Chapter 7

REACH for Health:
Service-Learning Through
Physical Education

Risto Marttinen
California State University – Fullerton, USA

Ray N. Fredrick III
Teachers College Columbia University, USA

Anthony J. Villanueva
California State University – Fullerton, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter begins by briefly introducing the background of service-learning in kinesiology and, more specifically, physical education. A push for service-learning at the university level has led to teacher education programs across the nation to implement a variety of programs to provide their students with opportunities to engage in meaningful educational experiences. The main objective of this chapter is to provide an explanation of how one regional comprehensive University in California re-imagined their teacher education program to provide undergraduate students various service-learning experiences before attending a teaching credential program. These service-learning courses provide a service to under-resourced schools in the community while providing pre-service teachers authentic learning and teaching experiences.

INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE LEARNING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the process of how a department of Kinesiology in one large regional comprehensive university in California adopted various service learning strategies to better impact student learning. This chapter describes the process and the concepts behind redesigning the student experience in the undergraduate physical education teacher preparation program. Although research is currently being completed to evaluate the impacts of the service learning courses on various factors (e.g. cultural competence, content knowledge, impact on student learning) this chapter does not report

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-4041-0.ch007
on the empirical research. And, although this chapter focuses on physical education as a sub-discipline of teacher education, the goal is for the reader to see parallels into their respective sub-disciplines.

The chapter is organized to first give an overview of service learning in kinesiology and Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs. Then there is a brief overview of the context of teacher education in California, which provides great opportunities, but at the same time produces challenges that need to be addressed. This section is followed by solutions to the problems by detailing five service-learning components that the department has embraced, and an explanation how specific courses were built and redesigned, and how relationship building occurred within the community.

In the redesigned and modified courses, high-impact practices have been a key component to successful and meaningful implementation. Kuh (2008) provides an excellent explanation: “High-impact practices are student-learning experiences or elements of student-learning experiences such as: facilitating learning outside of the classroom through authentic experiences, meaningful faculty–student interactions, collaboration with diverse others, and frequent and substantive feedback.” In fact, studies have recommended students participate in at least two high-impact practices during their undergraduate training; one in their first year and one in their academic major (Gonyea, Kinzie, Kuh, & Laird, 2008).

Service learning, while valuable, is time consuming. In order to recruit college students into a service learning class, their schedules—commute, academic course load, work, and family—must be taken into consideration. Additionally, the service learning class must exhibit something of value to the student (Jenny, Sherwood, & Yingling, 2016).

SERVICE LEARNING IN KINESIOLOGY/PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Carson and Raguse (2014) recently conducted an in-depth, systematic review of service learning in Kinesiology. A brief overview of service learning in kinesiology is provided for the purposes of this chapter, but we refer you to Carson and Raguse (2014) for a full discussion. They postulate that in recent years, reports of community-based, service learning efforts have grown prominent in health, physical education, recreation, dance, and sport disciplines. The review details service learning projects in nearly every discipline of kinesiology, including athletic training (e.g., Heinerichs & Gardiner-Shires, 2010); recreation (e.g., Coetzee, Bloemhoff, & Naude, 2011; Hendricks & Miranda, 2003); health promotion and education (e.g., Champagne, 2006; Tremethick & Smit, 2009); rehabilitation and therapy (e.g., Romack & Hsu, 2011; Waite & Tatchell, 2005); and physical education (e.g., Timken & McNamee, 2012).

Carson & Raguse posit that the highest pursued research in kinesiology service learning is with youth populations. There has been an increase in initiatives for children and adolescents in service learning efforts in kinesiology, which can be observed from the placement of future practitioners in field-based service settings where youth are typically active (i.e., schools, after school programs, recreation agencies, and fitness, dance, or sport locations (2014). Carson and Raguse further explain the increase of youth-centered service learning. Youth-centered service learning is an attractive field for future professionals because of the field’s promotion of youth development (Weiss, 2011; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009) and the steady growth of physical activity programs for underserved youth (Hellison, 2000). However, what Carson & Raguse (2014) put forth as the most important rationale for the increase in youth-centered service learning are the alarming levels of childhood inactivity and obesity. Only about 50% of children (aged 12-15) in the United States (US) meet the national physical activity recommendations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012) and roughly 30% of U.S. children and adolescents (aged 2