

**SPURS AND STUNTS: INSIGHTS FROM K-12 ART TEACHERS
REGARDING SERVICE-LEARNING INCLUSION**

DRAFT

EMERGING SCHOLAR PAPER

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INTRODUCTION

Service learning is an emerging educational innovation that integrates community service into the academic curriculum. Over the past two decades, many educators have embraced this pedagogy as research has shown that it has positive academic, behavioral, and affective outcomes (Follman, 1998; Weiler, et al., 1998). With increased federal and state support to implement service learning, the number of schools including it as part of their curricula seems to be on a rise (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

In 1984, approximately 32% of schools offered some type of service-learning program. Overall, teachers include service learning in 25% of elementary schools, 38% in middle schools, and 46% of high schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). With a closer look, though, at the number of teachers actually using service learning, the figures are less impressive; only 6.6% of U.S. teachers in K-12 schools are implementing service learning (Toole, 2002).

In a 2004 national survey on school principals, the number of schools offering service-learning opportunities rested at 28%, with 22% at elementary schools, 31% in middle schools, and 44% in high schools (National Youth Leadership Council, 2004). These figures are slightly lower but still comparable to the 1999 study. However, within the number of schools that offers service learning, the number of teachers implementing it in their classrooms rose to 30% (National Youth Leadership Council, 2004).

With reports and studies on school reform endorsing service learning as a pedagogical method for school improvement and community engagement (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; William T. Grant Foundation, 1991), with increased state and district support for implementation, and with an increasing number of schools requiring service as a graduation requirement, the question is why more schools are not implementing service learning. Furthermore, if the success of a service-learning project depends on the skill, knowledge, and creativity of the

classroom teacher (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991), what reasons assist or impede implementation of service learning?

Little information is available on the impact and role of K-12 classroom teachers' experiences with service learning (Siegel, 1995; Shumer, 1994). Less is known about K-12 art teachers who integrate this pedagogy. Most journal publications of arts-based service-learning articles have investigated concepts of pre-service teacher education (Jeffers, 2000), community practices (Taylor, 2002), community development (Bastos & Hutzler, 2004), student identity (Taylor, 2004), and community empowerment (Daniel, 2006), all of which focus on higher education and student and/or community impacts. Therefore, this article first explores the driving or stunting factors behind service-learning implementation at the K-12 level and then using two instruments from the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), examines a group of K-12 visual arts teachers in one Florida school district for comparison of previous research findings.

Service-Learning Teachers

Within the past two decades, there have been many service-learning articles published on the impacts on students' personal and social responsibility, civic engagement, and academic learning (Anderson, V., Kinsley, C., Negroni, P., & Price, C., 1991; Cognetta & Sprinthall, 1978; Conrad & Hedin, 1982, 1991; Morgan, W., & Streb, M., 1999; Shaffer, B., 1993; Stephens, L., 1995). However, few studies have focused on the experiences of service-learning teachers (Seigel, 1997; Shumer, 1994; Wade, 1997; Ammon et al., 2002). Seigel (1997) points to two central reasons to focus on teachers and their roles in service learning. Since teachers are the catalyst for change in educational reform, institutionalized change within the field of service learning relies on the extent to which teachers integrate it in their classrooms. Also, within a classroom, the teacher delivers the intended curriculum. Therefore, the success of a service-learning project is dependent on the skill, knowledge, and creativity of the classroom teacher (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991).

Service-Learning Teacher Demographics

The major studies that focused on teachers' beliefs and practices found that demographically, service-learning teachers are spread across the spectrum in age, gender, and income level (Wade, 1997; Seigel, 1997; Shumer, 1994; Ammon et al., 2002). However, in a study that included elementary, middle, and high school teachers, Melchior (1998) reported that middle-school teachers had higher-than-average use of service learning (36%) and were twice as likely to use it in their classrooms than their high school counterparts (18%). Although age, gender, and income level did not make a difference in whether implementation occurred, Seitsinger (2000) found that in a study of middle school teachers, on average, their professional knowledge and the number of years teaching middle-level students predicted their use of service learning. More specifically, higher levels of knowledge of students' developmental issues and of curricular standards predicted more frequent implementation of service-learning strategies. By contrast, greatest numbers of years teaching predicted less frequent use of service learning.

Motivations

Why do teachers incorporate service learning into their curricula? Studies show a variety of factors. Kinsley (1997) stated that one of the strongest reasons is the motivation for learning and the challenges service-learning projects provide for students. Wade (1997), Seigel (1997), Melchior (1998), and Ammon et al. (2002) reported that teachers wanted to instill civic, social, career development, and personal skills such as a sense of caring, social responsibility, and self-esteem. These outcomes were not even amongst all teachers. Elementary teachers frequently voiced their desire to enhance the ethic of citizenry, whereas high school teachers emphasized community issues or life skills. Elementary teachers gravitated toward creative expression, but middle school teachers emphasized problem solving, academic motivation, and self-efficacy.

In addition to student outcomes, Wade's (1997) study of 84 teachers found that the most common response toward motivation rested with teachers' ideological beliefs. Service-learning teachers advocated giving back to the community through service. Examples of contributions consisted of volunteering at community centers, working at hospices, or entertaining the elderly. One teacher stated that "service is absolutely necessary. It was a constant and would always be needed in the future" (p. 90). Teachers thought that this civic tie would not only help them connect with but also assist them to become active participants in their communities (Ammon et al., 2002), contributing in many ways (Siegel, 1997). The notion of civic engagement tied in with empathy and concern was not just for the external community but also for fellow students.

Teachers' pedagogical beliefs were also of great importance. Seitsinger (2000) found that on average, teachers thought service learning was essential to effective education for their students. Inherent within the philosophy and practice of service learning is the belief that students should not be confined within a classroom throughout the entire day (Siegel, 1997). Teachers wanted to engage students in experiential and hands-on learning. The desire for constant learning, while empowering students to take ownership of their learning and their projects, fit within teachers' educational philosophy (Ammon et al., 2002). Overall, teachers possessed core educational beliefs similar to service-learning pedagogy that served as the framework for their teaching (Nash, 2002).

When asked how they benefited personally from using service learning, teachers stated (Ammon et al., 2002) that they acquired better teaching management skills, increased subject-matter knowledge, enhanced relationships with students, and found more opportunities to collaborate with other teachers and members of the community.

In Kinsley's study (1997), some perceived service learning as a better way to understand and ultimately relate more positively toward students. A middle school teacher from Massachusetts explained:

I guess my experience with community service is analogous to what the kids go through. Once I did it, I saw things differently. For the kids, once they're responsible, once they serve others, and problem solve, they become believers in all those good things...It fleshes out what learning is to be. They take what they're learning and put it in to practice right away. It's problem solving, critical thinking...I've elevated my expectations (p. 5).

Academic Goals

The definition of service learning includes integrating service into the academic curriculum (Florida Learn & Serve, 2005). Since some teachers emphasized their primary responsibility is to promote student learning, they stressed the importance of academic development from service-learning projects (Siegel, 1997). However, this academic development did not always mimic rote learning. A middle-school language-arts teacher stated that the kind of learning necessary for useful reading and writing came directly from interactions with the community. Constant observations about the happenings within the community and structured verbal and writing reflection helped to achieve her academic goals. Melchior's study (1998) supports the notion of academic development, as over 80% of the teachers felt that service learning was likely to increase student academic achievement.

Prior Community Service Experience

Siegel found that many teachers who integrate service learning into their curricular instruction have had previous community service experiences through their churches or other organization. Over three-fourths of the teachers had some prior service experience as a child or an adult (Wade, 1997). No study to date has directly correlated previous community service to service-learning integration. However, Hodgkinson and Weitzman in 1992 found

early community service experience to be a significant indicator of adult community service involvement. Many teachers have pinpointed previous service experiences that contributed to their beliefs in the importance of service learning (Wade, 1997).

Rewards

Teachers reported several gratifying aspects of service learning, such as increased student motivation and learning (Wade, 1997; Seigel, 1997). However, similar to other findings about teaching rewards in general, the most gratifying aspect is observing changes in students (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Fullan, 1991). The words “excited,” “enthused,” and “changed” reflect their opinions. Teachers often elaborated stories of student success and behavior changes. A few teachers expressed pleasure at noticing students continuing to engage in service after the project ended. Other teachers relayed inspirational stories of problem students taking on positive leadership roles to become model students during service projects (Seigel, 1997).

As the success of a service-learning project increases, so does the attention from the media, community, and other teachers (Wade, 1997). It is common for newspapers and television stations to cover local projects. Politicians, school board members, and non-service-learning teachers attend celebration activities to congratulate and praise students for their efforts as well as learn more about successful service-learning implementation.

Challenges

Although implementing service-learning projects bring student-focused and intrinsic rewards, teachers also expressed some difficulties. The most common challenge is the factor of time. Service-learning projects are different in scale and scope from traditional classroom assignments and cannot be taught directly from the curriculum (Shumer, 1994; Seigel, 1997; Wade, 1997). In addition to academic curricular goals, teachers must incorporate service-related curricula

for elements such as preparation, reflection, and assessment (Wade, 1997). In other words, projects must be tailor-made. Teachers must alter pre-constructed service-learning curriculum to fit individual school and project needs (Florida Learn & Serve, 2005).

Whether students are providing service to other students on their campus or working with an external community organization, the issue of collaboration with community partners causes some concern. Finding and cultivating a service partner and coordinating logistics involves planning time, creativity, and mutual goal identification. Teachers also stated they needed to be flexible for unforeseen occurrences such as late bus arrivals, miscommunication with partners, and absent students (Shumer, 1994; Seigel, 1997). Many teachers received grant funding for expenditures not typically associated with classroom instruction. Those not part of a grant relied on administration support to cover these expenses. If the administration were not wholly supportive, teachers were not, for example, able to utilize their own or parent vehicles due to liability issues, thus causing more difficulties (Shumer, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model is a conceptual framework has been used in several studies to gauge educators' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Cunningham, Hillison, and Horne, 1985; Wesley and Franks, 1996; Jacobus, 1997; Fenton, 2002). The model is composed of three dimensions (Stages of Concern, Levels of Use, and Innovation Configuration) assisting in the overall development and implementation of innovative change, which in this case is service learning. This study looks at the information gleaned from the Level of Use and Innovation Configuration dimensions.

The Levels of Use explore behaviors and portrays how people are acting with respect to specified change (Hall & Hord, 2001) by identifying the degree to which teachers are using the innovation. In contrast, the Innovation Configuration examines the descriptive outputs of the

innovation. It is a shared vision of what the innovation looks like when implemented properly. It represents operational patterns and is a word picture or description of the innovation or change. In other words, it answers the question, “What does it look like?”

For the Levels of Use, I used a specifically designed focused interview, created by Hall and Hord, while the Innovation Configuration responses were gathered through a checklist I designed. Since the focus on this study is on teachers’ concerns and implementation of service learning, I decided to select a site that was committed to and deeply involved in service learning. Using three criteria as evidence of commitment (district administration financial support for service-learning implementation, increased annual growth of number of service-learning projects, and minimum of 5 consecutive years of receiving a service-learning grant), my convenience sample resulted in 19 K-12 visual arts teachers from Lake County, Florida.

RESULTS

- LAKE COUNTY TEACHER RESPONSES LISTED IN RESEARCH CATEGORIES AND EMERGENT THEMES
- TABLES
- DISCUSSION
- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
- CONCLUSION