Research exercise: Working Together for a Greater Tomorrow
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 engaged in a year-long experience focused on preparing urban learners from the Dayton area to succeed in a college setting. The Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) is a college preparatory school for inner city high school students. Through tutoring in various subjects and participating with the students on service projects, we learned from both the students we worked with and the influence of their environment.

The Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) is singularly focused on preparing urban learners from the Dayton area to succeed in a college setting. As members of the Building Communities through Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort, we engaged in a year-long experience focused on preparing urban learners from the Dayton area to succeed in a college setting.

Building Communities for Social Justice LLC Mission Statement

We are a living learning community that engages in a process of intellectual inquiry, promotes interaction and creates space for critical reflection and the exchange of ideas. We simulate academic, residential, and co-curricular experiences that emphasize the particular methodologies of the discipline, specifically those associated with the study of English, Philosophy, and Religion. We aim to develop a fundamental understanding of social justice issues, such as social inequity and the role of the individual in addressing them. The ultimate goal is to foster an understanding of the complexity of social justice issues and the role of the individual in addressing them.

DECA Mission Statement

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

Success is the only option at DECA. Positively represent college students at the University of Dayton. Encourage higher education. Provide inspiration for students to overcome academic challenges and to achieve higher education. Positively represent college students at the University of Dayton.

The Cave

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato (428-320) helped lay the foundation of Western philosophy and science through his exploration of reality. His writings explored justice, beauty, and equality. Plato was a teacher of the Academy in Athens, one of the first great educational institutions in ancient Greece. The Academy, a distinct philosophical school founded by Plato, discussed the definition of justice and the qualities of just and unjust. It is founded on the principles of the Cave (S28-508a). The allegory played a vital role in demonstrating the educational value of human nature and the desire we have for education. In the allegory, a group of people are blinded and are not aware of the shadows of objects projected by a fire located behind them. They live in a world of illusion, and nothing can be perceived as real. These shadows reflect their only perception of reality. One of the men is opened to one of the men. He is exposed to the world and realizes the only images he had were not of the true reality. Once the blind person is exposed to the new world and experiences the tortuous environment, Plato states that he is responsible for returning to the cave, where he is unable to quickly adapt and see the shadows again. He explains to the prisoners the world as it truly is and their mistaken perception of reality. The prisoners then start to reflect on the idea that what they have been seeing is not the true reality. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world. This is the moment of realization. They must leave their world and experience the world.

The curriculum is very interactive and stresses focusing on the success of the student.

A Theory of Social Justice

John Rawls (1921-2002) was an American philosopher educated at Princeton University who taught at Cornell, Oxford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard. While teaching at Harvard, Rawls developed and composed his most prominent book, his Theory of Justice. The Theory of Justice (1971) was revolutionary in the philosophical community because it was innovative and fresh, pulling away from the previously established view of utilitarianism. The idea of the social contract is an idea that was considered non-doctrinaire in addressing the greatest goodness with the greatest good, yet it still benefits everyone equally. In his Theory of Justice, Rawls proposed three theories in an attempt to change the current state of society to create a more equality based system. His first theory, the “right to be heard,” discusses the starting point where the designer of the society and rule makers decide on which facts each person must accept. His second theory, the “right of ignorance,” advances his first theory in stating that designers and rule makers cannot know how their societal rules impact the lives of men, race, and gender. With his knowledge of moral social rank structures, they would make unbiased decisions for the best of all people within society. His third theory, the “right of consensus,” states that the action in an indifferent society should be modeled by the actions of those at the least advantage in society. Rawls’ theory is revolutionary in that it ensures that everyone has an equal right to freedom and to be at an equal advantage with all the rest of society. His theory reflects the importance that justice and change can only begin at the individual level.

Reflection

Annie

My experience at DECA has increased my passion for assisting others. I enjoyed working with Ana and Dina, helping them to overcome the challenges school can sometimes bring. I mainly assisted them with mathematics and biology homework, while at the same time spending time with them to improve their second language skills. The feeling of happiness when assisting a person needed is indescribable. I learned that patience and perseverance is the way toward success, and hope for a better future is achievable.

Brittany

My experience with the students of the Dayton Public School System has been invaluable. Not only have the students learned a lot, but so have I. I learned that every student has the potential and opportunity to be the best student. There is no differentiation between the students which makes trying to do well in school easier for them. I assisted them with staying on the right path and making sure they succeeded no matter what they did.

Sarah

As I reflected back on my experience during the service learning project, I could not be more amazed at the success and achievements received throughout the experience. It has made me not only a new friend in which I cherish, but also learned the importance of holding every person at an educational level of equality. By discovering the potential in the assigned student I can now feel the importance of providing an equal learning environment for all. My experience has changed my view on serving others and emphasized the importance of equal opportunity not only in the Dayton community but globally.

Outcomes

Gain personal experience while assisting the students of Dayton.

Provide inspiration for students to overcome academic challenges and to achieve higher education.

Positively represent college students at the University of Dayton.