Working Together For A Greater Tomorrow
A Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort Community Project
2012 Service Learning Experience

Abstract

As members of the Building Communities through Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort, we were encouraged to engage in an educational experience focused on improving literacy in the surrounding Miami Valley community. In November of 2011, we each participated in the Universidad Early College Institute (UECI) program where we volunteered with students in grades four and five in high school to learn about the importance of education. The summer experience was held in the Dayton Early College Academy in cooperation with the local public school system.

Building Communities for Social Justice LLC Mission Statement

We are a living learning community that engages in a process of intellectual inquiry by participating in and creating spaces for critical reflection on the role of education in society, particularly for those at the least advantage in the society.

The Cave

The allegory applies to our experience with the students of DECA by means of us having left the cave in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. Plato begins his allegory of the cave, where his eyes are unable to quickly adapt and see the shadows again. He explains to the freed prisoner that his eyes had every known were in fact not reality. Once the freed prisoner is exposed to the sun and brightness, he is able to see the objects clearly. This philosophical concept applies to our experience with the students of DECA by means of us having left the cave in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

A Theory of Social Justice

John Rawls (1921-2002) was an American philosopher educated at Princeton University who taught at Cornell, Oxford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard. While teaching at Harvard, Rawls developed and composed his most prominent book, The Theory of Justice. The Theory of Justice (1971) was revolutionary in philosophical community because it was innovative and fresh. It was not about the traditional ideas of justice, but about the creation of a more equal society. His first theory, the “veil of ignorance,” states the designers of society and rule makers decided on the system that was fair for all people. This first theory was flawed because it was not fair for all people, but it was fair for all of society.

The second theory, the “original position,” states that the designers of society and rule makers decided on the system that was fair for all people and for all of society.

Outcomes

- Encouraged the students of Dayton toward success.
- Gave personal experience while assisting the students of Dayton.
- Provided inspiration for students to overcome academic challenges and examine higher education.
- Positively exposed college students at the University of Dayton.

DECA Mission Statement

The Dayton Early College Academy is singularly focused on preparing urban learners from the Dayton Public School District to go on to college and be the first in their families to graduate.

Reflection

Sarah

As I reflected back on my experiences during the service learning project, I could not be more amazed at the success and achievements received through this opportunity. Throughout my experience, I have made not only a new friendship in which I cherished, but also learned the importance of helping every person to an educational level of equality. By discovering the potential to assist students, I can now foster the importance of providing an equal learning environment for all. My experience has changed my own service learning and exemplified the importance of equal opportunity not only to the Dayton community but globally.