4-29-1999

The infusion of service-learning into the curriculum of Cinnaminson High School

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THE INFUSION OF SERVICE-LEARNING INTO THE CURRICULUM OF CINNAMINSON HIGH SCHOOL

by

Robert A. Krastek

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree of The Graduate School at Rowan University May 1, 1999

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 39, 1999
This study was done to determine the effect of service – learning on the students of Cinnaminson High School. This was the first phase of a long-range project that would lead to every Cinnaminson High School student being introduced to service – learning, during his or her high school career.

The study was conducted with a limited student population that included students in the Advanced Placement United States History II classes. These were homogeneous classes of about fifty-one students who were given the option of creating a service – learning project. They were required to produce a portfolio on their experience.

Data was collected through the use of a student survey that determined how students felt about community service and citizenship before and after their service – learning experience. Data was also collected by interviewing the teacher of the class. Data was used from the student portfolios, which included a journal in which students reflected on their experiences.
The findings of this study indicate that the students found service – learning to be an enjoyable experience. However, the data was too limited to indicate any significant change in the students' attitude towards either community service or citizenship. The study does indicate that service – learning is a learning technique that does have some potential for further infusion into the curriculum.
MINI-ABSTRACT

Robert A. Krastek

The Infusion of Service - Learning into the Curriculum of Cinnaminson High School
1999

Dr. Theodore Johnson
Educational Leadership

The purpose of this study was to introduce and evaluate the affect that service - learning would have on students at Cinnaminson High School. This study, while limited, indicated that service - learning did bring about some positive reactions from students about community service.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Terry Luxenberg, who directed me to study service-learning and who has supported all my efforts here at CHS. Thanks also to the school administration and the Cinnaminson Board of Education for supporting this project. I would like to thank the members of the social studies department, Kyra, Beth, Gene, Tom and John, for their professionalism and help on this project. I would like to thank my wife, Leila, my son Eric, daughter Caroline and daughter-in-law Stacy for all their support. Most especially, I want to thank my students at CHS for their spirit and enthusiasm in working with me on this and many other projects. I especially would like to acknowledge Kathy, Stacey and Missy for all their help and enthusiasm. They helped make this project a reality.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Focus of the Study

There are many different educational experiences offered to students in schools today. Among these experiences is the opportunity to participate in community service programs. Community service programs, while recently gaining in popularity throughout American society, have been a long-standing part of the educational system. Educators have recognized that exposing students to the concept of community service is a very positive educational objective. Educators have long felt that this type of educational experience has the potential to bring about a variety of outcomes. What is less clear is exactly what those outcomes are and how significant of a factor the service that students perform is in reaching the educational outcome.

This study will focus on the implementation of a service-learning program into the curriculum at Cinnaminson High School. This is a program which is being developed because of a school level objective that was proposed which directed that a service-education program be implemented into the high school during the 1998-99 school year. This objective was proposed by the high school administration, supported by the faculty and approved by the Board of Education. A committee of parents, faculty and students was established to implement this objective and to evaluate the outcome of a service-learning program. The committee researched the issue of service learning, attended
workshops and entertained guest speakers on the topic. The committee established a plan to achieve this school wide objective and introduce service learning into the high school curriculum. This study will attempt to evaluate this program in terms of its success in bringing about desired educational objectives.

**Purpose of the Study:**

The research problem that is being dealt with is to determine how effective service-learning is in bringing about educational objectives among high school students at Cinnaminson High School. Research on this subject indicates that these types of programs have the potential to bring about significant educational improvement. Specifically, this study is being done to determine the effectiveness of a service-learning program on developing more positive attitudes among high school students towards community service. This will be a qualitative study, which will use some quantitative data into the analysis of the program being studied. The program will provide students with the opportunity to connect classroom learning to community service. The service-learning will be incorporated into the curriculum and not be an extra-curricular activity. The expectation is that this approach will make the learning more meaningful for the students. The results of this study will be provided to the school administration and the service-learning committee. This evaluation will be used to help determine if the service-learning program should be expanded in the future.
Definitions:

There is a debate as to which type of experiential learning is most effective. Most programs use a community service model. In this model, students are asked, required or expected to perform some type of service for the community. There is usually some type of reward for community service. In this model, there is service, but usually no training or reflection on the service performed. A worst case example of this model would be community service required of someone who has broken the law. A student who rakes leaves for a senior citizen for pay is also performing some type of community service.

A second model is usually called voluntary service. In this model, there is no reward or requirement for the service being performed. Students who, on their own, volunteer for a program like Habitat for Humanity on their weekends are experiencing voluntary service.

A third model, and the one being introduced into Cinnaminson High School is a service-learning model. In this model, there is preparation for the experience, the service itself and, most importantly, some type of reflection on the experience. This reflection may take many forms, from class discussions to writing research papers on the subject being dealt with through the service. The key to service learning is the reflection which is expected to make the experience of the service more meaningful. This is usually believed to actually result in more significant learning by the student involved taking place. Research tends to support that service programs incorporated into the regular school curriculum have a greater chance to bring about the desired educational outcomes.
than other models of service programs. The program being introduced and evaluated through this study will be a service-learning program, which will be incorporated into the high school curriculum.

Limitations:

The high school administration and the Board of Education have expressed the desire that the service-learning program, if deemed to be successful, could be expanded throughout the high school curriculum and possibly into the district's middle school. The study will indicate the impact that service learning can have on the students in social studies classes. It is expected that the results might also indicate that a program like this could be expanded into the social studies classes at the district's middle school. Because of the nature of the service activities being used by the students in this study, this program will not be relevant for use in the elementary schools in the district. It is expected that the work will be too demanding for younger students to deal with.

A significant limitation to this study is that it will focus on attitudes relating to civic responsibility. This will not necessarily be relevant to other disciplines. Furthermore, the initial population that the study will include will not necessarily be an indicator of how successful the program will be with other classes.
Setting of the Study:

This study will be conducted in Cinnaminson High School, which is located in Cinnaminson, New Jersey. Cinnaminson is a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is a town of approximately 20,000 people. The citizens of the community cross all socio-economic levels, although most fall into the middle or upper middle class. Over the past several years the number of people in the lower socio-economic groups has risen. There are a small percentage of minorities in the community. The members of the community are very active in community activities, including school-related activities. The community offers many opportunities for recreation, sports and entertainment. The business district in the town has suffered a great decline over the years. This has had an impact on the educational programs in the school district as the community has consistently voted to defeat the school budgets in recent years.

The study will be conducted in the high school, which numbers approximately 750 students in grades 9-12. The school population represents the community in terms of socio-economic level and percentage of minorities in the school. In spite of the recent defeats of the school budget, the school continues to offer a comprehensive educational program, which consistently results in significant success on the state and national tests administered to the students. There are a number of extra-curricular activities for students, including many opportunities to engage in community service activities.

Since this is a first attempt to include service – learning into a regular course of study, the student population that will be involved in this study is relatively small and
homogeneous. The students that will be introduced to service – learning are the students in the Advanced Placement United States History II classes. They number fifty-one students. They will be introduced to the concept of service – learning through a Veterans’ Day program in their classes.

Significance of the Study:

The uniqueness of this study lies in type of program being evaluated. The Veterans’ Day concept is a unique one. There does not appear to be any information on the educational impact of this program being used. The information acquired in this study will support this program as a potential service-learning program. The study will also add to the body of information about the impact of service learning on student achievement as compared to the information that exists on community service and voluntary service programs. Research strongly suggests that, while community service and voluntary service programs are noble ventures, service learning is the only model that can guarantee success in educational outcomes. This program will introduce service learning into the curriculum. The study is being conducted to reveal the effectiveness of this approach.
Organization of the Study:

This study will include a review of the literature, which will support the idea that programs of service learning included into the curriculum will have an impact on bringing about desired educational outcomes. This study will also include the design of the study. This will include a description of the program being used, the description of the work of the service-learning committee, the implementation of the program into the curriculum and, finally, the results of the program. This paper will also present the research findings, which will come from observation, surveys and journals. Finally, this paper will include an analysis of the data collected, which will demonstrate the effectiveness of the service-learning programs.
The research on service-learning and community service is growing and is fairly new. The information that this research provides on service-learning is significant in providing the potential for its use and specifically for this project. While there are certainly many different types of service-learning programs, there are equally a great many goals and expectations for what these experiential activities will bring about (Shumer, 1993; Alt, 1994).

The research indicates that service-learning is significantly more successful in bringing about change in the social behavior or social perspective of students rather than in academic performance (Alt, 1994). There are few studies which suggest that student academic achievement can be improved through some type of service-learning. However, in several studies, students who do some form of tutoring can actually improve their own academic performance, although these changes were modest (Conrad and Hedin, 1989; Alt, 1994). More success is seen when the expectation of the service-learning is an attempt to alter social behavior or social perspective, develop self-esteem or teach some lessons about citizenship or civic participation (Newmann and Rutter, 1983; Alt, 1994). Research seems to indicate that it is important to be clear as to exactly
what the service–learning activity is attempting to accomplish. It is equally clear that
the program must be designed to effectively bring about the desired outcome.
The research on service–learning also gives significant information on what factors are
important in designing an effective experiential activity. Besides a focused objective,
enough time to plan, a committed teaching staff, supportive administration, and
meaningful activities are all important elements of any successful experiential program
(Shumer, 1993, Alt, 1994).

Because this is a relatively new teaching technique for many teachers, time must be
permitted for teachers to prepare the activities, instruction and reflection. Especially
important in this is the coordination of people, places and things with which the students
will be involved. In many of these activities, community resources will be utilized. This
does require collaboration and cooperation of all the people involved. This takes time.

This also means that it would be difficult to require teachers who are not supportive of
this type of educational experience to be included in the program. It is suggested that the
teachers and administrators who are most supportive of service–learning lead the
development of these types of programs (Shumer, 1993).

Research also tells us that it is significant to develop programs that allow students to
engage in activities that they find meaningful and important (Conrad and Hedin, 1982).
This suggests that it might be advisable to allow students a great deal of latitude in
helping to design and choose the experiential activity. The more students connect to the
learning experience, the more significant are the results.
The question remains as to whether these types of programs should be voluntary or mandated in some fashion. While voluntary programs seem to be more successful, connecting the service with the curriculum also offers some potential for achieving educational objectives. Robert Shumer suggests that these types of programs be incorporated into the regular school curriculum.

The literature on service learning will be very helpful in framing and guiding this study. There is a significant amount of research on service learning and much of it is very recent. Research does indicate what the reasonable expectations for programs like these should be. The research also helps us to understand what makes an effective and successful service learning program. These components will be used in developing the service learning experience at Cinnaminson High School.
Chapter 3

The Design of the Study:

The service learning committee, made up of faculty, students and community members designed the program and established the goals that are based on desired outcomes. The committee was made up of volunteers who demonstrated, through their efforts, a strong interest and commitment to service learning. The administration and the Board of Education have given their support to this program by allowing faculty and students to attend workshops on service learning and providing time for information to be shared to other members of the school community. Both have also endorsed the action plan designed for this study. Community members have been involved in all aspects of the process. Plans have been made to evaluate the programs used in this study. Faculty, students and members of the community will be involved in the evaluation of the service learning program. Students have been involved in the process since the beginning. They served on the committee that developed the action plan. They also make up the Student Advisory Council, which selected and promoted the activities. Training was given to both faculty and students.

While there is a significant amount of research on a variety of service learning programs, the program used in this study are unique. The design that will be used in this study, the Veterans Day Program, has not been used in any studies to date. The impact that a program like this has on students' perspectives towards social responsibility has not
been evaluated. This information will add to the research on service learning and help produce the kind of service efforts that bring credibility, respect and satisfaction to the service learning movement.

**General Description of the Research Design:**

This study was introduced into the Advanced Placement United States History II classes in November of 1998. This was at the end of the first academic quarter of the school year. Most of the experiential learning activities took place during the second quarter of the school year that ran from November, 1998 until January, 1999.

Veterans were invited to visit Cinnaminson High School on Veterans Day to share their experiences with the students in the Advanced Placement United States History II classes. Students in those classes were placed into groups and completed research on the wars and engagements in which the veterans had been involved. One veteran was in World War II, one had been in the Korean War, one was involved in the Vietnam War and one was in the Gulf War. Students were required to develop questions to ask the veterans about their experiences. After they interviewed the veterans, the students would then share their information and compare and contrast their observations about each veteran’s experience. Each student was required to write a personal reflection on the experience.

To help facilitate this experience, students were given training in conducting oral history projects and intergenerational experiences. Three students who had attended a
summer seminar on intergenerational learning worked with the social studies teachers to develop a one-day training session for the history students who would be involved in this program. They provided handouts and a presentation to guide the students in the process. They also helped them to form the questions they would ask the veterans.

After this part of the program, students were invited to participate in the service-learning part of the program. Students in the classes were given the opportunity to develop a service project for veterans, using some perspective they gained from the oral history Veterans' Day program. Students were permitted to form teams to carry out the project. The students were required to write a project proposal and gain approval from their teacher before attempting a service project. Eleven students took advantage of this proposal.

Service projects that the students developed included a Christmas card collection for veterans in a Veterans Hospital, an interview with a World War II veteran, which was donated to the school library for reference, a stamp collection for veterans in a retirement home, and a Christmas cookie program in which students made cookies and visited a Veterans Hospital during the holidays.

The sampling design for this study included three sections. First, students involved in this project were surveyed about their perceptions and experiences with service-learning before and after their experiential experience. The goal of this survey was to determine if any changes could be noted in student perspective towards community service. Second, the intern interviewed the teacher whose students were involved in this study. This interview permitted both the intern and the teacher to determine any significant
observations the teacher could make about the students' reaction to the service-learning project, specifically if the teacher was able to observe any changes regarding student attitude towards community service. Third, each student was to complete a portfolio assignment in which they kept all research information, memos or letters, and a reflection on their experience. The reflections offered insight into the affect of the program.

**Development and Design of the Research Instrument:**

Members of the service-learning committee designed the instrument used in this study. This committee was used to first identify the desired objective of a service-learning program. They had the major input into designing the research instrument. The social studies department also had input into the instrument because the social studies classes had the most contact with the program when it was implemented. Members of the service-learning committee who volunteered for the task designed the instrument. The instrument was approved by the entire committee and shared with the social studies department for input.

**Description of the Sample and Sampling Technique:**

Every student who was engaged in the service-learning program was surveyed. There were eleven students who were involved with this program. This meant that approximately 1/5 of the students in the A.P. United States History II classes became involved with the program. One student did not return their survey. Every student who
took part in the program was asked to complete a survey about their experience. The students were also required to develop and hand in to their teacher a portfolio that was to be a record of their experience. This portfolio was to include a personal reflection about their project.

The surveys used in this study asked student the following questions:

1. Prior to your service-learning project, how would you describe your experience with community service?
2. Prior to your service-learning project, did you feel that community service should be required of high school students?
3. Prior to your service-learning experience, did you feel that community service was a characteristic of good citizenship?
4. How would you describe your service-learning experience?
5. Since your service-learning experience, do you feel that community service should be required of high school students?
6. Since your service-learning experience, do you think that community service is a characteristic of good citizenship?

Description of the Data Collection Approach:

After the data is collected, the service-learning committee compiled the results. The data was used to demonstrate student reaction to their service-learning experience. Students were asked about their perspective towards community service both before and
after their service – learning experience. The data demonstrated if the students have changed their perspective. It may be concluded that the service – learning experience did have an affect on their perspective. The interviews with the teacher will be used to support the conclusions of the surveys. Data collected from the teacher shows any significant changes in student perspective observed by the teachers during the experience. These observations came from any statements that the teachers heard or any general observations the teacher noted concerning favorable or unfavorable reactions to the program. The reflections that the students were asked to write and include in their portfolios also offered a perspective on student attitudes towards service – learning.

**Data Analysis Plan:**

The data collected was then computed to determine any pattern with regard to student perspective towards community service. Students were surveyed as to their perspective before and after the experiential program. The responses indicate if a change has taken place because of the program or no change has taken place. The teacher’s observations support the information gotten from the surveys. The reflective essays also offered some supporting evidence for the conclusions.
Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings:

What Information Was Found:

The study provided information about student’s attitudes regarding community service and their perspective about the service – learning experience. All (100%) of the students involved in this project stated that they had some previous community service experience. They also all (100%) agreed that community service was a characteristic of good citizenship. Seventy (70%) said that prior to their service – learning experience they thought that community service should not be required of high school students. All (100%) of the students responding found the experiential program to be a “positive experience”. Fifty percent (50%) of the students responding said that after their service learning experience they felt that community service should be a requirement for high school students. All (100%) of the students felt, after their service – learning experience, that community service was a characteristic of good citizenship.

What did it Mean:

The teacher observations of student reactions to the experiential learning indicate high motivation and enthusiasm for the projects. The teacher noted that prior to the Veterans’
Day program, many students seemed skeptical about the program. However, after the program, he noted a heightened enthusiasm and interest in the event. Student reflections indicated surprise about some of the things they learned about the veteran experience and interest in some of the topics that came up during their interviews. He also noted that the students who were involved in a service-learning project seemed much more involved and excited about the class. The teacher indicated that their projects had gotten very positive reactions from other elements of the school community including other students, teachers and staff. He noted that the main office staff had made a concerted effort to collect stamps for the stamp collection project.

The reflective essays written for the portfolios also indicate that the students had a very favorable and memorable experience. Students used terms such as “meaningful,” “surprising” and “gained insight.” One student wrote about visiting a Veterans hospital where she and other students gave Christmas Cards to veterans. She wrote about meeting a former Army nurse, named Rose, who was 101 years old. The student gave her a Christmas card. The student wrote; “Before we left, I went and saw Rose one last time. She was right where she was before, holding her card and still smiling down at it. My heart almost melted and I knew that this was worth all the effort.”
Conclusions, Implications and Further Study:

Major Conclusions and Their Implications:

The small number of students who were engaged in this study and the homogeneous nature of the student population involved limit the affect of this study. However, the objective of the project was to implement a service-learning component into the curriculum of Cinnaminson High School and in that this project was a success. The implications of this study indicate that service-learning does have the potential for further development and inclusion into other areas of the Cinnaminson High School curriculum.

The most significant aspect of this study is that it was a very positive experience for the students who were involved in service-learning. Students involved in a service project did rate their experience as a positive one. Student responses in their reflective essays and teacher observations of the student’s as they did their work also support experiential learning as a positive experience. As such, service-learning offers potential as an effective learning technique. Teachers seeking to motivate their students could use these types of learning situations to excite and stimulate their students.
The data collected also suggests that attitudes regarding community service did change slightly because of the service – learning experience. Students surveyed indicted that they are more likely to see community service as a requirement for high school students because of their own experience. One interpretation of this data is that students might feel this way because their experience was so favorable.

One limitation in this study is that these students who were involved were a motivated group of students who were already somewhat involved in community service activities. The data indicates that they felt that community service was a characteristic of good citizenship prior to the study and that that perspective did not change at all because of the study. The question remains unanswered as to what affect service – learning might have on student perspective about citizenship. To answer this question, service – learning will need to be expanded to include a larger student population that is more heterogeneous in makeup. Plans are already in place to do so at Cinnaminson High School.

The Conclusions and Implications on the Intern’s Leadership Development:

The intern served as the chairperson of the service – learning committee. It became his responsibility to coordinate the work of the committee throughout the entire process. This meant coordinating all the work including the creation of the project, time lines, and evaluations. This also included communication between the committee, administration, social studies department, veterans and students. The intern ran into problems with the
design of this model in that the faculty seemed to be hesitant about attempting to include this type of learning experience into their classes. By taking a smaller, more controlled and documented approach, the faculty is now more willing to listen and discuss the possibilities for this type of learning. The intern has developed skills in planning, communicating and facilitating.

How the Organization Changed as a Result of the Study:

The service – learning committee has determined that the program has met its most important objective which is to include service – learning into the curriculum. The committee has also determined that there is enough evidence to suggest that this type of program should be expanded into other classes. Plans are currently under way to implement this type of model into the World Culture classes and the heterogeneous United States History II classes for the following school year. The committee concluded that it is possible to infuse this type of learning into the curriculum and that there are possible benefits to doing so. The committee also concluded that it is possible to include service – learning into the Middle School. The committee did not feel that there was any evidence to suggest that this type of learning could be used in the classes of other disciplines, however that concept is still being explored.

Cinnaminson High School has demonstrated that service – learning does have potential as a classroom technique. It is believed that it can help to motivate students and
to create a positive experience for the students. This can certainly help promote learning, a more positive self-image, and more positive attitudes towards others. The committee feels that these are certainly desirable goals that should be a focus of the curriculum.

The Need for Further Study:

It is recommended that this program be continued and expanded. It is also recommended that the committee continue to study the results of service – learning to determine how it affects other groups of students. Specifically, the service – learning model develop through this program should be included into all the United States History II classes and closely monitored. This could be done efficiently and with little increased cost to the social studies budget. The committee should also attempt to develop a program of service – learning for inclusion into the World Cultures classes. One suggestion that came out of the service – learning committee was to use the Peace Corps Partnership Program. This should also be monitored closely for its affect on student learning and behavior. There is certainly a need to study other types of classes and other groups of students regarding the impact of service – learning. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that this is certainly a worthwhile endeavor.
References


Appendix A

Research Instruments
PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION REGARDING YOUR SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND RETURN TO YOUR TEACHER.

THANK YOU

1. Prior to your service learning project, how would you describe your experience with community service?
   ___ I have had a great amount of community service experience
   ___ I have had some community service experience
   ___ I have had no community service experience

2. Prior to your service learning experience, did you feel that community service should be required of high school students?
   ___ yes ___ no

3. Prior to your service learning experience, did you feel that community service was a characteristic of good citizenship?
   ___yes ___ no

4. How would you describe your service learning experience?
   ___ It was a positive experience
   ___ It did not affect me at all
   ___ It was a negative experience

5. Since your service learning experience, do you feel that community service should be required of high school students?
   ___yes ___ no

6. Since your service learning experience, do you think that community service is a characteristic of good citizenship?
   ___yes ___ no
### Biographical Data

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