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## Implementing Service-Learning as a Pre-Service Teacher

Amber Fessler

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IMPLEMENTING SERVICE-LEARNING AS A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER

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HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the University Honors Program  
at Bowling Green State University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

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## Abstract

This project explores service-learning in math at the middle school level and addresses the challenges and possibilities of pre-service teachers implementing service learning as a part of their educational preparation. The focus was a semester long experience with an 8th grade teacher in a math classroom at a middle school in Findlay, Ohio during the 2010-2011 school year. Activities included engagement in a math classroom, design, and implementation of a service-learning project, and regular reflection between the author and the teacher partner. Partners in the project included the Hancock United Way and Findlay Community Gardens. Direction for the project was provided by Dr. Jane Rosser, the director of the Office of Service-Learning, Dr. Patrick Vrooman, the director of Educators in Context and Community (ECC), and Dr. Nancy Patterson, associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development, Division of Teaching and Learning, all at Bowling Green State University. Key questions included: how can pre-service teachers effectively learn to use service-learning pedagogy, and what are the challenges of pre-service teachers partnering with and working in K-12 schools.

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## Introduction

I am a product of an educational program, Educators in Context and Community, at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) that uses service-learning as its foundation. Since the beginning of my first year, I had been in a learning community that provided me with intensive, long-term field experiences in urban classrooms connected to university courses that discussed urban educational issues. By the time I started this project at the beginning of my junior year; I already had 250 hours of experience in K-12 classrooms, and had explored a myriad of pedagogies and proposed solutions to the problems in education. I began to investigate service-learning as a pedagogy to use in my own classroom after working with the university's Office of Service-Learning for a year. Because service-learning had worked so well for me in learning to become a teacher, it seemed probable that the pedagogy might also serve my future students well.

Realizing that I was not sufficiently trained to use service-learning pedagogy, I decided to use my Honors Project as a way to engage with and learn about service-learning as an educational strategy. I chose to build on my experience participating in service-learning as a part of my learning community, and with the support of faculty who were trained in service-learning and K-12 pedagogies, attempted to set-up a service-learning project in a local 7th-12th grade math classroom (my licensure area). I had developed an interest in serving low-income, high-needs schools through my

learning community. I felt that my project could provide the most benefits in this type of school with students who had not already had the chance to use their education to serve, benefit, and/or interact with the community. Initially, my support for this project came from Dr. Jane Rosser, the director of the Office of Service-Learning, and Dr. Patrick Vrooman, the director of my learning community. Later in the process, Dr. Nancy Patterson, associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development, Division of Teaching and Learning at BGSU, provided additional assistance.

### **Preparation for the Project**

Prior to implementing a service-learning project, I conducted an investigation into service-learning pedagogy and the best practices in the field at the K-12 level. I signed up for the K-12 SL Listserv, a national listserv for those interested and/or involved in service-learning at the K-12 level. The most helpful resource I found at this point in the project was the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice published by the National Youth Leadership Council in 2010 (Appendix A). These standards served as a guide throughout the project for what components I should include and how to structure my project. I also researched a variety of relevant projects identified via a review of Learn & Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. *Mathematics in Service to the Community* by Charles Hadlock (2005) was particularly useful and helped frame my thinking about and approach to the project.

While the community issues my service-learning project attempted to address were different from any of the issues addressed in the sample projects I researched, the examples did provide some ideas for what the scope of the project could be.

## **Methods**

### **Introduction**

Part of the very nature of service-learning pedagogy is that it is rooted in partnerships. Therefore, this project could not be just about what I wanted and needed, but had to incorporate the constraints and desires of students, a community, a school, and a classroom teacher as partners. First, I had to find a school and classroom teacher who was willing to work with me to set up a service-learning project. Then, once that partnership was identified, together we needed to determine potential community issues that would fit the needs and interests of the students and relate to the relevant math curriculum. This process would need to be flexible to accommodate the search for appropriate community partners. When all the partners were in place, then project planning could begin.

### **Finding a Partner Teacher**

The first thing I needed to do was find a partner math teacher. I worked with Dr. Rosser to identify key contacts in the local K-12 community who might be interested in service-learning and have the contacts or position to connect me with 7th-12th grade math teachers. We identified four faculty members at BGSU and four community



members to whom I sent a formalized proposal and request via email (Appendix B).

The proposal included a brief introduction of myself and my project, what I could provide for the partner teacher and school, and what I would like from them. The next couple of weeks I spent following up with emails and forwarding my message to new contacts that were suggested to me. I was eventually able to meet with three people, each affiliated with a different school, who were two steps removed from the teachers with whom I hoped to work.

The first actual classroom teacher I was able to meet with was Mr. Lacy from Glenwood Middle School in Findlay. After a short meeting at the school, we decided to work together. In addition to the advantage of Mr. Lacy's being the first teacher I was able to meet with, the school and the students closely matched the demographics I was hoping for, and Findlay was a community with which I was unfamiliar. Ordinarily the last point would be a disadvantage for service-learning, where community contacts and ties are very important. However, it offered the opportunity to expand my range of experiences and assist me in developing the skills to adapt to new settings. All my experiences up to this point had been in Toledo Public Schools. Both Toledo and Findlay include many students who come from families with low socio-economic status. However, while Toledo is a large urban area, surrounded mostly by suburbs, Findlay has a population of approximately 40,000 people, about an eighth of the

population of Toledo, and is surrounded by mostly rural areas. Findlay is home to over half of the people who live in Hancock county which is largely rural.

### **Planning for Reflection**

As we began our partnership, Mr. Lacy and I decided to keep a blog throughout the process to track the project and to give us a space to dialog (Appendix C). During the project, I would periodically post questions and Mr. Lacy and I could respond at our own pace. We did this mostly to address the reflection standards listed in the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice. It proved very beneficial, providing a place to regularly record our thoughts, and facilitate open communication. Compared with face to face communication, it seemed that the online communication supported our ability to construct our statements carefully and allowed us to highlight our struggles as well as our successes. In addition, when I was actually at the school, there were so many other demands on our time that we did not usually have an opportunity to reflect without students present. We knew that the reflection on the blog would just be between the two of us until we could decide whom else to include.

### **Building a Partnership with the Community**

I had met with Mr. Lacy for the first time in late December, and we decided that I would begin coming to Glenwood each Tuesday and Thursday, starting in January, for

his afternoon 7<sup>th</sup> grade math class. I would also stay for his homeroom/study hall at the end of the day, so we could talk about the project and have time for reflection on the outcomes. The next step in the process was to begin working with the students and Mr. Lacy to determine a community issue, a community partner, and which state math standards to correlate with potential projects. We looked at areas of measurement, geometry, and data analysis and probability. We looked at possible services that his class could offer the community based on the 7th grade state math standards, no funding, and the travel constraints (the students could only leave the school if they could walk; there was no money for busing). Throughout the process, I kept the National Youth Leadership Council's (NYLC) K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice in mind (Appendix A). For some of the standards, it is only necessary that you keep them in mind as you plan the project. Others can be addressed near the end of the project or in the lesson planning. The standards for reflection and youth voice required action at the very beginning of the project.

To engage the students in the planning process, we used the Hancock County United Way's categories for community services, and polled them on where they were most interested in working to better the community. We allowed the students to vote as many times as they wanted in order to measure overall interest rather than only voting for their first choice category. The highest number of votes was for the category of mental health (15 out of 20). Next were hunger/food issues, followed by homelessness

and seniors (each about 12 out of 20). My next step was to begin to contact local agencies that were already working on these issues.

I first used United Way's website to look up agencies in Findlay that corresponded with the interests of the students. I called the agencies first to find out if they were interested in partnering with 7th grade students, and asked for the details of the best to contact about a project. I found 12 agencies that were appropriate, and in addition, Dr. Rosser sent my proposal to three of her contacts. My proposal included a brief introduction about me and the goals of the project, the community issues we were interested in addressing, possible projects/services we could provide, the social and life skills I hoped the students would learn, and what I hoped to learn. (Appendix D).

I had three agencies respond with project ideas. Not all were directly from the people I contacted. Many times my email was forwarded two or three times before, it reached someone who could provide a response. The first idea was from a national financial lending company and focused on making posters about financial responsibility for their customers. This option had some possibilities, but was not in line with the services we suggested, and would have been difficult to connect to the curriculum. The second idea was from a local senior center and focused on making geometrically shaped table centerpieces for their banquet hall. This would have been a great service opportunity but had very limited potential as a service-learning project. The third came from another teacher at Glenwood Middle School, and encompassed

working with the local community gardens to make maps to pass out to community members about food assistance agencies and services in Findlay. This third option, was selected because part of the project could be done at an agency right behind the school (one of the gardens was located behind the school), the rest could be done in the classroom, and I had numerous connections at the University that could donate the only part that cost money (i.e. printing). Another benefit, which I found out after we agreed to this project, was that the main contact, Jon Hart, also happened to work fulltime at Glenwood Middle School.

The process of finding a suitable partnership took almost a month from when I first sent out the proposal, and it could have taken longer. Given the time constraints of both my partner and I we needed to move ahead, but with a different timeline I may have taken more time to find a community partner that was an even better with our goals.

### **Project Development**

It was now the end of February. Jon Hart, the community partner, and I met and decided that the students could make a community map of places that provide hunger assistance in Findlay (something United Way was interested in). Then they could help in the garden at the community center to mark out each family's plot. This project idea would allow the students to use the scaling skills they had learned during the year (to meet some of the 7th grade math standards), create a tangible product for the

community, interact with other community groups, do some hands-on service outside the school building, and be a good opportunity for positive publicity for the school.

This would help to address the K-12 Quality Practice Standards related to strong links to the curriculum, mutually beneficial partnerships, and meaningful service.

On March 3, I met with Jon Hart and Glenwood's Principal to talk over what we planned to do and get approval to move forward. The meeting went smoothly, with the understanding that we would keep the Principal informed with each further development and let him know before we agreed officially to do anything. The next day I sent an email to Ms. Phillips our United Way contact to update them before a meeting they had the next day. Without going into too much detail, we had some miscommunication through email that almost halted the project completely. It thankfully was worked out, but it could have all been avoided if I was able to attend United Way's meetings. Unfortunately, I had class at the time they held their meetings each week. This experience reinforced the challenges of partnership development when there are constraints on time and availability.

The rest of time until May was spent working out details of the project and doing much of the work in the classroom that I had become accustomed to as part of my previous school based engagement. I was answering students' questions, helping them with class work, re-affirming the lessons that Mr. Lacy was teaching, providing resources from the University's library, learning about and getting to know the

students, and teaching lessons to small groups and the whole class. It was good for the students, Mr. Lacy, and my development as a pre-service teacher. It was also particularly helpful to this particular project. Because I had been working with the students through the semester in a variety of fashions, it was an easier and smoother transition when we started the service-learning lessons. I was also better able to tailor my lesson plans to the individual student's needs, because I knew them.

At the beginning of April, we reflected on some unexpected causes of delays:

Mr. Lacy: I think the biggest factor that has influenced the timeline for this project has been preparing for the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) that are coming up at the end of April. I believe that Ms. Fessler has done an amazing job working with myself and Mr. Hart to be very flexible and accommodating through everything. Knowing that these tests are very important to the school and our students' future as well as our teachers, Ms. Fessler has adapted and worked very hard with me to help my students achieve at a very high level. Another huge factor has been the weather, this year has been a crazy year for snow, ice, and flooding, and this has delayed the project some as well as put a wrench into my lesson plans for preparing for class. Ms. Fessler has proven very vital and very welcomed by the students and myself in this process and I believe things will begin to move along much better from this point on.

Ms. Fessler: I agree with Mr. Lacy that both of those factors have influenced the timeline for the project greatly. The flooding not only had an impact on the students and the classroom by missing days of schools, but also delayed when the planting dates will be for the garden and how soon the community agency can begin their work. I would also add that from my end, university class workloads and times have impacted the timeline of this project. There were some things that I didn't keep moving as quickly because of distraction with my other classes or scheduled classes that I couldn't miss coinciding with the community partner's meetings. (personal communication, April 9, 2011)

My experience through ECC prior to this project allowed me to anticipate the delay that standardized testing would cause. However, I did not anticipate the extent to which weather or my limited availability would delay the project. There was a lot of flooding in the Findlay area during the spring and this meant that students had not been able to get out and volunteer at the community garden. In addition, I had planned to finish only a few days before the end of the school year, so the days of cancelled school due to flooding meant I ran out of time. In the future, I would plan for these delays by adjusting my original schedule to finish the project at least a few weeks before the end of the year.

## **Results**

### **Implementing the Plan**

By the time Ohio Achievement Testing was finished, it was the beginning of May and Bowling Green State University's finals week. I wanted to bring in someone from one of the agencies we hoped to put on the map to talk about hunger issues in Findlay. Here again many of the people I had contacted earlier in the project reappeared as important contacts. I decided to ask someone from United Way to come in, as they were the agency for which we were making the map. As I talked with the president, I realized that there was already an online version of the map we were hoping to make that was interactive and could be updated very easily. Mr. Hart had alluded to this earlier when he proposed that making a map would be a good idea, but we had not



fully grasped how this impacted our project. So we decided to redirect the project to serve specifically a population that would not have easy and frequent access to the Internet.

As I began to plan the lessons, I set the following learning goals:

- Students will be able to list at least two factors that contribute to hunger issues in Findlay and two that inhibit solutions.
- Students will be able to list the different types of agencies that serve hunger issues in Findlay.
- The students will interact with a community agency/people in the community working on hunger.
- The students will produce a map of Findlay with places to get free food listed by day.
- The students will work with the community garden.
- The students will be able to articulate ways in which they can contribute to help serve the community.

Mr. Lacy looked over the goals and gave his approval. Later we realized that we had become so focused on incorporating the community service outcomes of the project; we neglected to include many of the key math outcomes. I set the first two goals as my week one objectives and hoped to finish the third by the end of week two (with the plan of having all of May, four weeks, to complete the project). I sketched out the first week

in more detail and planned to be there for Monday and Wednesday while Mr. Lacy would teach my lessons for the other three days. Over the weekend, I asked the students to get feedback from teachers and community members on their plans for the map, and to ask whether they thought the maps would be useful to those needing food assistance. A more detailed plan for Monday included leading the students into coming up with the idea for this project on their own by asking a series of preplanned questions. I split the class into five groups for the beginning of the project, varying ability levels, interest levels, and social groups to align with NYLC's K-12 service-learning diversity standard for quality practice (something I could not have done had I not worked with the students for months prior).

The following are some of my reflections from the first day:

For the first ½ of class everything went as expected. The students' answers were as I expected and we were progressing with good time. We got to the point, where I asked the students what we could do to help. Obviously, some suggestions were more plausible than others were, but I let them all share freely and openly without evaluating the suggestions at first. The discussion was then interrupted by Mr. Hart, who came to speak about his part in the project with the community gardens. He talked to the students about what service-learning is, their chance to earn high school credit, what they will do in the gardens, how it will relate to math, and ways in which their work would be publicized. The students asked many questions and most seemed excited at the chance to help others and the community. After Mr. Hart left, I tried to get them back into our discussion a bit, but ended up just starting to talk about making a map to hand out and some details. We then began to go over different types of services [that] provide food. Finally, I broke them up into five groups of 4-5 people to begin looking at some of the agencies listed on the online map. Each group had 6 or 7 agencies to find when and to whom they provide food, what type of service they fall into, why they do what they do, and determine a recommendation to the

class on whether or not to include the agency on the map. They worked on this for the rest of the period and most groups were almost done by the end of the hour.

Overall, I think it went really well. I had not made in depth preparations, trusting that the student's answers would help guide the discussions, and they did. There are few things I would do differently, but there were not glaring hiccups. If I did this again, I would try to let the discussion go a bit more, so the students felt like it was their idea to make a map. We almost got there, but I jumped ahead a bit too early. I would also set up Mr. Hart's piece better (than the not at all it did today) and place it later in the lesson, like near the end or probably even another day. I was fairly pleased with the groups today. I attempted to break them into groups with people they didn't normally work with, varying ability levels, and typical engagement levels. Next time, I might also be more specific on what I expected of the group work. Most groups ended up working more as individuals than together. Hopefully as the project goes on they will grow to work more cohesively as a group. Tomorrow the plan is to finish up their initial investigation, graph some of their findings, and begin to look at poverty.

Looking back, I can see that it was even more of a problem than I anticipated that I jumped ahead a bit too early and didn't let the students come up with the ideas on their own. It was a lot more difficult to keep the students interested as the project progressed. It also became more, not less, of a problem that I didn't set up ground rules for the groups. I unfortunately didn't get another chance to articulate expectations, and some groups even decided that they were going to split and work individually near the end.

Later I also realized that I adjusted my approach to preparation time based on the success of Monday's class which had not required much preparation and went smoothly, so I tended to spend less time planning subsequent lessons. The following is part of a reflection I wrote about day 2 and 3:

Mr. Lacy had communicated with me through email what had been accomplished the day before as he was in meetings and there was a substitute for class today.

We talked about poverty for most of the class. I had them read over the Hunger Report on United Way's website. We then talked about the federal poverty guidelines for monthly income, calculated what someone could earn at minimum wage doing full time, and compared. We discussed what the students felt were necessary things people needed that cost money and I had them find statistics about poverty. I also asked them why they think the particular numbers that were chosen for poverty guidelines are what they are, but we didn't really come to any answers.

Near the end of the period, I broke them back up into their groups and attempted to explain to them the next step in the process. I didn't explain very well though and we ran out of time for me to clarify things, so I think they are mostly confused. I told them that tomorrow Mr. Lacy could go over with them their answers to question number one and four from Monday (the agencies hours of operation and their recommendation on whether or not to include the agency on the map), each group could decide what agencies they wanted to include on their map, and Mr. Lacy might be able to clarify for them what they need to do.

From here, I knew that I wasn't going to be back until at least Monday [two school days lay between and the president of United Way was coming on Tuesday] and since Mr. Lacy wasn't here today we couldn't discuss the plan for the next two days. I emailed him a reflection from today and ... suggestions/instructions with the hope that the students could continue to work on the project during the next two days.

I was hoping over the weekend and on Monday before class, they would show their ideas to other teachers, community members, their families, etc. and get feedback. Then on Monday, they could work on making final changes. I also included in my email to Mr. Lacy that if he or the students had any questions during class they couldn't figure out, he should feel free to call me. I could have come down both Thursday and Friday, but with gas being so expensive, and

anticipating that I would continue to be driving to Findlay for the rest of the month, I wanted to space out my visits.

Monday went as follows:

The previous two days that I wasn't in the classroom, the students had begun working on their maps. I soon found out that group one was almost completely finished, with only minor adjustments needing made. Group 4 and 5 had concepts started, but were not near as far as I had hoped. And the other two groups appeared as if they hadn't even begun. I could also see that each group had at least one student who wasn't being included (some voluntarily, others not). I moved from group to group throughout the class answering questions, providing suggestions, and attempting to get the groups to work cohesively and inclusively (i.e. getting students to stay with their group, talk with each other, and/or find some work to do to contribute). I also had to monitor students wishing to move in and out of the classroom to get documents they printed, go to the restroom, or get a drink. The time appeared to be productive for all the groups except group two. They spent most of the time frustrated waiting for one of their members to help them. At the end of the period it still appeared as if they hadn't started. I think I could have been more helpful to all the students by laying some ground rules for group work before we got started and being more strict on students staying seated working with their group only. I was pleased with the first group's work, but am nervous that most of the others will have little to show the president of United Way tomorrow.

One of the NYLC's K-12 service-learning standards for quality practice deals with students developing interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making. From my mistakes with setting up the groups, I learned some important things about how I want to set up groups in the future and ground rules I should set.

The next day was when our guest speaker--the president of Hancock United Way--came in. The following is my reflection on the visit at the time of the project:

Today the president of the United Way (Mr. DuVernay) came to speak. I met him in the office before hand and we talked a little about the school in general and then our class in particular. He mentioned being a bit more uneasy talking to children than to adults. Mr. Lacy met us soon and Mr. DuVernay shared that he was appreciative of the chance to share about service with the students. On our way down to the classroom, I recounted to him what I hoped he would share. When we got into the classroom, Mr. Lacy and I introduced the students to Mr. DuVernay and he began by talking about what the United Way does. He then talked specifically about what Hancock County has been doing to provide food assistance to its citizens mixed in with giving away free t-shirts. After that, the students moved into their groups and Mr. DuVernay and I walked around to look at each map. He gave each group suggestions and some to the class as a whole. The groups' maps weren't much different than at the end of the class yesterday. Group one was good, group two had nothing to show, group three and four had something, but it could hardly be described as a map, and group five was closer to groups one with only about one side done. After looking at the maps, Mr. DuVernay had some more free things to hand out and asked questions about various agencies in the area as trivia. When he left, we had about ten-fifteen minutes left where the students were given more time to work on their maps. Tomorrow Mr. Lacy will be out again and since I won't be there either the students are going to work on a worksheet instead of this project. Thursday Mr. Lacy will work with them again and Friday I will be back so we can hopefully start moving towards the whole class working together on one map. I was very pleased with how today went with the exception of some of the groups' ideas that weren't very complete. I think I could have helped this a lot by better setting up what I wanted them to do at the start and giving them more direction. I wanted to give them freedom to come up with their own ideas, but I inadvertently left many of them confused.

My less detailed planning, the students working slower than I expected, and end of the year assemblies, rewards, and other events meant that the students stopped working when we were only about half way through the project. After day seven, I expected to be back on Friday (day 9). I received an email that morning that there were some presentations going on at the school that had changed the whole schedule. Mr. Lacy was unsure what times they would be meeting as a class and didn't want me to waste gas coming down, so he suggested I not come. After school that day, he sent me what the students had finished to give feedback on. They were about a week behind where I hoped they would be. Due to the work schedule for my summer job, I was not able to reschedule to get to the school for another week. A class was also disrupted on the next Monday with celebrations to mark a new school building opening. That evening I sent Mr. Lacy an email providing feedback on the student's work that he had sent me, and detailed instructions of how I thought they should proceed in order to finish by the last day of school.

On Wednesday, I received the following email in reply:

Amber thanks for the feedback on the maps the kids are pretty much shut down at this point and I am not getting much of anything from them at all. I wanted to let you know I am not sure how much actual class time we are going to have work on Friday or the following week with the end of the year activities and things that we have to do for this grant. I know on Friday the kids are going to need to [do] a couple of surveys that are rather lengthy. Things have gotten pretty crazy as they always do this time of year. I am sorry about that but I just wanted to let you know so you don't waste gas to come down and watch awards assemblies or kids

taking surveys or movie activities that are going on with different rewards for the students. We all appreciate your help throughout the second semester of the year you helped me out more than you know. Thanks and good luck if you need anything at all please let me know and I will help anyway that I can. (personal communication, May 18, 2011)

I responded by asking if there were 10-15 minutes that I could talk with the students to provide closure to the project - I knew at that point I was going to have to compile the students' maps into one and finish it myself. I wanted to be able to show the students the final product and point out how much of it was their work. However, I was not able to resolve this. I sent the final map to Mr. Lacy via email so that he could show the students at some point. Since I had not been to the school in a while, I also had not talked to Jon Hart. I sent him an email with the final map. He said it looked fine and suggested I take it to United Way when I was finished. After emailing the president of United Way and the principal of Glenwood for final approval, I sent the maps to Dr. Patrick Vrooman, the director of ECC, and Dr. Jane Rosser, and the director of the Office of Service-Learning, for printing. They had both agreed to print 100 copies of the map in color front and back as a donation to the Hancock County United Way.

Following the close of the school year, I returned to Findlay to distribute the printed maps to the agencies. The agencies all agreed to distribute the maps to anyone in the targeted demographic that came to utilize their services. A few of the agencies were extremely grateful and shared that there were people they already knew who would really appreciate the maps.



## **Project Reflections**

As I looked back on the project, I want to highlight a few things I found especially beneficial as well as struggles I went through with managing my time, pursuits, and constraints.

One of the decisions I made early on that proved to be very helpful was to interview Mr. Lacy. From this interview I learned about his previous experience (7 years of teaching in 4 different areas with no service-learning experience), what he found most rewarding in teaching, how he perceived the school district and the community, how the school addressed cultural diversity, what he saw as the number one problem facing schools, his philosophy of education, what motivated him, what he would like to reform, how he includes parents, what has impacted him most, and any recommendations he had for first-year teachers. The interview gave me an insight into his personal teaching style and what he valued and helped us get to know each other. It also helped me to build rapport with him early in the project, which was key to a successful partnership.

One of my early challenges with this project was to juggle all the different avenues I was pursuing simultaneously when trying to find a partner teacher. I needed to continue to follow up and work closely with each person to ensure I had the greatest chance of finding an appropriate partnership within my time constraints; yet, I also had

to be careful not to mislead them all into thinking that, if they found a teacher willing to work with me, I would immediately accept.

After I found a partner teacher and proceeded with contacting the other people that initially were trying to find teachers for me, I realized I had not been as transparent as I should have been during the first attempts to find a partner. Fortunately, I had addressed this issue during the second round of outreach. By this time, I was much more upfront with everyone that I was pursuing multiple possible projects. I made sure to thank the organization for their reply, to let them know that I would get back to them after discussing the ideas with my other partners, and that I was still waiting on replies from other local agencies I was in contact with. Each person I was in contact with at this stage of the process seemed to respond positively. While the agencies I decided not to work with were still disappointed, they did not seem frustrated or upset.

I also struggled with communication at another point in the project. In the midst of planning to implement the project, I was assigned to contact Ms. Phillips to update the United Way on what we were planning before their meeting the next day. Without going into too much detail, we had some miscommunication through email that almost halted the project completely. It thankfully was worked out, but it could have all been avoided if I was able to make United Way's meetings. Unfortunately, I had class at the time they held their meetings each week. This is another challenge that comes with having University students working with/in K-12 schools and local communities. The

times that work best for K-12 staff, faculty, students, and communities do not always fit into the university schedule. Even though I excel in my classes and could afford to miss some, there were scheduled events such as tests and other meetings/activities that prevented me from always being available when my partners would have liked. This incident also reinforced for me the importance of maintaining good relationships with everyone you contact. At different stages of the process, Ms. Phillips kept reappearing as the key contact person after I thought I had finished the part of the project that involved her.

As we came to the end of March, I posted the following reflection about the project on our blog:

One of the most frustrating things has been trying to balance my schedule as a student at BGSU with my schedule at Glenwood. OAT testing schedules, different spring breaks, and different ends of the year have impacted our timelines quite a bit. ... Another frustrating thing would probably be waiting. We hit a bit of a pause in the process and I've built some anticipation and anxiety as we get closer and closer to the end of the year. As there is less necessity to do a lot with the project, I have been focusing more on my other work as a student, even though I know there is probably things I should have researched more or worked on. I'm most excited about helping to teach the students about community service and getting the students off-site working at the garden. I hope that they can have lots of fun and enjoy seeing their schoolwork applied to help others. As I reflect on the project now, I realize that these are problems that are inherent in trying to work in both a university and K-12 setting simultaneously. I wanted to devote myself fully to the project and my students, but other demands as a university student limited the time I could spend.

As I thought about the time issues, I became very aware of how time consuming service-learning can be, especially for pre-service teachers. During the first semester working on this project, my total work time equated to what I would dedicate to a 3-4 credit hour class (BGSU sets 12-18 credit hours as a full-time student). I was also taking 17 credits of other classes, working five hours a week, participating in field experience in Toledo five hours each week, and spending about nine hours a week participating in and leading University student organizations.

As I moved into the second semester of the project, I replaced my time in Toledo schools with the 5 hours a week I spent in Findlay (excluding the two hours travel time). I also quit my job and decreased my class load to 16 credit hours. School has always been easy for me and I have been able to balance my time and still excel in classes. Even with the decreased load compared to previous semesters, if I had to spend the same amount of time on preparing for my classes as most of my peers or if I could not have afforded to quit my job, I would not have been able to do half of the things I did for this project. During the second semester, I spent about a third of my time working on this project and helping with other things at Glenwood, another third with university student organizations, and the final third on my university classes. Other students who have to spend more time on their studies, or must hold another job to stay in school, may choose to give up being highly involved in student organizations or

might choose not to participate in community engagement. These are important considerations for pre-service teachers trying to balance community based work with class commitments, and meet commitments to community partners.

Finally, as I look back I realize that the math goals for the service-learning unit were weak, and did not effectively address the all the criteria from NYLC's K-12 service-learning standards for quality practice. I was so focused on planning lessons, making sure students could finish the map, and accommodating student voice, that other elements I wanted to incorporate seemed to get lost. This experience really brought home to me the challenges of planning a service-learning course and how many different elements a teacher has to manage. Unfortunately, limited time to plan lessons and prepare lessons is almost always a constraint in the K-12 classroom. As a full-time teacher, I may not have university classes or semester deadlines to deal with, but I will be limited by the amount of planning time I have in a day and how many lessons I must prepare in that time. This experience has been invaluable in really helping me grasp everything that is involved in incorporating service-learning as a pedagogy.

## **Discussion**

### **Further Research**

Following my experience setting up a service-learning project in a local school, I decided to look into what other work had been done with pre-service teachers in service-learning and how my experiences related to the previous work in the field.

My goal for this project was to become an effective service-learning practitioner. Previously, I had only heard of school districts training teachers already in the field or teachers who trained themselves. Both examples included teachers implementing service-learning as part of the learning process. Therefore, I thought that trying to implement a service-learning project would be the best way to learn. During the first semester of the project, we were so caught up in making a proposal, trying to find a teacher to work with, and working on details that would allow the project to happen, that research was primarily related to this particular project rather than exploring issues related to pre-service teacher education.

While I had a lot of experience in the classroom prior to this project, I was never in charge of planning more than a day lesson or teaching students as planned by the teacher I was working with. I learned a lot through this project about service-learning and the issues related to using community based learning in K-12 schools, yet I learned almost as much about the issues that affect any type of learning in K-12 schools. As a pre-service teacher having not yet completed student-teaching, I faced some unique challenges.

Following the project, I decided to do some further research focusing on the issue of implementing service-learning as a pre-service teacher. I could have focused on implications of working with teachers who are not trained in service-learning and Mr. Lacy's experience. I could have looked at service-learning in middle school math classrooms or colleges using service-learning in their teacher preparation programs. My initial goal was to implement service-learning as a pre-service teacher. While I learned a lot about many other areas and could have gone in many different directions with my final research, I chose this area because I thought it best concerned the entirety of my project and as a current pre-service teacher; I could contribute insight that may not be available to many professionals in the field.

Service-learning is a very collaborative field so I began my research by emailing the national K-12 Service-Learning Listserv requesting recommendations for resources related to service-learning and pre-service teacher educators. I received very strong responses, including some of the scholars whose work figured prominently in the recommendations. I then conducted searches via the National Service-Learning Clearing House Database, the International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education website, the National Youth Leadership Council website, ERIC, BGSU's library, and a variety of internet databases. The following is the most current and comprehensive information I was able to find on implementing service-learning as a pre-service teacher.

The National Youth Leadership Council's annual report, *Growing to Greatness* (2010), featured an article entitled "Service-Learning in Preservice Teacher Education: An Overview of the Research". In this article Anderson and Root use a definition of academic service-learning in pre-service teacher education that includes "a credit-bearing educational experience that involves teacher candidates ... designing and facilitating service-learning experiences for K-12 students in order to learn about the use of service-learning as a pedagogy." (24) They also state that the teacher candidate must "work closely with the community to identify and address genuine community needs and engage in systemic reflection to accomplish course goals, enhance their personal and professional formation, and develop civic responsibility". (24)

My project fits this definition, because I will receive credit for the project and I designed and facilitated the project. I also worked with the community attempting to identify and address a real need. I engaged in systematic reflection through this final documentation of the project that helped to accomplish the final four pieces of the definition.

This article sites a few studies that seem to confirm what I have learned and experienced throughout my project. A 1999 study by Wade et. Al, supports my initial idea that in order to prepare pre-service teachers to implement service-learning, they must actually implement a project. They also say that pre-service teachers must receive "explicit instruction in the use of service-learning pedagogy" and the field experience



must include the pre-service teachers designing the project, assessing and reflecting on the service-learning, and “working closely with experienced K-12 teachers, their students, and community members”. My project met several key elements identified in this study, and corroborated the weaknesses I have already identified in terms of the challenges of planning and managing a service-learning project.

Anderson and Root (2010) also comment, “an additional challenge unique to teacher education is the need to respond to different layers of accountability requirements”, both those at the K-12 and the post secondary level. I found this especially true as I dealt with not only the accountability requirements from my classroom teacher, but also from the school, and ultimately the state standards and school’s priority for standardized test scores. At the university level, I was somewhat less accountable for my learning as I was enrolled in an elective self-directed honors class, but the fact that I was not exposed to service-learning pedagogy in my other education classes was reflective of the constraints imposed by standards for teacher preparation.

Anderson and Root (2010) cited a 2001 study by Harwood & Lawson that addressed what I came to realize about the unique ability of pre-service teachers to implement service-learning, “Despite these challenges, teacher education programs are well placed to facilitate service-learning in both higher education and P-12 environments. ... Many [teacher education programs] have formed equitable,

collaborative relationships with P-12 schools, and as a result, have the potential to establish service-learning partnerships that effectively address the needs of K-12 schools, along with the needs of teacher education programs.” Pre-service teachers at my institution are always looking for quality teachers and schools that will allow them to gain experience and knowledge by helping out in the classroom. The pre-service teachers have time, energy, resources provided by the university, and the desire to serve that can greatly benefit any classroom. P-12 schools in turn have the classrooms, students, and experiences that pre-service teachers want to work with to enhance their learning. Service-learning takes extra time, energy, and resources to implement compared to many pedagogies that are more traditional. Pre-service teachers are often uniquely suited to provide exactly what P-12 schools need to implement service-learning projects successfully. However, I do realize that this can sometimes be undermined by pre-service teachers who fail to fulfill their commitments to the P-12 schools and students or P-12 teachers who are not willing or able to provide quality learning experiences to pre-service teachers.

Anderson and Root (2010) also cite over 25 studies that examine the impact of service-learning on pre-service teachers. They support that it increases “academic learning, ...understanding and caring for students, ...professional attitudes and values for successful teaching, ... understanding and appreciation of diversity, ... [and] motivation, knowledge, and skills to implement service-learning.” The National

Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) has a standard on candidate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions as well as one on diversity. The benefits of service-learning for pre-service teachers help to address and fulfill the NCATE standards in these two areas. I personally feel that this project has helped me demonstrate target performance in the standards of pedagogical content knowledge for teacher candidates, student learning for teacher candidates, professional dispositions for all candidates, and experiences working with diverse students in P-12 schools. It has also helped in achieving acceptable performance in the standards of professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills for teacher candidates and experiences working with diverse faculty.

Anderson and Root (2010) conclude their overview of service-learning in pre-service teacher education research with "service-learning in teacher preparation has the potential to assist prospective teachers to develop into knowledgeable, caring, responsive, and effective professionals, skilled at using this approach to help their students achieve academically and connect to realities of their communities."

The other document I found most helpful was the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse's fact sheet on Teacher Education and Service-Learning. Billig and Freeman (2010) cite several researchers (e.g., Harwood, Fliss, & Goulding, 2006; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002; Vickers, 2007) who "found that when teacher candidates engage in service-learning projects, they are more likely to become sensitive to students'

developmental needs, understand the social-emotional learning that can serve to support academic learning for the students, and develop a more realistic view of the teaching profession, which in turn can help them to adjust and stay within the profession when they become teachers.” I can definitely say throughout this project I have gained a better understanding of students’ developmental needs and developed a more realistic view of the teaching profession. There were many things throughout the semester that I mistakenly thought my students would be able to understand before I realized that as 7th graders they were not developmentally ready for the way I planned to explain the material.

I had plenty of experience prior to this project working with students in classrooms and even teaching a few lessons. However, this was the first time that I was both creating multiple lessons in a row and in charge of teaching more than ten or fifteen students by myself. Of course, Mr. Lacy or a substitute teacher was always around if something would have gone awry, but they gave me the opportunity to see what it is like to try to teach all the students at once. I was also faced with many opportunities in which the students had more questions and needed more help than I alone could provide in the time I had. I was forced to decide whom I was going to help and whom I would leave confused.

The students I worked with were all at different levels. Some would quickly fly through the material and be waiting for me to teach them more. Others would work at a

moderate pace and some would be way behind where I needed them to be. In my own life, I was usually the first kind of student, and often felt underserved by an educational system that often failed to teach me at or near my capacity to learn. Especially with the recent emphasis on standardized testing, teachers often focus on the students struggling the most, in turn neglecting those who excel. As a teacher, I hope to challenge all students to the best of their ability. Nonetheless, I did not realize prior to this project, how hard this would be and why it happened so often, even with otherwise excellent teachers. My view of the teaching profession is much more realistic than prior to the project.

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse website also gives resources for successful implementation of service-learning in teacher preparation programs and what characteristics most affect the results. If you are looking for proof of the benefits of service-learning for pre-service teachers and/or K-12 schools, the previous two documents are a great start. There are also many books about service-learning in teacher education that clearly lay out the greatest benefits, such as *Service-Learning in Teacher Education* edited by Anderson, Swick and Yff (2001) or the *Advances in Service-Learning Research* series published by Information Age. The *Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Teacher Education* is yet another source for new research in this area. It is available online and is edited by Kathleen Wasserman. For individuals interested in incorporating service-learning into a teacher accreditation program, the

International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education, formed by the National Service-Learning in Teacher Education Partnership in 2003, has three documents posted to their website housed at Clemson University on how to meet NCATE standards through Service-Learning. These resources would be useful to other students and faculty members interested in engaging pre-service teachers in service-learning experiences in P-12 settings.

### **Recommendations**

The following are my main recommendations for pre-service teachers who want to implement a service-learning project:

- Plan at least a month of daily communication to find partners.
- "Don't let perfect be the enemy of good."
- Plan things to take twice as long as you think they will.
- Pursue as many partnerships as possible and be open that you are pursuing multiple paths until you settle on one.

While some of these are related primarily to the service-learning, most apply to any area of teaching.

Plan at least a month of daily communication to find partners. Good partnerships are essential in service-learning and they take time to develop. Don't expect to find a perfect match quickly or on the first try. K-12 teachers and community agencies have many demands on their time. If you hope to find partners well suited for your project,

expect to put in lots of time following up with and responding to leads. Many times my initial emails were forwarded two or three times before they reached someone who could provide a response. Setting up service-learning projects is made much easier by relying on a network of people who believe in the project and are willing to pass along your request. I might never have been able to find the right people on my own. It was thanks to the help of countless individuals along the way who took the time to read my proposal and put me in to contact with others that I received any fitting project ideas at all.

“Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good.” I was given this advice a few semesters after I had implemented the project. I cannot remember in what context or from whom I received it. Yet as I look back now, I can see how many of my struggles were due to letting my perfect be the enemy of good. You will always be limited in the amount of time you have to plan lessons and projects. There will also always be improvement you could have or wish you had made. If you try to wait until you have the perfect plans to try to implement anything, you will always be waiting. It is better to settle with a decent or good plan sooner and give yourself more time to work out the details of the plan.

Plan things to take twice as long as you think they will. There are often many unexpected delays in the K-12 environment. Circumstances such as weather delays, school assemblies, special schedules, and state testing may cut down the time you have in the classroom. The project could also get delayed or elongated if your community

partner experiences unexpected delays or if your students do not catch on to the material as quickly as you thought.

Pursue as many partnerships as possible and be open that you are pursuing multiple paths until you settle on one. Setting up service-learning projects is made much easier by relying on a network of people who believe in the project and are willing to pass along your request. Being open with everyone you contact about what you are doing is also really necessary to developing good partnerships.

### **Personal Reflections**

Could the advantages that I found be worth what others would have to give up to try this? Learning to use service-learning pedagogy through trial may not be the best way or even the most efficient way to learn. However, that is not what really concerns me. I chose to become a part of learning community at BGSU with early, intensive field experience and I chose this Honors project in a large part because I wanted to help others and teach students valuable lessons as soon as possible. I did not want to wait until my senior year of school or even after I graduated to start making a difference in the lives of students. I don't know what tomorrow will hold for me, but I can do something about today. Engaging in service-learning in this way as a pre-service teacher allowed me to make a difference in the lives of students while I was learning and preparing to lead my own classroom, not waiting until after graduation. I sought to reject the traditional idea of college where you spend four years in academic settings



learning about what you want to do and waiting until you are finished to start actually doing what you really want to. As I began to learn, I sought to apply my knowledge while it was still fresh, to test it out in practice. The longer after I learn something that I wait to use it, the less of it I actually remember.

I am trying to say that it is worth the time. It was worth spending time implementing a service-learning project rather than just doing a research project. The research made so much more sense once I had an experiential lens to evaluate and think critically about the content. It was worth having a little less free time to work with students a couple hours each week. I may have done a little less high quality work in my other classes, missed a few late night card games, read a few less novels, and spent less time cooking and eating my meals. It was worth it for me to help another community, to be there for the students who needed a little extra help, to introduce them to a different way of learning, to talk to them about their lives and show them someone cares, and to learn to be a better teacher by learning from professors, teachers at Glenwood, and through my own trials. Whether engaging in a similar project would be worth it for others depends on what they value. There is a lot more I could have done to make this project a success, but that would have meant making a lot more sacrifices with my time. I was not willing to give up the work I did with my student organizations, my Christian practices, and the majority of the time I spent with friends. However, I was still able to do a lot of good and accomplish significant learning while

holding on to all these parts of my life. What it comes down to is –it is worth what you have to give up. The more time you put into it the more you will learn. I hope my experience conveys an idea of how much time is necessary for certain types of experiences and what can be hoped to be gained from pre-service teachers engaging in service-learning.

This kind of project also takes money. I worked with no initial funding for my project. I was able to make it work through the help of donations and personally funding costs such as transportation. Nevertheless, there were many improvements I could have made to the project if I had more funding. Mr. Lacy, Dr. Rosser, and everyone else who helped me with this project also donated their time for free. On the small scale of one project, this was possible with little to no trouble. On a larger scale or with more pre-service teachers, financing would be a necessary concern.

I could have taken more time to look into the benefits and challenges of institutionalizing service-learning in teacher education programs, as there is plenty of research and information on the topic. However, as a current pre-service teacher, I am more concerned with what pre-service teachers, with the help of supportive faculty and K-12 educators, can accomplish. I started this project with an interest in bettering the community where I work, helping to teach students how to make a better life for themselves, and supporting them in that process. From my experience, there are many pre-service teachers who are interested in these same things. However, many do not

know or have access to ways to accomplish them. Can you help them? Are you one of them?

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## Appendix A

### K-12 National Youth Leadership Council's Service-Learning Standards



These standards and indicators were vetted through a series of "reactor panels" convened nationwide by the National Youth Leadership Council and RMC Research Corporation. The panels were composed of young people, teachers, school and district administrators, community members, staff from community-based organizations, policy-makers, and others interested in service-learning. The process was much like content-setting standards in other fields. Each panel considered the work of the two before them, revising the standards and indicators to ensure that they included the strongest aspects of quality, and to make the wording clearer, measurable, and actionable. For more information, visit [www.nylc.org/standards](http://www.nylc.org/standards).

## K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

### Meaningful Service

*Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning experiences are appropriate to participant ages and developmental abilities.
2. Service-learning addresses issues that are personally relevant to the participants.
3. Service-learning provides participants with interesting and engaging service activities.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to understand their service experiences in the context of the underlying societal issues being addressed.
5. Service-learning leads to attainable and visible outcomes that are valued by those being served.

### Link to Curriculum

*Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning has clearly articulated learning goals.
2. Service-learning is aligned with the academic and/or programmatic curriculum.
3. Service-learning helps participants learn how to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another.
4. Service-learning that takes place in schools is formally recognized in school board policies and student records.

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*Service-learning is a philosophy, pedagogy, and model for community development that is used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.*



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## K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

continued ...

### Reflection

*Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning reflection includes a variety of verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities to demonstrate understanding and changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes.
2. Service-learning reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience.
3. Service-learning reflection prompts participants to think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions.
4. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine their preconceptions and assumptions in order to explore and understand their roles and responsibilities as citizens.
5. Service-learning reflection encourages participants to examine a variety of social and civic issues related to their service-learning experience so that participants understand connections to public policy and civic life.

### Diversity

*Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.*

Indicators

1. Service-learning helps participants identify and analyze different points of view to gain understanding of multiple perspectives.
2. Service-learning helps participants develop interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making.
3. Service-learning helps participants actively seek to understand and value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of those offering and receiving service.
4. Service-learning encourages participants to recognize and overcome stereotypes.



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## K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

continued ...

### Youth Voice

*Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning engages youth in generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
2. Service-learning involves youth in the decision-making process throughout the service-learning experiences.
3. Service-learning involves youth and adults in creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas.
4. Service-learning promotes acquisition of knowledge and skills to enhance youth leadership and decision-making.
5. Service-learning involves youth in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

### Partnerships

*Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service-learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.



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## K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice

### Progress Monitoring

*Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning participants collect evidence of progress toward meeting specific service goals and learning outcomes from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
2. Service-learning participants collect evidence of the quality of service-learning implementation from multiple sources throughout the service-learning experience.
3. Service-learning participants use evidence to improve service-learning experiences.
4. Service-learning participants communicate evidence of progress toward goals and outcomes with the broader community, including policy-makers and education leaders, to deepen service-learning understanding and ensure that high quality practices are sustained.

### Duration and Intensity

*Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.*

Indicators:

1. Service-learning experiences include the processes of investigating community needs, preparing for service, action, reflection, demonstration of learning and impacts, and celebration.
2. Service-learning is conducted during concentrated blocks of time across a period of several weeks or months.
3. Service-learning experiences provide enough time to address identified community needs and achieve learning outcomes.

## **Appendix B**

### Teacher Proposal

My name is Amber Fessler. I am a junior at Bowling Green State University majoring in Adolescent to Young Adult Mathematics Education. I am a member of the Honors Program, the Co-Chancellor of the Partners in Context and Community Prospective Teachers Learning Community, a tutor for Student-Athlete Services, and involved in a number of service groups at BGSU. As part of my requirement to graduate with University Honors, I am attempting to create a service-learning project connecting a community need with teaching students math skills contained in the Ohio Academic Content Standards. For this project, I am hoping to find a local teacher and a community partner who I can work with to make this project happen.

I bring to this project over 200 hours of experience working with students in Toledo Public Schools' classrooms on subjects ranging from 8<sup>th</sup> grade pre-algebra to 12<sup>th</sup> grade pre-calculus. I have attended approximately 60 hours of seminars on current trends and topics in education, frequent and common urban school issues, and presentations by master teachers. I have knowledge of and many connections to

community agencies in the Bowling Green and Toledo area through my work in BGSU's Office of Service-Learning and my leadership roles in various clubs at the University during the past two years. I also recently visited a public school in Ohio that uses projects like the one I hope to create as their whole curriculum and consequently learned a few of the tools they use to develop their projects.

My ideal partnership would be with a teacher in a school serving a low-income population in a grade from 7th to 12th. I am passionate about bringing creative opportunities for learning to students who typically do not have access to these opportunities. Students in low-income schools are also less likely to come from highly educated families and therefore might not be as familiar with ways they can use their education in their community. I would love to have a teacher who is excited about methods of assessment other than traditional test or papers, would like to try new teaching strategies, is passionate about serving the community, is eager to develop curriculum that teaches life skills in addition to the standards, is dedicated to differentiated instruction, and has the time and energy to work on a project that requires frequent communication. I would love to work with students in the classroom, to have the possibility for short trips off school property either during school hours or after school hours and to document student work and progress for the purpose of scholarship creation. The project may be difficult in a school with strict pacing guides.

I am willing to spend 5-10 hours in the classroom each week throughout the process, working with the students, the teacher, and other necessary school personnel to make this project possible. I am also willing to take responsibility for making connections with a community partner, planning the project, supervising any trips, assessing student work, researching best practices, and any other necessary work to complete this project.

Through the project, I hope to learn more about the process of getting service-learning projects approved in schools as well as all the communication needed to coordinate the project between the community partner, the students, the parents, and the school. I also hope to learn more about helping students who are struggling academically, socially, or emotionally, differentiating instruction, and other best teaching practices.

I can be reached through email at [amberlf@bgsu.edu](mailto:amberlf@bgsu.edu) or by phone at (937)-570-0910. I would like to start working on developing this project as soon as possible and the latest would need to begin by February 1, 2011. As a note, BGSU is on holiday break from Nov. 23 -28<sup>th</sup> and Dec. 18 – Jan. 9, which will make communication and work during those times more difficult as I will not be in the area. A minimum of two weeks is needed to develop project ideas that fit with the culture and timeline of the classroom

as well as possible community needs. Following this period, a minimum of three weeks is needed to find a community partner for the project, before student work on the project can begin. All student work and assessment will need to be completed by April 4, 2011. Other important dates to note are BGSU's Spring Break from March 5 to the 13 and if work is being done in a class with students needing to pass the OGT, the 2011 test dates are March 14 to 18.

Thank you for your time and I hope to be hearing from you soon.

Amber Fessler  
Bowling Green State University  
AYA Mathematics Education  
PCC Co-Chancellor of Administration  
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## Appendix C

### Reflection Blog

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2011

## An Introduction to Our Roles in the Project

Ms. Fessler :

I am a undergraduate student at Bowling Green State University majoring in Adolescent to Young Adult Mathematics Education. As part of my requirement to graduate with University Honors, I am working with Mr. Lacy to create a service-learning project in his 7th grade math class.

I will be at Glenwood each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon working with the students and Mr. Lacy both on aspects related to this project and other material the students or Mr. Lacy are working on. I will take the main responsibility for making connections with a community partner, researching the best practices, planning the project, and any other necessary components of a successful service-learning project.

Mr. Lacy:

I have a middle school education degree in math and science. I am in my 7th year of my teaching and this will be my first service learning project. I will serve as the lead teacher in the classroom working with the students on their daily math activities as well as helping create a project with Ms. Fessler that will fit our math curriculum.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 3:18 PM 1 comments



FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 2011

## Describe what the project has looked like thus far from your point of view?

Ms. Fessler : I started this process in August of 2010 meeting with Dr. Jane Rosser from Bowling Green State University's Office of Service-Learning. Together we worked to develop a proposal for what I was hoping to do, what previous experience I had, what my ideal school partnership would look like, what I could contribute, what I hoped to learn, and my timeline. Once we finished the proposal, I sent it out through email to contacts Dr. Rosser had in local k-12 service-learning. We waited, I met with a few different administrators, and finally I was put in contact with Mr. Lacy. I met with him in December and once we decided to work together, we discussed when I would be in Findlay during the Spring. I started in Findlay from 12:30-2:30p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday in early January. Dr. Rosser suggested I ask Mr. Lacy about the school policies related to the project, ways in which this project could benefit him personally, his previous experience with service-learning, and discuss how we wanted to document the process. I also looked up some categories of service and we surveyed the students to see what they would be most interested in. I've been getting to know the students and I am currently waiting to meet with Dr. Rosser to discuss how to go about contact and setting up a partnership with a community agency.

Mr. Lacy: Being honest when I first started this service learning project I was very nervous and I wasn't sure what to expect. But Ms. Fessler has done an amazing job with the students working with them on daily math problems and concepts. Also, just being a friend and someone they can come to with a question or comment and that has been very exciting and great to have in my class. The students have also responded to the initial brainstorming of topics in a very positive light that makes me very excited to see the students working and see the products that they come up with.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 2:47 PM 1 comments



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2011

## What has been the most difficult part thus far?

Ms. Fessler: The most difficult part for me thus far has been finding partners. This is two part, both finding a partner teacher and then finding a community partner. The first one being already accomplished and the second one still in progress. It took me almost three months from the start of developing a proposal to send to educators until I met with Mr. Lacy and we agreed to work together. It was difficult at the time because I had no idea how to go about it, but now that I've done it once I think it would be much easier next time. This is also a part of the process that will not be necessary if I use service-learning in my future classroom. The second part of finding a community partner took less time to develop a proposal, because I had my initial one to work off of. I just had to adapt it to apply to community agencies. Now it is a matter of putting the time in to contact agencies until I find one that will work as a good partner. It also takes a certain amount of waiting for agencies to respond. While I don't really believe in luck, for lack of a better phrase in this context, a bit of that is involved as well.

Mr. Lacy: I would agree the biggest challenge those far is waiting for the community agencies to reply to Ms. Fessler. As the difficult parts for myself is working a new face into the classroom a few days a week. The kids respond to Ms. Fessler very well and her hard work and knowledge of the material is very evident and the kids trust her in the classroom. All very great things for a teacher to have especially one that is here only part time. As for the class the students were looking forward to the project when we first introduced it now it is a matter of keeping them aware of what is to come and that we will have an opportunity to help someone out in the future. That is the biggest obstacle right now but I believe we can overcome this with the continued hard work in the classroom and updates to the students as much as we can.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 10:14 AM 0 comments







## What are 2 things that most frustrated you and 2 things you are most excited about?

Mr. Lacy: The two things that most frustrated me in the classroom so far has been the lack of communication and not on the part of Ms. Fessler but the community. I fear that if the group we will be working with wouldn't have had a prior connection with Glenwood that no one would have given myself, Ms. Fessler or our students the time of day. I don't why this is but that really frustrated me a lot. The other thing would have to be me not taking advantage of this other very smart and able student teacher in my classroom. I should have broke into groups more and had the students working and learning from her more than just what I had her doing. I dropped the ball on this opportunity and hopefully over the course of the next month I can help her out more. One thing that I am very excited about is working with the United Way and the Findlay Mentor program to do a great service for the community and to have the opportunity to let me students enjoy this process as well. This is a great thing for the students and the community and this really does excite me. Secondly, is having the opportunity to meet and work with Ms. Fessler. Her knowledge and passion for education and service learning is very unique. I appreciate all that she has done and I hope to continue to work along side of her in the future. Thank you!

Ms. Fessler: One of the most frustrating things has been trying to balance my schedule as a student at BGSU with my schedule at Glenwood. OAT testing schedules, different spring breaks, and different ends of the year have impacted our timelines quite a bit. I've also not been able to meet with all the different partners in the project as much as I would have liked because of my classes at the university. The second thing would probably be waiting. We hit a bit of a pause in the process and I've built some anticipation and anxiety as we get closer and closer to the end of the year. As there is less necessity to do a lot with the project, I have been focusing more on my other work as a student, even though I know there is probably things I should have researched more or worked on. I most excited about helping to teach the students about community service and getting the students off-site working at the garden. I hope that they can have lots of fun and enjoy seeing their school work applied to help others.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 8:44 AM 0 comments



THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2011

## How has having Ms. Fessler in the classroom affected student behavior and/or attitudes?

I think having Ms. Fessler in the classroom has changed the behavior in our math class. The students respect her and value what she has to say. I know that the students trust her and some students will seek out for her when they ask questions before coming to myself. This week will be the real test with the students so I will have to update this but Ms. Fessler will start teaching and working with the students on an individual basis. I believe everything will go great and the students will adapt and learn from her.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 4:43 PM 0 comments



Ms. Fessler: I agree with Mr. Lacy that both of those factors have influenced the timeline for the project greatly. The flooding not only had an impact on the students and the classroom by missing days of schools, but also delayed when the planting dates will be for the garden and how soon the community agency can begin their work. I would also add that from my end, university class workloads and times have impacted the timeline of this project. There were some things that I didn't keep moving as quickly because of distraction with my other classes or scheduled classes that I couldn't miss coinciding with the community partner's meetings.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 5:27 PM 0 comments



Overall I think it went really well. I had not prepared too indepthly, trusting that the students answers would help guide the discussions, and they did. There are few things I would do differently, but there were not glaring hiccups. If I did this again, I would try to let the discussion go a bit more, so the students felt like it was there idea to make a map. We almost got there, but I jumped ahead a bit too early. I would also set up Mr. Hart's piece better (than the not at all it did today) and place it later in the lesson, like near the end or probably even another day. I was fairly pleased with the groups today. I attempted to break them into groups with people they didn't normally work with, varying ability levels, and typical engagement levels. Next time, I might also be more specific on what I expected of the group work (e.g. they should at least discuss the 4th question as a group). Most groups ended up working more as individuals then together. Hopefully as the project goes on they will grow to work more cohesively as a group. Tomorrow the plan is to finish up their initial investigation, graph some of their findings, and begin to look at poverty.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 7:23 PM 0 comments



**SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2011**

## What factors (e.g. weather) have influenced the timeline of the project?

Mr. Lacy: I think the biggest factor that has influenced the timeline for this project has been preparing for the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) that are coming up at the end of April. I believe that Ms. Fessler has done an amazing job working with myself and Mr. Hart to be very flexible and accomodating through everything. Knowing that these tests are very important to the school and our students future as well as our teachers, Ms. Fessler has adapted and worked very hard with me to help my students achieve at a very high level. Another huge factor has been the weather, this year has been a crazy year for snow, ice and flooding and this has delayed the project some as well as put a wrench into my lesson plans for preparing for class. Ms. Fessler has proven very vital and very welcomed by the students and myself in this process and I believe things will begin to move along much better from this point on.

## Reflections from Day 1

Ms. Fessler: I started out by asking the students why they think they have to go to school. Why is school important? Some students said they are required by law, some stated their parents' forced them, a few others talked about the importance of learning for later jobs or being a productive member of society. I then asked them about members of the community that help others and what place education or what they are learning 7th grade math might play in this. There were a few of the expected answers I was looking for about dealing with money, but I also received a lot more blank looks than the last question. Next I had them look at the Hancock United Way website on serving the hungry. I asked who they thought might use this website. The answers were as I expected, volunteers and those needing food. We then elaborated on those needing food and what might be a disadvantage of presenting the information like this. One of the first answers was that those in need of food assistance won't have regular access to a computer. Building off of that statement I asked what we could do to help. A few suggested making posters, others buying tons of food, or creating terminals in telephone poles where people could access the internet. Obviously some suggestions were more plausible than others, but I let them all share freely and openly without evaluation the suggestions at first. The discussion was then interrupted by Mr. Hart, who came to speak about his part in the project with the community gardens. He talked to the students about what service-learning is, their chance to earn high school credit, what they will do in the gardens, how it will relate to math, and ways in which their work will be publicized. The students asked lots of questions and most seemed excited at the chance to help others and the community. After Mr. Hart left, I tried to get them back into our discussion a bit, but ended up just starting to talk about making a map to hand out and some details. We then began to go over different types of services that provide food (i.e. food pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, one day events, and food delivery). Finally I broke them up into 5 groups of 4-5 people to begin looking at some of the agencies listed on the online map. Each group had 6 or 7 agencies to find when and to who they provide food, what type of service they fall into, why they do what they do, and determine a recommendation to the class on whether or not to include the agency on the map. They worked on this for the rest of the period and most groups were almost done by the end of the hour. Their questions while working were about the types of service, how to determine recommendations, and mostly on how to find the agencies purpose statement.

It might also be good to tell the students that they are sort of competing against the other groups. After Tuesday or maybe even on Tuesday we (including the students) will pick a winner and that will be the map that everyone will help to create and perfect. For Tuesday they only need enough of an outline to convey their idea, not the full detailed map. Mr. Hart (our community garden partner) said that he hopes to be ready for the students' help the middle of next week. I also added that if the students have any questions during class that you can't figure out he could feel free to call me, I should be available to talk, I just can't afford to drive down each day of this week.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 1:20 PM 0 comments



I told them that the president of the United Way was coming on Tuesday for them to present to. They will need to present their idea to him and attempt to convince him that their map will meet a need in the community that isn't served by the online map. They have tomorrow and Friday to work on the map. Over the weekend and on Monday before class they should show their ideas to other teachers, community members, their families, etc. and get feedback. Then on Monday they can work on making final changes. If each person can show that they got feedback from at least two people (a total of 8-10 for each group) that would be good. Preferably if they know someone who might find this map useful, their feedback would be the most valued. It may be a family member or a family friend. They could get extra credit if they can talk to someone who works or volunteers for one of the agencies that provides food assistance in the community or someone who has gone to at least one of the agencies on the map for food assistance. One of the students voiced in class today that her grandpa had gotten food from CHOPIN hall before and I suspect that there are other students in the class whose families have or do use these services.

Their maps can be no more than one page front and back. They can use color. Streets and possibly landmarks need to be visible so people can easily navigate the map and find any of the agencies from anywhere in the city. There are four community garden sites if they want to include those as well, I have the addresses. There also needs to be enough information (probably in the form of keys) for anyone who picks up the map to be able to understand where they can go to get food what days of the week or when. If there are any requirements on who can receive food at the place (such as they have to be at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines) that information must be included. It would probably also help if they had some examples of what choices they can make about the map. They are free to use some of the space to make notes, include phone numbers, or other information.

## Day 2

Ms. Fessler: The students and Mr. Lacy continued to work on the project while I was not there. They used the groups of service agencies that they had decided on the day before to create bar graphs of the how many agencies servicing hunger in Findlay were of each service type (e.g. food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, delivery, and one-time events).

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 1:21 PM 0 comments



## Day 3

Ms. Fessler: Mr. Lacy had communicated with me through email what had been accomplished the day before as he was in meetings and there was a substitute for class today.

We talked about poverty for most of the class. I had them read over the Hunger Report on the United Way's website. We then talked about the federal poverty guidelines for monthly income, calculated what someone could earn at minimum wage doing full time, and compared. We discussed what the students felt were necessary things people needed that cost money and I had them find statistics about poverty. I also asked them why they think the particular numbers that were chosen for poverty guidelines are what they are, but we didn't really come to any answers.

Near the end of the period, I broke them back up into their groups and attempted to explain to them the next step in the process. I didn't explain very well though and we ran out of time for me to clarify things, so I think they are mostly confused. I told them that tomorrow Mr. Lacy could go over with them their answers to question number one and four from Monday (the agencies hours of operation and their recommendation on whether or not to include the agency on the map), each group could decide what agencies they wanted to include on their map, and Mr. Lacy might be able to clarify for them what they need to do.

From here, I knew that I wasn't going to be back until at least Monday (two school days lay between) and since Mr. Lacy wasn't here today we couldn't discuss the plan for the next two days. I emailed him a reflection from today and the following suggestions/instructions with the hope that the students could continue to work on the project during the next two days.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2011

## Day 6

Ms. Fessler: The previous two days that I wasn't in the classroom for, the students had begun working on their maps. I soon found out that group one was almost completely finished, with only minor adjustments needing made. Group four and five had concepts started, but were not near as far as I had hoped. And the other two groups appeared as if they hadn't even begun. I could also see that each group had at least one student who wasn't being included (some voluntarily others not). I moved from group to group throughout the class answering questions, providing suggestions, and attempting to get the groups to work cohesively and inclusively (i.e. getting students to stay with their group, talk with each other, and/or find some work to do to contribute). I also had to monitor students wishing to move in and out of the classroom to get documents they printed, go to the restroom, or get a drink. The time appeared to be productive for all the groups except group two. They spent most of the time frustrated waiting for one of their members to help them. At the end of the period it still appeared as if they hadn't started. I think I could have been more helpful to all the students by laying some ground rules for group work before we got started and being more strict on students staying seated working with their group only. I was pleased with the first group's work, but am nervous that most of the others will have little to show the president of the United Way tomorrow.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 1:41 PM 0 comments



# Glenwood Middle School 7th Grade Math: A Service-Learning Project

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011

## Day 7

Ms. Fessler: Today the president of the United Way (Mr. DuVernay) came to speak. I met him in the office before hand and we talked a little about the school in general and then our class in particular. He mentioned being a bit more uneasy talking to children than to adults. Mr. Lacy met us soon and Mr. DuVernay shared that he was appreciative of the chance to share about service with the students. On our way down to the classroom I recounted to him what I hoped he would share. When we got into the classroom Mr. Lacy and I introduced the students to Mr. DuVernay and he began by talking about what the United Way does. He then talked specifically about what Hancock county has been doing to provide food assistance to its citizens mixed in with giving away free t-shirts. After that the students moved into their groups and Mr. DuVernay and I walked around to look at each map. He gave each group suggestions and some to the class as a whole. The groups' maps weren't much different than at the end of the class yesterday. Groups one's was good, group two had nothing to show, group three and four had something, but it could hardly be described as a map, and group five was closer to groups one with only about one side done. After looking at the maps, Mr. DuVernay had some more free things to hand out and asked questions about various agencies in the area as trivia. When he left we had about ten-fifteen minutes left where the students were given more time to work on their maps. Tomorrow Mr. Lacy will be out again and since I won't be there either the students are going to work on a worksheet instead of this project. Thursday Mr. Lacy will work with them again and Friday I will be back so we can hopefully start moving towards the whole class working together on one map. I was very pleased with how today went with the exception of some of the groups' ideas that weren't very complete. I think I could have helped this a lot by better setting up what I wanted them to do at the start and giving them more direction. I wanted to give them freedom to come up with their own ideas, but I inadvertently left many of them confused.

Posted by Ms. Fessler at 9:12 AM 0 comments

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- Ms. Fessler
- Kyle

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  - January (2)

## Appendix D

### Community Proposal

My name is Amber Fessler. I am a junior at Bowling Green State University majoring in Adolescent to Young Adult Mathematics Education. I am currently working with Mr. Lacy at Glenwood Middle School and Dr. Jane Rosser, Director of BGSU's Office of Service-Learning, to create a service-learning project in his 7<sup>th</sup> grade math classroom. We have been working over the past few weeks developing ideas for possible services we can offer as well as determining various aspects of service that the students are most interested in. We are now hoping to find a community partner who is in need of one of the services we can offer and is willing to work with us.

My ideal partnership would be with a community agency that serves the same community served by Glenwood Middle School, addressing issues related to Mental Health, Hunger/Food, Homelessness, Seniors, and/or Domestic Violence. There is a very limited possibility that the students would be able to get transportation from the school to the agency, so it is also ideal that the project can be worked on off-site or within walking distance of the school. Possible projects relating to the student's curriculum include drawing up maps, creating ideal room arrangements, creating art using geometric figures, or graphing data. Ideally the project will require students to engage in problem solving, help them identify and analyze different point of view, develop skills in group decision-making and conflict resolution, help student recognize and overcome stereotypes and be appropriate for the development abilities of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students.

I am willing to help transport materials to and from the agency and meet with agency members throughout the project to a thorough completion of the project. I will take responsibility for seeing the project to completion and holding the students to quality work. Dr. Rosser has also agreed to assist in any way with helping to support the community partnership.

Through the project, I hope to learn more about the process of setting up service-learning projects, including the communication needed to coordinate the project between the community partner, the students, the parents, and the school. I also hope to learn more about ways to solve a particular community need.

I can be reached through email at [amberlf@bgsu.edu](mailto:amberlf@bgsu.edu) or by phone at (937)-570-0910. I currently live in Bowling Green and will be in Findlay each Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30p.m. to 2:30p.m. at Glenwood working with the students and Mr. Lacy.

I would like to start working on developing this project as soon as possible. As a note, BGSU is on Spring Break March 5<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>, Glenwood is on Spring Break April 18 – 15<sup>th</sup>, and the school's possible state testing dates are April 27, 29 and May 2.

Thank you for your time and I hope to be hearing from you soon.

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