

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

Lone Star College-University Park

Houston, TX

<http://www.lonestar.edu/universitypark.htm>

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## **Increasing Time in the Field and Success in the Classroom via Service Learning**

A service learning/field experience model has been used in the Introduction to the Teaching Profession course at Lone Star College to actively engage students who were planning to become teachers since 2003. Over the past nine years, many valuable lessons have been learned and evidence gained concerning this teaching model. This highly effective model consists of a few key components—dedicated instructors, focused course learning outcomes, and respectful partnerships. So what else sets this model apart? Extensive planning...there is a lot of time spent each semester getting ready to go into the field before the course ever begins.

So what are some of the instructor's roles in the service learning model? At Lone Star College-University Park (UP), instructors:

- Determine which PreK-12 schools best match the learning outcomes in the specific course. Based on the number of course sections being taught, a certain number of PreK-12 schools will be asked to partner.
- Distribute handouts to school administrators concerning the expectations of UP each semester and, when necessary, meet face-to-face with the school administrators. If the school administrator is interested and committed to the service learning philosophy, then the success of the program on their campus will be very high.
- Set-up service learning orientation field trips for each of the semester sections. Students are required to attend the field trips that are scheduled during regular class times (daytime or evenings). The school administrators, lead teachers, and/or PreK-12 students lead the orientations and tours for the college students.
- Share with the college students the UP Service Learning Handbook that contains important information and policies for working in the local schools.

What are the expectations of the college students in the service learning program? UP students are expected to:

- Learn about the six to 10 specific service learning sites. The students select one site to complete their 16+ service learning hours after completing approximately three field trips.
- Help with a variety of programs and needs at the local schools. Because the students are involved with service learning, the expectations are that students will provide a “service” to the teachers. These future teachers move quickly from “just observing” to “being highly involved participants.” This step has proven to be the key to not only providing a valuable experience for the college student, but also an instrumental part of the college students wanting additional hours beyond the 16 hours required by the state.
- Complete numerous class and homework assignments centered on the service learning/field experience program. For example, students research online the sites they will be touring within the first six weeks of class and share their findings with classmates. Students also write journal reflections, as well as, take an essay test for their midterm over the information learned from the fieldtrips and research. At the end of the semester, students submit an electronic portfolio that contains artifacts of the Texas 13 New Teacher Competencies, which are similar to the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium standards (INTASC). The artifacts are items discovered while working in the field and are related to content pedagogy, student development, diverse learners, motivation, management, etc.

### **Implementation Dates**

August 2003 – Present

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

If a college is looking to increase students’ time in the field and increase success in education courses, then this model needs to be considered. The service learning model relies on the expertise of the professor to set-up the ideal “lab” experience for his/her students. The course assignments are directly related to the field experience, and the schools’ personnel are very knowledgeable about the philosophy and expectations of the instructor. The students are also assured that the site being used wants the college students on their campus, is willing to help the students, and is a high quality school. The instructor thoroughly researches the schools used in the program and ensures that the learning outcomes of the course are related to the sites being used. For example, since the professor teaches about school reform, the college students tour three different types of schools: one charter, one private, and one district (zip code) school. The students then will get to learn first-hand the various purposes of each campus and decide which type of school they want to spend more time learning about and volunteering.

## **Indications of Success**

The majority of students involved with this service learning model volunteer above the state required 16 hours. These students are commuter students who have families, work responsibilities, and full course loads; however, many of the students obtain 20-50+ volunteer hours each semester. An end-of-semester report is sent to the schools sharing the number of hours volunteered and the potential monetary donation made by the students if they were getting paid for their volunteer hours (according to the IRS volunteer website).

This program is definitely a “win-win” model for the college students and schools. More time in the field means more learning and more practice for the college students, which in the long run makes for a better teacher. The students become well trained due to more hands-on experiences in the field. The students involved with this model become connected with the supervising teachers and continue volunteering for numerous semesters. The school administrators have noticed and commented on the dedication of the UP students. Some have shared that, when it comes time to hiring teachers in the future, these students’ applications will be at the top of their stack. Principals can count on the college students to assist with festivals, peer reviews, program reviews, field trips, and many other events. The college instructors can count on the schools to help with grant writing, serve on panels, participate on advisory committees and fill last minute favor requests. The partnerships forged between the various organizations are very strong and continue to bloom.

## **How the Model is Replicable**

This model can be replicated easily if the instructors involved believe in student engagement and serving the community. Implementation steps can be found in LSC-University Park’s Service Learning Handbook as well as on a YouTube link that highlights the current program. Many tips can also be gleaned by contacting Professor Jackson, lead contact and developer of this model.

## **Links to Presentation and Website**

Below is a link to a current YouTube video that captures the highlights of our teacher education program at UP via pictures. In the beginning of the movie, you will see “construction areas” and UP’s department chair for English, Education and Arts wearing a hard hat, since we just opened our sixth Lone Star College campus in January 2012. There are many pictures of the students touring the various service learning sites that our instructors work with each semester, as well as a field trip to the Bayou Land Conservancy. This hands-on ecology field trip directs students towards pursuing a high-needs science teaching degree down the road. Next you will see students sharing their small group, end-of-semester, transfer university projects, which are informative and energizing. Also, included on the video are pictures of the students’ multi-media service learning experiences. The DVD concludes with community college graduation pictures of

successful teacher education students and their families. Throughout the video; you will see many smiling faces of students and professors verifying that our teacher education program is fun, expects high quality results, and uses an effective service learning model to enhance learning for students and the community. Enjoy!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tINiuWobWhQ&feature=youtu.be>