Chapter 11
The Professional Development School:
Fertile Ground for Service-Learning Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the differences and similarities in learning outcomes between the two espoused approaches to service-learning in teacher education: an elementary school service-learning approach called the teachers as leaders of change model and a high school service-learning approach named the tutoring for change model. The purpose in comparing both models is to highlight the distinct learning outcomes that are associated with the manner in which service-learning is structured. Given the benefits of service-learning, the authors contend that service-learning in the PDS context has the potential to improve the overall quality of teacher preparation. However, benefits vary depending on the model organization. The authors describe structural differences in the models as three thematic outcomes: a) reasons for valuing, b) likelihood of future implementation, and c) attitudes on community participation. They recommend that decisions regarding program goals be aligned early in PDS organizational planning to effectively embrace unique service-learning benefits.

INTRODUCTION

The Professional Development School (PDS) mission is defined by Nine Essentials set forth by the National Association of Professional Development Schools (2008). One of these essentials is a shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants in the PDS. As we seek out innovative and reflective practice to bring to our PDS environments it is essential that we examine the practices to determine if they are research based and proven to positively impact student learning.

In conjunction with seeking out innovative, research based practices, there is a recent movement driven by the business community, education leaders, and policymakers to emphasize the importance of ensuring every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st Century. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2004) is the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century knowledge and skills into education as a motive for encouraging the development of globally prepared citizens who can effectively contribute to the world economy. The Partnership's vision is to promote a high level of understanding of core subjects while integrating authentic applications of 21st century skills such as; the development of creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, information, media and technology skills, along with career and life skills, to prepare students with what they need to be successful in school, work, and life in a globally interdependent society.

As we seek ways to develop 21st Century Skills in our students, President Barrack Obama has also brought service to the forefront as a national priority. He has stated that civic engagement and service should be a lifelong commitment whether at the school, community, city, state, or national level. He is committed to empowering people at all stages of their lives and at all levels of society to stand up and help solve problems in their communities. In an address to 2,000 service leaders gathered at the Points of Light Institute's (POL) "Presidential Forum on Service" at Texas A&M University, the President said, "I am asking you to have a public service mindset. I'm asking that no matter where you live, or what job you do, or what obstacles you face, you're always looking for ways to make service part of your life."

One promising practice that educators are turning to in increasing numbers that incorporates all of the above mentioned elements is service-learning. Service-learning has an ever-widening research base to support its benefits (Billig & Brown,

2004; Dymond, Renzaglia, & Chun, 2008; Koliba, Campbell, & Shapiro, 2006 Soslau & Yost, 2007). High quality service-learning projects are aligned with standards in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and/or science, allowing cross-discipline integration (Freeman & Swick, 2003; National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, n.d.; Dymond et al. 2008; England & Marcinkowski, 2007; Koliba et al. 2006; Novak, Markey, & Allen,2007). Service-learning experiences also have the potential to develop 21st Century skills and make learning more relevant and meaningful for students as they plan, develop, and implement service projects. Service-learning experiences are innovative in that they connect students with their community and provide authentic opportunities for students to apply their literacy and civic skills for the purpose of improving community life through service (National Council for the Social Studies, 2007).

The purpose of this chapter is to make the case for integrating service-learning as an innovative and reflective practice into the work of the Professional Development School and to provide a description of how this was accomplished at both an elementary and secondary school site. The literature review clarifies the concept of service-learning and examines the research on different levels of student learning, including impact on teacher candidates' learning and professional development. The literature review is essential in making the case for integrating service-learning because it clearly documents the extensive research base that supports this teaching and learning approach in classrooms. The descriptions of two different approaches to service-learning pedagogy at two different PDS sites reveal possibilities and unique outcomes that should be considered if designing service-learning opportunities. From these experiences, come recommendations and insights for why professional development schools are well suited for this type of innovative and reflective pedagogy.

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