

# Planning for Service Learning

Group/Class: High School level

Topic: Literacy, Mentoring

## Prepare

### **Essential Purpose or Question for Service:**

How do mentoring relationships help students become more cognizant about their own learning styles?

### **Service Need to Community or Others:**

Reciprocal learning occurs in mentoring relationships between older and younger students with mutual benefits; young children need encouragement to read and write.

<b>Service Idea: Give it to the Worms</b>
Instruct young children in reading and collaborate on making books for the community.
<b>Investigation of the Need:</b>
Interview a kindergarten teacher to explore a potential mentoring relationship.
<b>Preparation and Planning:</b>
Write reflections on childhood, and favorite books. Participate in an interactive workshop with a child psychologist about learning styles and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. In small groups, discuss methods of working with young children; design lessons reflecting different types of intelligences. Reach consensus on theme for the new books ("Friendship" is chosen to combat bullying); get resources for mentoring best practices and bookmaking; learn bookbinding techniques; arrange logistics and transportation.
<b>Action:</b>
Seek out needed products, interaction with young children, and involving child development specialist from Area Education Agency. Visit a kindergarten class three times: 1) get acquainted with children and read books, 2) discuss book ideas on the theme of friendship and begin story development, and 3) write and illustrate the story. Copies of the book are given to the children, the school, and public libraries.
<b>Reflection:</b>
Write in journals with peer "journal partners" who read entries and respond; teacher also reads and give feedback weekly. Engage in a class discussion after each visit, using role-plays and problem solving. Write reflective essays on how the theory of multiple intelligences applies to daily student life.
<b>Demonstration to Others:</b>
Present the service experiences with the kindergarteners at the school district service learning committee meeting.

## Organize

### **Service Learning Project Parameters:**

Once students have established a desired action plan, they can work on creating realistic expectations with the kindergarten teacher on supply needs. They can then try and contact local organizations and the community library to see who would be willing to support their mentoring relationship.

Transportation could be an issue; be open to alternative ways of connecting which could include technology interaction or walking. Speak with school busing system for potential options.

### **Duration/Timeframe of Service Learning Project:**

This experience lasted 6 weeks; 2 weeks of investigation and preparation, 3 weeks of action and reflection and 1 week of demonstration.

### **Youth Voice:**

High school students created plans, found a partner kindergarten classroom, made phone calls, got donations, and designed activities.

# Facilitator Reflections

## Skills Developed

### **Experiencing and Exploring Diversity:**

Working with children of many ethnicities and connecting with their interests-often without a common language-led to thoughtful conversations. Students also saw how bilingual development is an advantage and marveled at some of the children who were already fluent in two languages at a young age.

### **Involvement with Project Management:**

With each visit to the kindergarten class, students paid attention to interaction on two levels, social comfort and academic growth. They used information from the child psychologist to look for responsiveness from the children and continued positive affect. They also looked at retention, what the children remembered from one visit to the next. At the end of the first 2 visits they asked, "What do you want to remember from this visit?" and then checked in with the children later. They also asked the teacher after each visit what progress she had noted by observing the children interactions.

### **Learning About Careers:**

Students learned about careers in child psychology and education.

### **Strengthening Social, Emotional, and Character Traits:**

Students gained skills in self-reflection, especially when comparing their own learning styles and preferences with those of the children; caring; humor; and supportive interactions with peers and younger children.

### **Making Global Connections:**

Students were exposed to various cultural backgrounds and familiarized with potential language barriers.

### **Developing Leadership:**

Students revised the initial plan made by their teacher to have them read books to an elementary class. Students reframed the experience to work with children over time to gain a better grasp of the learning process and to create books for the community. They wrote a new service plan, obtained approval from the principal, and found a class liaison for elementary school, logistics specialists, a budget manager, and donation solicitors.

## Additional Attributes

### **Curriculum Connections:**

- English/Language Arts-Wrote a grant proposal; read and analyzed children's books for content, format and style; wrote a book; wrote letters requesting donations and reduce-cost supplies
- Social Studies/History-Researched child psychology
- Math-Managed a budget of funds received from the school and a literacy grant
- Science-Studied how the brain works with multiple intelligences
- Language-Prepared for working with young bilingual children with assistance from a Spanish language teacher
- Art and Music-Art students made presentations on illustrations to inform students about various styles; create illustrations with children; book binding
- Technology- Used computer skills to create a design and template for the book-making process.

### **Public Awareness or Presentation:**

Students presented at the school district's Service Learning Advisory Committee meeting and were featured in a local newspaper with a photograph.

### **Other:**

Through student imitative and planning, the plan changed from a one-time read aloud to elementary children into a 3 week reading program and bookmaking venture. An ongoing relationship was established between the classrooms and schools.