

## **Service Learning/Field Experience Model of Success**

Anne Arundel Community College

Arnold, MD

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## **Anne Arundel Community College Education Department Fieldwork Study**

*Education Department Vision: The Education Department at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) is a premier learning community that prepares graduates to transition to the next level of learning and successful placement in the childcare or education field.*

Throughout their coursework, education majors at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) complete a total of 45 hours of fieldwork in order to meet the requirements of the Associate of Arts degree in Teaching (A.A.T.). This unique degree allows students to complete the first two years of a teaching degree and then transfer seamlessly to any public or private four-year college/university in Maryland. At one time, students completed all 45 hours of fieldwork at the end of their A.A.T. program; however, beginning with the 2007-2008 academic year, the hours were divided into three separate courses (15 hours of fieldwork each). The fieldwork classes were scaffolded according to the breadth and depth of course requirements and students were encouraged to complete courses in a specified sequence that would lead to increased student success and retention.

In order to assess the effectiveness of this new model of fieldwork, a Data Collection Committee was formed and several action research studies were completed. The first study ran during the 2008-2009 school year. This study compiled the scores received by students on each standardized assignment in their fieldwork classes. This data served as a basis for determining how well standardized assignments were being implemented by different instructors. Further, the data was disaggregated by student demographics to more closely examine student success.

For the following two school years, 2009 to 2011, the committee delved even further into the effectiveness of scaffolded fieldwork. A comprehensive, longitudinal survey was created that evaluated students' knowledge, self-efficacy (confidence), and teacher dispositions (behaviors). A sample of students, determined by the sequence of course completion, completed the survey four times: before beginning a fieldwork class, after the first class, after the second class, and after the final class. Results indicated that students grew in each of the three categories studied, the greatest growth occurring in knowledge.

This research endeavor yielded many outcomes and changes to the degree programs in the Education Department. For years, the department has investigated the possible causes for low A.A.T. degree completion rate when semester enrollment is always substantial. Based on statistics such as these as well as the results of the data collection efforts, the following changes

occurred. During the following year, 2011-2012, Fieldwork Reflection assignments were revised to include the scaffolding of fieldwork reflection assignment questions (from basic to more advanced) and the inclusion of teacher disposition questions. For the current 2012-2013 academic year, the following initiatives have been put into place:

- Two standing committees were created: Teacher Dispositions and Degree Program Enhancements
- Creation of mandatory education student orientation
- Prerequisites changed to sequence EDU courses so that students are more successful in their coursework as well as degree completion

### **Implementation Dates**

2008 - Present

### **How the Model is Innovative and/or Unique**

Like many community colleges, AACC holds student success to be of paramount importance. The Education Department at AACC took the initiative to thoroughly explore and account for the success of education majors. An action research effort years in the making resulted in significant changes to the way students take courses. These new changes will be carefully monitored in the coming year to ensure their efficacy.

### **Indications of Success**

While the effects of recent changes to prerequisites will not be seen for several years, there are early indicators of success in terms of the scaffolding of fieldwork. Students are engaged in PK-12 classrooms as early as their first semester of college. Their activities during the required 15 hours are carefully structured by the use of standardized field-based assignments for each course. Furthermore, the AACC Education Department earned National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for its early childhood degree programs in the summer of 2007.

### **How the Model is Replicable**

This model of action research could easily be replicated in any community college education department for little to no cost. The first step would be to ensure that all education faculty members are committed to measuring student success in tangible and consistent ways.

If fieldwork hours are not already embedded into coursework, it is suggested that education departments begin by adding these hours into core education courses. This step may take time since it involves changes to courses and the buy-in of other college constituents. If fieldwork hours are already embedded into core courses, the next step would be the standardization of course assignments. Only then can an accurate measure of student achievement be taken. The Education Department at AACC, feels strongly that standardized assignments and standardized fieldwork experiences result in a quality learning experience for all students. The last step would be to sequence all education courses in such a way to increase student retention, success, and program completion.

