Developing Each Child Academically:  
A Social Justice Learning and Living Cohort Community Project  
2012 Service Learning Experience

Abstract
Through the Building Communities for Social Justice Living Learning Cohort (BSSL), we were placed in social justice themed classes, prepare 12 hours of service, and live in a community with other students. In order to prepare the students, we were instructed to tutor at the local high school, the Beavercreek Academy College (DECA). DECA is an alternative school for students in the Dayton area, run by the University of Dayton. This school allows them an opportunity to excel academically so that they are able to achieve their goal of graduating from high school. We were tasked with tutoring one student or a class during each week. We could work with our students on various assignments, such as drills and reading English papers, practicing vocabulary, developing fundamental math skills, and improving their literacy skills through reading. By working one-on-one with the students we have became more involved with the community. As students we have learned to recognize the specific needs of students in the DECA school, and with the guidance of our mentors we are improving our ability to interact with students.

Social Justice Mission Statement
We are a living learning community that-

- engages in a process of intellectual inquiry
- productively negotiates and creates space for critical listening and the free exchange of ideas
- theoretically integrates academic, residential, and co-curricular experiences
- deploys the particular methodologies of the Humanities to address the singularly focused on preparing urban students for college and a lifetime of learning.
- utilizes the original positions of philosophers such as Plato and Socrates for being called the wisest man in Athens caused Plato to develop the cave.

Socrates for being called the wisest man in Athens caused Plato to become more interested in philosophy.

A Theory of Social Justice
John Rawls, a famous American philosopher, wrote about topics related to moral and political philosophy. He earned his Ph. D. from Princeton University and went on to become a professor at Oxford, Cornell, and then Harvard University during the 1960s. One of his most well-known works, Theory of Justice, was published in 1971. This work explores ideas such as the original position, the veil of ignorance, and justice as fairness. The original position describes the original starting point of society in which the designers of the society make certain assumptions about the primary goods that each person in the society must have. These primary goods include freedom, equality, opportunity, wealth, power, and income. The idea of “justice as fairness” is the idea that principles of justice are agreed to an initial situation that is fair for all who reside in the society. The veil of ignorance is an idea which states that lawmakers should make their decisions about the primary goods without knowing where they themselves would fall into society in terms of sex, race, birth, or talent. This allows every one to be on the same level so that no law creates favor of one person over others. Overall, Rawls believed that justice must be fair and that each individual in a society must have his or her primary goods. Through his suggested methods the ideal society can be achieved where everyone is treated as an equal. For our service learning, we worked one-on-one with junior and high school students at Dayton Early College Academy (DECA). This work mirrors Rawls’ theory because he believed that justice and change can only begin at the individual level.

Plato’s Allegory of The Cave
The allegory of The Cave, found in book number seven of The Republic, was written by Plato in 400BC. Plato writes in the form of a dialogue whose main character, Socrates, has a conversation with Glaucon about the allegory of the cave. Socrates, Glaucon, and Plato were all Greek philosophers. Plato was originally preparing for a life in politics, but the trial and the execution of Socrates for being called the wisest man in Athens caused Plato to become more interested in philosophy.

The cave is a hypothetical situation in which prisoners are chained since childhood and exposed only to shadows projected onto the wall in front of them. Because they have been chained since childhood and have no information about the world outside the cave, they think that the shadows are real. One day a man is released from his chains and goes out into the real world to discover the truth. After residing in the real world for a period of time, he goes back into the cave to tell the others about what he discovered. The allegory of the cave was Plato’s way of symbolically describing in which mankind finds and proposes a way to find salvation. One of Plato’s main ideas is that the world revealed by our senses is not the real world, but rather a poor perception of reality which can only be discovered through intellect. Plato also believes that knowledge cannot be transmitted from teacher to student but that the path to the answer must be pursued so that the student is able to discover the answer herself/himself. According to Plato, educated individuals have an obligation to help members of their society.

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Outcomes
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Help students with organization and the drafting of English papers
- Improve literacy and increase student reading ability
- Improve fundamental math skills

Reflections
Alblyna: I enjoyed working with a ridden English classroom as well as one-on-one with a 19 year old student. I was able to help my single student with the organization of his paper on Fleecer as well as help draft ideas for his science paper. I worked with the class on how to write their works cited and helped to make sure that they were staying on track with their in class work for the period. The experience taught me how to effectively communicate and work with not only one student, but a group of students as well.

Emily: Tutors at DECA has been an immensely rewarding. I plan to become a math teacher in the future, so having this experience has reinforced my love for teaching. I have worked with the students I am paired with, and their eagerness to work with me. This experience has taught me how to effectively communicate and work with not only one student, but a group of students as well.

Milo: My service learning project was spent as a tutor at DECA for a young male student in the eighth grade. During my time spent as a tutor, I worked with the student on various reading and comprehension assignments, homework questions in his physical science class, and taught basic geometry skills. My experience at DECA taught me the importance of helping other members of society, as well as the importance of a strong education.

Chelsea: Tutoring at DECA has allowed me to experience how the Dayton area strives to create a better learning environment for their students. Working one-on-one with students I have learned communicative skills as well as how to stay patient and empathetic when students didn’t always work out as planned. I worked with the students on graphing coordinate planes and also with comprehension of vocabulary words for their English class. The experience has been a wonderful opportunity and I am glad that I was able to experience it.

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.

- Students at DECA work on a group project in the school’s common area
- Mentor helps a student with his math assignment
- The main lobby of the College Park Center where one must obtain a pass to enter DECA
- College Park Center where DECA resides on the 3rd floor