experienced in prison. As Doc described prison life, "It's up and down, because like I said, it's not nothin' easy for nobody. I wouldn't tell nobody that it's somethin' that's fun and games. It's not because all the time, you're like, all the time, you're lookin' behind your back because you're paranoid." Doc goes on to describe a range of potential tensions with other

inmates, many of these men lacking conventional notions of right and wrong. Responding to this video interview, workshop participants often invoked empathy in their survey responses and their written work. For example, we received the following survey responses:

Participant 1: "When I arrived at Q[uestion] #2, I became more emotionally involved with the ex-con."

Participant 4: "The second piece was more personal. It put a face with the 'ex-convict' term."

Participant 7: "My initial concern about the students having negative stereotypes reinforced were lessened. I felt like 'Doc' could help them see past that as they came to know him."

Participant 8: "Putting a face and a story about the program and the people involved in it gave me a better understanding of what the students are doing and the difference they are making in people's lives."

Participant 9: "It was so much easier to write about Doc because this convict was humanized."

"Putting a face" on under-served populations is central to service-learning, and for our workshop participants, identification and empathy appeared in more than just the surveys. As part of the text-message channel we offered to discussants, one person texted, "a real person gets us beyond assumption--doc offers a reality--a breath of fresh air--"what next?"--issues of trust." The first part of this message, the idea that "a real person gets us beyond assumptions," is especially important; it is a starting point for our first learning objective involving social justice. It is also key to one of service-learning's goals: "an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222). Some of the written responses push further into this terrain, as workshop participants moved from identification with Doc to a greater awareness of ex-cons, their challenges, and their potential value. As Participant 7 wrote, "I would also feel a bit embarrassed about my pre-conceived notions of ex-convicts. I would not feel as anxious about the students. . .now that there is a human face and he [Doc] seems to understand his role in working with them." In similar fashion, Participant 5 wrote,

"Doc is a wealth of humanity. His experiences with crime, punishment, healing, and redemption are elements of human experience that penetrate to the deepest questions of young and old people alike. The mutuality he describes between his healing and his openness to other people, especially students/volunteers, is instructive to others who might be in a self-imposed box."

These lines suggest that an ex-convict can offer value to society, even when he has faced judgment and punishment for the most severe of crimes. Furthermore, the resonant theme of humanity in this response gets at a key realization for any kind of social-justice work—the idea that humans have value no matter what their station or situation. As Participant 6 put it, "We all deserve the chance to be forgiven and seen with non-judgmental eyes despite the myriad mistakes we have made."

Service-learning and Concrete Knowledge

Our second learning objective was to convey how service-learning encounters can make student knowledge more concrete and authentic. As teachers, we value the fact that service-learning blurs borders between action and thought, between doing and knowing. Dewey (1990) made this connection clear long ago when he argued that progressive education requires linkages between the actions of students and the communities in which they live. So often, our Belmont students, coming from middle-class to upper-middle-class backgrounds, lack these important connections. For them, poverty is an abstraction, and only through sustained engagement with a different population are they able to see poverty as something with real-world effects. Take, for instance, this piece of writing submitted in one of Dr. Holt's First-Year Writing classes, in which students served as "Belmont Buddies"—tutors and mentors for local elementary-school students: During my first session, my buddy told me that he did not have many friends because he really liked math and science. Presumably, he was glad I was there. As we continued talking and as I learned more about my buddy, he told me about his life at home. He said that, everyday after school, he had to wait in Fun Company [an after-school program] until five o'clock, and then his mom would pick him up from school. From there, he and his mom would ride the bus to their house, located a few miles away. As soon as he said this, I had a sudden epiphany. All the things I had grown up with and thought were normal, like owning a car, were in fact luxuries that many do not have.

Following Kolb (1984), we recognize that the experiential element of service-learning forces students to re-conceptualize abstractions around experiences that are more immediate. In this the case of Dr. Holt's student, ideas about normal are destabilized in dramatic fashion because poverty sits across the table from him and talks to him about a bus ride home.

In our workshop, we found that survey respondents also wrote about such a shift with respect to Doc. For instance, participants noted:

Participant 1: "he [Doc] personalized the experience for me."

Participant 3: "It went from theory to actual person."

Participant 6: "My writing moved from writing about the proposed experience as an abstraction to a warmer, more personal reflection."

Participant 7: "Some of my concerns changed as the ex-convict became personalized."

Participants 1, 6, and 7 all write of a more personal(ized) connection to "the experience" and to "concerns." These claims are related to the previous point about empathy and social-justice, but they also indicate ways in which participants begin to see the larger topic of ex-convicts as a more concrete reality, one that occupies a visceral space. Participant 3 echoes this shift to the concrete even more explicitly by juxtaposing theory alongside actuality.

In the writing samples, the biggest difference was the level of specificity with which workshop participants addressed their topics. This difference in detail is a rather common-sense effect of giving two distinct prompts/topics—the first asking about ex-convicts in general and the second asking about Doc specifically.

As expected, in response to the first prompt, we received writing about broad themes, the most common being safety, supervision, potential impact, transformation, and growth. But after the video of Doc and the second writing exercise, we received writing with a much finer grain of detail. For instance, Participant 4 wrote:

"Doc was insightful, and I enjoyed hearing that he does have plans and/or goals for the future; he isn't playing a 'victim.' He has accepted his mistakes, taken accountability, come to terms with it [the past], served his time, and [is] moving on. He still has a lot to offer—he feels he has purpose for the future and I appreciate his candor. I feel that students could gain knowledge from Doc—not book knowledge, but valid life knowledge."

These lines offer up considerable analysis in a short space, and rather than wallowing in vague abstraction, the prose offers some punch because of its attention to detail. We wanted to reinforce for participants the notion that "valid life knowledge" comes from intimate experience (in this case, video contact) rather than broad sociological musings, and time and again in the writing responses, we found assertions grounded in detailed evidence from Doc's account.

Service Learning and Writing

Our final learning objective was to demonstrate how service-learning sparks better argument, authenticity, and detail in written work. This idea stems directly from the last two learning goals, for students must connect with their world and conceive the world in detail before they can write about it in sophisticated fashion. Along these lines, Participant 5 wrote on his survey, "There was less to write about when describing an idea than when describing a personal relationship. . . . Creativity is easier when this [latter] sort of substance is evident." Indeed. In our own writing classes, we often find that service-learning reflections are among the best writing produced by our students. Their reflective writing resonates with readers not only because of its detail, but also because of the authentic voices it contains. The reason is simple; service-learning students have a greater level of expertise regarding their content. Asked to write about the justice system or about criminal recidivism rates, college students will likely go and read a few Internet sources before offering up their best guesses about the topic. But they do not own the topic in the same way that they own their service-learning experiences. From a theoretical standpoint, service-learning reflections often instantiate the difference between Scardamalia and Bereiter's (1987) knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models of writing. In looking across strategies of novice and expert writers, Scardamalia and Bereiter found that novices usually regurgitate found knowledge without truly grappling with the material; experts, on the other hand, use writing as a way of reflecting deeply and of working out new content. In this latter model, the resultant writing is more detailed and more rhetorically complex and effective.

Granted, in our workshop, participants only had seven minutes of pen-to-paper freewriting per prompt—little time to develop intricate arguments or polished prose. As noted in the previous sections, however, the writing from the second prompt did show considerable improvement with respect to connection and to detail. In addition, as already shown, workshop writers moved more frequently from general assertions (about rehabilitation, human values, the justice system, etc.) to specific details about Doc's life. This movement alone made the second batch of writing more engaging and convincing.

As writing instructors, we often ask questions such as: how do we empower our students to write from positions of expertise? How do we help them develop authentic voices that speak and write from detailed experience? As our workshop participants found, service-learning instructors often do so by requiring written reflection at the same time they position writing as grounded in knowledge that the students own. In most cases, this owned knowledge/experience has already required students to grapple with pre-conceived notions of the world, and written reflection is simply one more iteration of this grappling. Nonetheless, students feel as though they have greater mastery over their material because they have lived it, and as a result, their accounts often come alive with human connection, vivid detail, and sophisticated argumentation.

III. Now What?

Moving Forward With Reflective Activities in Service-Learning

We proposed a workshop centered around reflective writing for several reasons: (a) we are writing professors and are firm believers (as is our discipline) in the extraordinary power of writing to give shape to thought; (b) we teach service-learning classes regularly and are continually amazed at the level of compassion, insight, and expanding worldview we see in our students; and (c) as reflective practitioners, we strive to improve classroom instruction by finding new ways of incorporating the activities at our service-learning sites. As a result of discussing, preparing for, and conducting this workshop, we have gained information that we can use in our classrooms, share with colleagues, and disseminate to the wider academic community.

As anyone who works regularly with individuals engaged in service-learning quickly discovers, the true value of service activities lies in the insight students gain about themselves and their place in the world. When the abstract concept of the "other" becomes a live, multidimensional human being, theory suddenly becomes practice. Examples abound:

• A second grader a student is tutoring in reading is not a case study out of a textbook, but a little girl who cannot concentrate because she is hungry.

• A thirteen year old confides to a college-age homework helper that his grades have fallen because he is regularly teased, taunted, and threatened when his grades are good and because he has plans to go to college.

• Students help to prepare and then share a meal at a halfway house for men recently released from prison, including a repentant, soft-spoken man who served time for murder, and whose greatest wish is to move nearer his son and grandchildren.

Providing opportunities for individuals engaged in service activities to process what they are experiencing is crucial, and as service-learning theorists assert, reflective activities are "the key to making community service yield real learning" (Zlotkowski, 1999, p. 99). Certainly, assigning directed reflective writing about service activities is a valuable pedagogical practice, and often

students make it clear that they have been impacted by their work. But what happens once they leave us? Will they carry the impact of the service experience with them? Will they remember that others in the world are less fortunate? Nothing we do can guarantee this, of course, but from this workshop we made several interesting observations about activities that might deepen the impact of service-learning.

First of all, because reflective writing is generally one-draft, professors seldom ask students for clarification of what they write about. Yet asking students to "unpack" some of their more puzzling statements, perhaps as part of a class discussion, could get at some of the deeper issues students struggle with when working with underprivileged populations. For example, when workshop participants were asked about their realizations or their take-aways, they responded with lines like the following:

Participant 5: "Doc is. . .the strange upside down nature of what is beautiful and meaningful in the world."

Participant 4: "I can also take back an expansive thinking pattern."

Participant 9: "Not to be afraid of the different around me."

We have an idea of what the writers meant by these broad statements, but if we hastily label them as unclear writing, we may be missing valuable opportunities to help writers explore the growth of their perspectives on complicated social issues. Writers sometimes write unclearly when they are working through difficult emotions or concepts. If asked to write a bit more about these statements we could theoretically help them to better articulate exactly what it is they do feel as a result of their service. In a classroom where an environment of trust and respect has been established, such statements could also be used as starters for reflective conversations.

Another discovery we made as workshop leaders was the value of video archiving. The basis of our presentation was a video of an ex-convict who resides in transitional housing. As we put the presentation together, we decided, almost as an afterthought, to include some video clips of our students reading selections of reflective writing. Recording students and community partners provides us with an archive of material we may be able to use in future teaching, but what we all noticed (and had not expected) was that asking our students to read reflections as we video-recorded them produced yet another level of engagement with the subject matter for the students. Their demeanor changed as they read, and we realized that the activity elevated their writing from the private and personal journal that almost no one sees to the public level of championing social justice. Reading to an audience is an act of courage, and when a student admits aloud his conflicting feelings about a service partner who has so little, the act reinforces the dilemma in the student's mind; as a result, this connection and the associated emotions are less likely to disappear when the semester ends.

From our first discussions about this workshop to our final reflections, we have repeatedly been reminded of how service-learning enriches our teaching lives. Interactions with students and community partners, all who graciously complied with our requests for help, have provided us with ideas and data that we can take with us to our classrooms, pass along to our colleagues, and disseminate in other scholarly formats. Service-learning activities broaden the reach of academia by embracing surrounding communities, whose members welcome our students and help them to develop a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of grave socioeconomic issues. The academic community increasingly values such work, and it is the responsibility of everyone engaged in service activities to provide participants with guided reflection opportunities in order to process conflicting emotions and to nurture budding intellectual empathy.

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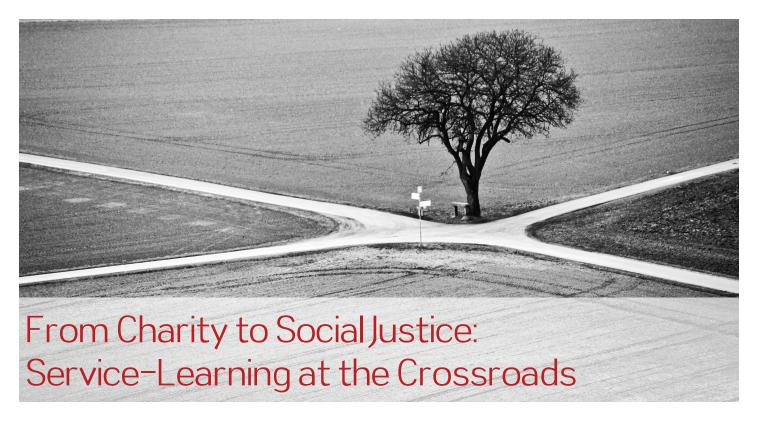
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From Charity to Social Justice: Service-Learning at the Crossroads

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Abstract

The themes and ideas explored in this paper are observations from practice and experience in navigating the implications of developing a campus-wide service-learning graduation requirement for traditional undergraduate students. While the pedagogy of service-learning as an experiential education methodology is not new in academia, Lipscomb University is relatively new to the practice of service-learning. Through five years of formal program existence and in establishing a centralized office of service-learning to promote and support service-learning work, it has become increasingly clear that the office of service-learning helps set the tone for civic engagement work on campus, and has a great deal to do with navigating the campus culture and constituents' attitudes on the role of service-learning. If service-learning is, as has been demonstrated in the literature, such a strong influence in the lives of students and the likelihood of students' future community involvement, what is the role of the service-learning center in helping students develop a context for their service work?

Examining the development of the SALT (Serving and Learning Together) Program at Lipscomb University reveals a service-learning program at a crossroads in exploring two paradigms of service-learning: a perspective of charity or a standpoint of social justice. This paper explores ways that faith based institutions can frame service-learning experiences to an orientation toward justice.

Background

Purposes for service-learning work in higher education are just as varied as the definition of service-learning itself—even in 1990, over 147 definitions of service-learning were counted in a review of the literature by Jane Kendall, author of Combining Service and Learning (Jacoby, 1996). Given this variety of interpretations and interest in service-learning, why do we personally engage service-learning as pedagogy or, on a macro level, find our institutions promoting service-learning? If service-learning has such a significant impact in the lives of students and their likelihood of future community involvement, what is the role of the service-learning center in helping students develop a context for their service work? Exploring these driving factors, examining the philosophies of service-learning and considering our campus cultures provide implications for how we actually facilitate service-learning. More specifically, they provide implications for the role of a university's office of service-learning in setting the tone for service-learning within the campus community.

Our experience with student attitudes towards community involvement through Lipscomb's service-learning program, SALT: Serving and Learning Together, demonstrate that our students generally fall into two categories: those who view service work as an episodic opportunity to do good deeds and others who are looking to examine the underlying causes of community challenges and create strategies for change. While not in direct conflict necessarily, a tension exists in the practice of service-learning, especially at Christian colleges and universities: is service-learning a way of facilitating charitable acts, or a method of bringing about justice? While this paper is a call to further discussion and future research, I propose that service-learning at faith based institutions is at a crossroads: finding a place between the concept of civic engagement as charity or social justice. By espousing a particular paradigm for community involvement through activities such as service-learning, colleges and universities direct students toward particular attitudes of community engagement that have a role in shaping students' development.

Discussion

Regardless the setting—either in faith based or secular institutions, or the demographic—with students who are actively involved in a faith community or self-described more generally as spiritual, the current generation of students are looking for higher education to play a role in their spiritual and personal development. Findings from a multi-year project to study the trends, patterns, and principles of spirituality and religiousness among college students, and how the college experience influences spiritual development, conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles found that first-year college students "have high expectations for the role that their college or university should play in their emotional and spiritual development" (Lindholm, 2007). Specifically, students are looking to make meaning of their life experiences, develop personally and determine "what they think and feel about the many issues confronting them and their communities" (Lindholm, 2007). While this is nothing new in the circles of Christian higher education, where the educational distinction is to make meaning and substance in academic, personal and spiritual development; providing "an education that cultivates the creative and active integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture," (Holmes, 1987) it is interesting to see that across the board, students are looking to their faith based and public universities to help construct not only knowledge, but meaning as well.

Service-learning is one very natural response to this desire among students to explore the intersections between academic study and vocation, personal development and community involvement. The most widely accepted definition of service-learning is provided by Bringle and Hatcher in their article, Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education, where service-learning is viewed as a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle, 1996). To further explain the way that service-learning bridges this gap between making meaning and learning to make a living as students prepare for the professional world after college, service-learning links "the classroom to the world of praxis, it allows induction to complement deduction, personal discovery to challenge received truths, immediate experience to balance generalizations and abstract theory. In and through service-learning, students learn to engage in problem definition and problem solving in an authentic, powerful way" (Zlotkowski, 1998). This observation by Edward Zlotkowski, a founding father of service-learning, describes how service-learning brings both "doing well" and "doing good" to center stage in higher education—allowing students to make connections between their interests, talents and skills and community need. In addition to creating space for students to make connections between their academic endeavors and the life questions of purpose and vocation, service-learning has demonstrated its significant impact on the lives of students as they continue college, graduate and become professionals. An increased level of social responsibility, a commitment to service and involvement in volunteerism after graduation, are all outcomes of service-learning that have been demonstrated over years of assessment of service-learning programs (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). While service-learning greatly impacts student academic and personal development on campus during their years in higher education, equally important is the impact that service-learning has on the lives of students and their involvement in community work after graduation.

Given the scope and impact the transformational potential of

> *"Service-learning is one very natural response to this desire among students to explore the intersections between academic study and vocation, personal development and community involvement."*

service-learning, we are led to a place where we must address and explicitly state our intent in providing opportunities for students to engage in the community and participate in service-learning work. Beyond the critical outcomes of service-learning providing enhanced academic development and opportunities for professional growth, increased levels of retention and engagement with the curriculum, service-learning is a formative experience that shapes the lives of service-learning participants (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). At faith-based institutions, this has significant implications where our schools are called not only to educate and prepare but to equip and shape students in our communities. What kind of equipping and shaping can be provided by service-learning centers at Christian schools? Where institutions are advocating civic engagement and involvement in the community, it is critical for schools to determine and articulate their purposes for this community partnership. The philosophy of beginning with the end in mind has significant relevance in this point. To provide substantive service-learning experiences for students, it is most helpful to provide students a framework or context for their work. Attitudes toward community involvement can be viewed on a spectrum of perspectives, ranging from a concept of charity to realized social change and social justice. From experience in the first two years of formal program existence, the service-learning program at Lipscomb University has begun to navigate these perspectives of community involvement, and is moving towards a context of social justice in its service-learning work.

The SALT Program is Lipscomb's approach to intentional community engagement, where service-learning is a teaching and learning methodology that allows students to apply their knowledge and skills to specific service projects associated with a nonprofit or for profit organization and provides for growth and development in understanding better the academic, spiritual and civic elements associated with service to others. Service-learning through the SALT Program has been adopted as a method for advancing teaching and learning at Lipscomb. As of fall 2008, all incoming traditional undergraduate students are required to complete service-learning experiences as a part of an academic graduation requirement. For the purposes of the SALT Program, student learning is defined as developing academic, personal/spiritual, and/or civic knowledge as the result of increased opportunities to apply existing knowledge and skills in service settings. Students can fulfill the service-learning requirement through a variety of opportunities, both in curricular and co-curricular settings. The graduation requirement was designed not as a service hour obligation for students to complete as an add-on to

their college experience, but rather as an opportunity to integrate a number of aspects of learning and development opportunities at Lipscomb. Students can participate in service-learning experiences through courses, internships, mission trips, one time opportunities, interdisciplinary projects and research opportunities. One of the unique underlying tenets of the SALT Program is the intent for this service-learning effort to encourage a developmental approach to service-learning. Through the graduation requirement, students complete two different service-learning experiences of their choosing, but must participate in increasingly more involved service-learning opportunities with greater levels of service engagement and academic expectations associated with each experience.

Because of the relative newness of this service-learning program, and because of the campus-wide graduation requirement, Lipscomb's office of service-learning, The SALT Center, became the clearinghouse for service-learning opportunities and the office reviewing and approving appropriate service-learning opportunities. Beginning with the realities of finite resources of time and peoplepower, coupled with the recommendations of promising practices in service-learning at other established programs, the SALT Program began moving towards the paradigm of social justice philosophy in service-learning practice. Navigating the crossroads of the two perspectives—charity or social justice—came first from the pragmatic reality of managing limited resources and a desire to emulate other noted and effective service-learning programs. It was only upon further reflection and thought that the ideological implications of adopting a justice orientation in service-learning work were considered, and processes were developed to move towards intentional methods of developing a social justice perspective through service-learning.

Also important to consider is 2006 research done by Bringle, Hatcher and McIntosh, that reveals students have a stronger preference toward participating in projects related to charity (direct service) as opposed to project-based service or work that supports more systematic community change. What we are exploring at Lipscomb is whether students hold this preference toward charity focused projects because those are the types of efforts where it is easiest to engage (easy access to projects, little preparation or technical skill required), or if students would be equally, if not more attracted to capacity building projects if they had the appropriate support and resources provided. Through the infrastructure offered through a centralized office of service-learning, The SALT Program is working to build the ability of students and the number of projects offered where participants will be a part of promoting transforming and sustaining community change.

Recommendations

A founding tenet of service-learning pedagogy is based on the concept of mutual benefit and reciprocity—the expectation that all partners involved in service-learning receive equal benefit from the experience. Benefits to those involved in the service-learning enterprise—community agencies, students, faculty, institutions—will not be uniform in nature, but should be equally allocated to all parties in the partnership relationship. This is the philosophical underpinning of a justice orientation in service-learning: while our community partners receive some benefit from episodic relationships with our students and faculty, the community derives its greatest benefit from partnering with universities to bring the full weight of community resources to bear on some of our most significant social problems. Ongoing acts of partnership that lead to sustainable and capacity building efforts is what community partners are asking for and what will bring about the greatest advancement in the community (Sandy, 2007). In this philosophy our community partners in service-learning are calling

us towards a distinctive social justice perspective in our work in creating substantive change in the community.

As campuses look to respond to this call and develop a justice orientation in their civic engagement and service-learning programs, there are both macro and micro level processes that can be integrated into service-learning experiences to support this social justice perspective.

To begin, providing a venue for this conversation on attitudes in service-learning results in an opportunity for service-learning stakeholders—community partners, students, faculty and administration—to discuss and identify the institution's desired outcome for developing a philosophy of service-learning and community engagement. Service-learning centers can be a convening party for outlining the institution's goals for service-learning work. By identifying these goals, service-learning centers can determine the appropriateness of a philosophy of civic engagement. Nadinne Cruz, pioneer of service-learning and researcher on civic engagement, has developed Navigating the Politics of Civic Engagement worksheet that is a helpful resource in evaluating stakeholders' interest in service-learning work, and is a tool to help identify points of convergence and divergence in the interests of program stakeholders.

Examining the institution's mission statement and service-learning program mission statement is also a key step in determining an institution's attitude toward service and civic engagement in the community. The school's purpose statement and service-learning program's mission statement will reveal a significant amount about attitudes toward community involvement, and the nature and purpose of this engagement.

Additionally, the office of service-learning's support of long term, macro-level projects, rather than more episodic service-learning experiences will help build significant relationships with community partners and will create the opportunity for more substantive and in-depth service-learning work over the life of the partnership, resulting in a greater community impact. As is appropriate, given community partner needs and interests, long term service-learning partnerships and projects should be encouraged. This is especially the case in working with upper division students where academic study and student development support more detailed and complex work.

Further, there is great opportunity to design and promote experiences within the service-learning program where students participate in more detailed and complex projects like a capstone experience that can also lead to a commitment to ongoing service-learning work. Within the SALT Program, students who become especially interested in service-learning can work beyond the basic service-learning graduation requirement and attain the distinction of SALT Scholar. SALT Scholars are experts in service-learning in the context of Lipscomb University, and complete three different types of service-learning experiences in addition to a self-designed capstone project. The capstone project for the SALT Scholar draws from the student's previous service-learning work, in addition to her academic discipline, and results in a year-long project with a community partner where students produce a service "deliverable" for the nonprofit agency. This capstone opportunity provides an avenue for students to do increasingly in-depth work and draw from previous experiences to enrich community benefit offered through the project.

On a micro level, while reflection is critical in all service-learning efforts, it becomes especially important when helping students create a context of social justice in their community work. Reflection in service-learning is viewed as "the ability to step back

and ponder one's own experience, to abstract from it some meaning or knowledge relevant to other experiences" (Jacoby, 1996). In the same vein, reflection is the process through which students can make meaning through their service-learning experience and document the learning and critical thinking that was brought about through the service-learning work. Developing a consistent reflection curriculum for service-learning experiences that encourages students to think about systematic causes to social concerns and looks at the potential for change within the community supports students' reflection on root causes of community challenges. For example, facilitating guided discussion on the presence and role of influence, power and access in the community, while students are involved in service-learning work, provide students with some insight into the bigger picture issues that impact the community at large. Additionally, asking students to define their own philosophy of service before and after the service experience allows students to process and document changes in their personal context of service work that have developed during the process of service-learning.

Conclusions

For those of us involved in the work of service-learning, and especially for those of us working towards campus-wide service-learning efforts, we hold significant responsibility in setting some context for community engagement. In his foreword to Successful Service-Learning Programs, Zlotkowski alludes to the transformative potential of service-learning for the institution, and talks about the power of uniting an institution's guiding philosophy with its plan for service-learning. Zlotkowski even goes so far as to say, in citing examples of service-learning programs at such schools as Augsburg College and Santa Clara University, that philosophies on service-learning have the potential of redefining the meaning of faith based higher education (Zlotkowski, 1998). Specifically, in justice focused relationships with the community, the university has an opportunity to be "directly responsive to and shaped by the community" especially in places where the marginalized within the community are left without a voice. It is in this space that faith based institutions participate in acts of solidarity with the poor and the meek by working alongside each other in partnership together.

A reflection response from a service-learning student, Katie, demonstrates this transformative power of service-learning: "my generation is united in the belief that the choices we make now define our moral selves and determine the ethical character of the world we inhabit and leave for future generations. And this is why we serve." Given the significant potential of this service-learning work for creating change in students and in the community, it is our responsibility in designing service-learning programs to give an intentional focus to creating a context for student service work. For institutions that are committed to instilling in their students a desire to create justice in community, it is imperative that service-learning programming have a design and plan for supporting this justice orientation.

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"Knowing the Why": Personal Writing and Its Value In the Service-Learning Classroom

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In service-learning classes, instructors often encourage students to collect and tell stories about themselves and about others. Thus, service-learning positions personal narration and personal reflection as privileged and useful tools. Along these lines, Stanton, Giles, Jr., and Cruz (1999) point out:the value and discipline of reflection—of stepping back from intense social engagement to learn from it in order to be more effective the next time, and the connecting of these reflections with existing theoretical knowledge—not only distinguishes service-learning pedagogy; it was a practice that sustained the pioneers [of service-learning] themselves. (p. 191)

These authors highlight the important point that, in service-learning pedagogy, reflective practice operates at the junction between theory ("existing theoretical knowledge") and practice ("intense social engagement"). Rather than separate knowing and doing, service-learning reflection yokes the two conditions and ideally synthesizes them into a more coherent, significant narrative. Service-learning writing, often rooted in personal accounts, helps create such connection and synthesis. Teachers in service-learning courses commonly ask students to write about their experiences in the community as way of bringing together course work and field work.

Yet, in some college circles, personal narrative is undervalued as a tool for producing and exploring knowledge. Particular to composition studies, Rosenberg (2002) notes, "The issue of personal writing is hotly contested . . . Some believe that personal writing has no place in academic writing" (p. 1). During the 1990s, such debate ran fast and furious—from the much-ado public debate between Bartholomae (1995) and Elbow (1995) to scholars like Nicolini (1994) writing that "personal narrative is often viewed as a kind of bastard child when compared with 'legitimate' exposition" (p. 57). Comments from other published work during this period reinforce the binary nature of the debate:

• "While the personal narrative is still commonly granted a place in composition instruction, it is generally a much lesser one, conceived in most cases as a relatively easy preliminary before settling into the mainly expository business at hand." (DiPardo, 1990, p. 66)

• "Despite the prevalence of personal narratives as assigned writing in both literature and composition courses, personal writing is thought of as ancillary, something students do before they get down to the business of real writing." (Wood, 1997, pp. 2-3).

• "Still others [opponents of personal narrative] note that critical thinking is generally absent when an assignment only requires students to relate a personal experience." (Wallace, 2000, p. 437)

• "In classrooms too, opponents of expressivist writing pedagogy have long maintained that writing instructors do their students a disservice by encouraging personal narratives in first-year writing courses." (Spigelman, 2001, p. 63)

Oppositional pairings here include ancillary versus main, critical thinking versus personal experience, and writing pedagogy versus personal narrative—each idea suggested as a discrete domain. However, within such debate, numerous voices (including some of the authors quoted above) have taken up positions in support of personal narrative in the writing classroom. Spigelman (2001), for instance, argues "that the telling of stories can actually serve the same purposes as academic writing and that narratives of personal experience can accomplish serious scholarly work" (p. 64). More recently, Schwartz (2007) contends, "our success as writing teachers may be connected to a willingness to use narrative as a material in our teaching. There is a difference between intellectual inquiry

and academic recapitulation, and inquiry is more likely to lead students to meaningful interactions" (p. 436). Implicit here is another contrastive binary that pitches a particular version of academic discourse against personal narrative, and Schwartz suggests that narrative better has the power to leverage "meaningful" work.

Into this longstanding debate, I wish to position the personal, reflective writing common to service-learning engagement in my classes. In doing so, I add my voice to a chorus that believes personal writing can effectively synthesize intimate experience and more abstract academic knowledge. This chorus includes scholars such as Eyler, Giles, Jr., and Schmiede (1996), who specifically address service-learning reflection and note that "[c]onnected reflection links service to the intellectual and academic pursuits of the students" (p. 18). While such reflection can occur beyond the page, in class discussions or in oral reports, writing in particular puts this connective and frequently transformative power into sharp relief. Written narratives usually involve more careful measure and commitment than oral stories. Students must select out characters and events, present them in coherent ways, and make durable their significances. They must judiciously evaluate experience and conclude: these are the moments that counted; these are the events that shaped my perceptions. And in important moments, students consider how and why conceptual reshaping transpired.

What about writing is liberatory in this context? One key is that personal writing frees students from strictures of past schooling. For instance, students escape the bonds of "objective" third-person prose and are allowed, even encouraged, to privilege first-person viewpoint—a byproduct being that students tend more naturally to build linkages between what they have done and what they think. In addition, personal narratives nudge students away from rigid structures, notably the five-paragraph essay, and elicit more creativity in terms of form. As a result, stories emerge, and the beginnings of more sophisticated essays appear. Following on the heels of these ideas is the notion that students more easily locate an authentic voice when they no longer must posture in ill-fitting garb. In personal reflections, my students experiment with description, dialogue, characterization, humor and a range of other techniques—invariably showing respect for service-learning activity and the knowledge it produces.

For just such reasons, in my classes involving service-learning, personal writing has become increasingly important, and in what follows, I draw upon selections from a service-learning class connected to outreach in the Nashville community by way of Nashville Adult Literacy Council (hereafter NALC). Each college student in my class spent ten hours during the semester working in NALC's Start Now program, designed to initiate community learners into NALC's curricula. At this "Start Now" stage, community learners are on flexible, contingent schedules prior to placement with one-on-one tutors, and the Start Now program is a way of getting their feet wet and testing commitment to the program. The university students were all members of a Third-Year Writing class that focused on issues of literacy and learning. Addressing literacy from a range of angles (personal, discursive, disciplinary, historical, functional, etc.), the class read selections connected to literacy and schooling from scholars like David Bartholomae, James Gee, and John Szwed. They also read book-length treatments such as Peter Elbow's Writing With Power and Greg Mortensen's Three Cups of Tea. Additionally, the students engaged in semester-long, ethnographic projects related to various forms of literacy, and this ethnographic direction encouraged students to consider research and writing as personal endeavors. In terms of service-learning writing, students composed reflections about their tutorials throughout the semester around three, themed topics: individual literacy, social/material space, and educational readings/theory.

The personal, service-learning writing produced by the students was among their best work of the semester. Because reflections were considered a "risk free" zone, not subject to the same grammatical and mechanical scrutiny as other assignments, my students expressed greater ease with completing these writing tasks. Moreover, because the reflections had to be grounded in first-person experience and written in first-person voice, I hazard that the students wrote with more assuredness and, in many cases, a greater level of detail. Finally, many of the responses revealed connections that cut across divides—personal, cultural, intellectual, and so on. In the remainder of this section, I use some of this student-produced work to show how reflective writing provides students with a liberatory position of strength regarding voice, and how personal reflection engages students at a level of transformative thought just as valuable as third-person, expository models.

A common challenge my students faced at NALC was identity shift—seeing the world through a different set of eyes. However, as much as this dynamic pushed students, it also held great value, and in reflections, students often addressed the theme with an eye toward human connection. One nice example is this passage by Meg :

In our hour, VZ does not want to make small talk; he is a serious student with a graduate degree in physics from Vanderbilt. He wants to dive right into the lesson and dot every 'i' and cross every 't'. I pester him with questions until I find a topic that interests him more than his lesson: books. What luck, a reader! He gives me detailed summaries of the last couple novels he'd read, and asks questions about particular word usages and cultural confusions. I make him laugh (which is, I believe, the key to a good session at NALC) because his choice of fiction is trashy crime novels about slaughtered models. I ask him why he is here. He says, stating the obvious, 'I want to speak English better; look it is written in my file.' 'Yes, I know, I read your file, but I'd like to paint better and I don't actually take art lessons. What makes you work at it, instead of just wishing it?' 'Ah, you wish to know my motivation!' he says, sounding like a villain from a paperback mystery. 'I would like to be better at work. I am speaking and making the presentations, and I am wanting to know how to say it better.' I sit up a little straighter; I always take my time there seriously, but knowing the why puts it into sharp perspective. He wants the best possible future for his career in America, and that means speaking clear English with educated people, both during technical presentations and the inevitable socializing surrounding them.

This storied description of a short tutorial exchange has a lot going for it. Not only is it well written and entertaining; it also involves considerable reflection on pedagogy and learning, and it reveals the development of a personal connection on the part of the tutor. Meg's ability to hear and understand VZ's motives gives literacy new dimensions that are both social and significant. Furthermore, perspectival differences are a topic the class often discussed with respect to literacy and schooled settings, and many students expressed frustration in their own educational experiences, mainly because of disconnects between knowledge (the teacher view) and practical application (the student view). But in the vignette above, these two elements come together in a powerful way. Literacy is personalized in the face of "VZ," and the student-tutor is asked, perhaps even forced, to see how her actions and knowledge matter in real-world ways. In Meg's passage, "knowing the why" is an important phrasing that captures the connective impulse of service-learning work. By "knowing," Meg refers to concrete knowledge born out of sympathetic contact. As her narrative shows, understanding the "why" of another human being is central to her experience, but this dynamic is not exclusive to Meg. "Knowing the why" is at the heart of any service experience where practitioners encounter the desires of other individuals and serve in order to

achieve these desires.

Such identity work similarly reverberates in a passage by Amy, who wrote, "I believe that through this experience I have grown as a person. The first time I went to the literacy center I was very nervous. I mean I was taken out of my zone. I was in a completely different world. I, a person who has been a student [my] whole life, had now become a teacher." Often, in the strange academic bubbles created for students, they are asked simply to accept their roles as students and even worse, relegate their priorities to ingesting and regurgitating information. Less common are schooled activities that enable students to question these roles, let alone alter them. But when asked to write about service-learning work at NALC, my students frequently keyed in on ways in which the tutorials initiated significant changes in their perspectives. And in writing about the shifts, students often came to grips with what it means to transmit literacy and, in the process, to be a vehicle for change. As Amy noted, "I didn't really know how to handle that at first. I was scared of screwing up, of confusing a student. I learned what it is like to be in a teacher's shoes as well. I learned about a different kind of responsibility. The responsibility that a teacher has with a student to educate, to help, and to understand."

At the level of textual understanding and course content, students also made important connective leaps, often bridging the academic and the experiential. Writing tasks initiated such lines of thought since I asked students to forge links between class readings and experiences; however, I gave them free rein to make whatever connections that made sense. To my delight, the resultant prose frequently exhibited attention to textual detail and deftness at comparative analysis. A good example is the following passage by Beth:

 Through my interactions at NALC I have been able to connect what I have encountered to reading in class. What I find so amazing are the sacrifices that people make for education. This theme was extremely prevalent in Three Cups of Tea, and through talking with J., I have witnessed that educating children is worthy of extreme sacrifice.

. . . [In] Three Cups of Tea the story that seemed to remain with me long after I finished the book was that of Uzra Faizad. She was the teacher in Afghanistan who refused to stop teaching her all-girls class during the Taliban reign and America's continual bombings. She truly cared about her students receiving an education . . .This sacrifice in order for children to be educated was paralleled in the story of J. She left the comfort of her homeland, her native language, her family and everything she knew in order to provide better education for her children. She moved her kids here and sent them to [a local university] while her husband stayed back in their homeland and worked. Both of these women show a tremendous amount of courage and sacrifice. It is a concept that, here in America, most of us could never fathom . . . We so often take for granted what we are provided, and education is one of the things we tend to look at with a passing glance.

True, the story of Uzra resonates with many readers of Three Cups of Tea, but for Beth, would it have the same deeply felt effect in the absence of a first-hand account like that of J.? Would Beth think as critically about the value of education without the added vehicle of a personal reflection? On both accounts, I argue no, and any reader of the above passage would likely agree that Beth's embodied experience provided her with a deeper understanding of Mortensen's Three Cups of Tea account.

In similar passages, my students displayed sophistication and a sharp eye when it came to joining content knowledge with experience, and vice versa. Often, the results surprised me. While I fully anticipated that students would key in on authors like Mortensen and Gee—authors who explicitly treat culture and literacy —I was pleased that my writers also drew upon readings in unexpected ways. Jo, for instance, focused on pedagogical strategies from Peter Elbow's Writing With Power, noting that Elbow's "methods allow students to concentrate more on learning without worrying about their language being 'wrong' or 'incorrect'. He introduces ways to make the learning more comfortable in a peer learning environment. This was extremely helpful to me in my sessions and seemed to really work." My original intentions, in assigning readings from the Elbow book, were to have students think more deeply about voice and audience in their own writing, yet Jo reminded me that, for student-tutors at least, Elbow's descriptions of teaching practice were bound to have as much, if not more, purchase.

As these written accounts show, personal narratives help students break down unfortunate, academic divides between experience and knowledge—ruptures that, as Rose (1989) notes, often appear at colleges and universities:

In higher education, there is a politically loaded distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' study. Pure study is elevated because it putatively involves the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake—mathematics and literature are good examples; applied study (engineering, medicine, education), because it is situated in human affairs, is somehow tainted, is less—well—pure. What a bewildering distinction, I would have thought. What a silly, bloodless dichotomy. (155)

In examining how students fall short of success, Rose takes issue with the compartmentalized manner in which school often delivers its material, with "little writing or speaking or application," at the same time it emphasizes "the recall of material rather than the reasoned elaboration of it" (191). Service-learning reflections, however, can push in directions that Rose would appreciate. Such narratives, especially when written in a personal voice and with an emphasis on human engagement, help students see the value of applied knowledge.

What then would we have our service-learning students do? If we abide by negative perspectives on personal narrative—viewpoints that cast the personal as lesser or ancillary—how then do our student writers convey the valuable contributions of their experience? In the absence of the personal, how does one express powerful human connections or Eureka moments? Service-learning work, I claim, forces us to acknowledge the power of the personal, and in the reflective writing composed by students, personal narratives are neither tangential nor secondary. They are essential to the task and to the students.

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The Case for Meaningful Service

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Abstract

Utilizing service-learning as an instructional strategy for pre-service teachers and alternative licensure candidates proved to engage the students in meaningful service and opportunities for self-growth. Students at an Historically Black College University (HBCU) spent two hours each week in a reading lab tutoring struggling readers while learning academic content within the classroom. The project was a win-win for all partnerships created and made the case for meaningful service.

Introduction

What makes a service-learning project meaningful? Meaningful service incorporates age and ability appropriate activities into personally relevant and engaging learning outcomes which are tangible, visible and therefore, valued by all participants. Engaging and interesting activities support a more sociocentric world perspective rather than an egocentric one. In service-learning experiences, meaningful experiences not only meet genuine needs but also demonstrate clear connections between academic goals and service. When connections are made from theory to experience and then thought to action in a real world setting, students feel a sense of usefulness and purpose.

Research Snapshot

Research supports service which was perceived as meaningful by students prompted greater commitment to the service (Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). In addition, students acquired greater knowledge & skills than their counterparts who did not participate in service-learning activities. A stronger commitment to the service followed interactions with individuals who were facing difficulties or injustices. The challenges faced by the students gave bloom to problem solving and made the service learning not only successful but meaningful.

Youinss, McLellan, Su, and Yates (1999) found meaningful service was related to students being given the role of decision makers in which they develop their own ideas. They also contributed the feeling of having made a contribution by solving meaningful problems to service that was personally relevant. Personally relevant service was more meaningful and showed solid positive outcomes when the service took place within their own communities as described in Youinss, McLellan, Su, and Yates' 1999 study with inner-city African American youth. This supports providing experiences near and dear to the students who are providing the service.

Academic and civic engagement outcomes were found to be greatest when students had some degree of control over the service-learning experience and perceived they made a difference through the experience (Furco, 2002). The control over important decisions led to enhancement of student engagement and commitment to take on challenges. Students who were involved with experiences which were described as "meaningless", "useless", "boring" or "pointless" did not feel empowered or challenged. Quality of relationships between collaborative partners was identified by the researcher as indicators for improved outcomes. This research study of 529 high school students who were involved with high quality service-learning experiences supports the need for meaningful and challenging activities for students in order to achieve positive learning outcomes.

Meaningful service has therefore, become a guiding standard of service learning. The K-12 Service-Learning Project Planning Toolkit defines the Standard for Meaningful Service and lists the indicators (RMC Corporation, 2009).

Meaningful Service

Standard: Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.

Indicators:
1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.

2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served (RMC Research Corporation, 2009, p.3).

Service, and in fact, any educational activity, is made meaningful by involving the students in the process (Billig, 2010). Involving students in the project selection is an obvious method. Beyond project selection, the project can be linked to the course standards through ongoing reflection in class. Discussion between the instructor and the students to review what will be done and subsequently what was done, aids in the process of making an activity meaningful. Through the reflective activities, the activities learned and refined are reinforced to the students and become more meaningful as the students determine the methods of documenting the outcomes of the actual activity (Billig 2010). As a part of documenting the outcomes, students can determine steps to improve the learning process for future students and serving the needs of the recipients of the service.

The activity must also be developmentally and age appropriate to be truly meaningful (Kinloch and Liptrot, 2010). Students need to be able to comprehend what they are doing and understand it's value to them and the recipients of the service be it directly or indirectly. It is, therefore, the instructor's responsibility to establish all activities as developmentally appropriate. Brant (1998) suggested ten statements to assist in determining the appropriateness of activities. These statements can easily be redone as questions or built into a rubric.

1. People learn what is personally meaningful to them.
2. People learn when they accept challenging but achievable goals.
3. Learning is developmental.
4. Individuals learn differently.
5. People construct new knowledge by building upon their current knowledge.
6. Much learning occurs through social interactional.
7. People need feedback to learn.
8. Successful learning involves the use of strategies – which themselves are learned.
9. A positive emotional climate strengthens learning.
10. Learning is influenced by the total environment.

Students can easily be involved in the use of each of these statements to ensure the activities being meaningful and enhance the learning involved.

One way to involve students in meaningful service is through exploring the essential need found within a particular community. By "community" we mean inside the classroom, school, and surrounding areas outside the school and even into broader categories of state, nation and world. The "need" is a term used to signify something that could be improved, changed and or developed. For the case presented, assessing genuine needs within the community surrounding the college was a valuable part of the service-learning. Information from a variety of sources were solicited and in matching academic content with skills required for service, a match was made.

The Case

Pre-service teachers need authentic experiences which connect theory with experience and thought with action. Pre-service teachers at a HBCU (Historically Black College University) engaged in a service-learning opportunity which took them outside of the college classroom and into the world of struggling readers in two urban reading labs. The Instructor met the students for class in the 6-8 and 9-12 school setting in a classroom designated as a reading lab. Each student was given a student to mentor for part of the class session and received instruction on the academic content for the second portion.

The college students were each assigned a struggling reader (identified by reading below grade level by two or more grade levels). The pre-service teachers became mentors to the struggling readers in both middle and high school settings. The mentors (pre-service teachers) went to the classroom to pick up the mentee (struggling readers) and brought them back to the reading lab for one on one instruction.

When the mentor and mentee returned to the lab, a 5 part reading lesson plan was followed which took place for 30 minutes. The lesson plan consisted of a 2 minute reading warm up. Next, the mentor played word games with the mentee which utilized vocabulary from a new book which would be read next. Before the reading took place and the after the word games were played, the mentor set the purpose for reading before, during and after. Step 4 consisted of a writing lesson which took another five minutes. The last 3-5 minutes was devoted to the retelling of the story by the struggling reader. The lesson plan was completed, the student returned to class and the mentor came back into the lab to complete a survey which detailed improvements and areas to work on the next week.

As noted by the Instructor, the first couple of weeks were filled with tense trepidations as the mentors made introductions to the teachers and welcomed the mentee to the lab. As the mentees came into the lab, they were anxious as well and unclear as to why they were there. After the fourth visit, the reading lab was filled with smiles and laughter as both Mentor and Mentee began to relax and enjoy the process.

What made this service-learning experience meaningful to pre-service teachers was clear connections between the service to the academic content. One mentor stated "I feel in the case of my mentee, he needs someone to held mold him into not only a better reader but he seems to need a big brother. I feel I have gained much insight from my student. He has taught me a lot about myself and why I really want to become a teacher." The passion to teach was ignited in the Mentors as they found themselves successful in learning outcomes for their mentee.

The service-learning experience increased self-efficacy for pre-service teachers in terms of student engagement, instructional practice and classroom management according to The Teacher's Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale. Student engagement mean scores stated a 8.7% increase over their initial perception of their sense of being effective/successful in student engagement. Self-efficacy in terms of instructional practices or perceptions over their success with instructional practices showed gains in 13% over initial perception. The last self-efficacy scale scored 6% gain over initial perceptions of success with classroom management. All three self-efficacy categories showed gains and serve to support authentic experiences in real world settings for pre-service teachers.

At the same time the pre-service teachers were serving struggling

readers in the clinic, new teachers (K-12) on an alternative license were serving as well. Authentic experiences and how to design them are equally important for new teachers. The teachers on alternative licenses are granted a license based upon their content based degree and frequently have no pedagogy in their background. They are accepted as competent in their field based upon their (minimum) Bachelor's degree and the Praxis exam, but still need the skills to be able to teach their content material. A seminar class taught concurrent with the students' own teaching offered an opportunity for further skill refinement and reflection upon their experiences. Placing new alternative licensed teachers into a service-learning experience tutoring struggling readers gave the new teachers a new experience dealing with students who were struggling and a structured means to address the students' needs.

Prior to beginning the clinic experience, the new teachers were introduced to service learning as an instructional strategy, adding to their base knowledge. They followed the steps of service learning and created a project in class that met all of the standards and experienced all of the steps except the actual service action. Once their knowledge and understanding of the service learning strategy was complete, they were trained in the structure of the reading clinic and actually began their service experience.

The students spent time directly tutoring one or more struggling readers. Every effort was made to pair a struggling student who was close in age to the students the teachers taught. Much of the time, that effort worked, but the learning was valuable regardless of the age of the child. The new teachers visited the clinic a minimum of ten times during the semester and not only tutored a struggling reader, but assisted in the charting of the student(s) progress. During the time the new teachers spend in the clinic they also maintained a journal of their experiences, participated in reflective discussions in class and expanded their reflection through the class online discussion board.

As was expected the students resisted the project initially. This project took them out of their comfort zone and made them question their own abilities. Upon reflection both during and after the project, the students indicated not only how much they enjoyed and valued the experience but just how much it helped them as a teacher. They were able to correlate the problems facing struggling readers with their own students who were struggling with learning issues. They came to realize that they each would have students who would in one way or another struggle with their subject. Further, some of their students would struggle because they were behind in other and related areas such as reading or perhaps, math. The new teachers came to realize that it was their responsibility to assist their own students with any and all of their remedial issues. That realization alone, made this project worthwhile

Conclusion

The authors both teach service learning as an instructional strategy at various levels and together led the project with the reading clinic. While it was a positive experience for the undergraduate (preservice teachers) and graduate students (alternative licensed teachers) and certainly for the K-9 students who were tutored, it was also a very meaningful experience for the professors involved.

Teacher educators are always looking for new and creative ways to make their students successful. This project was certainly one of those means. The pre-service (undergraduate) were winners in that their total participation made them stronger candidates for teaching jobs once they graduated and were licensed. They had,

in addition to their education and student teaching, a structured one on one tutoring experience with a struggling student to add to their resume.

The same experience was true for the graduate students who were all new teachers in actual classrooms. They came to realize the need for specific help for any student who struggles with learning and experienced the value of one on one interaction with students. The struggling students were winners since each of them showed reading growth through their participation in the clinic.

The growth was documented by the local school system test administered by the school's teachers. The local schools were also winners as a direct result of the struggling student's improvement. The reading labs have now become critical to the public school system and the goal is to create a reading lab in each school utilizing students from area colleges to mentor the students who are assisted.

Finally the teacher educators also enjoyed the winning result through the growth and success of their students. They have expanded their service learning experiences to other classes, teaching service learning as an instructional strategy, including classes offered online.

The win-win for each group and individual enhances this project as meaningful service. It was meaningful to each participant through the growth they experienced and the skills they gained. Children grew; teachers gained skills and professors expanded horizons all through a meaningful project for all.

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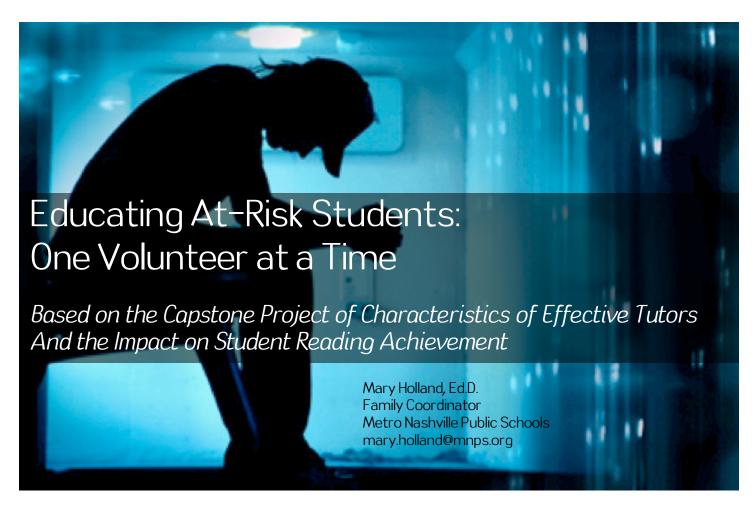
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Educating At-Risk Students:
One Volunteer at a Time

*Based on the Capstone Project of Characteristics of Effective Tutors
And the Impact on Student Reading Achievement*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article was to report the findings from a capstone project that researched characteristics of minimally trained reading tutors and their impact on the K-4 students. Reading achievement gains were reviewed in conjunction with characteristics of the tutors. The tutors fall into one of three categories: high school students, preservice teachers, and community volunteers. This capstone project builds upon the prior research of Dr. Tammy Lipsey (2009) whose research revealed tutoring in reading clinics had a positive impact on struggling readers' achievement; however, the characteristics of effective tutors were not established. This study used a mixed methods approach. A total of 197 tutors participated in the research. The participating tutors' ages ranged from 16 years to over 51 years of age. The total ethnic make-up for the tutors was Caucasian (62.4%), African American's (26.4%) and Other (11.2%). The reading scores of students were matched to their respective tutors. There was no statistical significance found with the tutor's temperament, age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background as a predictor of student reading gains. However, there was a statistical significance among the high school students serving as tutors. Their students showed the highest gains. The research also revealed the female students experienced higher reading gains than the male students. There was also a correlation between reading achievement gains and female gender-matched tutor and student. This research demonstrated that the use of high school students was related to student gains and poses questions for future research. This article highlights the immeasurable impact of volunteers who work with at-risk students.

Educating At-risk Students: One Volunteer at a Time

For several years, I have worked with a volunteer-base comprised of teachers, community businesses, students, non-profit organizations, and parents to accomplish endeavors related to education. In these years, I have learned the often quoted phrase "People don't want to get involved." is really a myth. In fact, now more than ever, people across every generation are looking for places of service that offer experience, relationships, and purpose.
In my perspective , perhaps the kickoff to service-learning began with the Greatest Generation who seemed to be born to serve, lived with a purpose, and had an impeccable work ethic. Having a parent born in this generation, I attribute some of my positive characteristics to his linage. Being born at the cusp of two generations warrants me to toddle in the midst of Boomers and Xs. Regardless of what generation someone was born into, it seems all compeers seek to give back, contribute, or make change to the world.

Because of these compelling characteristics existing in every generation; educational entities, especially in today's America , need all volunteer hands on deck to educate this new, complex generation of students. As the world has become more competitive and the equation education for all seems to be unsolvable at times, the invaluable knowledge and experiences volunteers offer to our teachers and students can influence not only student achievement but build meaningful relationships that inspire opportunity for change. Being part of a capstone cohort from Lipscomb University, I was privileged to work with a group of educators who were interested and motivated to understand how volunteers impacted student achievement. However, we were not prepared to experience what is nearly incomprehensible to explain even in a dissertation.

The purpose of the study was to determine indicators that identify effective tutors. Our research expanded on Dr. Lipsey's work with reading clinics. Tutors for these clinics were comprised of preservice teachers in preparatory programs, high school students, and community volunteers. All tutors were trained using a lesson framework formatted similar to reading recovery practices (Lipsey, 2009). The success of students' reading growth has been attributed to intentional instructional strategies supported by research and the tutors. Although the instructional strategies used for teaching are research-based, the characteristics of effective tutors had not been identified. Dr. Lipsey challenged our research team to identify these tutors characteristics.

Initially, the research team imagined creating a system that could perfectly match students and tutors with compatible characteristics. In this match, a harmonious relationship would occur resulting in underachieving students accomplishing unimaginable reading growth. After all, our society already used such systems for other partnerships. Why not for tutors and students?

Our starting point for research was to understand if temperament characteristics of the tutors impacted student achievement. The team also considered the type of tutor (high school students, preservice teachers, or community volunteers) and what influences correlated, if any, with students' reading outcomes. This study also measured tutors' effectiveness with age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, and socioeconomic background as a child. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Do the test scores of students participating in the reading clinic differ significantly based on the temperament of the tutor?
2. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the reading clinic?
3. Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized no reading gains in the reading clinic?
4. Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the reading clinic relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains?

These questions thrust us knee-deep into research pertaining to any avenue shedding light on any of our research questions. We looked at education reform and were able to identify who would be in reading clinics and why. Originally, consideration was given to the idea tutors needed to resemble students or at least have some sort of commonality for compatible working relationships. For the purpose of this study we researched the setting and demographics of where these specific students were being served. An understanding of educational settings is always vital when attempting to create a tapestry of complex issues concerning research.

We studied several models of reading clinics/tutoring programs and their effectiveness. Student and tutor relationships were huge components of our research. Types of tutors, service-learning, and influences of a tutor's personality provided many pages of pertinent literature to undergird our study. A word portal from our work would depict words such as service-learning, poverty, meaning, relationships, connections, relevance, cross-age tutoring, self-esteem, English learners, ethnicity, self-efficacy, temperaments, disparity, and at-risk.

A mixed-method approach was used combining both grounded-theory qualitative investigation and quantitative research using descriptive statistics, comparative, path, and correlation analysis. The researchers were granted access to student demographics as well as quantitative data such as test scores, growth patterns, gains, and pretests/posttests collected and stored by the reading clinic. The team was also given access to student/tutor pairs. The research team used an online questionnaire developed specifically for the research. This questionnaire was done by all tutors who willing participated in our study (197 cases). The researchers gained information from questionnaire responses and further insight from focus groups and individual interviews.

In reviewing our research questions, our study found there were no statistically significant gains existing between a student's reading scores and the tutor's temperament, and no correlations existed between a student's zero gain in reading scores and the tutor's temperament. However, the open-ended questions from the survey indicated certain characteristics tutors mentioned and practiced while working with students. Some of these were caring, patient, helpful, friendly, encouraging, compassionate, understanding, and respectful.

These characteristics are not necessarily associated with any one temperament, but they do suggest the attitude of the tutor. Tutors from high school , who are part of the same generation of students being tutored, reported through open-ended questions and reiterated in the focus group that the attitude of the tutor and how a child feels with the tutor are of extreme importance. With at-risk students embodying several known predictors for reading failure it is no wonder these simple characteristics demonstrated by tutors can help encourage children's self-esteem and motivation to learn.

It is also worth noting that there was no one temperament indicating success over another with students' gains or with students' zero scores. Cocoris (2009) proposed that everyone has traits of all four temperaments; therefore, helping tutors understand their own temperaments and recognize that characteristics such as caring, patient, helpful, friendly, encouraging, compassionate, understanding, and respect do make a difference and are important. The tutor session should demonstrate a good fit for both the tutor and the student. Students may have to attend tutorial sessions, but progress cannot be forced. In the focus groups, some tutors indicated they struggled to make connections with students due to tutors' lack of understanding of students' backgrounds. The focus groups also strongly emphasized the importance of making connections through small talk. Regardless of characteristics, a healthy tutor relationship with his or her student can fuel improvements and jumpstart student's success (A+ Home Tutors, 2008).

The second research question: Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized reading gains in the reading clinic? The tutor characteristic that revealed statistical significance with gains in students' reading scores pertained to gender-match and being female. When the student's gender was matched with tutor's gender, there was a statistically significant gain. No other characteristics were found significant. Reading gains for 83 students of the same gender as their tutors' averaged 2.80, while readings gains for the 98 students who did not have a tutor with the same gender averaged 2.06.

The researchers looked for explanation in the data. One explanation identified was females in general did better than males in the reading clinics (females=3.01, males=1.94). The pool of female tutors represented in this study would have also contributed to same tutor/student gender. The difference between the gender-matched students and those who were not matched was .74, representing nearly a one gain advantage. This reading gain is a representation of one of four assessments; therefore with four quarters of documented growth, this gain has the potential to represent a gain of 2.96 over the school year or three reading levels. The third question; Are there common characteristics of tutors whose students realized no reading gains in the reading clinic?

No statistically significant correlations existed between a student's zero gain in reading scores and the common characteristics of the tutor. Although it was significant for gains, there were no indicators for zero gains.

The final question; Will the background of tutors (preservice teachers, high school students, and community volunteers) participating in the reading clinic relate to varied effectiveness of reading achievement gains? There were three null hypotheses tested for this research question. Each group of tutors was compared to the other with average reading scores as the independent variable. One-way ANOVA post-hoc tests were performed. The first one was preservice teachers and community volunteers. The average for preservice teachers was 2.49 for student growth and community volunteers' average gain was 1.85 respectively. The null was retained with these two groups. The next null hypothesis tested preservice teachers (2.49) and high school tutors, which had an average gain of 3.01 overall. The null was retained. The final null hypothesis tested were groups of community volunteers (1.85) and high school tutors (3.01). This null was rejected because the analysis found significant differences. High school students had higher student gains than the other two types of tutors.

The researchers pondered this finding and descriptive statistics for all three groups were reconsidered. If there were significantly fewer high school students tutoring less children, smaller cases could influence average scores. The tutor population in this study was comprised of community volunteers (31.5%), high school students (27.4%), and preservice teachers (42.1%).

Interestingly, when a cross-tabulation was performed, these three groups of tutors were compared with the 36 cases of zero-gain students. High school tutors had the least amount of students with zero gains. Only 9.8% of high school tutors' students showed no gains in reading compared to 20.6% of community volunteers' students and 27.4% of preservice teachers' students. High school students had the highest average gains and the least amount of zero-gain students.

According to Allen and Feldman (1976) high school aged youth may have certain advantages over adults. This method of tutoring where an older student tutors a younger one is called cross-aged tutoring. These adolescents may pick up on academic problems in the younger student more quickly and may have experienced similar problems just a few years earlier.

Cross-age tutoring has exponential impact. Furco (2009) determined that young people had the strongest outcomes when they were engaged in meaningful service activities that challenged and interested them, or gave them high levels of accountability. Furco's research supports how high school students viewed their tutoring experience.

The other component to be considered with these finding is how high school tutors viewed tutor sessions included in this study. During the focus group, high school tutors referred to themselves as hope, encouragement, and role models for the students with whom they served at one elementary school. They talked about the importance of making connections. Two of the high schools, working directly with the reading clinics, are in the cluster of the elementary schools where students volunteer. Within this proximity, a high school and its feeder schools (elementary and middle schools) often have many demographics in common. One student said "when you bond, you find that you have things in common" (Focus Group, 2012). Another said, "You make tutoring about them" (Focus Group, 2012). When one researcher asked how you make it about the students you are tutoring, the consensus was

small talk about everyday life. Since these high school students came from the same neighborhood as the students they were tutoring, small talk becomes more meaningful with greater understanding of struggles, unspoken rules of the neighborhood culture, and the art of getting on their level to which so many referred to in the focus group. Tutors demonstrated a genuine empathy for the students.

After participating in all focus groups for this study, it was evident these particular high school students tutored from a unique experience. They didn't tutor with the knowledge a preservice teacher had acquired coming from an educational setting; nor did they benefit from the many life lessons and job experiences as community volunteers had attained. Some of these high school students simply had the experience of being struggling students and/or the understanding of living in poverty. Some even attended the same elementary school where they tutored. They offered connections in the students' world. The students' backgrounds were often much different for most preservice teachers and community volunteers. The high school students and the students being tutored shared a community. One tutor said, "I like giving back to my community" (Focus Group, 2012). Of all the focus groups, the high school tutors perceived their tutoring time as personal. After all, most of them had come from the same community.

Hirsch argued that "you can't learn to read without context. You can't understand what you read without knowing about the broader world" (Whitmire, 2011, p. 142). Students in poverty must have broader connections. They do not live in a text world (p. 143). Payne (2005) states "One of the biggest differences of classes is how 'the world' is defined for them" (p. 44). Students of poverty not only lack exposure to text but also see the world in a very different context than others. When the world is viewed in the same context for tutor and student, one cannot help but wonder if reading gains are impacted.

Another finding in this research that must be mentioned is the immense validation volunteers felt when working with students in the reading clinics, especially voiced by the community volunteers and the high school students. There were two distinct motivations within these two groups. Community volunteers understood the importance of reading and how the inability to read would impede success for students while in the education system and as an adult. Their motivation was very much a consequentialism approach to volunteering. Community volunteers were motivated to volunteer for the greater good.

High school students approached volunteering quite differently. They identified with the students. Other researchers have found similar motivations. Leal et al. (2004) stated tutors who invested themselves into the lives of struggling readers impacted their lives as well as their reading and writing accomplishments (p. 63). Understanding what students strive to learn in their lives outside of the school environment is crucial (Brozo & Simpson, 2007). Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2009) found in the area of mentoring that evidence clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of reading interventions aimed at children at-risk. Cross-aged tutors may more easily understand the academic challenges the younger students face because they are cognitively closer (Allen & Feldman, 1976). At-risk children may more easily identify with a student closer to their age, particularly one of the same ethnic or social backgrounds, than with an adult (Cohen, 1986).

Adolescents who tutor younger children benefit from learning by teaching (Paolitto, 1976). This meaningful experience is powerful and has even been shown to improve the behavior choices of the tutors (Gaustad, 1992). Tutors who have struggled themselves academically are typically more patient and understanding with

the younger students because they can relate to them (Lippitt, 1976). Helping struggling students has provided purpose for the high school students. Loehr & Schwartz (2003) stated "Purpose becomes a more powerful and enduring source of energy in our lives in three ways: when its source moves form negative to positive, external to internal, and self to others" (p. 135). The qualitative results of this study demonstrate what Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted" (Inter-American Foundation, 2009, para. 1). Qualitative themes that are nearly impossible to measure demonstrate the impact of the tutoring experience on both the lives of the tutors and the students they themselves tutored.

This research generated four significant findings. First, the temperament of the tutor made no statistical difference in student achievement, suggesting the reading program is designed to work across a variety of personality types. Second, gender-matching predicted higher reading gains, but student gender predicted both reading gains and gender matching. After controls, gender-matching was not significant. Third, the use of high school student tutors was associated with higher reading gains. Finally, the investment of tutors is evident in their dialogue. They communicate commitment, motivation, and empathy. While the impact of these specific characteristics on student gains was not assessed, it seems evident that tutors with these attitudes and drives create a positive learning environment for struggling students.

The formation of best practices with intentional relationships enhanced the overall educational experience for the student and the tutor. Education truly is power. Although children in poverty have many obstacles, it is no excuse for student failure. Payne (2005) suggested two major indicators for one to leave poverty; education and relationships. Both are crucial components and should be intentional when working with at-risk students.

I witnessed the transformation that took place for these high school students who communicated having meaning and significance through helping other students. The investment of the volunteers who tutored was evident in their dialogue and the reading growth of their students. When one considers equity for all students in education, especially struggling students, the right framework of lessons and a tutor empowered by the motivation to make a difference offer immeasurable gains for both the student and the tutor. In nearly every case where an at-risk child who was at least two grade levels below reading benchmark, made gains with volunteers. Students before the reading clinics had experienced little success, but with a volunteer and a scripted intervention were making gains. Although the world has become more competitive and the equation education for all seems to be unsolvable at times, educational entities must factor in what volunteers can offer to our students. Volunteers incorporate a knowledge and experience for our teachers and students influencing not only student achievement but building meaningful relationships that inspire opportunity for change.

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Reflection on the Impact
Of Service-Learning/Experiential Education
For the Field of Human Services

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Abstract

This article will address the importance of a holistic approach for human services by exploring the concept of community and utilizing service-learning/experiential education in human service courses. ACCESS (Achievement, Collaboration, Community, Education, Standards, and Services) will be covered by illustrating how service-learning/experiential education is a great pedagogy for collaborative partnerships between the university, community, students and faculty. Important elements of service-learning/experiential education will be reviewed to provide a better understanding of the concepts. Reflections of the service experience will be included from students, community agency and faculty. Survey results will be utilized to demonstrate how service-learning/experiential education helps students achieve skills and a better understanding of course concepts while helping meet needed services in the community.

Human Services is a broad based discipline both in its foundation and practice. Thus it is important to use a holistic approach so that students have a clear concept of community since they will be assisting with community/social problems. They will also need to network in their delivery of service. Students need to grasp that society is like a web comprised of various interactions all of which directly and indirectly are connected. They basically need to have a better understanding of how the environment and individuals impact each other. Utilizing service-learning/experiential education in human services is a good methodology to illustrate this point.

Experiential education is a philosophy and methodologies in which educators purposely engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values. (http://www.aee.org/about/whatIsEE) Service-Learning a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Both pedagogies rest on the principles established by John Dewey. "For Dewey, community was a core concept of his social philosophy. It was the communal association that gave rise to the moral, intellectual, and emotional aspects of life as well as the foundation of democracy." (Eyler & Giles, 1994) Experiential education/service-learning have "multiple outcomes for the public good." (Hatcher, 1997) It links personal and interpersonal development with academic and cognitive development. It allows students to learn about social problems and address them through community action (problem-solving). "Learning improves the quality of service today and more importantly helps sustain it throughout a citizen's life by developing attitudes toward community and a commitment to making a difference. Service transforms learning, changing inert knowledge to knowledge and skills that students can use in their communities." (Eyler et al., 1997)

Students in the field of human services need to develop skills and knowledge that center around the concept of community. Their role will focus on helping and the importance of networking to provide needed services for their clients. Human Service skills encompass some important elements found in experiential education/service-learning reciprocity, reflection/evaluation, development, and diversity.

There are a variety of benefits/outcomes of experiential education/service-learning, for all involved the community, student and the college. "Universities have valuable resources that become accessible to the community when partnerships address community needs." (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996) Research shows that students in service-learning have more positive evaluations, beliefs and values toward service and community, higher academic achievement, and more likely to pursue a career in the service field. (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Astin et al., 2000) Service-Learning also heightens the sense of civic responsibility and personal effectiveness of faculty and students. (Astin et al., 2000)

Surveys from East Tennessee State University human service courses (Introduction to Service-Learning, Introduction to Human

Services, and Child, Family, Community Relations) support these findings regarding the impact of experiential education/service-learning. Many students indicated that their service experience helped them with career decisions, improved skills, and they were able to apply course concepts, as well as, apply their service to the course and other courses. Please refer to the data below for specific percentages.

Impact of Service-Learning on Skill Development and Self Reflection

Career -

The experience helped to confirm career choices 31% made 20% think of a different career and 4% change career choice.

29% were somewhat stronger in confidence of their major and 31% were much stronger.

30% were somewhat stronger in confidence in career choice and 31% were much stronger.

49% were somewhat stronger in preparing for their career and 24% were much stronger in preparing for their career as a result of the experience.

Skills – Most felt the experience improved their skills

Writing – 55% somewhat stronger   9% much stronger

Analytical – 58% somewhat stronger 14% much stronger

Interpersonal – 55% somewhat stronger   36% much stronger

Most felt they were better able to complete a project.
46% agree   25% strongly agree

The experience allowed them to apply course concepts - 40% often 54% sometimes

Apply service to the course – 46% often   47% sometimes

Apply service to other courses – 34% often   48% sometimes

Other important outcomes were discovered regarding the impact of experiential education/service-learning. Most students indicated they were not volunteering prior to taking a course with service-learning but that they plan to continue to serve in the future. Attitudes about service-learning also improved with an increase in students wanting to participate. Service-Learning also made students more aware of community needs, interests and abilities. They became more involved in social problems and expect to be more involved in the future. Overall experiential education/service-learning help students feel they have the power to contribute. The experience also makes students more culturally aware. They are exposed to individuals from different backgrounds by serving and working with them. This creates an awareness of their bias and prejudices. Please refer to specific data listed below.

Volunteering and Culturally Aware Data

VOLUNTEERING:

Most students (64%) indicated they were not volunteering prior to taking a course with a service-learning component.

After taking the course most indicated they would continue volunteering as a result of the course.
50% somewhat stronger   40% much stronger

Attitude about service-learning prior to the course.
63% wanted to participate in service

14 % were neutral
25% didn't think they would have time
Attitude after taking a service-learning course.
71% wanted to participate in service
10% neutral
20% were surprised it worked into their schedule

Most indicated they experience affected their current involvement in social problems facing the nation.
69% somewhat stronger   14% much stronger

Most indicated they expect to become involved in addressing social problems due to the course experience
62% somewhat stronger   20% much stronger

RESPONSIVE CITIZEN

Empathy – The experience helped make the students more aware of community needs, interests, and abilities.
29% agree   58% strongly agree

Power to Contribute – The students learned how to become more involved.
38% agree   55% strongly agree

Cultural Identity – Most indicated the experience made them more aware of their own bias and prejudice.
36% agree   13% strongly agree

Most indicated the experience helped their understanding of different background than their own.
45% somewhat stronger   34% much stronger

Most indicated they served people of a different culture, race or SES background =82%

Most indicated they worked with people of a different culture =70%

Service-Learning is especially relevant since it balances the service and the learning. It goes beyond just volunteering where the primary focus is community needs. It is different than an internship where the focus is more on meeting the learning objectives of the intern. (Furco, 1996) Service-Learning assists students in the process of connecting the environment and the individual and how each impacts the other. The key is the reciprocity and reflection pieces of the pedagogy. The reciprocity in that community needs is met and the students learn based on their experience and applies the service to class and course concepts to the service. The service is meaningful to both. While serving and participating in class the students reflect on their experience for a better understanding of community and course material. Student, faculty and community reflections illustrate the power of experiential education/service-learning.

Student, Faculty and Community Reflections

Community:

* These students are wonderful asset to our program. The children they are helping get someone a little more cool to relate to, we get invaluable tutors, the students get to make a difference and I think they enjoy it more than the children.
* The Service-Learning program has provided positive

role models for individuals with disabilities.

* The student consistently demonstrates the ability to interact in a positive, professional, and caring manner toward the children for whom she is an advocate… She is a valuable addition and asset to our program and I look forward to continuing to work with her.

Faculty:

* I have learned the extreme value of experience in the aspect of learning. Service-Learning enhances the overall learning in the course. Students frequently report life-altering experiences through their reflective logs.

* I could have never described or taught the experiences, feelings and features/benefits of these 2 community nutritional programs in the way the students learned while in service-learning.

* The service-learning component greatly enhances what the students have to bring to the literature.

* Service-learning expands students' knowledge base – I can tell them what the profession is like, but service-learning shows them. Service-learning extends the classroom and gives students real world skills. Service-learning helps develop ideas about potential careers, hands-on work place experience, application of classroom learning/training, personal growth; learning to work with others from diverse backgrounds.

* Enriches curriculum and assignment possibilities.

* It is real-life learning which makes a life-long impact. That the students will moan, graon and complain but in the end they learned so much!

* Service-Learning is an excellent opportunity for my students to observe how skills are being practiced or not practiced. Research supports what service-learning is doing as we know students learn best in the environment. I value and depend greatly on service-learning as I think this experience is as important as the classroom experience.

Student:

* I have definitely has a quality learning experience. Every day I walk out of class having been enlightened. I took this class out of curiosity. It has nothing to do with my major but everything to do with the rest of my life. I have started to do a lot of community service work. I jump at every opportunity I get to do it.

* This class has made me much more aware of the world. Unlike other classes that I've had in school, this has been a forum for learning what other people think and feel. It has taught me a lot more about other's values and opinions. It has taught me to respect others because each person comes from a past that I can't understand from just looking at them. It has also taught me to examine myself and see what I really believe in.

* This class had made me much more aware of how I can participate in society. It is not as hard as it may seem. If everyone would just take a small step as we have in this class, it would create a huge impact on our society as a whole.

* I was able to use my unique talents and abilities to give back to the community.

* I was surprised at how much I learned about my community.

*How much my communication skills grew.

* I learned a lot through working in the community and I think community work should play a larger role at ETSU.

* My service experience impacted me in a much more powerful way than I expected. I'm very happy I was able to take this course.

* I feel that if every student took this class It could make a big impact on the community.

* Helping the community has made me a better and happier person.

* Service learning is learning with my hands and heart.
* I think it is important to have experience in community service to see what it is like outside our personal bubbles and have knowledge in what reality can be.

* Sometimes people need help getting started on how to start volunteering in the community.

* I believe this course should be mandatory for Social Work students.

* Service is life-altering; you will earn respect for others who are less fortunate than you.

* The service experience made me grateful for the life I have and aware that not everyone has the same opportunities.

* The relationships you build with the agency are amazing!

* You may not be able to have a huge impact on the world, but you can have a huge impact on someone's life by helping them.

* I enjoyed getting to make relationships with my students.

* Everyone should have to volunteer at some point, it makes you appreciate other people more.

* Really this class should be a requirement for freshman year to help establish a baseline for Human Services.

* I think that service-learning is very beneficial for students and those being helped in the community.

Experiential education/service-learning brings the concept of community to life for students. It illustrates the importance of networks, life-long learning, and active citizens. Civic engagement is necessary to grow and sustain our world. The field of human services especially needs students to be well equipped in this area so they may be successful in their careers to meet the needs of their clients.

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A Call for Papers for Serve InDEED

Submissions accepted for Spring publication in the following areas:
- Reflective Essays
- Research Based Articles
- Service-Learning Pedagogy
- Community Building Projects
- Best Practices
- Volunteerism

We seek to share ideas within all communities of service learning. Submissions are due no later than **March 15, 2014**

Goals of *Serve InDEED*, the Tennessee Journal for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement
1. Share ideas and/or resources in order to bring together all communities under the umbrella of service.
2. Learn from one another regardless of rank or position, non-profit, faith-based, K-12 or Higher Education, volunteerism or service-learning.
3. Include students as important contributors to the body of research in service-learning.
4. Share reflective experiences which foster dynamic change in beliefs, biases, and judgments in order to move us toward a more peaceful society.
5. Contribute to the growing body of academic research in service-learning, civic engagement and volunteerism.

Manuscript Submission Process
The journal publishes two issues per volume (Fall and Spring). The blind review process is outlined below:
Submission of article in APA formatting, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, double-space, 5-12 pages should be sent to the editors at serveindeed2012@gmail.com. Include in the subject box of the email the Word Submission and the category for which you want to be considered. The categories are listed below.
Include one page abstract due by September 15 for Fall publication and March 15 for Spring publication.

Submit paper with Title page including author(s) contact information (title, organization, and email address or phone number).
Do not include names in the manuscript. Articles that are under review by another publication should not be submitted.
Place figures, tables and/or graphics at end of text and include where it will be placed in manuscript.
At the end of the manuscript, please include References in APA style.

The manuscript will be sent to the blind reviewers for consideration. Authors will be notified by editors upon submission.
The review process will normally take 6-8 weeks. Manuscript responses may include acceptance, acceptance with revisions, acceptance for later publication or not in line with goals of journal.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
This journal seeks submissions from any of the following:
- K-12 Service-Learning
- Higher Education Service-Learning
- Community Partnerships in service
- Community-based organizations in service
- Non-profit organizations in service
- Faith-based organization in service
- The arts and service
- Government agencies involved in service endeavors

In the subject line of the email, indicate which type of article you are submitting from the following list:
- Reflective essay
- Research-based issue
- Best Practice
- Community Building Project
- Volunteerism
- Service-Learning Pedagogy

Student Submissions:
The Journal welcomes submissions from K-16 students involved in service-learning and volunteerism.

THANK YOU!