Chapter 7
Creating Authentic Preservice Art Teaching Experiences through Service–Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter contextualizes the literature on service-learning and outlines ways to design, conduct and evaluate service-learning projects by identifying strengths, weaknesses, capacity and sustainability of service-learning programs, and clarifies goals, objectives, and values of service-learning pre-practica for preservice art education candidates. The examples describe a service-learning based program for preservice art teachers that provided authentic teaching experiences in the field, or in situ. In addition, this project sought to foster a better understanding of, and commitment to, the visual arts and provide meaningful service to local community agencies through the introduction, development, and implementation of service-learning visual arts courses in the university curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of American higher education, according to Boyer (1994), has been "inextricably inter-twined" with the civic mission of the country since the founding of Harvard in 1637. Present day mission statements of most colleges and universities reveal a commitment to service and civic engagement. The civic mission of these colleges and universities identify three main strategies for achieving this goal: a rigorous focus on education in democratic values and citizenship, formation of collaborative community-university partnerships, and promotion of service-learning (Hutchison, 2001). While these concepts of service-learning date back to John Dewey, the intellectual forefather of the movement, along with Jane Addams and Dorothy Day, early pioneers of community service in American culture (Giles, 1991; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Saltmarsh, 1996), the term "service-learning" only began to appear in the literature in the latter part of the 1990's (Speck, 2001). Moreover, educators at all levels report service-learning activities (that are well-designed and implemented) can help address unmet community needs while simultane-

ously providing students opportunity to gain academic knowledge and skills (Root, 1997). According to Eyler and Giles (1999), service-learning is

… a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students…seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. In the process, students link personal and social development with academic and cognitive development…experience enhances understanding; understanding leads to more effective action. (p.6)

The literature on service-learning in teacher education indicates significant, positive correlations between in-service training and student outcomes. "Service-learning is a complex process that requires careful planning, implementation, and evaluation to be successful" (Driscoll et al., 1998, p.8) and "a way for students to reflectively consider their experiences in light of the greater societal forces at work in the lives of those served" (Keller & Helfenbein, 2007). However, there is a dearth of research and scant models for service-learning in art education. Therefore, this chapter contextualizes the research on service-learning and provides a framework for program evaluation of service-learning in art education. The project presented here focuses on a program evaluation model of three service-learning partnerships involving pre-service art education candidates at: a middle school, a non-profit educational collaborative for special needs learners, and a non-profit museum. The literature review provides insights into the research on service-learning in general education and art education, while the project provides a theoretical framework for service-learning in the arts and evaluation of such programs.

Our university has a commitment to civic engagement, this coupled with the increase in mandated pre-practicum hours and the difficulty of providing them, we sought partnerships that could accommodate our pre-practicum hours and provide meaningful service to community agencies. The project traces three site based service-learning pre-practica teaching and learning experiences that support civic engagement through established university partnership collaborations.

These experiences demonstrate the collaboration of combining the interests of cultural and educational institutions and how preservice teachers engaged in service-learning while teaching art, and in one instance, how they developed other service activities as a direct result of their previous service-learning encounter. The purpose of this chapter is to outline ways to design, conduct and evaluate service-learning projects by identifying strengths, weaknesses, capacity and sustainability of service-learning programs, and to clarify goals, objectives, and values of service-learning pre-practica for preservice art education candidates. In addition, the Authentic Preservice Teaching Project sought to foster a better understanding of, and commitment to, the visual arts and provide meaningful service to local community agencies through the introduction, development, and implementation of service-learning visual arts courses in the university curriculum.

CONTEXTUALIZING SERVICE-LEARNING

The work of London (1994), Taylor (2002 a, 2002b), Taylor and Balengee-Morris (2004)Jeffers (2005), Buffington (2007), and Keller and Helfenbein, (2007) all promote service-learning that recognize the impact of the arts in the community, on curricular decisions, and learning for preservice art teachers. Presenting students with personal encounters within their field of study is a foundation that can effect students' perspectives and their eventual teaching careers (Fullerton, Reitenauer & Kerrigan, 2015).

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