

Service-Learning Case Summary January, 2001

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Team Members:

- a. Marion Bledsoe, Instructor of Horticulture
Piedmont Technical College
Greenwood, SC
- b. Chuck McDonnell, Instructor of English
Piedmont Technical College
Greenwood, SC
- c. Karen Elliott, 1st Grade Teacher
Cambridge Academy
Greenwood, SC
- d. Eric Johnson, Professor of Psychology
Presbyterian College
Clinton, SC
- e. Kathy Dublin, Director
Life Time Discoveries
Greenwood, SC

Team Formation Process:

The initial team formed with a High School teacher and University Professor came unraveled before any real progress was made. Even though we met several times details of how the project should be handled were not clearly determined. Before more concrete plans could be made the university professor took a position at another university out of state and the high school teacher did not have a class that could participate in the project. At the beginning of the fall semester 2000 I didn't think the project would ever come to fruition. I had to start all over. I felt a great deal of frustration that this was becoming a more difficult task than I had imagined. However, I still had a strong desire to engage students in this project and the frustration pushed me to think differently about my partners. During this time a new intergenerational facility opened directly across the street from the college. They were eager to become partners and were very interested in a raised gardening project for their consumers of all ages. Spring 2001 at PTC offered a course in Horticulture on landscape design and implementation. The instructor in this class was part of the team that helped develop service-learning on the PTC campus and he was excited to become a part of the

process. This met the goal of his class and enhanced his instruction in a number of ways. His students not only had a meaningful service-project to undertake but they also had a joint opportunity to work with other students and an agency in creating a raised garden. I approached a colleague in the English department at PTC to see if he was interested in a project for his writing class. He decided that his students could interview the older adults who attended this facility about their previous experience with gardening and current interest in types of plants that could be planted in the raised garden.

I still needed outside partners from other educational levels and wanted a way to include the children that attended the intergenerational facility. I approached the Lander University Psychology Department where one of the original partners was from to see if anyone else in the department was interested. There was not interest so I contacted the psychology department at a private college in a neighboring town and was able to connect with a professor who wanted to offer a service-learning option in his developmental class so students would have an opportunity to work with young children and create age appropriate science lesson plans. I was never able to get a local high school interested so I approached a friend of mine who teaches first grade at a private school and she was very excited about having her students grow plants that would later be planted in the garden. This would work with all of her science lessons for the Spring.

I have met individually with each partner one or more times, had numerous phone conversations and we have had one joint meeting of all the partners to discuss roles in the project.

Geographical and Institutional Context:

For the last several years we have begun integrating service-learning into instruction at PTC. It has been a slow process, but the initial planning involved many partners from within and outside of the institution. I found it easier to approach the people who I knew would have some idea of what service-learning was. Getting my external partners was a little more difficult. The agency was easy because they have worked with our students before in internships, they are located right across the street from the school, and I have had a long working relationship with them. In fact, I worked with the director about 20 years ago! Other educational partners were not as interested I believe because sometimes its difficult to see the personal pay-off for the effort it takes to work with a project like this. I am particularly glad that a college 30 miles away was willing to participate.

Project Chronology:

Re-grouping fall 2000 involved meeting individually with a number of people and a joint planning meeting of the partners. This joint meeting was an opportunity to explain the origin/history of the project, clarify service-learning, discuss each partners roles and expectations, and create a tentative operating schedule. I found that my role had to be coordinator and information distributor. As we start up this new semester, the partners are still in place in the project is underway.

Next Steps and Outcomes:

With the beginning of the Spring semester 2001, each college class involved in the project knows when the other classes are meeting and that the instructor can be contacted to arrange class visits. Some students will arrange their service time to meet directly with the Horticulture class while the actual physical work is in process. Other students may arrange their schedules to interview the older adults and others may be creating and conducting plant and science lessons with the children. The first graders are planning a visit to the facility to look at the agency, may visit later during the building process, and will bring plants to plant after the construction is complete. All partners will be invited to a cookout to celebrate the project at the end of the semester. The final outcome of this project will be the creation of a raised garden that is appropriately accessible for older adults, wheel chairs, and children to enjoy.

Challenges and Opportunities:

So many times in trying to partner with an agency to provide a service, you complete the project but you lack the physical evidence to show others what working together has been able to accomplish. Because of the grant, money was available to provide a physical structure that can be used as an example to stimulate others to think about service-learning projects they can engage in that become a win-win situation for everyone involved. This project provides new opportunities for students to learn in a different way, across disciplines, and to value the learning at every educational level.

The greatest challenge has been to coordinate the information to all the participants and to get everyone together. The partners have been very flexible and willing. I think the diversity of the team players was one of the greatest assets. I believe because of the diversity, there has been a great deal of respect for each other's role and the knowledge that they are bringing to the partnership. We have really been able to value each other's uniqueness and accept the challenge of learning beyond a typical classroom lecture.

**Service Learning
Case Summary and Interview
July 5, 2001**

BEVERLY BURTON

Team Members:

- What was their previous involvement in service-learning?

Bledsoe: Had some experience but left the team prematurely. Helped with SL handbooks.

Elliott: Did not know what SL was.

Johnson: Knew what SL was but left the team early in the process.

Runyan: Has a course titled "Plants and Society" so he had some experience with applying his discipline in the community, and he eventually helped with landscaping plans.

Dublin: Community representative on the team whose work covers the lifespan by connecting youth with retired persons.

- How much discussion of service-learning as a pedagogy took place and how important was that discussion for the success of your project?

The words "SL project . . ." were part of every conversation. She sent literature to one partner to read. Lander University sent a request for participation in SL if possible, but no response from psychology department.

- How much of the project originated in their setting as compared to your teaching agenda (needs & goals)?

Mostly the setting and the diverse array of partners. She had to be flexible all along the way. She had prior contact with the senior citizen center, Lifetime Discoveries.

Team Formation Process:

- What specific hurdles did you have to jump in order to get a commitment from team members? What told you that you had a commitment?

Question not asked.

- How long did it take from your initial contacts until you knew you had a "team"?

Question not asked.

- When you discussed the assessment component, how well did your team members take the notion that they would be providing “data” about their efforts?

This was not a problem early in the process; however, it was impossible to get concrete data from team members.

- How much did the assessment component contribute to, or hamper, your efforts with team building (at any point along the process)?

There were no verbally offered problems with the assessment component from anyone.

Geographical and Institutional Context:

- In what ways has your institution changed as a result of your efforts? If it has not been impacted, who or what prevented that change?

Even though I invited staff from my institution to come to the open house held on Earth Day, no one came. I created and updated a bulletin board as the project progressed. The local paper turned out and published a story on the project.

- What would need to happen to further impact the institution?

More incentives are needed for faculty to participate, e.g. stipend. We need to show how service learning connects students to the real world. We need to advise and assist other faculty.

Project Chronology:

- What has happened since your last report?

Earth Day Open house and celebration took place on April 20th. We hired a landscaper to finish the beds since the faculty team member did not follow through to the end. First graders brought annuals to plant. University students designed the layout of the beds, and her students participated in the planting. I received a service learning state award for the “best SL project at the community college.”

- How did the process contribute to your team members' understanding of service-learning, especially as framed by the matrix? Did anyone really "get it"?

The biology students at Landers University commented favorably to convince the faculty member there about the value of SL. In response to Beverly's work, one biology student developed and implemented her own SL project.

The matrix was not used in the process.

Challenges and the Opportunities:

- What have you done to sustain the partnership? What other things might need to happen to strengthen and sustain the partnership?

I could have taken a more leadership role (her biggest learning part of the project). If I had had more coordinating effort and taken more authority, this might have helped with the assessment component. The children and seniors are now in charge of the gardens. Some gardens have to be replanted every year, so there may be more work the same time next year.