CONNECTING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND SECONDARY STUDENTS FOR SERVICE LEARNING, ANY WINNERS?

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Abstract

Service-learning, often identified as a powerful pedagogical tool, frequently identifies benefits conferred on the party served rather than the party in service. This research examined the experiences of university students who performed service within a framework calling for them to share their knowledge with younger students while also conveying a college-positive attitude. The university students derived benefits from the projects which are identified in the literature as strategies for college success. The participants reported experiencing enhanced personal vestment, strengthened educational gains, strengthened civic mindedness or awareness, enhanced community or regional awareness, as well as engagement in leadership opportunities and decision making which included the decision making characterized by the teaching process.
Chapter I: Introduction

Service-learning is often championed as a powerful instructional tool, frequently referencing the experiential nature of student engagement in service-learning, with the corollary assertion that such engagement offers participants, extended educational development and hands-on learning opportunities (Billig & Weah, 2008; Butin, 2006; Desplaces, Steinberg, Coleman, & Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2006; Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006; Stachowski & Frey, 2005). Within available literature, assessment of the benefits to students resulting from engagement in service-learning is frequently confined to outcomes attributable to the student who has been the receiver of the service, rather than the conveyor of the service. When outcomes for the conveyers of the service are assessed, they are frequently limited to anecdotal assertions that the students gained a greater awareness of civic responsibility as a result of having served their community.

Statement of the Problem

Incomplete assessment exists for the outcomes of service-learning, essentially ignoring any affective and thus, perhaps transformative, capacities of the experience for those who perform the service. Ignoring an affective capacity, may overlook a significant instructional instrument with the potential to enhance depth of academic experience for students of higher education as well as vestment in their educational career.

Within higher education, service-learning is viewed by some as facing challenges to program sustainability because of perceptions within the academe that service-learning is simply a philanthropic endeavor. When the major benefit of service-learning is seen as being conferred upon the party served, such activity may simply be viewed as a charitable act justified by a call to higher education to “prepare students for ‘lives of civic engagement… involving students as voluntary agents of social change” (Desplaces, Steinberg, Coleman, & Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2006,
“Service-learning is all too often positioned as a co-curricular practice, funded through ‘soft’ short-term grants, and viewed by faculty as ‘just’ an atheoretical (and time-consuming) pedagogy that may be detrimental for traditional tenure and promotion committees to take seriously” (Butin, 2006, p. 474). Butin also asserts that service-learning runs the risk of extinction within higher education because, although there is an attempt to shift from a charity perspective to a social justice perspective, the student demographics for those who engage in service-learning are diminishing within the overall student population on college campuses. This assertion has been offset somewhat by a historical call to institutions of higher education to develop civic-minded citizens with capacities enabling them to lead our communities. “…there is no doubt that leveraging civic engagement [through service-learning] for the mutual benefit of colleges and communities can be an effective strategy for realizing educational, civic, and economic outcomes” (Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010, p. 4).

Lack of exploration into the transformational capacity of engagement in service-learning by university students, risks overlooking the potential for this applied learning opportunity to be utilized as an instructional tool with the power to enhance student vestment in their own education, serve as a retention strategy, as well as to deepen the student’s subject area knowledge and further their leadership skills.

**Research Question(s)**

The following research question guided the study: What affective experiences emerged for Lake Superior State University (LSSU) students who participated in College Access Showcase Experiences? The research was further guided by the sub-questions: Do the LSSU student participants encounter transformative moments? Do the LSSU student participants experience a greater vestment in their college education? Do the LSSU student participants
experience a greater sense of community understanding or empathy? Does the applied learning component enhance the student participant’s education?

**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study **affective outcomes** are generally defined as residual understandings that were transformational, and changed the inner convictions of the university student. This definition is also understood as, “learning outcomes that focus on ‘individual disposition, willingness, preferences, and enjoyments …’” (Cleveland-Innes & Ally, 2006, n. p.) and builds on the concept of the affective domain, one of three educational domains recognized within a taxonomy of global educational goals developed by Benjamin S. Bloom. The, “[a]ffective [d]omain describes levels of the internalization process of students’ interests, attitudes, values, appreciations and behavior” (Reeves, 1990, p. 609).

**Service-learning** is defined as activities which incorporate the “…three R’s:” realistic tasks serving the community, a strong reflective component, and reciprocal exchange between equals” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 101).

**College Access Showcase Experiences** describes a unique framework of university student and secondary student interactions through which the university student(s) offers the secondary student(s) an instructional opportunity developed and delivered by the university student(s), based on topical knowledge identified by the university student and often (although not always) based on the university student’s academic pursuits. The experience is intended to facilitate a teachable moment in two arenas: first enriching topical content is offered and secondly the university student projects a college-positive attitude, encouraging the secondary student to consider engaging in post-secondary education. This framework was developed by the researcher in order to define a specific construction of service-learning in which the college
student(s) performs service to the secondary student(s) while also deepening the college student(s) personal education. This framework is frequently used by the researcher to support college-access programming as part of her employment at Lake Superior State University.

*Transformative moments* define moments of interaction between the college student and the secondary student when transformation within the affective domain occurs. For the purpose of this study the identification of *transformative moments* is limited to the experiences of the college student.

*Community understanding* describes the college student’s general awareness of the community. This is understood as, “an understanding of the activities of others, which provides a context for your own activities” (Koch, 2005, p. 4).

The concept of *empathy* complements the concept of community understanding and according to the Merriam Webster dictionary includes “the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner” ("Empathy," 2011).

*Applied learning* can be understood as “learning by doing” (Meredith, 2010, p. 81). In this case, it describes an experience where students are able to apply newly learned skills and knowledge in a hands-on application. The applied learning concept, *practice by doing* offers an approximate retention rate of 75% while the concept *teaching back* has an approximate retention rate of 90%. Both are noted as the learning strategies with the highest retention rates in the well known learning pyramid developed by Edgar Dale in 1946 (Lalley & Miller, 2007).
Chapter II: Review of Literature

Assessment of Service-Learning Outcomes

Within the literature, the bulk of the benefits of service-learning are reported as they relate to the receiver of the service. Where the benefits are assessed for the performer of the service, they are often assessed in terms of increased empathy for the service receiver, development of civic awareness, or occasionally educational enhancement through the application of classroom learning. Few studies have asked such questions as how the convictions or understandings of the party in service change as a result of having served, if students find greater purpose in their own education as a result of their service, whether the server sees himself in a different light following service to another or whether those who see themselves as victims, acquire a sense of empowerment following service to another. Such questions as, does participation in service learning have the potential to create transformative changes within the server or what affective experiences can occur, if any, for the server participating in service learning, helps further define the value of service-learning.

Service-Learning Assessment: Navajo Reservation Project

When examining the outcomes of a service-learning project which placed pre-service teachers on the Navajo reservation, the pre-service teachers were tasked to “reflect on what they learned about the people with whom they worked, the host community in general, and how these lessons influenc[ed] their understanding of their students and the school community” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 106). While these reflections contained observations of new knowledge, changes within the affective domain experienced by the teacher candidates are hinted at but were not fully revealed. The pre-service teachers engaged in reflection, their comments were often limited to a description of their activities, observations about the
community and new skills that had been learned. While it is likely that a deeper transformation within the affective domain occurred for each of the participants, however, the reflections did not fully capture the transformations (if any) experienced by the pre-service education students. The orientation of the reflective comments tended to be more outward than inward, as might be expected when revealing a profound personal change and also appeared to be somewhat serendipitous. The researcher reported student experiences as “eye-opening” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 110) and clustered around the following themes: “acquisition of new knowledge about Navajo culture and society – things that are not learned in classrooms and books, a deeper appreciation for the circumstances of other people’s lives, including a better understanding of the pupils in their classrooms and colleagues in the school, greater acceptance in their placement communities, new insights of a personal nature, and a renewed vision of their role in the Reservation” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 110).

Hinting at the transformational capacity of service-learning however, is the comment offered by student participant, Gary, who “believed he had become a stronger person for placing himself in unfamiliar surroundings and successfully fulfilling the requirements of his service activities” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 116). His reflection also observed that “[m]ost people could not take themselves away from their comfortable circle of life … [t]he participants of the Reservation Project are special because we have a deep, unexplainable sensation that drives us to new experiences” (Stachowski & Frey, 2005, p. 116), revealing at a prior orientation toward change that could help facilitate the transformational experience. Another teacher candidate, Rachel, confronted her whiteness when serving food at a funeral and being thanked for her help by the guests, however, while she reported experiencing herself as a minority, she did not report a transformation in her orientation to the world. Certainly, this experience positioned her,
however, to transform her orientation to the world. Another student, reportedly complained that her car got dirty inside and out when she was asked to help collect firewood and she did not feel she was adequately thanked (Stachowski & Frey, 2005). Although her comment may not reflect the intentions of the project designers, her participation may have also left her a changed person. Unfortunately, her limited reflection left hidden any change in affect (Stachowski & Frey, 2005).

**Service-Learning Assessment: Micro Business Incubator Program**

In another service-learning project, business students at the University of Hartford collaborated with local inner-city business owners to help strengthen the owner’s business management practices in order to strengthen the economic viability of targeted inner city businesses operating through the support of government loans. Evaluation of the project examined the impact of the students’ service on the businesses involved and found increased business success as a result of engagement with the project. The college students asserted that they applied their education to the project in order to create those positive outcomes, thus presumably deepening the students’ business education and offering opportunities to engage in leadership strategies. It is notable, however, that as with much of assessment for service-learning, the examination for affective outcomes was heavily focused on the experiences for the businesses rather than searching for affective outcomes for the students.

The study asserted that the student participants demonstrated a need for “…increased social understanding…” (Desplaces, Steinberg, Coleman, & Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2006, p. 73) hinting at transformative potential resulting from student engagement, which could have offered an interesting opportunity to examine the project in terms of college student gain - inquiring about enhanced student awareness of cultural implications for successful business engagement as a positive outcome. In other words, business students engaged in the project, who came to
understand cultural implications of business engagement as students, rather than later as employees, may be said to deepen their education and may be seen to bring enhanced strengths to later employment. These would be considered affective outcomes for the college students. Where such outcomes can be cultivated, they have the potential to add depth to the student’s education and reveal additional merit for engagement in service-learning within higher education. However, the project did not capture these potentially transformative changes. This is worrisome because, without identification as a rigorous instructional strategy and/or retention tool, these activities face the potential of being ignored when decisions concerning the allocation of university resources are made.

**Service-Learning Assessment: E-Pal Writing Experience**

A project pairing teacher education students with elementary students as e-pals assessed the project’s impact for the elementary students and noted the professional development of the university students, “the university students gained firsthand experience in working with students with and without learning disabilities. University students also experienced working with technology…” (Stanford & Siders, 2001, p. 23). Again, any affective outcomes for the teacher education students as manifestations of interactions were overlooked.

**Service-Learning Assessment: High School ESL Project**

A high school service learning project with Hispanic ESL students in rural Nebraska successfully captured an affective outcome, however. The students in the ESL class had expressed a longing to belong through their reflective writings and after completing the project, a Spanish-English phrasebook, which took them into the community for information as well as to high school AP English students for collaboration and editing, the students “realized through
their service activity, they now felt some attachment toward and ownership of the community in which they lived” (Russell, 2007, n. p.).

As with the transformational experience captured by the pre-service teacher, Gary, who served on the Navajo Reservation, the identification of this affective outcome, an enhanced sense of belonging, was revealed in a somewhat serendipitous manner, through participant reflection.

**Challenge of Facilitating and Identifying Affective Outcomes**

Reflection is a key element in designing a service-learning experience. It is the vehicle through which students may recognize their personal growth and one of three elements that distinguishes such outreach activities as indeed being service-learning (Billig & Weah, 2008; Cress, 2003; Stachowski & Frey, 2005). While students may readily recognize the application of their growing skills and knowledge within the service experience, difficulty in conceptualizing transformation within themselves may be at the heart of the absence of reported affective outcomes (Cress, 2003). Capturing and recording personal growth as it happens can be much more elusive than recognizing moments of applied learning.

**Portland State University Faculty Project**

The challenge of capturing the affective transformations was also noted by faculty members at Portland State University (PSU), “[w]hile service-learning courses are rich with learning opportunities, students are not always able to identify or articulate the breadth of civic competencies that they have gained as a result of their participation” (Cress, 2003, n. p.). With the hope of deepening the reflective responses of their students in order to capture these affective experiences, in this case as they relate to transformation in civic competencies, the university engaged in a faculty development project. The project examined strategies for helping students recognize and articulate the deeper outcomes of service-learning hoping to help students avoid
simply offering a recitation of their activities within their reflection and instead guiding them toward more profound understandings resulting from their engagements. The working group identified reflection revolving around open-ended writing prompts asking students to review earlier learning moments and link those moments to their present endeavors when assessing their experiences, as the best way to identify such affective outcomes (Cress, 2003, n. p.).

Service Learning as a College Success Strategy

In addition to offering important opportunities for applying newly acquired skills and knowledge within opportunities to learn by doing (applied learning), as well as opportunities for new insight and personal transformation, service-learning has been recognized as offering capacities as a retention strategy in higher education, facilitating personal educational vestment for university and college students and enhancing student persistence.

The practice of moving theoretical academic content from the lectern to engaged applications has grown significantly at higher education institutions over the past 20 years. This practice has been shown to help campuses fulfill several key goals of higher education, including producing critically, civically, and globally minded graduates who possess problem-solving and leadership abilities. (Cress et al., 2010, p. 3)

Measures of success in this arena often include assessment related to student grade point average, retention (enrollment from year to year) and completion (graduation) rates. Two studies (Astin and Sax, 1998 and Vogelgesang, Ikeda, Gilmartin, and Keup, 2002) found that service-learning was positively related to student retention and persistence (Cress et al., 2010).

Additional student success may also be asserted where evidence of enhanced cultural competency, communications skills and critical thinking ability resulting from service-learning is available (Cress et al., 2010). Skills that strengthen future employability as identified by the
Harvard Leadership Group and known as 21st Century Skills include: critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration across networks and leading by influence, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, and curiosity and imagination which may also be strengthened through opportunities for applied engagement (Wagner, 2008).

**Gallini and Moely and revealed College Student Outcomes**

A 2003 study by Gallini and Moely examined student retention, academic challenge, academic engagement, interpersonal engagement, and community engagement as indicators of student success following engagement with service-learning. Students who engaged “…in service-learning courses (n=142) scored significantly higher on all measures [engagement, academic challenge, and persistence] than did students in other courses (n=171)” (Cress et al., 2010, p. 6). A 2010 study by Campus Compact in Northern New England involving 17 educational institutions (both public and private) and 770 college students revealed similar results. The study found that “[s]tudents who engaged in more intensive service-learning experiences scored higher on all five measures [retention, academic challenge, academic engagement, interpersonal engagement, and community engagement] than did students who engaged in less intensive service-learning experiences” (Cress et al., 2010, p. 6). The Gallini and Moely model enabled the revelation of college student participation in service-learning as a predictor of “…student retention through the mediating effects of academic challenge and academic engagement” (Cress et al., 2010, p. 6). Additional studies also point to college student engagement in service-learning as a success strategy with Campus Compact reporting that survey data from more than 1500 college students indicate[d] overwhelming success, with nine out of ten student reporting improved attitudes toward academic learning and
increased likelihood of becoming involved in future community service work. Perhaps most significantly, nearly 90% of American Indian, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino students said that they are more likely to complete a college degree after participating in service learning. (Cress et al., 2010, p. 10)

**Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis**

The Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) utilized service-learning amongst several success strategies for students, asserting its potential to serve as a means of increasing student engagement and therefore aiding student retention with positive results (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006). With the desire to “meaningfully integrate what students already know, value, and do into curricular and co-curricular programs” (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006, p. 17), IUPUI developed, six Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) which formed the intellectual framework for all curricular and co-curricular programs. The principles called for “core communication and quantitative skills; crucial thinking; integration and application of knowledge; intellectual breadth, depth, and adaptiveness; understanding society and culture; and values and ethics” (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006, p. 17). The university identified several pedagogies that formed part of their approach to undergraduate learning enabling the outcomes desired and included thematic learning communities including service-learning among the pedagogies. The identified pedagogies, they noted, taken collectively, enabled an increase in student engagement, enhancement of student learning and positively affected student retention.
Chapter III: Methodology

Use of Case Studies

Case studies of eight (8) College Access Showcase Experiences examined the affective experiences encountered by twelve (12) Lake Superior State University (LSSU) students who participated in the project in the role of the server, over the course of one academic year. The university student participants were purposefully selected and included only students who participated in projects offering service to secondary students by delivering topical information or experiences to the secondary students while also modeling a college-positive attitude, as within the College Access Showcase Experience framework.

Capturing Affective Outcomes

As noted within the earlier review of literature, capturing and articulating nuances of experiences which yield affective outcomes can be challenging for students. Faculty members at Portland State University noted, “[w]hile service-learning courses are rich with learning opportunities, students are not always able to identify or articulate the breadth of civic competencies that they have gained as a result of their participation” (Cress, 2003, n. p.). With the hope of deepening the reflective responses of their students in order to capture affective experiences, in this case as they related to transformation in civic competencies, Portland State University (PSU) engaged in a faculty development project which examined strategies for helping students recognize and articulate the deeper outcomes resulting from engagement in service-learning. The working group identified reflection revolving around open-ended writing prompts asking students to review earlier learning moments and link those moments to their present endeavors when assessing their experiences, as offering the best means to identify affective outcomes (Cress, 2003, n. p.).
Modeling the strategy identified by the PSU faculty project, the present study offered LSSU students open ended reflective writing prompts. Before engaging in the service activity, participants were asked to recall prior service experiences through two reflective prompts and after their engagement in the experience, participants were asked to respond to five reflective prompts inquiring about changes in their sense of engagement in their education, their sense of community understanding or empathy as well as perceptions of their academic growth resulting from the applied learning experience (if any). The practice of asking the LSSU students to look at their past experiences and then link the past experience with their present experiences complemented the findings of the PSU faculty project, offering a research based strategy for eliciting deeper reflection in an attempt to capture affective any resulting transformations.

**Reflective Prompts**

In order to assist the participants in recalling past learning or service experiences, LSSU students were asked to use Crayola band crayons to draw a picture of a past experience before responding to the first two reflective prompts. Crayola brand crayons have a unique smell which the researcher hoped would help the participants to recollect past experiences. The participants were then asked to respond to two reflective prompts before their service engagement (Prompts A). Writing prompts A were as follows: Question 1 - Have you engaged in an activity that involved service to another or others in the past? Please Describe. Question 2 - How does that activity compare with the proposed activity that you created? What types of students are you serving in your proposed activity?

Once the participants completed their engagement, they were asked to respond to five reflective prompts, (Prompts B). These after engagement prompts were as follows: Question 3: How did the project compare with the service you have performed in the past? How did it
compare with your expectations?  Question 4: Did you gain any additional knowledge about the community outside of LSSU? Please Explain. Question 5: Did participation in the project impact on your preparation for your course or knowledge related to your major or your studies? Please describe. Question 6: Has participation in this project affected your academic growth in any way? Please Describe. Question 7: would you be interested in participating in a service-learning project again? Please comment about why or why not. Questions 3-7 (the *after* prompts) were intentionally developed to elicit recognition of and information about any affective outcomes that the participants experienced, if any. Participants received a common orientation to the project through individual introduction by the researcher. Inclusion in the research study was completely voluntary. Those LSSU students who elected to participate returned their reflective responses to the prompts A and B (questions 1 through 7) to the researcher in addition to the completed consent forms.

**Trustworthiness of Study Results**

Member checking, thick, rich description, articulation of researcher bias, and the inclusion of discrepant information will help preserve the trustworthiness of the study results (Creswell, 2009; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). The researcher spent extensive time in the field observing each of the service-learning experiences. She used peer debriefing to ensure accurate interpretation of data and the results were reviewed by an external auditor. Thorough documentation of the procedures used and data collected has helped ensure the reliability of results. In addition, transcripts of the data were reviewed for accuracy, consistency in code definition was confirmed and intercoder agreement was assured through use of a peer reviewer.

A combination of predetermined and emerging codes, utilizing *in vivo* language, was used to analyze the reflective data from the sources for “themes or issues” (Creswell, 2009, p.
Furthermore, themes were examined “for each individual case and across different cases” (Creswell, 2009, p. 189). Identified themes are discussed in a narrative providing a detailed review of the themes and sub-themes that emerged through the reflections. The discussion provides for multiple perspectives and culminates with a discussion of the interconnection between the themes as well as the researcher’s personal interpretation, building toward the development of “propositional generalizations” (Creswell, 2009, p. 64) about the existence or non-existence of affective capacities within the performance of service learning when combined with applied learning in College Access Showcase Experience framework at LSSU.

**Researcher Bias**

The awarding of multiple service-learning focused grants from the Michigan Campus Compact (MCC) as well as grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Gear Up program and the State of Michigan’s King Chavez Parks College Day (KCP College Day) program which support college-access activity for secondary students in addition to both in-kind and financial support from LSSU, calling for the creation of service learning opportunities for LSSU students prompted this study of affective outcomes of service learning for university students. The service learning experiences examined united LSSU students and secondary students in applied learning projects based on the university student’s educational background through the College Access Showcase Experience framework. The researcher wrote the referenced grant applications and the grants provide partial support for the researcher’s salary and office facilities, however, continuation of MCC grant funding is not premised on the identification of affective outcomes from service learning for college student participants, nor is a condition of continued funding through the Gear Up and KCP College Day grants. Research
into affective outcomes of service learning experienced by the university students has been undertaken separate from the grants and in collaboration with the researcher’s program of study.

Researcher bias can be assumed from the researcher’s interest in service-learning as a means to enhance university enrollment. A loss of student enrollment could affect the viability of the institution, threatening the researcher’s position. Service-learning was claimed as a means to increase student engagement and therefore retention at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006). Further, the researcher based her Capstone Research Project for her Master’s degree on identifying strategies for transforming a low performing school to a high performing school within the K-12 system. One of the measures identified was the inclusion of service-learning, especially in key transition years. That service learning has merit, is not under examination however, what is being explored is whether affective outcomes are generated by service learning. The researcher maintains a pragmatic worldview which carries over to her educational philosophy, accepting students as they are and working to enhance their competencies. The researcher has a background of advocacy in education, having served in a number of leadership positions on school boards and within the community, in a number of different educational systems, both public and private. She is a middle-aged female, mother of three, who holds an M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction as well as a B.S. in Business with an emphasis in American Jurisprudence.

Consent

In all cases, the participants signed consent forms, conforming to the requirements of the Northern Michigan University (NMU) Internal Review Board (IRB), allowing their anonymous reflections to be publicly published as part of the project (Mills, 2007). Furthermore, the LSSU Provost was consulted with respect to securing LSSU IRB approval, if needed. The Provost,
who chairs the LSSU IRB, expressed consent to the project, permitting the NMU IRB determinations to govern and guide the project.
Chapter IV: Results

Individual Showcase Experiences

As previously mentioned, the project examined LSSU student participation in eight College Access Showcase Experiences. The experiences all involved at least one LSSU student engaged in a student developed learning experience, delivered to multiple secondary students. As a result of the unique design of each experience, they ranged in depth of prior delivery planning. Student preparation for the experiences ranged across a spectrum, from modest, requiring a small amount of prior student involvement, relying mainly on prior knowledge of the college student(s), to significant prior development involving discussion at club meetings and input from faculty and finally to projects which required extensive student research ahead of delivery as well as development of visual and other instructional aids. The projects also varied in terms of the number of LSSU student participants, with some involving the engagement of a single student while others involved as many as five students. All but one of the projects, were designed on a voluntary basis as outreach for area students. A single project (involving two participants) was designed and delivered in order to comply with a teacher education course requirement for secondary student contact time. None-the-less, the teacher candidates who designed the noted project had several options for accomplishing the required contact time which would have been less demanding of their efforts, for instance they could have elected to simply observe a class rather than design and deliver a learning lesson. Because of the voluntary nature of the LSSU student participation in these projects, the population of the participants can likely be considered a self-selected group who shared a desire to communicate their knowledge and engage in learning experiences with youth. A description of each of the experiences follows.

Chemistry Silly Putty
Three LSSU students from the Chemistry Club planned and led an experience for secondary students participating in a bi-weekly after-school book club. The youth worked with the LSSU students in a campus chemistry lab, making exploding gummi worms and silly putty in addition to two other lessons. This experience involved significant preparation including the assistance of a faculty member. One of the LSSU chemistry students contributed responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

**Chemistry Secretor Test**

Five LSSU students from the chemistry club planned an experience for secondary students participating in a college-access fieldtrip to LSSU. The youth engaged in a laboratory experience organized by the chemistry students wherein they ran a secretor test on their own saliva, after being introduced to the implications of the secretor test by one of the students with the help of a faculty member. This experience involved significant preparation including the assistance of a faculty member. One of the LSSU chemistry students contributed responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

**Chemistry Candy Canes**

An LSSU graduate student in the education program who is a secondary science teacher led an experience for secondary students participating in a bi-weekly after-school book club. The youth engaged in a kitchen based lab experience which produced candy canes. This experience involved modest preparation. The graduate student contributed the responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

**College Budgeting**

Four LSSU students from the business club assisted in the delivery of an experience for secondary students participating in a college-access lesson about budgeting. The college
students provided context for the budgeting lesson and assisted youth in completing worksheets. This experience involved modest preparation. One of the LSSU business students contributed responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

**College History**

Two LSSU teacher education students planned an experience for secondary students participating in a college-access fieldtrip to LSSU. The youth engaged in an internet based activity as well as a game designed by the LSSU students reviewing the history of the area and the university. This experience involved extensive preparation over the course of the entire semester. Both of the LSSU teacher education students contributed their reflections for use in this project.

**LSSU Radio Station**

Three LSSU students who volunteer at the LSSU radio station led an experience for secondary students participating in a bi-weekly after-school book club. The youth were introduced to the radio station and were able to record a message to play on the air. This experience involved modest preparation. One of the LSSU students contributed responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

**Music as Personal Statement**

An LSSU student who volunteers at the LSSU radio station led an experience for secondary students who participate in a college access program. The youth were introduced to music as a form of personal statement. The LSSU student traced this theme through several generations of music and assisted the youth in developing personal statements. This experience involved extensive preparation. The LSSU student contributed the responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.
Spring Softball

Four LSSU students from three different majors coordinated an experience for secondary students participating in a bi-weekly after-school book club. The LSSU students worked with the youth to help them play softball. This experience involved modest preparation. All of the LSSU students contributed their responses to the reflective prompts for use in this project.

Responses to Reflective Prompts

LSSU participants were asked to respond to questions 1 and 2 before their engagement with the youth and questions 3 through 7 after the engagement. All of the responses are reported below and also captured in a spreadsheet included in Appendix A.

Question 1 - Prior Student Experience

Question 1 asked, have you engaged in an activity that involved service to another or others in the past? Please Describe. All of the university students (n=12) reported that they had engaged in activity that involved service to another (or others) prior to their engagement in the project. Nine (9) participants (75%) reported that they had worked with students in the past. Eight (8) participants (67%) indicated that their present project would share similarities to their past work. Two (2) of the participants (17%) indicated that they had performed community service in the past, but that it did not necessarily include children. One (1) participant (8%) referenced past experience training soldiers.

Question 2 – Comparison Prior Experience and Proposed Experience

Question 2 asked, how does that activity compare with the proposed activity that you created? What types of students are you serving in your proposed activity? Ten (10) of the university students (83%) reported that the proposed activities had similarities with past experiences, while three (3) participants (25%) indicated that the proposed project differed from
the past experience due in part to the added responsibility for design and delivery of the proposed project. One participant (1) noted that it both compared with and differed from past experiences and these responses have been affirmatively included in both the yes and no responses. Eight (8) of the students (67%) indicated they had worked with high school aged students in past projects, the same number, eight (8) students (67%), also indicated past experience with middle school aged students and one (1) student (8%) indicated experience working with elementary aged students. Examining the students’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, LSSU students commented that their present experience was focused on generating student [youth] interest in attending college (1 student - 8%), helping students [youth] work collaboratively in small group (2 students - 17%), helping students [youth] work individually (1 student - 8%), helping students [youth] learn about history and events (1 student - 8%), helping students [youth] develop strength and confidence (1 student - 8%), helping students [youth] learn to wash hands (1 student - 8%), helping students [youth] learn to play baseball (1 students - 8%).

**Question 3 – Comparison at Completion, Prior Experience and Expectations**

LSSU participants were asked to respond to questions 3-7 after their engagement with the youth.

Question 3 asked, how did the project compare with the service you have performed in the past? How did it compare with your expectations? Five (5) of the university students (42%) reported that they found the project similar to past experiences, seven (7) participants (58%) indicated that the project had differed from past experiences and two (2) of the participants offered no comment or comparison with past experiences. Two participants (2) noted that the project both compared with and differed from past experiences and these responses have been affirmatively included in both the *similar to* and *differed from* responses. Four (4) of the
students (33%) indicated the project implementation had aligned with their initial expectations, two (2) students (17%) indicated that the project differed from their initial expectations and (3) students (25%) did not offer comment about the project’s alignment with their initial expectations. Examining the participants’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, one (1) LSSU student (8%), noted engagement in reflection in action calling the student to change the pre-planned delivery to conform with the needs of the youth, three (3) LSSU students (25%) noted that they had fun, four (4) of the participants (33%) indicated they valued their engagement with the younger students, six (6) of the participants (50%) commented that the younger students acquired new skills or knowledge, one (1) participant (8%) enjoyed the autonomy experienced in the higher level of responsibility for design and delivery of the project, one (1) participant (8%) noted that the younger students performed above expectations within the presentation.

**Question 3 - Participant Outcomes Revealed**

The participant comments related to question 3 point to three overall benefits for LSSU students who participated in the project related to the examination of the project before and after participation. Through their engagement in the experiences, 2 of the 12 LSSU students (17%) indicated a recognition of experiencing leadership related decision making, 7 of the 12 participants (58%) also identified that they taught the youth new information or a new skill. With teaching involving leadership decision making, it is likely that this group also experienced leadership strengthening interactions with the youth as well. Finally, 3 of the 12 students (25%) directly commented about their enjoyment from their interaction, suggesting that the LSSU students experienced a personal investment in the experience. This suggestion is affirmed by student responses to later prompts as well.
Question 4 – Acquisition of Additional Knowledge of Community

Question 4 asked, did you gain any additional knowledge about the community outside of LSSU? Please Explain. Three (3) of the university students (25%) reported no, that they did not gain any additional knowledge about the community outside of LSSU, however one of those students seemed to have misinterpreted the meaning of the word community as not including students, because the participant went on to comment affirmatively, that he/she gained an enhanced awareness of younger regional students. However, for the purposes of this study, the student’s response, no, has been preserved, while the affirmative comment using in vivo language appears within the emerging codes section as an affirmation of enhanced awareness.

Six (6) participants (50%) indicated that they did acquire additional knowledge about the community outside of LSSU. Two (2) students did not offer a response to the question.

Examining the students’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, LSSU students commented that through their participation in the experience they learned about students from outside area [regional students] (2 students - 17%), found that the secondary students were engaging (3 students - 25%), they learned about the Sault Sainte Marie area through their research (2 students - 17%), they acquired new awareness of a program at LSSU (Gear Up) (1 student - 8%), they acquired new awareness of community support for students with special needs (2 student - 17%), they acquired new knowledge about students from the area [in terms of diversity] (1 student - 8%).

Question 4 - Participant Outcomes Revealed

The participant comments related to question 4 point to one overall benefit for LSSU students who participated in the project related to community awareness. Through their
engagement in the experiences 10 of the 12 LSSU students (83%) indicated some level of enhancement of their *community and/or regional awareness*.

**Question 5 – Impact of Participation upon Student’s Course/Study Preparation**

Question 5 asked, did participation in the project impact on your preparation for your course or knowledge related to your major or your studies? Please describe. Three (3) of the university students (25%) reported no, that their course preparation or knowledge related to their major or studies was not impacted by participation in the project. Nine (9) participants (75%) indicated that their course preparation or knowledge related to their major or studies was impacted by participation in the project with five (5) of the students (42%) indicating that participation deepened their knowledge in the target area through work and/or additional research. Examining the students’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, LSSU students commented that through their participation in the experience they gained experience and orientation about public outreach (5 students – 42%), gained orientation to graduate school study (1 student – 8%), the experience helped my program of study (5 students – 42%), found the experience enjoyable, through creation of the experience (2 students – 17%), or participation in the experience (1 student – 8%).

**Question 5 - Participant Outcomes Revealed**

The participant comments related to question 5 point to overall benefits for LSSU students who participated in the project that repeat themes emerging from other responses. Through their engagement in the experiences, 9 of the 12 LSSU students (75%) identified that they experienced *strengthened educational gains*. The students also recognized *a strengthened civic mindedness or awareness* (5 students – 42%). Two (2) of the students (17%) offered
comments which indicated that they experienced themselves as personally invested in the project
(*really enjoyed my experience* and *enjoyed creating the experience*).

**Question 6 – Impact of Participation upon Student’s Academic Growth**

Question 6 asked, has participation in this project affected your academic growth in any way? Please Describe. Three (3) of the university students (25%) reported no, in the project. Nine (9) that their academic growth was not affected by participation participants (75%) indicated that their academic growth was impacted by participation in the project with four (4) of the students (33%) indicating that they had learned more about working in their chosen field. Examining the students’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, LSSU students commented that through their participation in the experience they learned about teaching (3 students – 25%), learned how big of an influence you can really be (1 student – 8%), recognized the experience made me a better student (2 students – 17%), identified that they engaged in reflection in action (1 students – 8%), enjoyed interaction with other (LSSU students) (1 students – 8%), identified the project as a great experience - working with different students (4 students – 33%).

**Question 6 - Participant Outcomes Revealed**

The participant comments related to question 6 point to overall benefits for LSSU students who participated in the project that repeat some of the earlier themes. Through their engagement in the experiences, 5 of the 12 LSSU students (42%) identified that they *taught the youth new information or a new skill*. As indicated within earlier discussion, with teaching involving leadership decision making, it is likely that this group also experienced leadership strengthening interactions with the youth as well. The students also recognized *a strengthening or enhancement of their education* (9 students – 75%). Five (5) of the students offered
comments which indicated that they experienced themselves as personally invested in the project (enjoyed interaction with other (LSSU) students and identifying the project as a great experience - working with different students.

**Question 7 – Future Participation in Similar Service-Learning**

Question 7 asked, would you be interested in participating in a service-learning project again? Please comment about why or why not. All twelve (12) of the university students (100%) reported they would be interested in future participation, with four (4) indicating their enjoyment in working with younger students (33%). Examining the students’ additional comments for emerging codes, using in vivo language, LSSU students reflected that they enjoyed seeing excitement [interest] of the students (3 students – 25%), they had fun (5 students – 42%), enjoyed [college] recruiting opportunity (2 students – 17%), they experienced the project as a confidence booster for future career and/or orientation to world (people, society) (2 students – 17%), they came to feel all students in [my program of study] should do something similar (1 student – 8%), they experienced the project as far better than [typical class experience requirement] (1 student – 8%), they enjoyed delivering the [student developed] message (2 students – 17%).

**Question 7 - Participant Outcomes Revealed**

The participant comments related to question 7 point to overall benefits for LSSU students who participated in the project which repeated earlier themes. Through their engagement in the experiences, eleven (11) of the students (92%) offered comments indicating that they experienced themselves as personally invested in the project (enjoyed working with the students, enjoyed seeing excitement [interest] of the students, had fun, enjoyed [college] recruiting opportunity, confidence booster for future career and/or orientation to world (people,
society), feel all students in [my program of study] should do something similar, far better than [typical class experience requirement], and enjoyed delivering the [student developed] message).

**Collective Participant Outcomes**

When examined collectively, the responses to each of the reflective prompts point to six affective outcomes experienced by LSSU student participants. Each of the 12 student participants (100%) offered comments that pointed to having experienced themselves as being personally invested in the project. Of the twelve participants, nine (75%) offered comments that indicated they had strengthened educational gains as a result of their participation in the project. Five of the participants (42%) offered comments that indicated they experienced strengthened civic mindedness or awareness. Enhanced community or regional awareness was reported by 8 of the participants (66%). Practical experience from engagement in leadership opportunities and decision making were noted by 2 of the participants (17%). Valuable teaching experiences were noted by 7 of the participants (58%), which may also strengthen the leadership element previously noted because the practice of teaching often involves leadership opportunities which may have not been fully recognized by the students within their reflections. For instance, LSSU students who were teaching baseball to younger students initially approached the project with a plan for the instruction. When they recognized that some of the youth were cognitively challenged to process the instructions they were being offered, the college students huddled together and devised a completely new strategy for their instruction, furthermore the researcher observed a definite leader emerge from within the team of LSSU students. However, while these leadership moments were observed by the researcher, they were not noted by the LSSU students within their reflections.
Transformative Affective Outcomes

The six affective outcomes noted by the LSSU student participants point to potential for transformation, wherein student encounters with affective outcomes facilitate a transformative experience, resulting from engagement in the project. All of the student comments pointed to a sense of personal vestment and nine of the twelve students indicated a strengthening of their educational gains both of which are noted within the literature as college student success strategies and were strategies specifically facilitated for students at the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006). The indication of enhanced civic mindedness or civic awareness in addition to enhanced community or regional awareness reported by the participants reflect “key goals of higher education, including producing critically, civically, and globally minded graduates who possess problem-solving and leadership abilities” (Cress et al., 2010, p. 3). These key goals are also affirmed by the students’ reported engagement in leadership experiences and decision making while participating in the project, to include the teaching activities. The teaching moments offered opportunities for the LSSU students to engage in applied learning or learning by doing (Meredith, 2010, p. 81). Permitting the participants to deepen their knowledge by applying newly learned skills and knowledge in a hands-on application can also be considered practice by doing and teaching back, both learning strategies with high rates of subject matter retention embraced within the well known learning pyramid developed by Edgar Dale in 1946 (Lalley & Miller, 2007). These strategies are expected to trigger the university student’s expanded curiosity and intellectual development, qualities believed to reduce attrition, especially for first-year students (Evenbeck & Hamilton, 2006). The reflections of the LSSU student participants affirm participation in service-learning
through the framework of College Access Showcase Experiences as offering affective outcomes which support the educational enhancement of participating university students.
Chapter V: Recommendations and Conclusions

Recommendation

When searching for success strategies to help university and college students broaden and deepen their educational experience as well as facilitate enhanced persistence, service-learning within the described framework is an option to consider. The opportunities to teach back and practice by doing reinforce the university student’s academic development. Furthermore, enhanced connection with the community, fellow students and the faculty point to greater ownership of personal education and have the potential to facilitate synergistic moments of learning. Opportunities to model a positive, college-going attitude to younger students as within the framework of the service-learning opportunities studied, also offer venues for university students to affirm their commitment to the value of higher education for the youth as well as for themselves.

The research suggests that when possible, opportunities to weave development and delivery of the service-learning framework examined (College Access Showcase Experiences) into course offerings as a practicum or in lieu of a term paper or other research assignment should be considered. This suggestion is made in view of the beneficial research performed to support the experience as well as in recognition of the synergistic opportunities for students to interact with fellow students and their faculty advisors. The project found that service-learning experiences which were unrelated to course content and engaged in voluntarily by students, also offered many of the same benefits to the university students. When left to volunteer participants, however, the population of students engaged is self-selected with the benefits derived from this engagement opportunity confined to students who might already have pre-existing personal inclinations toward similar outreach work, limiting the benefits of the opportunity to this self-
selected group. The framework for service-learning might also be used by student groups, student support offices and other university offices interested in inducing and facilitating the synergistic sense of connectedness reported within the literature as a means to enhance student vestment.

**Areas for Further Research**

This study did not examine the benefits to the secondary youth who participated in these college-access service-learning experiences. It would be helpful to investigate the effectiveness of this strategy in encouraging secondary students to pursue post-secondary education and their success rates once enrolled in post-secondary education as well as the use of this framework to provide academic enrichment for the youth. It would also be worthwhile to examine whether a difference in effectiveness in terms of inducing a sense of connectedness to the university exists between the College Access Showcase Experience service-learning framework and other experiences of service-learning. In order to present this framework of service-learning as an academically enriching experience for college students on par with the enrichment expected from preparation of a term paper or other course-required presentation, it would be helpful to determine if the preparation of the College Access Showcase Experience is equally demanding to prepare and yields equally positive learning outcomes for the university student.

**Summary and Conclusion**

A lack of exploration into the transformational capacity of engagement in service-learning by university students prompted this research project. The project asked what affective experiences would emerge for university students who participated in service-learning with secondary youth within a framework which called for the university student to develop and deliver a learning experience and weave into that experience a college-positive message. The
project also explored whether university students would encounter transformative moments, whether they would experience a greater vestment in their college education, whether they would develop a greater sense of community understanding or empathy, and finally, whether the applied learning component (*teaching back* and *practicing by doing*) enhanced the university student’s education. The project revealed that indeed, the response for many of these questions was yes. The research project pointed to six affective outcomes experienced by LSSU student participants, the students experienced themselves as being personally invested in the project, experienced strengthened educational gains as a result of their participation, experienced strengthened civic mindedness or awareness, experienced enhanced community or regional awareness, experienced engagement in leadership opportunities and decision making, including the teaching process. Many of these affective outcomes are desired outcomes of efforts directed at enhancing college student success within higher education. Thus, consideration should be given to including the College Access Showcase Experience framework of service-learning within student success and engagement activities adopted by higher educational institutions.
References


Connected University Students and Secondary Students for Service Learning, Any Winners?

Shelley K. Wooly

Appendix A

Reflective Data

![Table]

Figure 1. Reflective Data
Q4. Did you gain any additional knowledge about the community outside of LSU? Please explain.

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Q5. Did participation in the project impact on your preparation for your course or knowledge related to your major or your studies? Please describe.

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Q6. Has participation in this project affected your academic growth in any way? Please describe.

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Q7. Would you be interested in participating in a service-learning project again? Please comment about why or why not.

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<td>Enjoy teaching opportunity.</td>
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<td>Confidence booster for future career/organization in world (people, society)</td>
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<td>Feel all students in any program of study should do something similar</td>
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<td>Enjoy delivering the message.</td>
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| Personal invested in experience.  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Enjoy seeing excitement/interest of the students |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Feel                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Enjoy teaching opportunity.       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Confidence booster for future career/organization in world (people, society) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Feel all students in any program of study should do something similar |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| For better than typical class experience requirement. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Enjoy delivering the message.      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

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Author Note

Support for the use of the College Access Showcase Experience framework has continued to grow at the university where this research took place. It is presently being included as a success strategy for first year, full time in college students as well as commuter students who often miss out on opportunities to develop synergistic university connections among campus faculty, staff and fellow students due to the fact that they often leave campus after their classes are complete. The implementation of this strategy is proposed to begin in the coming year and will continue for five years, provided grant funding is awarded in accordance with the application.