Research exercise: Enhancing Adolescent Development through Service Learning
Enhancing Adolescent Development
A Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort Community Project

2012 Service Learning Experience

Abstract
As members of the Building Community through Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort (BCSJLLC) our first experience was meeting each other and becoming more than just neighbors. Living in a community and attending classes together has provided us a unique educational experience. As members of the BCSJLLC, we are committed to improving literacy rates in the Miami Valley. We pursued this ideal by donating new books to the children in fourth and fifth grade at the Cleveland Elementary School, a Dayton inner city school. As a part of our service learning commitment, we were trained to help students in grades K-8 learn to read through the tutor training program provided by Project READ. After our training, we were placed in tutoring positions at Holy Angels and DECA. By tutoring these children, our goal was to encourage educational growth in their literacy studies. As we helped these students, we felt we were emerging as leaders in the community. By being transformational leaders, we empowered these children with the knowledge to become leaders themselves. In this presentation, we will reflect upon building community and as leaders how we can affect the surrounding community.

Social Justice LLC Mission Statement
We are a living community that:

- Engages in a process of intellectual inquiry
- Productively negotiates and creates space for critical listening and the free exchange of ideas
- Holistically integrates academic residential, and co-curricular experiences
- Deploys the particular methodologies of the Humanities disciplines, specifically those associated with the study of English, Philosophy, and Religion
- Fosters an interdisciplinary approach to fundamental human concerns, e.g., what it means to be human
- Focuses on apprehending and addressing issues of Social Justice, such as stewardship, solidarity with those different from us, commitment to the integrity and equality of all human life, and dedication to the common good
- Encourages undergraduate research that is informed by the experience of service learning

The Cave
In the Allegory of the Cave in The Republic, Socrates tells a story about philosophy. After analyzing the text, one can find that our mission statement is outlined quite well in the Allegory of the Cave. The story is about an individual that ascends to enlightenment by discovering a world outside of the cave. After gaining sight of the world he begins to finally contemplate himself as a being. He realizes that the “world” inside of the cave is lackluster compared to the intellect of the real world. He realizes this fact when he steps back into the cave with the other beings. He then felt obligated to free them from the prison of the cave in which they live their lives, and bring them into the world of enlightenment outside of the cave.

Holy Angels Mission Statement
We are a vibrant education ministry of the Parish committed to challenging our students to grow in faith and excel in academics within a caring Christian environment.

Theoretical Social Justice
John Rawls, a philosopher who wrote A Theory of Justice introduced us to the idea of the veil of ignorance. This idea ensures that no one person is at an advantage or disadvantage in a situation. This theoretical idea was used by us in our adventures of student learning by not judging or putting anyone of the students higher than one another during tutoring. This was possible because we were able to tutor a new student every session, also going in on a daily basis we were able to meet a new student with a different background so you could not pre-judge the kids. We also used the veil of ignorance when we were giving back to the Dayton community when giving books to elementary school students. We did not know the kid’s race, age, or interests we were only given a name and the reading level they were at and told to pick out a book for them. Due to us not knowing their interests we needed to pick out a book that would be suitable for all types of readers, which would put no one at an advantage or disadvantage. Through John Rawls work we have learned more in depth about how not just judging someone and using the veil of ignorance you are able to open up to a broader range of people.