Chapter 11

Service–Learning in the Clinical Experience of Alternative Certification Teacher Candidates: Service–Learning as a Mutual Partnership

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to describe a service-learning program in a public school setting for possible replication by other educators. Service-learning in teacher preparation continues to expand as a pedagogy to help future educators gain knowledge and strategies for working with diverse students. Using this model, teacher candidates address community needs and learn course content because service-learning is linked to the curriculum. Indeed, well-integrated service-learning is a powerful experience when it is designed as a partnership where both parties learn and grow. This chapter addresses how service-learning is integrated into the clinical experiences of an alternative teacher preparation program while meeting the social and academic needs of elementary school (K-5) students in a community with a large population of English language learners (ELLs).

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INTRODUCTION

The Parkwood Academy is a university-school-community partnership that provides teaching experiences for pre-service and in-service teachers and service to children who are non-native speakers of English. This programmatic description includes the educational purpose and intended goals of the program, the resources needed for operation and sustainability, and details of the curriculum. The authors describe how the teaching of reading and mathematics to English Language Learners may be used as the principal means by which students can make an impact on a local community. This chapter draws attention to the interconnection of using theory and practice through service-learning as an effective pedagogy in preparing pre-service and in-service K-12 teachers. It concludes with the proposition that service-learning promotes meaningful learning and allows an opportunity to build deep partnerships with the community.

The Indiana University Southeast “Parkwood Academy” began six years ago after Parkwood Elementary School experienced an influx of new students who had not yet developed English language skills. Indiana University Southeast’s undergraduate program in reading previously included a summer tutoring program at Parkwood. Teaching focused on developmental reading skills. Following this experience, a teacher at the school proposed an expansion of the partnership with IU Southeast to include tutoring in English language acquisition and mathematics skills. At that point in time, the partnership was named the IUS/Parkwood Summer Academy. The Summer Academy expanded again in 2016 and now includes a service-learning/clinical experience component for both IU Southeast graduate students enrolled in the Master of Science program (in-service teachers) and teacher candidates in the IU Southeast alternative teacher preparation program (pre-service teachers). This alternative teacher preparation program is called the Transition to Teaching (T2T) program.

An important element of this expanded partnership is that faculty members at IU Southeast listened to the needs of the parents and teachers in the school community while at the same time meeting the needs of IU Southeast students. In addition, Parkwood Elementary faculty wanted to avoid the “summer slide” in mathematics and language arts content. They also aimed to avoid the downward spiral in English acquisition skills over the summer, as most of the English language learner students did not encounter English at home as they did during the school year. This chapter focuses on a unique program that integrates service-learning, English language acquisition, English language arts, and mathematics skills into a summer program for children in a local elementary school. During this two-week, intensive program, both T2T candidates and Master of Science (MS) graduate students teach the children together under the guidance of two full-time University professors and a school administrator.

The Scholarship of Teaching Service-Learning

Why was a service-learning component added to The Parkwood Academy? Based on the research of E.L. Boyer nearly 30 years ago, the term “Scholarship of Teaching” was born (1990). Boyer (1990) challenged the status quo between teaching versus research. His idea was to bring the term ‘scholarship’ to legitimize the true meaning of teaching and learning, implying that there is no dichotomy in this type of academic work. Boyer encouraged the academe to embrace the scholarship of application and teaching. Since Boyer started the challenge, higher education is beginning to recognize its presence and function in the society and in initiating a broader scholarly outlook by responding to community needs. Service-learning fits into Boyer’s framework of the scholarship of teaching since in its very essence, service-learning is putting theory into practice that is focused on experiential teaching and learning.
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