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## Creating a Meaningful Experience: On Service Learning and Teacher Preparedness

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Creating a Meaningful Experience: On Service Learning and Teacher Preparedness

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### **Abstract**

The focus of this Capstone project is on the effectiveness of service learning and its role in teacher preparedness. This is an important issue for Liberal Studies students, professors, and the community because in the Integrated Teacher Education Program, service learning is treated as preparation for teaching, and it can be seen that way for Traditional Pathway students as well. It is argued that while service learning works towards an admirable goal, there are obstacles and design decisions that keep it from being fully effective in preparing Liberal Studies students in becoming teachers. The three primary stakeholder perspectives chosen were service learners, professors, and service learning faculty because of their involvement and engagement. Three major action options emerged from an analysis of the data and were explored as ways to address the issue presented. In order for service learners and students in the community to both receive meaningful experiences, professors need to work closely within the community and its schools and teachers, while receiving active support from the University's Dean and Chair. This is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of improving the service learning experience for Liberal Studies students at CSUMB.

**Creating a Meaningful Experience: On Service Learning and Teacher Preparedness**

In high school, I had a classmate who happened to be the son of an acquaintance of my father's. We were not particularly close, and we lost contact with each other after graduation. It was not until three or four years after high school when I would hear about him again--not from him directly, but from my father, who had then recently had a conversation with his parents. He had become a student teacher in mathematics soon after graduating from the University of California at Irvine. His parents were concerned about him because he had quit his job after expressing frustrations with the profession. Apparently, he felt that his time in school did not prepare him for how teaching would really be like, out in the field. He did not feel like he could connect with his students and that had he known how difficult the job really was, he may have been able to change his career path sooner. His story is a sad one, but not surprising--many new teachers leave the profession in only a few years. Still, it gave me doubts as someone who wants to pursue teaching as a career. If he had gotten more intensive field experience before he started student teaching, would he still have chosen to quit, or would he have been able to hone his skills and continue working?

During my time doing service learning for CSUMB I have been fortunate enough to have been in a variety of different classrooms, from traditional public settings, to private and charter school classes. In one instance, I was in a class where the teacher had myself and her other service learners work very closely with her students, but I was soon moved to another teacher's classroom as she already had so many. In the next teacher's classroom, I spent the rest of the semester mostly observing, and I wouldn't always get to work directly with her students. Afterwards, I thought about how is it that service learning experiences for Liberal Studies

students can be so different. Not all of mine were the same, and now that I'm so close to graduation, I'm left wondering if all of it will help me to be a good teacher. Am I even ready for the credential program? I found that I also wasn't alone in thinking these thoughts. There would be cases where other students in my classes would express frustration or displeasure at the activities that they were doing in their classrooms. Some would be left grading papers, or would be stationed in the back of the classroom, observing until the teacher found them a task to do. In even worse cases, I can recall students, on more than one occasion across different classes, asking our professor if they could use their break from classes in the spring to finish their hours in the span of a week, rather than throughout the semester. For some, it seems as if service learning is not a valued experience for self-fulfillment and improvement, but just another hurdle to get over. These experiences have led me to taking on this project. I want to know if there is a way to optimize service learning so that future teachers can be better prepared for the work that lies ahead of them.

### Literature Synthesis

Service learning is meant for the benefit of students and the communities that they serve. In higher learning, service learning supports faculty teaching by providing students with opportunities to connect the knowledge learned in the classroom with practical work out in the field. There is no denying that service learning is a resource to be used for the overall betterment of everyone involved in its process. It is also required for teachers in California--students wishing to be teachers must have early field experience in elementary schools of at least 50 hours while supervised by a credentialed teacher, and the Liberal Studies major combines early field experience with service learning to meet both state and university requirements (California State University Monterey Bay, 2019). As a student teacher, having the opportunity to receive early field experience in a K-12 classroom is invaluable. We believe service learning is necessary and enriching for future teachers because teachers are expected to work closely with their surrounding communities, and having this early field experience provides student teachers with opportunities to hone and practice their craft. However, unless it is utilized and developed carefully and correctly, it runs the risk of being inadequate and underserving those in need. As noted on CSUMB's Liberal Studies page, under the Service Learning section, Liberal Studies students should "...have the opportunity to lead lessons with children, tutor, develop curricular units, and engage in classroom management--all skills useful for teachers!" (2019). We are concerned that LS majors that wish to become teachers may not be fulfilling one of or all of these skill sets as advertised, so to speak. From the California State University website's page on [Early Field Experience Information](#), "the Early Field Experience is designed to provide you with

enough information to make a decision about whether a career in teaching is suitable for you” (The California State University, 2019). We question whether 50 hours, while not a definitive limit on the student, should be considered “enough” across four years of combined lower division and upper division coursework. As researchers Dwight Giles Jr. and Janet Eyler (1994) note from the educational reformer John Dewey, “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative”. Our intent is to examine the university’s service learning program in regards to the Liberal Studies department, find where it provides significant early field experience that benefits both the student and the community, and to find where it needs more development.

### **What is the problem?**

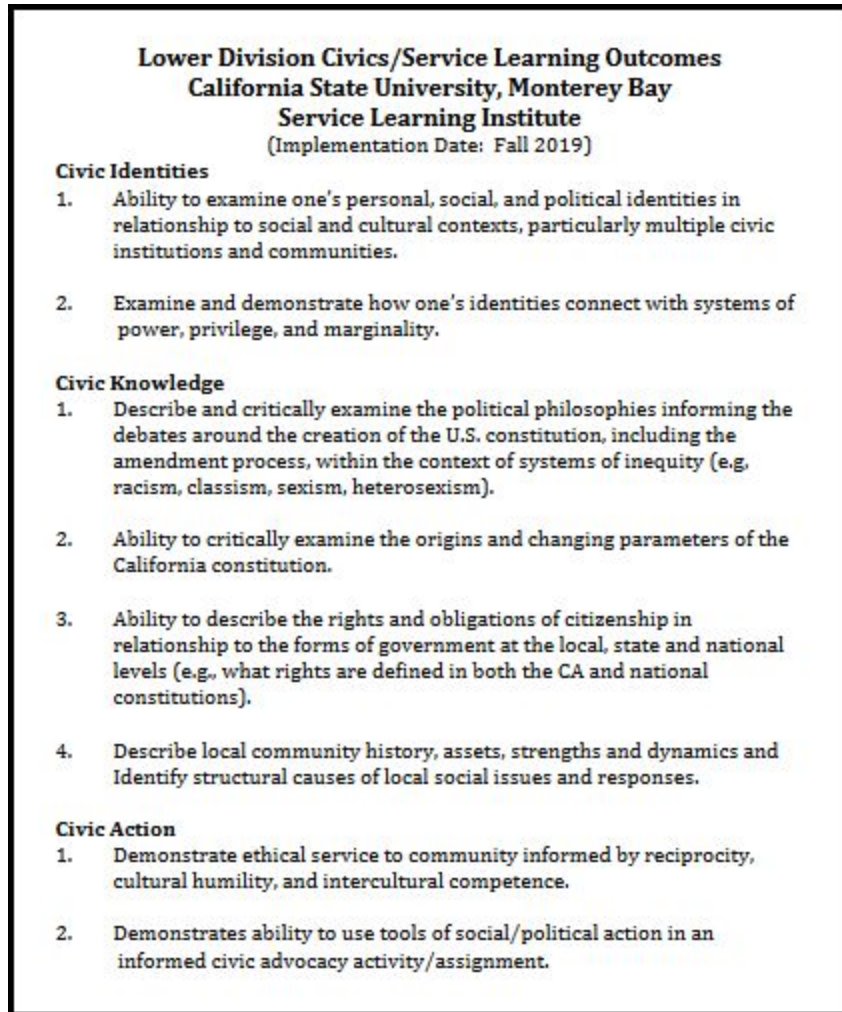
Before we can critique and construct new ideas for service learning, we must first define its elements so that we can better understand what we want to achieve. In Shelley Billig’s (2000) paper on K-12 school-based service learning, service learning was developed in the late 20th century in response to concerns that youth were not engaged with their communities and with society as a whole (Billig, 2000). These young students were “...less likely than other age groups to vote or volunteer, and their top goal was to be well off financially” (2000). In theory, service learning seemed to be an effective part of higher education. It “...offered a powerful pedagogical alternative that allowed students to gain a greater understanding of concepts while they contributed to their communities” (2000). It also plays a key role in how students determine their future career. A team of researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles concluded that “[s]ervice participation appears to have its strongest effect on the student’s decision to pursue a career in a service field. This effect occurs regardless of whether the student’s freshmen

career choice is in a service field, a non-servicefield, or ‘undecided’” (Astin et al., 2000, p.4).

Key benefits that were identified as a result of service learning were: “an increased sense of personal efficacy, an increased awareness of the world, an increased awareness of one’s personal values, and increased engagement in the classroom experience” (2000, p. 5).

Both advocates and opponents continuously question and debate service learning: what key elements need to be in place for a program to claim to be service learning, what makes up good practice, what the effects and impacts are, if the characteristics of the participants and schools matter and how it influences outcomes, as well as many others. Because of its relative newness and variety in structure, clear definitions of service learning are nebulous. As Billig (2000) notes, the “...discussion of its definition is often the source of disagreement among proponents”. The California State University at Monterey Bay has outlined clear outcomes for service learning, as seen in Figure 1.



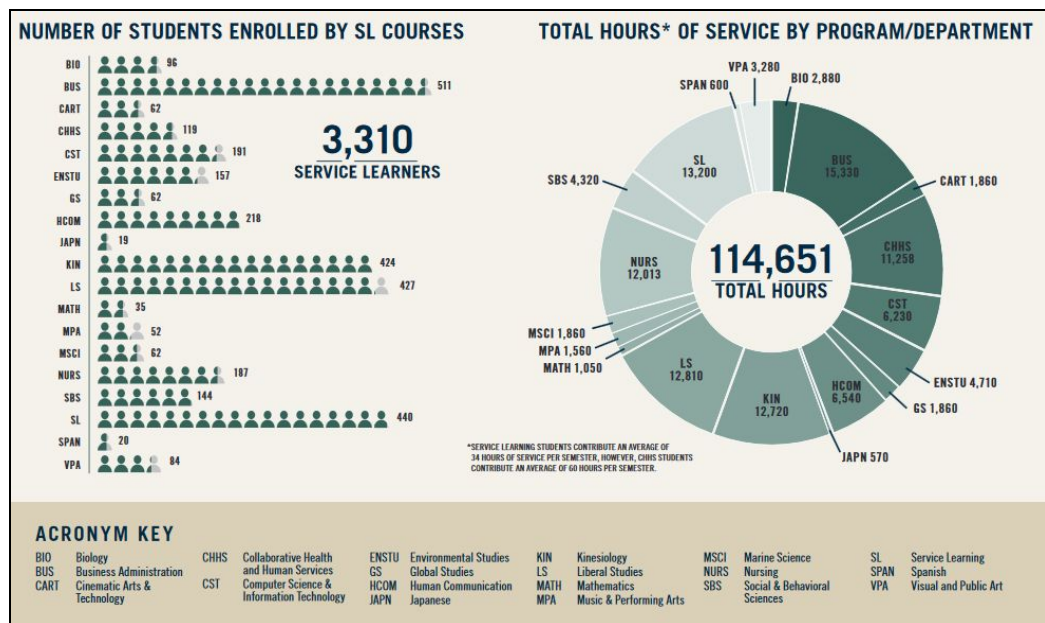


As outlined on the California State University (2019) website's form on [Early Field Experience Information](#), there are seven target observations that should be made during students' early field experience: the texts and main instructional materials in schools, student interactions, student/teacher interactions, the grouping of students for instruction, classroom management strategies used by the teacher, the planning and delivery of lesson plans, and how schools function (p. 1). Learning how schools function is important for future teachers. In order to hone their craft, they have to have intimate knowledge with how classrooms function at the micro

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1: Lower Division Service Learning Outcomes for CSUMB.

level just as much as the macro. However, if Liberal Studies students are being sent into classrooms without the framing or background to be able to do the work thoughtfully and with clear goals in mind, these lessons may well be lost. Researcher John Eby wrote, “When service-learning is done without proper selection of students and without appropriate training, orientation and reflection, it can support ineffective and sometimes harmful kinds of service. Such service trivializes service and demeans service professions” (1998, p.3). We are concerned that while service-learners may enter the classroom with positive intent of providing service to various communities of needy students, being placed without any context or guidance may be more harmful than beneficial. If professors are having service-learners experience a classroom setting as just aid to support the coursework, then it seems that there is a lost opportunity for more professional development for future teachers.

## Why is it an issue?



As seen in Figure 2, Liberal Studies students contributed the third-highest amount of hours in service learning in 2018, behind the Service Learning Department and Business. Liberal Studies students also make up a significant number of those enrolled by these service learning courses. However, the 50 hours that is expected of them pales in comparison to a major like Nursing, with less than half of the number of Liberal Studies students but a nearly exact number of hours. Because of this, we question whether the amount of hours future teachers are expected to accumulate is adequate for teaching experience before they enter the credential program or go on to teach in some capacity. As stated by the Service Learning Quick Facts from the Service Learning Institute (2018), students are expected to “...develop new knowledge and skills relevant to their future career.” There is a great opportunity here for active professional development as opposed to passive. Researcher John Eby wrote, “Often service-learning is organized to respond

<sup>2</sup> Infographic from *Service Learning Quick Facts (2017-2018)*. Retrieved from: <https://csumb.edu/service>

to the needs of an academic institution which sponsors it, the needs of students, the needs of an instructor, or the needs of a course. The needs of the agency and the community often come last” (1998, p. 2). Schools that lack good teachers appreciate the extra help that service learners provide, but under-prepared college students that are seeking what may be their first teaching experience are unlikely to offer much assistance, and needy communities deserve more. Eby (1998) complicates the situation by commenting that “[s]ervice-learning tends to skew programs toward the needs of students rather toward the needs of communities” (p. 4).

### **What should be done?**

If work in the classroom is mainly focused on increasing the student’s understanding of the study, then perhaps it needs to be redefined. In Andrew Furco’s (1996) examination on service learning, he differentiates between different forms of similar volunteer-based symbiotic relationships. He lists *Field Education* as an option: “Students perform the service as part of a program that is designed primarily to enhance students’ understanding of a field of study, while also providing substantial emphasis on the service being provided” (1996, p. 12). It can be argued that as Liberal Studies students are placed into classrooms with credentialed teachers with the primary goal of learning from these experienced mentors, they are not chiefly responsible for the young students. Therefore, these youth are unlikely to receive as much good from service learners than they would from their own teachers, which contradicts a central idea in service learning, wherein “...both the providers and recipients of service benefit from the activities” (1996, p. 9). Reframing the work as field education would be more accurate as the program’s primary focus is still on the student teacher’s learning. Furco goes on to explain that in some

cases “...students in Education programs may spend up to one year as student teachers to hone their teaching skills and learn more about the teaching process” (1996 p. 12). For the work to be considered service learning, Liberal Studies students must: 1) identify a need in the community, 2) apply the skills and knowledge gained from their coursework to address and hopefully solve that need, and 3) gain experience from the service that improves upon their repertoire and hone their craft. In order for this to occur, Liberal Studies courses and the Service Learning Institute must facilitate this process, rather than allowing for students to freely choose a placement with the goal of observing and reflecting upon their observations.

Professors must also prepare students so that they do not enter communities and cause harm, unintentionally or otherwise. John Eby wrote on this issue, saying that, “Breaking the relationship at the end of the service-learning assignment can be traumatic and can add to the fragmentation already typical of poor communities. Students may reflect ethnocentrism and racism in ways that are harmful. Idealistic students may inappropriately criticize agency practices and policies” (1998, p. 5). Alexander Astin’s team supports this as well, with their findings that “The extent to which the service experience is enhanced by the academic course material depends in part upon the amount of training that the student receives prior to service participation” (2000, p. 5). Multicultural and culturally conscious teaching must occur in service learning courses so that Liberal Studies students are prepared for that work. Tania Mitchell’s team (2015) warn against service learning as a pedagogy of whiteness, citing that “[the lack of] a critical focus on race, can reinforce ...socially constructed understandings of whiteness. The language of service learning, ‘underprivileged’ and ‘at risk’ for example, can reinforce stereotypes based in white supremacy” (p. 614). Students must not conflate community issues of

dropout rates or drug addiction with individual circumstances rather than the complex structural and societal circumstances that may shape them, and professors are tasked with providing that background for inexperienced undergraduate students.

Finally, students need to be able to critically evaluate their own work and reflect upon their experiences. Astin explains that "...providing students with an opportunity to process the service experience with each other is a powerful component of both community service and service learning. Compared to community service, taking a service-learning course is much more likely to generate such student-to-student discussions" (2000, p. 4). Liberal Studies students need to collaborate with and understand other students' experiences to bolster their own knowledge, and professors need to be able to take those experiences and use them to improve on their existing curriculum or clarify and guide when needed. Reflection is crucial for Liberal Studies students during and after the service learning process, especially when the experiences are unique and memorable. If there is not enough structure to how service learning is facilitated, reflections on those experiences becomes more of the same, and is not valuable. As researchers Bringle and Hatcher summarize, "Experience becomes educative when critical reflective thought creates new meaning and leads to growth and the ability to take informed actions" (1999, p. 180). They recommend the use of journals to support this.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, most would agree that service learning is positive. It serves as a process that shapes our students into personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). As future teachers, Liberal Studies students would do well to take

on these traits. That is made possible by partnerships between the instructor and the site with clear goals in mind. The best possible outcome would be for both parties to benefit equally, though in our students' cases, we should focus more on ensuring that they are well prepared before they can think about the ethic of service. The university, as an institution, must also be as supportive as they can be in order to make this happen. In Kelly Ward's (1996) analysis of the institutional commitment of student volunteerism, "While major innovations in higher education need administrative leadership, certain aspects of faculty work can be challenging for presidents and other senior administrators to 'enforce' their visions and goals for the institutions" (p.6). If professors are not compensated or recognized for the work they need to do in order to make unique service learning experiences possible, they cannot be expected to occur. CSUMB has a positive reputation for its work in service learning, and to set an even greater example would mean to raise our standards for the betterment of our future teachers. Ward supports professors' compensation in saying:

"Funding, especially in times of dwindling resources, is a constant stress to those charged with realizing the servicemissions on their campus. Large sums of money to carry forward a service agenda are not necessarily required, but certainly campus personnel need salaries, projects need funding, and faculty need incentives. Funding also has important symbolic qualities to those interviewed:they want their presidents to allocate resources to show support" (1996, p. 21).

## **Methods**

For this Capstone Project we investigated how Liberal Studies undergraduate students, faculty, and professors view the service learning program and what they think could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what they learned to formulate an action that responds to the focus issue in a way that inspired, informed, or involved a particular audience.

## **Context**

We will be conducting our interviews at the California State University Monterey Bay campus.

## **Participants and Participant Selection**

### **Researcher**

As Liberal Studies undergraduate students, we do not feel like we have received enough preparation for teaching. We and our peers have had shared experiences with service learning in Liberal Studies courses at the California State University at Monterey Bay, and we would like to identify issues within the service learning curriculum. Our biases as students may impact how we see service learning, while professors and faculty may have different perspectives on the matter.

### **Informants**

We invited 20-50 Liberal Studies major students, professors, and faculty to participate in this study. This group of prospective participants were invited to participate



because of their relevant experience/expertise/knowledge.

### **Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions**

#### **Student Semi-Structured Interview.**

1. Do you want to be a teacher?
2. If you are not planning on teaching, are you planning on a career in education? If so, could you elaborate?
3. Are you a transfer student?
4. Do you know what the concept of early field experience is? What is your understanding of it to be?
5. What are some examples of things that you learned during your service learning experience(s)?
6. What are some examples of things that you wish that you learned during your service learning experience(s)?
7. What were your expectations going into service learning?
8. What were your professors' learning outcomes of your going into service learning?
9. What activities done in the classroom lined up with what was outlined in your professor's syllabus?
10. What activities did you do in your classroom(s)? How involved were you? (i.e. Did you tutor? Plan lessons? Assist directly or observed?)

11. Did you develop any practical skills that you could use as a teacher? What were they, and how were they developed?
12. Do you believe that the service learning experiences that you had is effective for teacher training? Why or why not?
13. What are your concerns when it comes to Service Learning?
14. What is currently being done to improve service learning - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
15. What do you think should be done about service learning?
16. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to changing service learning?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to say about service learning and/or the improvement of service learning?

### **Professor Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Have you taught in K-12 schooling? How many years were you in K-12?
2. What is your understanding of early field experience based on the CTC definition?
3. Have you taught any service learning courses in LS?
4. What are your expectations for early field experience?
5. What differentiates high school volunteers from service learners?
6. In what ways do you think service learning has been successful? In what ways does there need to be more development?
7. What are your expectations from your students' service learning experiences? Do your assumptions compare with the students' expectations and actual experiences?

8. What are the benefits of having a certified K-12 teacher facilitate service learning?
9. Are there any barriers when it comes to placements/completing hours for service learning? How are these considered when designing the SL curriculum?
10. What do you see as the problem with service learning?
11. What is currently being done to improve service learning - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
12. What do you think should be done about service learning?
13. What do you think are the obstacles to changing service learning?
14. Is there anything else that you would like to say about service learning and/or the improvement of service learning?

**Service Learning Coordinator/LS faculty Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

15. What ideas, thoughts, or concepts do you want students to know?
16. What is your understanding of the CTC's definition of service learning and early field experience?
17. What are your expectations for early field experience?
18. What differentiates high school volunteers from service learners?
19. In what ways do you think service learning has been successful? In what ways does there need to be more development?
20. What do you think your professors expect from their students' service learning experiences? Do their assumptions compare with the students' expectations and actual experiences?

21. What are the benefits of having a certified K-12 teacher facilitate service learning?
22. To get a better understanding of the new service learning curriculum. Can you tell us what is being changed?
23. How do we ensure that students are placed with credentialed teachers?
24. Are there any barriers when it comes to placements/completing hours for service learning? How are these considered when designing the SL curriculum?
25. What do you see as the problem with service learning?
26. What is currently being done to improve service learning - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
27. What do you think should be done about service learning?
28. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to changing service learning?
29. Is there anything else that you would like to say about service learning and/or the improvement of service learning?

### **Procedure**

Participants were interviewed. All interviews were done individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete a phone interview or an email survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews took less than one hour, were audio-recorded (with participant consent), and took place in Playa Hall. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys were scheduled at the

convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 60 minutes to complete.

## Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews will be coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

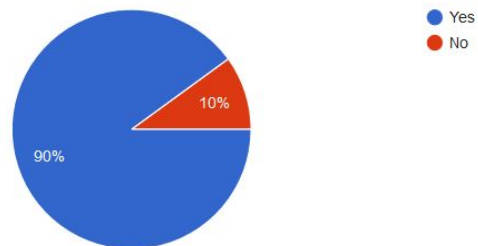
## Student Survey Results

50 surveys were sent out through university email to students via Google Forms.

Individualized responses of our survey can be found at this [Survey Responses link](#).

Do you want to be a teacher?

10 responses



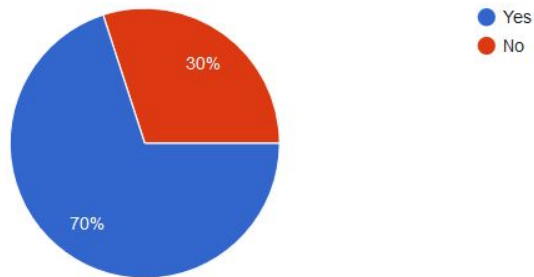
30.

31. If you are not planning on teaching, are you planning on a career in education? If so, could you elaborate?

open to different possibilites
elementary school. preferably 2nd-4th grade
Yes, i would like any job in a school district so that i can work while my son is in school and have the same time off in the year
I want to work with youth, but more on a level of working with troubled youth and helping them get back on track with both life and school

Are you a transfer student?

10 responses



32.

33. Do you know what the concept of early field experience is? What is your understanding of it?

<p>Early field experience is a way for future teachers to go out into schools and observe different grade levels.</p>
<p>I would compare it to service learning, otherwise I'm not sure.</p>
<p>That we get to practice implementing lessons.</p>
<p>I feel like this refers to service learning hours we are required to do but I am not entirely sure</p>
<p>Yes, early field experience is getting introduced to the responsibilities and duties of a job position before officially becoming an employee or salary.</p>
<p>Not really heard of it.</p>
<p>No, I am not familiar with the concept of early field experience. If I had to guess I would say that it is likely related to the concept of student teaching.</p>
<p>No, working in the field you want to go into before graduating</p>
<p>To get a feel of what it's like in the classroom and to work with students before you make a commitment to teaching</p>
<p>The term of early field experience was not mentioned in any of my courses.</p>

34. What are some examples of things that you learned during your service learning experience(s)?

<p>I have learned about different grade levels and what it is like to be in the classroom of that grade level. I have learned different strategies as well as teaching styles from observing. Lastly, I have learned what it is like to be a teacher at that school in their community.</p>
<p>It is the best way to learn about my future career.</p>
<p>To manage a classroom and how to teach lessons</p>
<p>how NOT to run a classroom.</p>
<p>1. Students need consistent boundaries and rules to follow 2. How to build professional relationships 3. Teaching students to be responsible and accountable is additional part of teaching</p>
<p>How to help children read and learn some math problems.</p>
<p>I think that the biggest take away from my service learning class was the exposure that I got from visiting three different schools, classrooms and grade levels. It gave me an idea of the different context that I could find myself working in as an educator.</p>
<p>New teaching tools from observing teachers</p>
<p>How to gain classroom control, do's and don'ts in certain cases, fun activities for building classroom environment , how to build relationships with students and families,</p>



how to gain trust with students.
Observing the teacher showed me classroom management skills, I've seen and had meaningful interactions with students.

35. What are some examples of things that you wish that you learned during your service learning experience(s)?

How to become a substitute in that district.
I wish I went to a wider array of schools. Otherwise I returned to the school I liked. But, I wish I knew more about lesson planning and curriculum.
How to create a lesson plan and how to do different activities
classroom management, attention getters, participation
1. Having an opportunity to teach a lesson to the class 2. How to organize and schedule a curriculum 3. How to select good teaching materials and strategies for effective teaching
How to actually have a classroom and the teaching methods used.
I wish that I would have learned a little more about: - how to teach a lesson in class. - classroom management strategies - alternative ways of assessing students

How to follow/create curriculum and lesson plans, more experience in actually teaching
How to make sure everyone gets the lesson before moving on, how to get students engaged when they don't show interest. How to make sure no one gets singled or left out.
Seeing a teacher make a curriculum and actual lessons plan would have been extremely beneficial.

36. What were your expectations going into service learning?

That I would learn and experience what it is like to be in a classroom.
Total open to it, loved it.
I knew I had to work with a teacher that was fully credential
learning A LOT
I expected to be co teaching after two weeks of observing and getting to know the classroom dynamic but ended up becoming a teacher's helper
For it to be like the credential program.
The very first time that I did service learning, I thought that it was going to be a more

<p>hands on experience than what it was. I am not even sure why I expected that because there was no real direction from my professors about what the objectives of this work was.</p>
<p>I thought I would have had more guidance in the classroom. Teachers often let you observe and that's it.</p>
<p>To be able to learn from my teacher, build relationships with the students and teachers, and to be able to teach a little something</p>
<p>I simple expected more experience within a class, but I wish it would have shown us more behind the scenes aspects of teaching and the work that goes into planning a day.</p>

37. What were your professors' learning outcomes of your going into service learning?

<p>To learn about schools in the community.</p>
<p>Do the time and get a good evaluation.</p>
<p>That I was not just a teacher assistant</p>
<p>I do not remember</p>
<p>1. Multi lit required mostly cultural observations and reflections 2. Social issues in education required more of the same 3. Teaching multicultural education required 30 hours in the classroom no specific tasks stated, more reflections</p>

Not sure
Honestly, I am really not sure. I the outcomes were not clearly defined because I didn't feel like a had any particular focus going into the classroom/school where I would complete my service learning.
I'm not sure, they were more elaborate and intricate than what I was doing though
To learn classroom life and to get comfortable being and working with students
N/A

38. What activities done in the classroom lined up with what was outlined in your professor's syllabus?

Multi-cultural books and reading lessons.
n/a
Doing multicultural lessons
the teachers I did service learning with showed me what not to do when I become a teacher. I did not have very good role models to follow
Several in class, not service learning
Not sure

For the kinesiology class, the PE lessons lined up well. For the LS 390 class, I am not really sure if it lined up with the syllabus, but I did get to see LA lessons.
I was able to read culturally diverse books to students one on one or in groups for LS 390/394s
Working with the children in small groups or one on ones
N/A

39. What activities did you do in your classroom(s)? How involved were you? (i.e. Did you tutor? Plan lessons? Assist directly or observed?)

I was an assistant in the classroom for the teacher.
Totally hands-on. I did several lessons on my own.
Observation and creating a lesson
basically hovered and observed
Create lesson plans, lots of group projects
I just listened to kids read and help with math. I mostly just watched the teacher do everything or do a bit of their errands like taking books to the library, organizing, etc.
For KIN, I planned and led lessons. For my other service learning experiences, I got to assist with small groups during centers. Other than that, I walked around the room and

assisted any students who needed help. Sometimes, the teachers would ask me to prep work for them.
I would be in charge of small groups, work one on one with a student, monitor, and observe
I've observed, worked with students one on one, help the teacher prepare the materials for lessons, walked around and was available for help and questions
Within the T-K classroom I worked at various stations with the kids and assisting in art projects.

40. Did you develop any practical skills that you could use as a teacher? What were they, and how were they developed?

I learned different skills to manage a classroom.
How to manage students with special needs.
How to manage my classroom and what how to help them with a subject
Learned more organizational skills, creativity, adjusting to time constraints and lack of group contributions, developed over time with the several classes I've taken
Not really, I know how to help kids read.

<p>Honestly, I am not really sure if I learned any NEW practical skills that I could use as a teacher. I guess I also got to see how the teacher leads lessons and transitions her class from one thing to the next. I wouldn't say that this was developed in any way, it was just an observation.</p>
<p>Not really. Just some fun lesson plans and ideas I was able to see from observing</p>
<p>Classroom management, talking with students and building relationships, how to deal with students who need extra help and or attention</p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p>no sadly</p>

41. Do you believe that the service learning experiences that you had is effective for teacher training? Why or why not?

<p>No, service learning teachers did not seem like they knew how to model proper teaching.</p>
<p>Yes, because I am now more comfortable on the classroom setting. No because I have no idea of the expectations I'm walking into as a new teacher.</p>
<p>No because it hasn't taught me how to control a classroom or skills on teaching students.</p>

No, not really. There was very little direction for both myself and the teacher(s) that I did my service learning with.
No. From 3 semesters of taking a service learning class I feel no more prepared to teach than I did before taking these classes
I believe yes, but could be improved with the expectations from the teachers and students
I feel our service learning program is great for those to see if they want to go into education to get a feel for the classroom, however for upper division it should be more about teacher/school relations and the actual planning of lessons and curriculum.
Yes, I believe it was a great way to be introduced into schools in the community.
Absolutely
Yes so we can learn how to manage classrooms

42. What are you concerned about when it comes to Service Learning?

There seems to be a lack of urgency by professors when it came to starting service learning and getting paper work in.
Dealing with unresponsive teacher contacts.
We aren't taught to create lessons with a plan



<p>being placed with teachers who are not conducting their classrooms very well.</p>
<p>I'm concerned that I haven't had enough guidance or practice. Service learning in general has been a challenging task as I've had to work and care for my child, who is now four.</p>
<p>Wasting my time.</p>
<p>With the exception of the KIN class, I didn't learn how to design a lesson plan or how to execute one. This concerns me because I am going into a intern teaching credential program in the fall. This means that I will begin working as the teacher of record before I have ever learned how to teach. I get that this pathway isn't ideal for that reason, but it is a pathway that is offered none the less. It is for that reason that I think service learning should be modified to give students more opportunities to have teaching experiences.</p>
<p>There's no point. I think there needs to be more guidance and requirements because otherwise service learners are just another pair of eyes in the classroom for 20-30 hours</p>
<p>If I'm going to get a teacher who actually will give me things to do in class instead of just sitting there and observing</p>
<p>The the experience i did have did not prepare me enough for an actual classroom of my own.</p>

43. What is currently being done to improve Service Learning--by whom--and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?

I am unsure.
?
I think it's indifferent because different teachers have ideas
I don't think anything is being done... or at least I haven't heard of anything. this is bad, i think teachers who get service learners should be excelling in their craft.
I have no clue what is being done or by who. I believe that the learning experiences should be evaluated and taken into consideration to improve the service learning program.
I'm not sure.
I am not sure.
I'm not sure, I think change needs to happen to the service learning department
I don't know what is being done to improve it, but all the teachers I've gotten have been great to work with
I do not know of any changes happening in the program.

44. What do you think should be done about Service Learning?

<p>Service learning might be better if there was a one time only class about what to do what to expect and how to fill out forms.</p>
<p>no thoughts</p>
<p>It should be explained differently</p>
<p>modeling the teacher, more interactions with students, conversations with teachers one on one</p>
<p>Look at answer above*</p>
<p>I think it should be a teacher learning system where the teacher helps incorporate the service learner into teaching lessons. (only for people who want to be teachers though)</p>
<p>I think I answered this two questions above.</p>
<p>I think that there needs to be a more clear goal. Either working on lesson plans during class and then teaching/co-teaching with the teacher you're placed with (like how KIN 373 is being done now) would be more helpful than what it is now. More guidance and structure would help so that everyone is learning from their own experience instead of observing</p>
<p>It should have higher expectations</p>
<p>N/A</p>

45. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to changing Service Learning?

Funding.
n/a
The times of the Golden ticket meetings are an obstacle because it is sometimes during our classes
large class sizes make it hard to have good classroom management.
Higher expectations for new students is unfair for the current students, ie more hours and more work.
It could make people who don't have a lot of time hate it.
I could see students complaining about the amount of work that they would have to do in service learning classes. It might overwhelm students and even scare them away from the profession. I am not sure if that is a good or bad thing. I could make an argument for both.
I think that it is harder to actually monitor and guide college students in an outside classroom. And students probably wouldn't be happy about more requirements but I think that it would help the most
It can be hard to find time to do between work and school, so maybe the classes should be hybrid to make sure students can make it to their hours

N/A
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46. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Service Learning and/or the improvement of Service Learning?

No
I think teachers who take on service learners need to be told what it is they should be modeling for us, ensuring they are properly conducting their own classes, have proper classroom management skills. KNOW WHAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY DOING (bad experiences w past teachers)
Nothing to say.
Introduce aspects of the credential program during service learning.
No
-
It is helpful, but should be more flexible
N/A
No thank you.
no and good luck

## Interview Transcriptions

Interviews are edited for clarity and length. Interviewees consisted of professors and faculty members in either the Liberal Studies or Service Learning departments. [Scans of our interview notes](#) are found at this link, and [here](#) as well. Below we have included a sample of interviews done.

### Interview 1: “Abby” - Professor

- *Have you taught in K-12 schooling? How many years were you in K-12?*

“My experience with K-12 is varied. Early on, I did nature education. I parlayed that a number of years later into being the naturalist on site that worked with specific school groups--you may remember science camp from 5th Grade--this was that kind of experience in Ohio. It was a couple years. I went to get my credential in secondary, and for two years, I did not get a position, so I was a substitute teacher at the middle school level and then at the high school level. I taught in Wisconsin. I went on to graduate school and I worked with people who were going to be teachers. So, since that time, my experience has been with people who were going into the public school classroom.”

- *What is your understanding of early field experience based on the CTC definition?*

“The CTC calls for early field experience, and they’re very general about what that means. At CSUMB that means that they’re not merely observing--which would be acceptable to the CTC--but at CSUMB it’s service learning, which means they should be actively involved in the classroom assisting in some way. Often what that means for Liberal Studies students that

means tutoring, sometimes doing more general assistance, sometimes doing teaching at the front of the [class]room. The definition is very, very general, so there's a lot of latitude, and in some institutions, all they ask of the students is to sit at the back of the classroom and take notes as they observe what happens in the classroom."

- *Have you taught any service learning courses in LS?*

"I have been primarily teaching Social Foundations of Education, which is also my professional area. I think ever since I was hired, about 15 years ago, there's been a service learning course associated with Social Foundations. I have been teaching service learning then for about 15 years."

- *What differentiates high school volunteers from service learners?*

"I can't speak very knowledgeably about what happens in the high schools in California because I haven't been involved in that end of it."

- *In what ways do you think service learning has been successful? In what ways does there need to be more development?*

"For me, service learning has been most successful when I have been able to form a partnership with a high school or elementary school site leader, most often a principal or vice principal. For example, Del Rey Woods Elementary had a very successful had a very successful partnership with that school because of Ray Ramirez, their vice principal, who had done some doctorate work in the value of mentorship. He and I put our heads together and designed curriculum that was unique to the placement of my service learners at that site such that our course material and what was happening at the school were very tightly related. In fact we did some courses. Some days we had a class meeting on site at the school where Ray was the



instructor. Success was guaranteed by local control and flexibility and a shared vision between instructor and principal.”

*Q: Do you think that's possible in every case?*

“The challenge is that the only institutional requirement--the CTC early field experience--the dean is looking out for the ‘bottom line’, which is what he can tell the CTC that all of the service learners are going to approved sites and are doing what’s required by the CTC. What I mentioned to you that makes it all successful goes on top of that, and the challenge is that there’s very little at this point in time any institutional reward for putting in that kind of effort. To form a relationship with Ray, to work with him, it required a lot of extra effort and time--both in managing the course and working with those teachers. It was highly rewarding for me and for Ray--we did it for 7 to 8 years--and it was very beneficial for the students. The feedback that I got was that it was very successful on their end, too. But you’re asking, ‘Can it be done broadly and then continuing through time?’ It could, but it’s going to need that soft commitment from the instructor to establish and maintain that partnership. Without any institutional motivation, reward, or guarantee, these sorts of things can come and go. If it’s institutionalized, you risk losing that special quality, that relationship; it becomes standardized.”

“There’s one more piece I would add: the research that I did was to implement a mini-workshop that would focus more particularly on the tutoring skills that the students should be practicing at the site. I was specifically asking them to tutor, to be tutors. In Social Foundations, I took 4 different classes where I focused in on tutoring skills, like task analysis or modeling the language for modeling lessons. The research showed that the students benefited--and learned--the skills that I introduced through the application of them at the site,

and they appreciated being taught those skills to use and put into practice. The additional layer of giving students things to practice as well as look for and comment and reflect on related to the more abstract parts of the course. Those two things worked really well in conjunction with one another, also on a more conceptual level.”

- *What are your expectations from your students' service learning experiences? Do your assumptions compare with the students' expectations and actual experiences?*

“My course is a bit more unique as it's focused on very large issues, like with policy--what's happening with the Trump administration--or how can we build playgrounds and on what basis--should we design them to support the mission of schools? Rather than sending them in like the Children's Literature course, where they're going to deal with something specifically in schools, like teach a piece of literature to kids, I'm less prescriptive. That's kind of why I created the workshop, to give them something specific to pursue. I'm asking them to tune into these larger institutional issues, like what's the salary schedule like in the school district and then to compare them with other schools. I've been very freehanded in how I invite them to work in the classroom. It's more about what's on their agenda and how they use those opportunities to discuss it in the class. I haven't been very thorough about [discussions] because we haven't had that kind of time while teaching the content.”

- *What are the benefits of having a certified K-12 teacher facilitate service learning?*

“The most obvious benefit would be the practical application. A credentialed teacher would understand the language being used, how state testing is being done, how it's driving the curriculum, how you integrate--or choose not to integrate--arts, the values of your school or administration... They have those details for students. I'm not a California credentialed teacher,

so I don't know those specifics, as opposed to someone like Dr. [REDACTED]. They are the kind of teachers that Liberal Studies students are going to be, so they act as two models: a role model, by virtue of seeing what they do, and also by the extent to which of how they see themselves as a model. Some teachers are very direct about what they do about that, and others do nothing. They just accept [service learners] into the classroom.”

- *Are there any barriers when it comes to placements/completing hours for service learning? How are these considered when designing the SL curriculum?*

“We're actually embroiled in a controversy about that right now. The Dean of Education and the credential program don't care for charter schools. I don't understand why, categorically, but they don't. There's some question about the curriculum in Liberal Studies and the Dean and the Teacher Ed program are trying to constrain placement in LS to non-charter schools. We don't know why that is a useful restriction.”

“At the level of daily barriers, there's all sorts of challenges. Instructor time, because it does take a great deal and investment the more you want to focus or develop a partnership related to service learning. Qualified teachers--how to identify qualified teachers--is challenging. Teachers receive our students without any pay at all, so it's very generous for them and the principal to accept students. It's challenging to put any restrictions on the quality of teacher who would do that as well as put in the time to figure all of that out, so that's a challenging process to identify who's going to receive students at any given time. Student time is a bit of a challenge--I don't think it's all that hard, I just give them a schedule and tell them to sign up for it. When we had coordinated placement at one place, we did it that way. It's much easier to just tell them to go find a school and they work it out themselves. But students' schedules, where they go, and

where they want to go can also be a challenge. Some want to go to a school they're familiar with, or where they want to get hired at, but the instructor wants them to go somewhere where they think they'll get a unique experience, and then they have to negotiate that. Student transportation can be a challenge, especially for lower division students. The logistics of getting to the placement is a constraint."

- *What do you see as the problem with service learning?*

"The biggest problem--I actually wrote an article about this 12 years ago--the best service learning that I've seen in place is unique to the relationship between the instructor and the school. [REDACTED] has had some relationships with some schools in Salinas, where he's worked closely with the site administrators and the teachers. I've worked with a number of different partners, 3 different partners particularly since I've been at CSUMB. Each of those partnerships have worked well because I spent a year getting to know the site leader and teachers and another year talking with them about what service learners should be doing and coming to them about what the agenda was. Previously I was at Olson Elementary, and the principal came to me specifically asking for reading instruction help, providing assessments and helping with these reading skills. We were on the verge of creating a workshop for these skills in my class, which would have been powerful, because students would have a comparative experience, they would know the teachers working at the school and the administrators, so if there are any problems anywhere down the line, I would know about it through them. I could do check-ins and updates. At the end of the semester, I'd get with the teachers and ask them how we could improve, what worked and what didn't. I could coordinate different aspects of the experience to keep it focused and to ensure its quality. The challenge is that it takes a lot of time and makes it a

very unique thing, and the university as an institution doesn't like 'unique'. It likes 'standardized', it likes implementation, and that's true of all levels of government. And that's what the CTC wants, because of the scope of the work that it has to do. The university is not that much different; it has service learners in every department in all different parts of the community--why would it want to bother with supporting the unique investments that I need to make? It doesn't, it wants to be more or less of a regulatory agency, and then that goes down to the departmental level, where instructors might not want to do some of the things I do. Standardization starts to become more general and less unique. The biggest thing is just the time and desire to build the relationships that ensures the quality of instruction for the students."

- *What is currently being done to improve service learning - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?*

"I've been on sabbatical, so I don't know much about it; I think there's a 'service learning coordinator' now, but I'm not the person to ask. My perspective is that this is what institutions do. In standardizing the work, if they're having trouble in the grass roots level, they create another level, a title, another layer of standardization to close out the perceived problem. A bureaucracy only wants to increase itself, and that usually happens through exactly these sorts of processes. I've been doing this for 15 years. There is a Service Learning Institute, and there is a person over there that coordinates to some extent. Their job is to go out and find partnerships to connect professors and partners in order to let them build partnerships and take care of things like paperwork and risk management. That function is done, I'm not sure what the thinking is in creating a local service learning coordinator."

“Institutions also like to suck power up towards the top. I’ve noticed that with teachers--as a teacher 20 years ago, we were left largely to determine our own curriculum. Then came in the standards, and then, principals started buying scripted curriculums so that they could control teacher work. Control’s moving up out of the hands of teachers and into the hands of administrators, so this sounds like the same kind of thing. You have a coordinator who can be coordinated by the person above them--who I assume is the chair--so you start to have a bureaucracy that’s reaching down in terms of its control, and taking it away from the official instructor. Now I don’t know how that’s going to work out. For example, if I still had that relationship with Ray, who isn’t a principal anymore, would this coordinator come to me and say that I can’t do X or Y because we want a more coordinated effort--I don’t know.”

“Perhaps they’re there to play a more assistive role, or providing support. If I had a problem I could go to them and ask them. Time is a factor, I don’t have time to find amazing principals that are going to be good to build a relationship with. If this coordinator makes it their job to find these great sites, that’s great. I can go to them and ask, ‘Who should I talk to?’ That saves me a lot of time and gets me to where I need to go.”

- *What do you think should be done about service learning?*

“I’m a big fan of building a mindset from the ground up. In my ideal world, the department and chair would have conversations with the instructors and find out what they care about, what they’re passionate about, the kind of situations that they think work best, what their needs are, and to try and coordinate that toward a shared understanding of what we want to obtain in service learning and find out what that should look like going forward. Building a sense

of what's possible and setting goals and trying to make that happen at the grass roots level going up. That's not usually what happens in bureaucracy, it usually comes down."

- *What do you think are the obstacles to changing service learning?*

"[Bureaucracy] would only be a barrier if somebody wanted it to be. Right now there's nothing stopping building a mindset, building a culture--I think that's what leadership is. You get folks to have a vision, and then you find a way to pursue that vision. We really want to get serious about not only building teacher skills, but social justice actions. That would require getting everybody on board, getting them excited about it, finding out what kind of sites would be interested in doing things like that, what the relationships look like... Maybe the chair would go to the dean and get money to buyout time for instructors to build these relationships and do social justice work. All of that could be implemented, but that would take leadership, and there's nothing that is required of that by the institution."

- *Is there anything else that you would like to say about service learning and/or the improvement of service learning?*

"I think in the LS program, active early field experience--students really get a lot out of that. On course evaluations, I will get more comments about beneficial service learning experiences than I will about what I did in the classroom. I take that as a marker that when you want to be a teacher, going out into the classroom and seeing that happen is one of the highest quality experiences that you can have. So in that regard, service learning is very valuable in Liberal Studies because it anticipates what many students don't see as their future. I think they also just enjoy the activity. The buzz of school and working with kids is much more fun than just sitting in class or reading a book. When it's done well, when you add the social justice and social

consciousness elements to it, it's also very valuable. CSUMB has some very good ideals, it's a question of how to make them real in every instance, and that's a bit of a challenge. I'm a big fan of service learning, I think we need to continue to do it. We just need to keep making it a rich experience for the students, but I don't think it's always the first priority. Sometimes the first priority is, 'We have to make curricular changes', so we get correspondence from the Chancellor's office. Things get lost having to make changes to meet other standards."

"The one thing I'm excited about is having a course that's not tied to content. Students tend to be concerned about similar things, like discipline--behavioral concerns, how they get handled, etc. If we have people in different classrooms, we can create a feedback loop with students. We build that discussion each week, and it has real promise."

Interview 2: "Babby" - Professor

- *Have you taught in K-12 schooling? How many years were you in K-12?*

"Yes, I taught in K-12 for five years."

- *Have you taught any service learning courses in LS?*

"Yes."

- *What differentiates high school volunteers from service learners?*

"Most service learners are seriously considering this field."

- *In what ways do you think service learning has been successful? In what ways does there need to be more development?*

"Students learn from hands-on experience. More student prep needed."



- *What are your expectations from your students' service learning experiences? Do your assumptions compare with the students' expectations and actual experiences?*

“Learning from being in the class-room and interacting.”

- *What are the benefits of having a certified K-12 teacher facilitate service learning?*

“They would get more practical guidance.”

- *Are there any barriers when it comes to placements/completing hours for service learning? How are these considered when designing the SL curriculum?*

“Students put off finding classes and rush at the end. Enforce early deadlines.”

- *What do you see as the problem with service learning?*

“Lack of supervision/feedback while in the classroom.”

- *What is currently being done to improve service learning - by whom - and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?*

“I don't know.”

- *What do you think should be done about service learning?*

“I don't know.”

- *What do you think are the obstacles to changing service learning?*

“I don't know.”

- *Is there anything else that you would like to say about service learning and/or the improvement of service learning?*

“Not at this time.”

Interview 3: “Cabby” - Professor

- *Have you taught in K-12 schooling? How many years were you in K-12?*

“I did not teach K-12 schooling. I volunteered in schools from preschool to 6th Grade on a weekly basis. We practiced reading instruction because I was a Linguistics instructor. We led reading circles and stuff like that. I also led after school groups, and when I was a doctoral student, I collected data in a middle school for 8 months, by shadowing students in 4th and 5th Grade classrooms. My experiences are different, but I got to sit in with so many awesome teachers, and I have an appreciation for what elementary teachers do. They set the tone for learning for the rest of life. Elementary school teachers are much more important than college professors. That was one of my motivating factors for getting my PhD in Education rather than Linguistics.”

- *What is your understanding of early field experience based on the CTC definition?*

“I have seen it two ways. At Fresno State, when I was teaching there, they didn’t have the early field experience requirement. I knew students who went through their 4 years and they ended up hating teaching. I admire our program because of how much exposure to classrooms students get. I think a lot of times people go through school and they don’t know what to do for themselves, but they were modelled by teachers their whole lives through school, and they end up deciding to teach and hating it.”

“I think early field experience, the value of it, is learning about yourself. The other side of it is, I see in my students, while they’re struggling, when they go into the classroom they’re

not in a vulnerable position. They're authorities, but children don't see them as scary. For a couple hours a day, they get to know school cultures, principals, and kids."

3. *Have you taught any service learning courses in LS?*

"Just one course, LS277S."

4. *What are your expectations for early field experience?*

"I really think it's important. In lower division, it's mostly observing. I know we try really hard to make sure students aren't just filing the whole time and interacting with the children. I think it would be really nice if we could train students a little bit more directly on how to work one-on-one with kids, like reading. When I taught LS277, students went out into a variety of different classes, it was more about the social context of institutions, what happens in schools, different experiences in schools, developmental models--Waldorf, Montessori--key philosophical pieces... For classroom interaction, I had a list of things students could potentially do, but it was up to their teacher what to do with them. Some of them were in after-school programs, where they were supervised by a teacher."

• *What differentiates high school volunteers from service learners?*

"I don't know what high school students do in classrooms. I'm more familiar with K-8, so I don't know what high school students are asked to do compared to service learners. They're probably just told to do whatever the teacher tells them to do. For our purposes, college students are thinking more critically and abstractly about the classroom. There's this assumption that we are going to critique and we have this higher status, but we have to go in with an open heart and an open mind. We need to recognize that we can't account for everything we see. We might see things happening that aren't optimal, but we don't know the whole story. We're guests to the

classroom, we have to see it as a privilege. Having one more adult in the classroom really helps and keeps kids on their toes. In the service learning contracts, there's a list of what students can do, and we hope the teachers adhere to those expectations."

- *In what ways do you think service learning has been successful? In what ways does there need to be more development?*

"When this campus was established, people didn't really know what it did. The service learning component really helps people outside of the campus understand what we're trying to do. Our presence on the Monterey peninsula is enhanced by the service learning program. It's important for us to have this kind of presence so the community stands behind us. This is only year 25 of this university--it's young--so making its mark is important. When I compare the preservice teachers that I taught from Fresno State to the preservice teachers here, there's a difference. You guys have a better sense of what's happening in schools, a lot of you may change your mind and do something else, and that's fine--but you've learned something. You have information to base your career choices on. Things may have changed, service learning is more common. I would love to see service learning more linked to linguistics and children's literacy. The things that I talk about are very applicable in elementary school classrooms."

## **Results**

For this Capstone Project, Liberal Studies students, professors, and faculty were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve service learning in regards to teacher training. This is important because there were concerns about how students view service learning, its effectiveness, and the questionable meaningfulness of freeform, less-guided service. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged. Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: cost; time; and effectiveness. Cost was chosen based on the monetary value estimated to make the changes a reality. Time was chosen based on how long it would take to implement changes. Effectiveness was chosen for the overall impact each action would have based on what they change. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

### **Emergent Themes**

Through the process of interviewing faculty and professors and surveying Liberal Studies students, we gained insight about what it is that students felt they needed to gain a more meaningful experience in service learning and how professors wanted more from their students' experiences at the school sites. After evaluating the data, understanding the perspectives, and learning from the research, three major action options emerged. These were: 1) Professor-crafted service learning experiences to make them more meaningful, 2) CSUMB providing transportation to service sites, and 3) simplifying the placement process for students. Our criteria for judging their worth were Cost, Time and Effectiveness.

**Evaluation of the Three Action Options**

	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>
<b>Professor-crafted learning experiences</b>	High	High	High
<b>CSUMB-provided transportation</b>	Medium	Medium	Low
<b>Simplifying the placement process for students</b>	Low	Medium	Low

**Professor-crafted learning experiences**

Professor-crafted service learning experiences would allow professors at CSUMB to establish stronger and more personalized partnerships with school site principals and teachers. This would help site teachers have a better understanding of what expectations to have for the students coming into their classrooms. Having professors build interpersonal relationships with the school sites would be costly. They would need to be compensated accordingly for how much more time and work is being put into creating lectures and lessons in class while also molding experiences with site teachers. We know that there is a Service Learning Field Placement

Coordinator who would work as a liaison between the Liberal Studies department and school sites. By having the person in this position work closely not only with the site but with professors, that could strengthen the partnerships being built. We do believe this would be highly effective in the learning process for students participating in service learning at the school sites, however. By implementing more hands on, professor and teacher-controlled learning experiences, students would be able to observe, assist, and potentially retain more information pertaining to the school system, community and themselves. This is the costliest of the three action options.

#### **University-provided transportation to SL sites**

Students and faculty of CSUMB have both said that transportation is a barrier students face. Transporting students would be a costly option. There are also liability forms and information that would need to be relayed to students. With different times and sites being throughout the Monterey County, its effectiveness would not be able to reach all students in need of transportation. The time spent on transporting students affects how much we would have to pay and train drivers.

#### **Simplification of the SL placement process**

Simplifying the placement process for students was our final action option. With this option, the cost would be low in terms of how much more money we would need to make this feasible. Students would have more time in class to understand the paperwork such as the learning agreement, short term agreements. In our survey students noted that they were concerned about the difficulty of finding a placement. They cited different obstacles such as

scheduling conflicts, limited number of placements, and a confusing paperwork process relating to the MPUSD orientation. Other barriers related to the placement process were the cost of TB tests and fingerprinting, with some sites requiring fingerprinting at separate county offices with varying costs.

### **Conclusion**

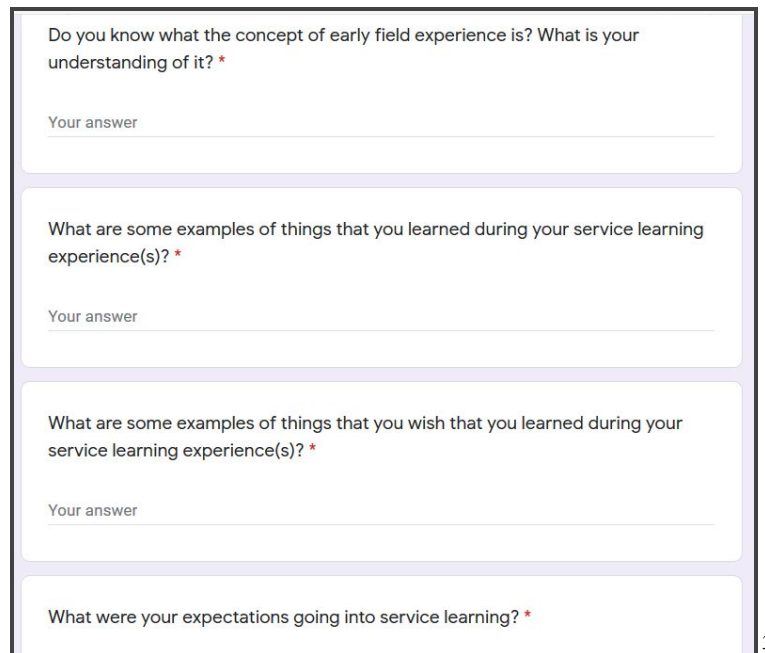
As we were discussing our options we came across the realization that we would need not only one of the action options, but all three to create a more meaningful, well-balanced experience for the students in the Liberal Studies major. The need for all three options led us to imagining changing how service learning courses are scheduled. Professors could be able to have content-filled days once a week and the next day have students at the service learning site or multitude of sites chosen with the assistance of the course professor and the service learning field placement coordinator. Students could be able to carpool together to sites or van transportation could be available with the permission of CSUMB. Limitations could be found in the action of creating a hybrid service learning course. We have little knowledge of how the university could change future courses. The decision to cut units in service learning could also be seen as a limitation. The number of units of the course should be directly proportional to the number of hours students and professors are expected to work each week. Due to the professors' pronounced roles in carefully planning experiences relating to coursework along with the site teachers, reflections and observations made in the site classrooms would be more beneficial in the learning process. If changed to hybrid courses, students and professors would have the time to create a more meaningful and community ordained experiences unique to the course



descriptions and following the Major Learning Outcomes of Service Learning and Liberal Studies.

### Action Documentation & Reflection

We decided to send an online survey to Liberal Studies students to reach a greater number of people while also respecting their time constraints and other school and personal priorities. We sent out 50 surveys to students who either already completed a Service Learning course or were in the process of completion. The surveys garnered 10 responses of which the students responded with issues of transportation, flexibility, scheduling, and hands on experiences as major barriers of Service Learning. Other responses such as not understanding the learning objectives of the course or what the role in the classroom were also noteworthy. Students noted in their surveys that they wanted to know more about teaching such as classroom management, how to teach a lesson plan, how to assess students, and how to effectively get students' attention and participation in activities. Fig. 3 shows partly how the survey looks like:



Do you know what the concept of early field experience is? What is your understanding of it? \*

Your answer

What are some examples of things that you learned during your service learning experience(s)? \*

Your answer

What are some examples of things that you wish that you learned during your service learning experience(s)? \*

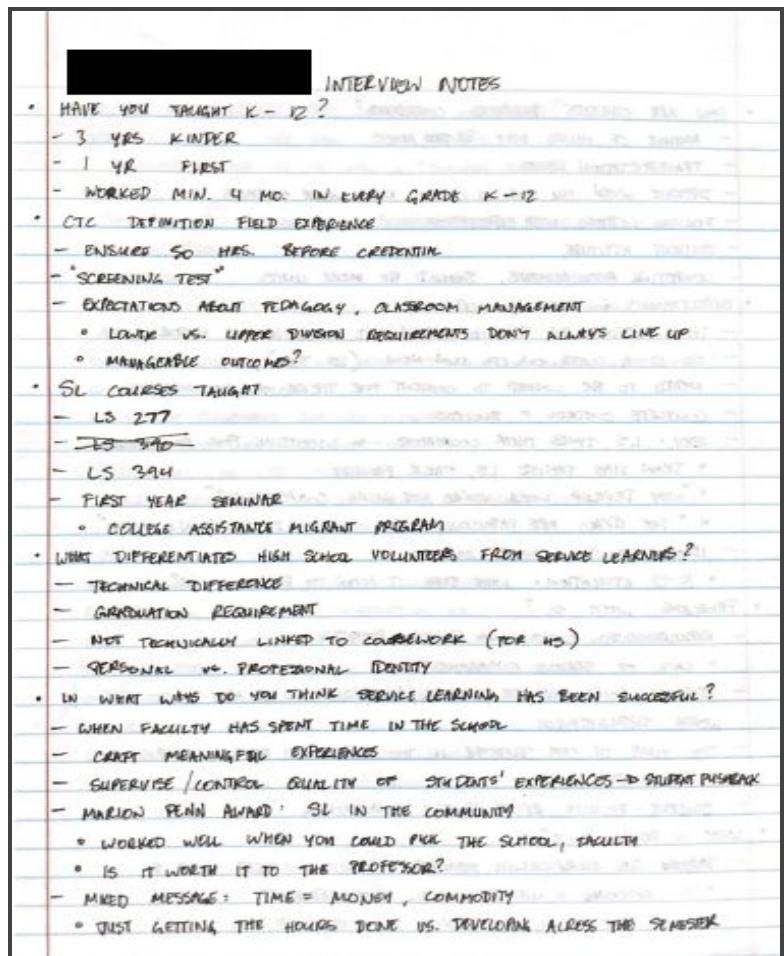
Your answer

What were your expectations going into service learning? \*

3

<sup>3</sup> Google Forms survey sent to 50 undergraduate Liberal Studies students. Responses: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ecPpFafz\\_SL3\\_SVxpxQkyDJGE7jZpLPA/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ecPpFafz_SL3_SVxpxQkyDJGE7jZpLPA/view?usp=sharing)

We found it important to reach out to the stakeholders who were knowledgeable about Service Learning and could provide possible action options. We interviewed faculty and professors from the Liberal Studies department and the Service Learning Institute would be helpful in our research of understanding how Service Learning works at CSUMB, in what ways it enhances students' education, and how, if at all, it needed improvement on. Figure 4 shows a sample of the notes taken during one of the interviews.



We spoke to Professor Pamela Motoike of the Service Learning Institute, Dr. Ondine Gage, Assistant Professor of Education, Dr. Miguel Lopez, Associate Professor of Multicultural

<sup>4</sup> This document shows an example of interview notes taken of a faculty member. Notes: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/15CVnA\\_x1JyP4qgKiwF9qG\\_QSFQh41CGh/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15CVnA_x1JyP4qgKiwF9qG_QSFQh41CGh/view?usp=sharing)

and Social Justice Education, Dr. Scott Waltz, Professor of Social Foundations and Education, Professor Judy Huddleston, Lecturer of Liberal Studies, and Alma Uribe, Service Learning Field Placement Coordinator. We found through the interviews that professors were in support of service learning. If they had anything to add it was to call for improvements to the existing program, such as intensive crafted experiences, strengthened university support, and students' critical reflection of the work being done at the school sites.

Looking back on the work conducted, we had some hitches that we wish we could have changed. For one, our surveys did not reach as many Liberal Studies students as we had hoped, and we wish we had a larger sample size. Student voices and feedback are difficult to collect. We understand that from our own experience, as we did not want ourselves to come off as angry or impatient for choosing to do this work. As students voiced their concerns about service learning to us informally, we were surprised to find that they also had similar fears of not being taken seriously by staff. We believe that in order for more positive change to be made, students have to be able to express their thoughts plainly and without repercussion to the university. The programs cannot change if the faculty are not aware of these student issues, and programs like MAESTROs are key in collecting that data.

### **Critical Reflection**

After working on this project, I would say that we best fulfilled Major Learning Objective 1 as Developing Educators. We learned a lot about what it takes to be a teacher in California, and about how service learning just scratches the surface on what teachers are expected to know. I believe we also fit MLO 4 as Social Justice Collaborators. Service learning is very much intertwined with working towards a more just world, and that starts with improving our communities. I feel that we have grown a lot during this project, as we had to read and analyze texts that went beyond the coursework that we have experienced. We learned to view service learning on a more meta-analytical level.

As someone who wants to see change happen for other students, now that I am so close to graduation, I want to advocate for other students to speak up for their concerns and for what they want. I know that my peers want to learn, and they want to serve our communities the best we can. Students need to be vocal about what they want to learn and experience in their coursework. It needs to be addressed in course evaluations, recommendations to MAESTROs, and in feedback to the Service Learning Institute and professors. In order to reciprocate, professors and faculty also have to be receptive to this as well. We all want to see success in our service because we want to see growth across our careers as educators.

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