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# Research exercise: Helping Angels Find Their Wings

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## Abstract

The Social Justice Learning Living Community's mission is to support the initiative of demonstrating community service and civic engagement. As a community we live together, take classes together, and go to meetings together regarding pertinent social justice issues. To complete our community service in the LLC we were trained to tutor students by an organization called Project READ. With the help of this organization we also had a book drive to donate a new book to students for Christmas. Through Project READ we completed the 12 hour service requirement. Throughout our tutoring we developed great relationships with the students and assisted teachers that were overworked. Through this program we helped students improve in the areas of Math, Reading, and Writing by using flashcards to help them memorize and pronounce words. It is through this program that the students have made an impact on us as we worked to carry out the University of Dayton's mission to learn, lead, and serve.

## Social Justice LLC 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
  - 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

## Holy Angels School 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.

# Helping Angels Find Their Wings: A Social Justice Learning Living Cohort Community Project

## 2012 Service Learning Experience



(Pictures Left to Right)

- Students in an outside classroom.
- The winning of a science award for their school.
- Students in an elementary classroom at Holy Angels School.
- Holy Angels Church located on 1322 Brown St.

## The Cave

*The Cave* is an allegory written by Plato, which was presented in his work *The Republic* around 400 B.C. Plato was a student of Socrates and a mentor of Aristotle. He was the founder of the Academy in Athens, Greece as well as an acclaimed philosopher and mathematician at the Academy. Plato believed that ultimately the world is good and that enlightened individuals have an obligation to guide society. In *The Cave* a group of people live their whole lives chained to the floor of a cave facing a wall. They watch shadows projected on the wall by a fire behind them which is as close the as the prisoners get to seeing reality. The prisoner is released and then comes back to tell the others but the others don't believe in his new true meaning of reality.

When the one prisoner is set free Plato describes how the philosopher is like the free prisoner who once freed realizes that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality at all. Plato's main theory in *The Cave* was that the world cannot be revealed to us through our senses but rather can only be apprehended intellectually. Plato's theory was that his idea of knowledge couldn't be transferred from teacher to student, but rather students must be directed in the right direction by the teacher to allow them to develop on their own. Plato's theory can be applied to our service learning project because we are older than the students we work with and it is our responsibility to guide them along their path to gain knowledge. In this program we, as college students, with a higher degree of education have an obligation to guide society and direct younger students to a stronger understanding of the world around them.

## John Rawls

John Rawls was an American political philosopher who focused his theories in the areas of moral and political philosophy. Rawls, who attended Princeton and taught at Princeton, MIT, Harvard and Cornell, was most highly regarded for his book called *The Theory of Justice*, originally published in 1971. His two main theories in this book dealt with the topic of social justice which include the original position and the veil of ignorance. Rawls theory of the original position is an original starting point for theoretical society in which the designers of the society make assumptions about the primary goods that each person in society must have. These primary goods include freedom, equality, opportunity, wealth, power, and income.

The veil of ignorance states that the planners and members of society made their decisions about the primary goods without knowing their sex, race, birth or talent. Rawls believed that justice must be fair and that the rights of all individuals should not ever be sacrificed for the greater good of society. However, Rawls states that the veil of ignorance isn't possible in today's society. He explains why this theory won't work because Rawls believes that the veil of ignorance would prevent the creation of a social structure that would benefit only those who were deciding how justice should be allocated. Therefore, those who create these primary goods will still have the biases that they have developed in the past and will cause the primary goods to become corrupt.

## Outcomes

- Assist students with school homework
- Build positive relationships based on respect
- Help students improve in the areas of Math, Reading, and Writing

## Reflection

**Matt** - After working with several students and teachers at Holy Angels Elementary School, I assisted them through working one on one with the students. Upon arrival the students greeted me with excitement and were always ready to work hard. Many of the younger students I assisted needed help with their handwriting and reading skills which I enjoyed helping them with. They had never been assisted one on one before but I could tell they enjoyed my company. After working with different students over this semester, I have seen great improvement in their attitude, reading and writing skills, and arithmetic. Through this experience I have learned how to adjust to each student's learning styles and have developed different ways to engage the areas of their interests.

**Henry** - My experience of mentoring at Holy Angels was an exceptional one. I worked with a variety of students ranging from first graders to eighth graders in the subjects of Math, Reading, and Writing. I worked with an eighth grader who struggled in his Math class. However, after working with him for a couple of weeks, I saw vast improvement. Most importantly, the student gained confidence in his math skills. All of the students that I worked with were eager to learn and approached everything we did with a positive attitude. Throughout my time at Holy Angels, I learned how to assist the students according to their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, I adjusted to the student's needs by using different strategies to keep the students engaged.

**Jake** - During my mentoring at Holy Angels, the experience was very rewarding and worthwhile. I tutored students from kindergarteners through fourth graders in vast subjects and games. It was fun to interact with young students and re-live my childhood. I was allowed a second chance, and this time around I accomplished more in educating the students and put forth effort and determination, which I did not always get when in their position. Through this experience I learned how to give students my full attention and respect. I learned how to assist other students and adapt to their reading and writing levels.