

A mutually beneficial example of service learning: Collaboration between preservice language teachers and a local community center

Susan A. Hildebrandt, Ph.D.

shildeb@ilstu.edu

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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” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5).
 - Spanish club trip to Costa Rica
 - Spontaneous translation trips to CPS schools for parent-teacher conferences

Service learning and languages

- Spanish (Abbott & Lear, 2010; Alonso, 2008; Caldwell, 2000; Hellebrandt, 2006; Lear & Abbot, 2009; Marks, 2008; Sanders, 2005; Zapata, 2011)
- Preservice teachers (Lally, 2001; Polansky, 2004; Tilly-Lubbs, 2004)
- Pros and cons

LAN teacher candidate sequence (French, German, Spanish)

- General pedagogy courses in College of Education
- LAN 319.11, *Principles of Foreign Language Learning* (4 credits, 35 clinical hours, Intermediate High)
- LAN 320.11, *Foreign Language Teaching in the K-12 Setting* (2 credits, 12 clinical hours, Advanced Low*)
- Student teaching (11 weeks, Advanced Low)

UNITY Community Center

- “A multicultural Out of School Time center that provides programming for youth of families with limited resources.... It offers a positive, structured learning environment for those ages 5-18 years old.”
- 632 Orlando Avenue, Normal
- Serves 45 students, many with monolingual French or Spanish speaking parents

Needs

UNITY Center

- Volunteers
- Translators of Spanish and French
- Role models for K-12 students
- Resources

ISU LAN teacher candidates

- Advanced Low on Oral Proficiency Interview
- 100 clinical hours (50 in “diverse settings”) prior to student teaching
- Contact with families of real students
- To connect language acquisition theory to practice

SoTL Civic Engagement/Service Learning Small Grant Program

- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)
 - the “systematic study/reflection on teaching and learning made public.”
- Focus on student outcomes
- \$5K awarded in July, 2011
 - French, German, Spanish age appropriate books for UNITY’s library and teaching materials
 - Graduate assistant, Iryna Brown, Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum and Instruction

Research questions

- What benefits, if any, do language teacher candidates reap from assisting a local community center?
- What challenges, if any, present themselves to language teacher candidates as they work with a local community center?

Methodology

- 7 participants have consented
- Data
 - Philosophy of teaching statements (3 drafts)
 - “What I learned” wiki entries
 - Midterm and final exams and reflections
 - 15-minute teaching samples (3-4)
 - Teacher Performance Assessment assignments
 - Two or three 30-minute interviews
- Qualitative analysis – ongoing by grad assistant, after students’ graduation by me

Interview Protocol (Today!)

- Have you ever participated in a service learning project before? If so, please describe that experience.
- What, if anything, might stand in your way of participating in a civic engagement or service learning project?
- What kind of contact, if any, have you had with parents of students until now?
- What types of experiences have you had with native speakers of French/German/Spanish before now?
 - Please describe your study abroad experience, if you have studied abroad.
 - Do you know any local families what are native speakers of French/German/Spanish?
- Do you volunteer in the Bloomington-Normal community, other than what is required for your clinical hours? If so, what activities do you engage in?

Interview Protocol (Feb. & May/Dec.)

- What, if anything, did you learn during your time at UCC?
- What, if anything, might stand in your way of participating in another civic engagement or service learning project?
- What type of experiences do you currently have with native speakers of French/German/Spanish?
- What kind of contact with students' parents have you had at UCC? Do you think that contact taught you anything?
- Do you anticipate volunteering in your new community in which you will teach? What might you do?

A taste...

- Empathy/Compassion
 - I now want to instill a more humanistic view of the world in my students through the use of culture and communication. I would like to inspire them to advocate for the needs and concerns of the people whose cultures and languages my students are learning about.

- Communities

- When I was in high school and learning Spanish, I had absolutely no experience with the Spanish-speaking community in my area (I live in a 90% Caucasian community and our largest minority is Arabic speakers), and I was a bit sheltered, and I do not want the same thing for my children or my students. There is a world out there, and we need to explore it.