Chapter 18
Doing Service–Learning on the Ground in Diverse K–12 Communities:
The Critical Importance of Being There

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is about designing service-learning and gives voice to college students engaging in service along with children and families who attend a culturally diverse urban Title One school. The various settings presented in this chapter show the numerous options open to service-learners in the University Assisted Community School. Engagement in this program realizes that schools with low resources have communities with low resources and communities with low resources have schools with low resources.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and analyzes what transpires when university students from a public research-intensive institution from a variety of majors engage in service-learning with urban Title I elementary students in a University Assisted Community School (UACS) (Basma & Kronick, 2016; Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Kronick, 2005; Luter & Kronick, 2017). The students in the UACS school speak twenty languages and come from twenty-five countries. They are refugees, migrants, and nascent students from working families (low socio-economic status). The school's accountability report card notes that the school has 16% English Language Learner students, 64.6% economically disadvantaged students, and 15% students with disabilities. Students are 42.1% white, 42.1% Black, and 13.6% Latinx. The univer-

sity students are generally middle class, white, and female. Service-learning at the university has been ongoing since the 1970s, but recently the university has attempted to institutionalize civic engagement and is striving to be an anchor institution (Taylor & Luter, 2013). This chapter focuses on working with diverse K-12 communities and sharing experiences through stories for those service-learners who seek to or will soon enter the world of practice.

Service-learning is experiential learning in that students learn through doing. John Dewey, arguably the most recognized scholar of experiential learning, was ultimately a philosopher of education. Not only did he theorize about how experiential learning works, but he also theorized about how schools should better interact with society, leading to his seminal publication *The School as Social Center* (Dewey, 1902). When he spoke of the school as the community and the community as the school, he was speaking of service-learning. This was learning in the messiest sense: making sure learning was connected to real-world problems and making sure learning was grounded in everyday democracy.

The authors begin with a theoretical basis for service-learning and explain the potential this pedagogy has for teaching about the complexities of K-12 educational issues. Then, they introduce the UACS concept and explain the multiple stakeholders involved in the UACS effort (faculty, students, and urban Title I children, UACS staff). After, they present stories that are at the heart of service-learning and help to show the kind of learning about social justice that is possible when university students are in public school settings engaged with diverse populations. These stories are placed in a context of action theory (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985), that distinguishes service-learning from volunteering. Finally, after describing the context and the stories of students and faculty doing work in a multicultural and multilingual school, the authors reflect on implications for universities as culturally responsive anchor institutions.

SERVICE-LEARNING IN BRIEF

Service-learning by its very nature is connected to a course: middle school, high school, or college. Readings are tested in the field, and theory and practice advance through this integration. Through this integration, the teaching/learning of service-learning leads to a stronger research agenda for faculty. All of this activity is synergistic and makes service-learning a dynamic field.

Service-learning has three critical components: integration, reciprocity, and reflection (Kronick, Cunningham, & Gourley, 2011). These components are indicators of differences between service-learning and volunteering. Integration is the crossing and mutual influence of theory and practice. Theory can drive practice, and practice can reshape theory. In the seminal work *The Looking Glass Self*, Cooley (1972) found that people get a sense of who they are from the reflections they get from others.

Reciprocity is how service-learners absorb experiences from and are informed by the community partners with whom they engage, resulting in learning that is circular rather than linear. Stories in this chapter illustrate how university students learn from K-5 elementary students and how those elementary students learn from the university students. This reciprocal learning is an exciting phenomenon and is a privilege for the professors who engage in service-learning teaching.

Reflection, the third foundational leg of service-learning, tends to be the most difficult of the three for students. In a rapid-paced society, taking time to think and feel is difficult, and journaling helps to get students to reflect. Journal reflections enable instructors to learn about students' behavior and ideas and to guide classroom discussion and learning. In this instance, service-learning refocuses teaching and

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