

Service Learning Outcomes One through Four: What I have learned

If it was any other class, the outcomes that are presented here, would be much more difficult to understand or grasp. I believe this is due to the fact that in our Service Learning class we actually work in the community, at an elementary school and with professionals that help support our efforts. Other classes do not seem to have the same type of commitment or strategy required to meet the outcomes. The reason I say this is to emphasize the importance on how much impact service Learning has had on me. There are four major learning outcomes (MLO's) and each has an important message for our young generation that is being educated today. Each MLO will be described with some examples and immediately followed by my personal opinion as well. This essay will help the reader understand what I have or haven't learned through the course, however, the point is to share my experiences with you and show the connections I have made regarding the outcomes, so let's begin.

MLO 1: Self and Social Awareness

I was assigned to two different service learning sites so I had the added work and responsibility to help more kids as well as other cohorts. This gave me an advantage in awareness because I could see from an outside perspective and observe a larger amount of data regarding the process of learning, teaching, providing service and the dynamics of a community. Self-awareness is gained by understanding how, (I, myself), acts, thinks and behaves towards new and old situations. We were thrust into an experience with teaching kids each week about specific aspects of Japanese culture with an overload of standards that are required. I became

very aware of how hard it was to implement those standards through a teaching process without proper training, but, I actually enjoyed the challenge and made a deep connection with teaching. For social awareness, I believe it is common sense to know what that is. But many people don't so I must then be aware of those who have a lack of understanding and I should be patient, compassionate and helpful where and when I can. That is the basics of social awareness. In other words, the ability to observe your surroundings or social community to find solutions to problems or communicate and teach cultural values that benefits everyone. This so called awareness is an outcome that can be applied to many different aspects of life and many of the experiences we had from service learning can fit into all four of the MLO's as well.

MLO 2: Service and Social Responsibility

To me, service is a social responsibility and many people have forgotten what true social responsibility really is. We, as a species, have the responsibility to help one another when we can. Unfortunately our egos have not permitted many of us to overcome the selfishness that lies within our souls. I am not trying to sound like I'm preaching. What I am trying to sound like is the part of humanity that is positive. From our experiences reading the many articles that talk about stereotypes, cross cultural ethics, benefits of dual language learning, etc., we are responsible to set good examples to the younger generation and help facilitate the differences of a global society so they don't grow up closed minded or brainwashed. That is our responsibility as adults and Kids need to be valued more. My service to the community is not for my benefit although I take much pride in what I did, but it is for the good of the people. This is shown by consistently creating lesson plans, being on time, interacting with the kids and having genuine good intentions for providing help for the kids. A byproduct of providing service is a kind of happiness or fulfillment that you have changed or bettered someone's knowledge or life. This

aspect of service and social responsibility directly connects to our community which is part of the next outcome.

MLO 3: Community & Social Justice

Our community should be important to all of us because we live there and have a voice to express what we would like our community to be. Social justice is a harder concept for others to understand and can be overlooked because of its definition. However, social justice is imperative to a community because without it, the community can become corrupt, unfair, and unequal and can cause hate, anger, financial loss and so on. An example of social justice is the CPY program and their staff. CPY provides educational activities after school to help eliminate the percentage of kids failing from school or being manipulated by a dark path. So the justice is there by caring and valuing each child as a person and supporting them like a mentor with minimum amount of finances. But for us to enforce social justice we need to recognize social in-justice. This is important because we as a community have the power to stop the injustice by ways of voting, advocating, coming together to find solutions and just plain telling the truth. All of this together is a community and is vital for that community. We also must understand the differences in opinions, cultures, nationalities, languages and beliefs to help communicate a solve problems with less negativity.

MLO 4: Multicultural Community Building/Civic Engagement

This MLO is the heart of everything I have learned. I helped build the community by sharing my knowledge of another culture. This was done through teaching the differences and similarities between the kids own cultures. One thing that is nice is that we already live in a fairly diverse area and many kids have the opportunity to learn diversity at a young age. But, I

set examples not only by teaching but the way I may look, or the way I talk to my peers. These are all tiny signals that kids can pick up on and by always behaving in a global type frame of mind, kids can learn from others as well as communicate to further their knowledge in their tiny information sucking brains. The act of actually using multicultural knowledge daily around people within the community is, to me, civic engagement. Service learning is the best example but it is forced upon the student while the definition of service still includes our moral responsibility to implement what was discussed above without having to take a class for it. A couple of the students in our class put it simply from a quote they really liked and that was “act locally, think globally”. The world is forever getting smaller in terms of communication so it is only ideal to include multicultural learning within our daily routine.

Conclusion

So, overall, each outcome has, in some way, made itself apparent to me through the act of teaching elementary school kids three times a week for a total of seventy-five hours in three months. These MLO concepts were already in my head before but they were not projected into my critical thinking process until I experienced first-hand how they related to what I was doing. I can't stress enough the importance of service learning and how it helped show the MLO's in action. I strongly believe I have found a connection with myself and teaching as a bonus and the MLO's sound like good morals and values to live by. I will continue to broaden my mind throughout my life and hope to encounter another opportunity to learn as much as I did through Japanese service learning.