TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE-LEARNING: K-12 SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TEXAS SCHOOLS

A Record of Study

by

JO ANN BLUDAU

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

December 2006

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Linda Skrla
	Luana Zellner
Committee Members,	Julian Trevino
	Jon Denton
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ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of Service-Learning: K-12 School Community Partnership Development in Texas Schools. (December 2006)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda Skrla
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At the conclusion of a three-year grant cycle (2003-2006), educators and administrators as well as the general public in the state of Texas are questioning whether or not service-learning is indeed a powerful means of preparing students to become more caring and responsible parents and citizens. This study was designed to measure teachers' perceived effectiveness of service-learning. The Texas Center for Service-Learning provided a list of districts participating in the K-12 School-Community Partnership Grant Project and contact information for district grant coordinators. Coordinators in participating districts were then contacted by phone and e-mail to submit names and contact information for teachers participating in the service-learning program.

Teachers whose districts are located in central and southeast Texas were interviewed during the spring 2006 on their campuses, and teachers from more remote parts of Texas were interviewed in Austin during the Summer 2006 Institute. The sample that was used in this study includes six elementary, four middle, and two high school teachers who have been involved in the development and implementation of service-learning programs in their districts. In addition to targeting teachers at the

elementary and middle school level, both male and female service-learning teachers were interviewed as well as teachers who also assumed the role as campus and/or district service-learning coordinator.

Data collected from the service-learning teachers interviewed was analyzed to generate a composite picture of teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward service-learning. Once interviews were completed, data were transcribed, coded for audit trail purposes, printed onto separate sheets, and those sheets that apparently related to the same content were categorized into provisional categories.

Five important salient themes emerged as conclusions of the study. The first conclusion relates to service-learning work and competing priorities. The second conclusion illustrates service-learning as having a higher purpose for the teachers who have chosen to become involved in it. The third conclusion was reached by examining the role of grant funding. The fourth conclusion was drawn from situations where teachers and communities are promoting a culture of service, and the fifth and final conclusion stresses the importance of teacher leadership in the success of service-learning programs.

DEDICATION

This record of study is dedicated to the many loved ones who have helped me to find my purpose in life. My parents, Rose and Henry Pekar, sacrificed in many ways and instilled a faith that has helped me to weather the storms of life and appreciate the blessings that I have been given. My siblings, Mary, John, Carol, and Jeannie, have offered many words of advice and encouragement through the years to help their younger sister in pursuit of a lifetime of teaching and learning.

A special thanks goes to Sharon Jaks, my former 4^{th}-8^{th} grade teacher and colleague during my first seven years as superintendent, who has shown me the importance and beauty of planting myself in one place long enough to see the fruits of my labor. The children, parents, staff and board members of Sweet Home ISD have provided support and an opportunity for me to experience a true learning community in my hometown.

Finally, thank you to my best friend and husband, Ronnie, who has been the quiet inspiration in my life. You have given me the wings and courage to soar to places I had never dreamed of going. Your patience, understanding, and confidence in me have kept me moving toward excellence each time I felt the need to take the next step in my educational career and in life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their interest in my professional development and for their dedicated support throughout my doctoral program at Texas A&M University. First, I am grateful to Dr. Linda Skrla for agreeing to serve as my temporary advisor and ultimately co-chair of my dissertation committee. I appreciate her understanding of my uncommon experience as a young female superintendent in the state of Texas and her encouraging me to take Dr. Yvonna Lincoln's Naturalistic Inquiry class and explore the field of qualitative research by listening to and sharing the voices of educators in my field.

Dr. Luana Zellner, who also agreed to be my co-chair, has been a constant supporter and cheerleader for me as I balanced the roles of instructional leader, teacher, wife, and daughter. Dr. Zellner's creative class scheduling, on-line assignments, distance technologies, and independent study projects have not only allowed me to balance my responsibilities at work, home, and in school, but also introduced me to a new world of adult learning that will sustain my desire to learn for many years to come.

I am grateful to Dr. Julian Trevino who has guided me in district strategic planning and helped me see the importance of developing and maintaining positive board-superintendent relations in my district. Dr. Trevino has also encouraged me to consider a number of possibilities for my professional career and at the same time has respected my small town commitments and educational plans.

As a true instructional leader and professor, Dr. Jon Denton has broadened my knowledge in the areas of curriculum and instruction and has reaffirmed my belief in the importance of creative and innovative teaching and learning in an educational system. Many of Dr. Denton's assignments have helped me to reflect more deeply on my primary role as a teacher, and I believe that these experiences have ultimately made me a stronger principal and superintendent.

Dr. John Hoyle, who I consider to be an unofficial member of my committee, has helped me to see the humor amid the complexities of my profession and has reinforced the roles that leadership and the force of love play in my everyday interactions with teachers, students, board and community members.

Another group that I wish to acknowledge is a group known as "The Beaumont Bunch" which includes Stacy Arnold, Benny Soileau, Scott Sheppard, and Fred Brent. Making the decision to attend graduate school was easy for me. Finding a cohort of fellow administrators from my area was difficult. After taking off 'on my own,' I never dreamed that my cohort would end up being from across the state and was already in College Station and willing to adopt me into their group. I appreciate the camaraderie that they have provided me during the past four years and wish them the best in their educational careers.

Through my experiences as a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, I have learned that my learning community and network of support has not only expanded but has also been enriched by many wonderful people who genuinely care and are dedicated in their roles as educational leaders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As academic service-learning continued to grow rapidly during the last decade of the 20th Century, Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, Jr. appropriately titled their book, *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* At the same time, practitioners were discovering a pressing need for solid empirical research to sustain service-learning as a valid learning activity (Eyler & Giles, 1999). During the 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006 school years, a number of K-12 school districts across the state of Texas implemented service-learning projects made possible through K-12 School-Community Partnership Grants from the Texas Center for Service-Learning.

Allen (2003) noted that both President George W. Bush and former President Bill Clinton have lauded the value of service-learning in their speeches and even followed through with financial support for the initiative in their budgets. Both presidents have touted service-learning as a chance for students to apply the content of their studies and character to real problems in their communities (p. 51).

A tradition of community service goes back to early U.S. history. In 1830, Alexis de Tocqueville first recorded this unique phenomenon in *Democracy in America.* As he observed the civic and social support citizens gave their young nation, he called these acts "habits of the heart" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1986, p. vii) (As cited in Kinsley & McPherson, 1995, p. 2).

This record of study follows the style of Educational Administration Quarterly.

According to Eyler and Giles (1999), a great deal of energy has been devoted to defining service-learning. In 1990 Jane Kendall wrote that there were 147 definitions in the literature, and there has been no falling away of interest in this endeavor since (As cited in Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 3). Root, Callahan, and Billig (2005) mentioned that the definition of service-learning remains broad. The authors noted that currently, over 200 published definitions of service-learning exist in the professional literature (Furco, 2003) (As cited in Root, Callahan, and Billig, 2005, p. 39).

In 2002, the National Commission on Service-Learning chaired by Senator John Glenn published *Learning in Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for American Schools.* The executive summary discriminated service-learning from volunteerism and various forms of community service. School-based service-learning is not a volunteer or community service program with no ties to academics; an add-on to the existing curriculum; logging a certain number of service hours in order to graduate; one-sided—benefiting either the students or the community; compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or school administrators; and only for high school students (Implementing Quality Service-Learning Section, para. 2). The National Commission attributes of service-learning can be integrated in the following comprehensive definition (as cited in Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004, p. 4):

> **Service-learning is a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic studies to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. It engages students in**

addressing real unmet needs or issues in a community and actively involves them in decision-making at all levels of the process.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which was signed into law on January 8, 2002, is perhaps the most sweeping reform of federal education legislation since the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965. There are a number of ways that service-learning supports the goals of NCLB. Under Title III, Part B, Subpart 1, English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement, some possible program enhancement activities include "implementing applied learning activities such as service-learning to enhance and support comprehensive elementary and secondary language instruction educational programs." Another example of service-learning is listed in Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2-National Programs, "Community service and service-learning projects may be designed to rebuild safe and healthy neighborhoods and increase students' sense of individual responsibility." Service-learning is also noted as an innovative assistance program under Title V, Part A, Subpart 3, Innovative Programs, which states that "community service programs that use qualified school personnel to train and mobilize young people to measurably strengthen their communities through nonviolence, responsibility, compassion, respect, and moral courage." (As cited in www.tea.state.tx.us/NCLB).

Many of teachers who have been involved in service-learning in Texas public schools have been able to address NCLB goals as well as local and state goals through service-learning projects with their students. At the conclusion of the three-year Texas Center for Service-Learning K-12 School Community Partnership grant cycle, educators

and administrators as well as the general public in the state of Texas are questioning whether or not service-learning is indeed a powerful means of preparing students to become more caring and responsible parents and citizens.

Billig (2000) pointed out that research in the field of service-learning has not caught up with the passion that educators feel for it (p. 660). Eyler and Giles (1999) note in their preface, "Our passion for doing this research grew out of our experiences as teachers and community practitioners. We saw how powerful service-learning was for our students, and we experienced it ourselves as well" (p. xiii). Likewise, my reason for selecting service-learning as the topic of my dissertation study stems from my passion and experiences as a service-learning teacher and administrator, and the impact I have seen in my community.

Statement of the Problem

Among the many benefits that service-learning practitioners across the country identify, four in particular help demonstrate the method's value (Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004).

- The first is its power to enhance students' cognitive development—their intellectual capacities.
- A second benefit is service-learning's potential to increase student's academic achievement.
- A third benefit of service-learning is its potential for strengthening students' citizenship education, their sense of community responsibility and their abilities to participate as citizens.

- A fourth benefit of service-learning is its potential for accelerating school reform (p. 4-5).

Although, teachers and administrators as well as school boards in Texas have invested a considerable amount of time and resources in developing service-learning programs in their districts, the question remains as to whether or not these programs are having a positive impact on student learning, attitude, and achievement. Allen (2003) also questioned, does service-learning live up to its advocates' claims that it motivates students to learn more deeply and experience democratic values more tangibly? (p. 51).

Furthermore, according to Billig (2000), respondents to a media scan were somewhat concerned about whether service-learning would distract schools from the "basics" or subordinate the role of parents in teaching values. They also expressed concern about student safety and mandatory service calling the latter, "involuntary servitude" (p. 659). Thus, research on the impact of service-learning at the classroom level is needed.

Design of the Study

This study utilized the naturalistic qualitative inquiry process which is an alternative paradigm—a "naturalistic" rather than a "rationalistic" method of inquiry—in which the investigator avoids manipulating research outcomes a priori (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 7-8). It was designed to capture teachers' perceptions of service-learning at the conclusion of a three year grant project which was designed to build K-12 school-community partnerships in Texas.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study is specifically on the teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning on student learning. The study was designed to measure the perceived effectiveness of service-learning and its impact on student learning according to teachers in districts participating in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant Project 2003-2006. Billig (2000) suggested that collecting more and better-quality data about service-learning will help to establish its credibility as a pedagogy and its legitimacy as a reform strategy (p. 663).

Researcher – Service-Learning Teacher - Administrator

As an active participant in the service-learning grant project, I have both a personal and professional interest in learning more about the perceived effectiveness of service-learning across the state of Texas. Sweet Home ISD, the district where I serve as superintendent, has been involved in the 2003-2006 service-learning project through the Texas Center for Service-Learning, and I began working on my doctorate at Texas A&M University in January of 2003. I am thankful that my dissertation study has coincided with the ending of the first three year grant cycle, and in designing my study, I had hoped to meet with elementary teachers who are making it happen. I had also hoped that the information that I gathered would be helpful to both Texas Center for Service-learning staff members as well as service-learning educators around the state.

Throughout my doctoral program, service-learning has been the topic of several of my major projects and papers in courses focused on administration of change in an educational organization, curriculum development, and independent study. As a small

school principal/superintendent, I have been fortunate to experience service-learning from the viewpoint of campus/district administrator, curriculum director, teacher, and graduate student. My unique position and doctoral studies have given me an opportunity to reflect on service-learning from an historical perspective, study its role in curriculum and instruction, and examine it as a systemic approach to reforming public schools.

Initially, I struggled with determining a focus for my dissertation study. After wearing so many hats in a public school system, I have a hard time separating my roles as superintendent, principal, teacher, business manager, community liaison, strategic planner, etc. Often times, meeting accountability standards, maintaining facilities, while at the same time building positive relations with students, staff, community, school board members and taxpayers seem to be competing priorities. Finally, after reflecting on the most important position to effect change and success in a public school, I determined that the individual teacher is in the key position to evaluate the effectiveness of a program or project. When my advisors asked what I really wanted to know about service-learning, I responded, "I want to know what the teachers think about it," because in my mind, they are the people who can really make a difference in a school system.

In *Teachers of Service-Learning,* Wade (1997) seemed to agree with my line of thought, "Teachers are central to the practice of service-learning in American schools. Whereas some districts mandate service-learning, more often teachers have the option whether to infuse service-learning in their curriculum. Even in service-learning programs that are promoted by an enthusiastic administrator or facilitated by a district coordinator, invariably teachers have the primary responsibility for guiding their

students in serving the community and learning from the process of doing so. At every level of schooling, the ultimate success of a service-learning project depends, at least in part, on the skill, knowledge, and creativity of the classroom teacher (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991)" (As cited in Waterman, 1997, p. 77).

Seitsinger (2005) conducted a one-way multivariate analysis of variance statistical procedure to examine teachers' use of service-learning associated with their attitudes toward standards-based instruction and use of standards-based practices. The results of Seitsinger's study indicated that core classroom teachers' use of service-learning strategies differentiated their use of standards-based instructional practices and their endorsement of these practices (Seitsinger, 2005, p. 19-30).

I specifically focused on elementary teachers because over the past few years I have observed that some of the service-learning programs at the secondary level are less integrated across subject areas and are often designed as an elective class or an alternative education placement. Whereas service-learning at the elementary level has appeared to be designed as a more systematic academically and socially integrated approach to addressing real community problems. At the beginning of this study, I questioned if service-learning teachers were attempting to implement change at the primary levels in hopes of changing an entire educational system that has been in place for over a hundred years and if they perceived their attempts as successful or fruitless.

Pritchard and Whitehead (2004) described service-learning as a method of teaching and learning that brings together people from different generations with different perspectives and values and calls upon them to share responsibility for the

education of young people through service. Shared responsibility holds equal promise for the teachers and parents, schools, service partners and community members who collaboratively design, carry out and evaluate service-learning projects (Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004, p. 260).

Research Questions

1. How is service-learning perceived by classroom teachers as enhancement for student learning?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning strategies on the accomplishment of national, state, district, and/or campus goals?
3. What experiences, training and support have allowed service-learning teachers to be successful with their students?
4. What are teachers' perceptions of engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness as a result of participating in service-learning projects?
5. What are teachers' perceptions of administrator involvement as it affects the success of service-learning in a school district?
6. What are teachers' perceptions of how the community perceives service-learning projects in the community, and do they see them as mutually beneficial?

Methods

This study used qualitative methods and a case study approach to examine the experiences of service-learning teachers involved in the K-12 School Community Partnership Development grant project in the state of Texas. Interviewees were asked six open-ended questions in an informal setting where the researcher recorded field notes

and later transcribed responses to be reviewed for accuracy by participants. Individual responses to questions were then analyzed to identify common themes as well as unique insights that might be useful to practicing service-learning teachers, administrators, and the general community.

Significance of the Study

According to Waterman (1997), "Knowledge about what program practices contribute most to successful outcomes of service-learning, and why they work, can be used in the development of new service-learning programs and the improvement of existing programs" (p. 9). Likewise, Billig (2000) suggests that more and better qualitative research is also needed to provide deeper understandings and texture to our knowledge of how service-learning produces its outcomes (p. 662).

This study was designed to provide better knowledge on teachers' perceptions of service-learning and may guide districts in determining whether or not they should sustain service-learning as an instructional methodology within their districts by developing policies and providing or designating additional funding for service-learning projects. This study may also assist districts that are considering adopting service-learning as a method of teaching, engaging students in meaningful projects and helping them to master the state required curriculum.

Assumptions

1. Teachers utilizing service-learning will answer interview questions as accurately and honestly as possible.

2. Selected teachers will be knowledgeable about service-learning and involved in the implementation of it.

Limitations

Only identified service-learning teachers in Texas will be interviewed. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, there are no further limitations.

Operational Definitions

Service-Learning: An educational method that combines elements of experiential education with community service. It involves youths as resources to their schools and communities, as they apply academic skills to solving real-world issues, with the support of adult partners.

Service-Learning Teacher: Public school teacher who has been involved in planning, implementing, and or evaluating a service-learning program during the past three years.

TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

STARS: Teacher training focused on student leadership, thoughtful service, authentic learning, reflective practice, and substantive partnerships.

AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress.

Overview of the Chapters

This record of study is divided into five major units or chapters. Chapter I contains an introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the overall design of the study, the significance of the study and definition of terms. Chapter II contains a review of the literature including definitions of service-learning, democratic

aims of service-learning, leadership development for youths, moving from diversity to equity, curriculum for the future, and service-learning as a strategy for reform. The methodology and procedures which follow are found in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains an analysis of the data collected in the study based on the naturalistic paradigm. Chapter V contains the researcher's summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

You should know that the education of the heart is very important. This will distinguish you from others. Educating oneself is easy, but educating ourselves to help other human beings to help the community is much more difficult.

-Cesar E. Chavez, Social Activist

To gain a better understanding of developments in the field of service-learning, I reviewed articles and books focused on service-learning and related concepts including: definitions of service-learning, the democratic aims of service-learning, leadership development for youths, moving from diversity to equity, curriculum for the future, and service-learning as a strategy for reform.

Service-Learning Defined

The earliest definition of service-learning—the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth—can be found in publications of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (1969) (As cited in Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, 1999, p.2). Some commonly used definitions of service-learning can be found in the 2005-2006 Program Coordinators' Manual provided through the Texas Center for Service-Learning. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (servicelearning.org) states that "Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content."

The National Service-Learning Partnership (www.service-learningpartnership.org) defines service-learning as "a form of instruction in which students design projects to address community needs as part of their academic studies." The essential features of contemporary service-learning first appear in the National and Community Service Act of 1990. The act characterizes service-learning as an educational experience (As cited in the Texas Center for Service-Learning Program Coordinator's Manual, 2005, Section 4, Page 1):

A. Under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs and that are coordinated in collaboration with school and community;
B. That is integrated into the students' academic curriculum or provides structured time for students to think, talk, or write about what they did and saw during the actual service activity;
C. That provides students with opportunities to use newly acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations in their own communities; and
D. That enhances what is taught in school by extending students' learning beyond the classroom and into the community and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

Service-learning is sometimes described as a vehicle for taking action (McDonald & Dominguez, 2005). According to Nathan and Kielsmeier (1991) service-learning is a blending of both service and learning goals in such a way that both occur at

the same time and are enriched and supported by one another. Service-learning is a teaching and learning method that connects meaningful community service with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility (As cited in McDonald & Dominguez, 2005, p. 18-22).

Howard (2005) defined academic service-learning as another teaching strategy with great potential for moral education. He explained that in service-learning, students learn academic content by providing community service. Howard (2005)insisted that schools have a responsibility to prepare good citizens, "This entails teaching moral education along with transmitting academic knowledge and skills. Moral education should be an explicit aim for every educator" (p. 7).

Moral education seemed to be the focus of a number of articles written in recent years. For example, Lickona (1993) described how concern over the moral condition of American society is prompting a reevaluation of the school's role in teaching values. He explained that character education is as old as education itself, and noted that down through history, education has had two great goals: to help people become smart and to help them become good (p. 1 of 9). In his *Reflections on a Century of Independent Schools,* Powell (1999) explained that the central goal parents have had for independent schools throughout the century is neither academic nor intellectual, but what is usually called character development (p. 5 of 7).

Throughout history, reformers have attempted to infuse moral and character education into the curriculum. Archer (1999) mentioned Horace Mann, the 19th-century father of state-supported universal education, who saw moral instruction as an essential

element of the common school. The school system that Mann envisioned was one based on a kind of nondenominational Christianity that he believed all Americans could accept, but not everyone did (p. 2 of 15).

Despite attempts to incorporate character education in public schools, some educators have encountered much resistance. Lickona (1993) cited a number of reasons why character education declined through the 20th century including the introduction of Darwin's evolution metaphor, the emergence of the philosophy of logical positivism, a worldwide rise in 'personalism' which celebrated the worth, autonomy, and subjectivity of the person, emphasizing individual rights and freedom over responsibility, and finally, the rapidly intensifying pluralism of American society. He then described the Character Education Partnership which was launched in March 1993, as a national coalition committed to putting character development at the top of the nation's educational agenda. Members include representatives from business, labor, government, youth, parents, faith communities, and the media (p. 3 of 9).

In contrast to the reasons listed for the decline of character education, Billig (2000) mentioned the most common reasons cited for the adoption of service-learning which included helping students to become more active members of the community, increasing student knowledge and understanding of the community, meeting real community needs, and encouraging students' altruism and caring for others (p. 659).

Values education reemerged as service-learning proponents described the purposes of service-learning experiences. Sawyer's (1991) definition of service-learning in the introduction of Kinsley and McPherson's (1995) book entitled *Enriching the*

Curriculum Through Service-Learning states, "Service-learning is a powerful educational experience where interest collides with information, values are formed, and action emerges. The learning part has two dimensions: an inner dimension; learning about yourself, your motivation, your values, and an outer dimension; learning about the world, its ways and the underlying cause of the problems that service work addresses (p. 1).

Likewise, Kaye (2004) explains that service-learning can be defined in part by what it does for your students. According to Kaye, when service-learning is used in a structured way that connects classroom content, literature, and skills to community needs, students will:

- Apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve the community.
- Make decisions that have real, not hypothetical, results.
- Grow as individuals, gain respect for peers, and increase civic participation.
- Experience success no matter what their ability level.
- Gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their community, and society.
- Develop as leaders who take initiative, solve problems, work as a team, and demonstrate their abilities while and through helping others.

These important and documented academic and social results have helped validate service-learning as a valuable, respected, and widely recognized teaching method (Kaye, 2004, p.7).

According to Alan Melchior at Brandeis University, the payback in terms of real services provided to the community substantially outweighs the costs involved in integrating service-learning in the curriculum. Melchior (2000) explained that the question of cost is only one part of the decision to adopt service-learning in a school or district. Melchior suggested that among issues that need to be considered are these: service-learning's perceived effectiveness as an instructional strategy; its capacity to help a school or district address a wide variety of student goals (civic, academic, social or career development); the desire to build stronger ties between school and community; and the readiness of both educators and community members to embrace a more hands-on, experiential approach to learning (p. 4 of 5).

Democratic Aims of Service-Learning

Robert Putnam (1995) presented striking evidence that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades in his article, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital.* Putnam stated,

> Many students of the new democracies that have emerged over the past decade and a half have emphasized the importance of a strong and active civil society to the consolidation of democracy. Especially with regard to the postcommunist countries, scholars and democratic activists alike have lamented the absence or obliteration of traditions of independent civic engagement and a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state. To those concerned with the weakness of civil societies in the developing or postcommunist world, the advanced Western democracies and above all the United States have typically

> been taken as models to be emulated. There is striking evidence, however, that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades (p. 65).

In *Restoring the Balance Between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools,* Boston, Pearson, and Halperin (2005) described a disturbing imbalance in the mission of public education:

> As a new century unfolds, we find a disturbing imbalance in the mission of public education. America's recent preoccupation with reshaping "academics" and raising academic performance has all but overpowered a task of equally vital importance: Educating our young people to become engaged members of their communities, not just as wage earners and taxpayers, but as citizens—people who participate in the civic life of their communities.(p. 7).

The concern for the civic education appeared in literature in the early 20th Century. Dewey (1916) viewed the community as an integral part of educational experiences because what is learned in the school must be taken and utilized beyond its bounds, both for the advancement of the student and the betterment of future societies (As cited in Waterman, 1997, p.2). Organizations such as the National Council for Social Studies have also made civic education a priority and communicated their position to the education community and general public. For example, Wade (2000) concluded the bulletin for the National Council for the Social Studies with the following quote, "Community participation in a democratic society should not be simply an option: it is both a right and responsibility. It is the schools' obligation and social studies'

mission to develop students who have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to participate as informed and active members of their communities" (p. 96).

In recent years, educators and scholars in higher education have stated their opinions of civic education as it relates to service-learning. Allen (2003) mentioned Joseph Kahne, a professor of education at Mills College in Oakland, California, who is also concerned about the decline in the number of young people who take part in civic life. Kahne stated that a special goal of service-learning is—or should be—to boost students' interest and future participation in civic life (p.52).

Leadership Development for Youths

In his article *A Time to Serve, a Time to Learn: Service-Learning and The Promise of Democracy,* Kielsmeier (2000) described a new partner which has stepped boldly forward to help shoulder the burden of improving schools and communities. Kielsmeier suggests this "new" partner as young people. Service-learning, a way of teaching a learning that engages students in active service tied to curriculum, can transform the idealism of youth into a powerful force for educational change and democratic renewal (p. 652)

In contrast, Blank, Johnson, and Shah (2003) commented that adults typically see young people through the narrow, and too often negative, perspective of the media. However, when the community is used as text, young people can become assets to their community, helping to solve specific problems alongside peers and adults. The community can serve as a resource to help students become more engaged in learning and strengthen connections between schools and community (p. 111).

There are a number of reasons why adults often view young people negatively. Feldman and Elliott (1990) explained that public attitudes about adolescence arise from a blend of personal experience and media portrayals; neither source offers the objectivity needed to understand how normal development is evolving in this country. Many individuals measure the behaviors of today's teenagers against the often distorted memories of their own youth (p. 480-481). In the United States today adolescence is characterized by marked age segregation and little regular interaction with adults (p. 3).

In an abridged version of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (January, 1990), The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development provided a number of recommendations for transforming middle grade schools. Among their many recommendations is, *"Teaching young adolescents to be active citizens*." The council recommended that "Every middle grade school should include youth service—supervised activity helping others in the community or in the school—in its instructional program. Youth service can teach young people values for citizenship, including compassion, regard for human worth and dignity, tolerance and appreciation of human diversity, and a desire for social justice. Youth service also teaches student skills for work such as collaboration, problem solving, and conflict resolution" (p. 14).

According to Kinsley and McPherson (1995) service-learning has roots in youth development, "Service has long been viewed as a powerful way to develop character, foster and ethic of service, and nurture a sense of membership in the community" (p. 5). Likewise, Des Marais, Yang, and Farzanehkia (2000) have found that service-learning is the most powerful approach in youth leadership development. Through service-learning,

young people become engaged leaders taking responsibility for solving complex problems and meeting the tangible needs of a defined community (p. 679). The authors also stressed that adults must recognize that being a young service-learning leader means taking responsibility for the process and the outcomes. But being able to "let go and let be" seems to be the greatest challenge for adults in service-learning. They pointed out that in effective service-learning classrooms, the teacher moves from being the gatekeeper of knowledge and resources to acting as an ally and a partner in learning and social action (p. 680).

In 1938, John Dewey described the trouble with traditional education was "not that educators took upon themselves the responsibility for providing an environment. The trouble was that they did not consider the other factor in creating an experience; namely, the powers and purposes of those taught" (p.45). Dewey (1938) also stressed that the most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning (p. 48). In 1949, Ralph Tyler also emphasized the "the value of having pupils participate with teachers in planning the more particular things to be done by that class is largely in giving the student greater understanding and meaning to his learning experiences as well as increasing the likelihood of his being motivated" (p. 103).

Furthermore, Blase and Anderson (1995) explained that for true democratic and empowering leadership to become a reality, the real challenge for educational practitioners may not be so much what they need to learn as what they need to *unlearn*. The latter may include how practitioners enact organizational roles, how 'school' is supposed to be done, and how they view the traditional role of parents and students (p.

135). As a result, educators must change their thinking to involve students in meaningful ways. Kinsley and McPherson (1995) describe service-learning as both a mindset and a pedagogy. As a mindset, it views young people as resources who have the capacity and energies to contribute to their schools and communities. As a pedagogy, it influences how we design instruction and programs. It helps democratize schools and communities by giving voice and influence to young people who are often of the recipients of service, but are rarely asked to be "of" service (p. 115).

Moving from Diversity to Equity

Byrnes and Kiger (1992) pointed out that we live in an increasingly ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse society. They emphasized the need for educators (most specifically classroom teachers) to take strong positions in opposing prejudice and discrimination in schools and society to actively educate for attitudes compatible with a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse society. Byrnes suggested that there is little doubt that if substantial changes are to be made so that all racial and ethnic groups are treated equitably, every person involved with educating children must take an active role in the process (p. 11).

According to Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001), "What is critically needed is real-life, context-specific, tactical, anti-racist work in our schools" (p. 239). Given this goal, the question remains—Who? When? Where? How? (As cited in Brown, 2004, p. 80). My question is, "Could it be service-learning?"

In reflecting on the progress of public education, Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) recognized that schools have failed to capitalize on the strengths of people to forge

collaborative relationships within the school. They encourage teachers and principals to think more deeply about school reform, individual responsibility, and collaborative culture. In their book, *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?*, Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) provided exciting ideas and methods for teachers and principals to act as moral change agents and help establish new, more powerful working and learning conditions in their profession (p. i).

Unfortunately, some educators have struggled with engaging culturally diverse children in meaningful learning experiences. In response, Hollins, King and Hayman (1994) asserted that teaching African American and other children from culturally diverse backgrounds is neither difficult nor impossible. The authors stated that it does require a restructuring of teaching attitudes, approaches and strategies, "Teachers must become facilitators and directors of the learning process, rather than information givers. Classrooms must become more group-oriented and cooperative rather than individualized and competitive and more inviting than repressive. Peers and other students must be included as teachers in the learning process along with the community and parents of the children while the materials used in the classroom must be a reflection of the experiences of the children, not just in character image, but in settings and contexts" (p. 188). Service-learning projects provide opportunities for students to take the lead in learning while interacting with peers and are often coordinated with community groups which more accurately reflect the cultural diversity that exists in public school systems.

Collaboration appears to be a key ingredient to facilitating a successful service-learning project. Kouzes and Posner (1995) insist that trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration, "It's the central issue in human relationships within and outside the organization. Trust is also an essential element of organizational effectiveness" (p. 163). Building trust is also a key goal in developing relationships in individual classrooms and between teachers and students (Flippen Group, 2003 & 2004).

Students who are learning English as a second language may also benefit from the interactive nature of service-learning projects. Scarcella (1990) pointed out that dramatic improvements in the academic achievement of language minority students result when their teachers understand their learning styles and incorporate these learning styles into everyday classroom teaching (p. 8). Scarcella (1990) implied that language minority students of all ages need to develop experiences in the widest possible array of real, meaningful, contexts. "Teachers need to understand second language development, provide their students with comprehensible lessons, and incorporate the students' languages and cultures into the curriculum. They need to collaborate with their students in such a way that their students' interests and experiences are validated," (p. 14). Perhaps, some of these language acquisition and support experiences may be provided through service-learning projects as suggested in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title III, Part B, Subpart I.

Although service-learning has been criticized for its potential to polarize a school community in ways that are not socially healthy, in some communities it has been used to reach students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs. For example,

Matthew Jennings (2001) described two service-learning projects that bolstered both the self-esteem and the academic skills of his middle school special education students. Jennings noted that through service-learning, his students have gained confidence in their skills and have developed a sense of pride and of belonging in their community (p. 474-475).

In consideration of the wishes and beliefs of parents who represent diverse groups in public schools, Garber and Heet (2000) suggested that service-learning should exist only in schools that are freely chosen by the families of students who attend them. The authors explained that critics of the current state of service-learning rightly point out that most of its advocates lean strongly to the left side of the political spectrum, and most of the programs engaged in by students in the U.S. reflect a social-activist bent. They believe that it is the responsibility of schools (particularly those funded by taxpayers and run by government entities) to engage students in honest inquiry and honest effort to understand the many perspectives on a given issue. The authors maintained that service-learning holds tremendous potential for expanding and enriching a child's education. However, it is important to note that schools serve diverse constituencies, and some citizens will inevitably object when their tax dollars are used to advance causes with which they disagree (p. 676-677).

Another concern is related to the purpose and intent of service-learning projects. Weah, Simmons, and Hall (2000) explained that the "missionary ideology" that currently underlies much of the service-learning movement is mostly the result of a series of decisions intended to "do good things" for others, and so the movement does not directly

acknowledge what those others, particularly communities of color, might have to offer. The authors believe that, if this nation is serious about diversifying the leadership and control of service-learning, then all of us must seriously consider who is doing what, to whom, and for what reason (p. 673). They noted that perhaps the service-learning movement should renew its dedication to discovering the essence of service. They suggested that now we must invent new models and create new ways of thinking about service that will demonstrate democracy at its core. This means working together to find ways for everyone to be responsible, productive, and empowered (p. 675).

Ralph Tyler (1949) had expressed similar ideas in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* "If in the elementary school an effort is made to develop better, more social attitudes toward other racial groups, it is important to provide experiences in which children have a chance to share with children of other racial groups, to serve and to be served by them, but in situations that give a good deal of satisfaction from this type of sharing, this give and take" (p. 558).

Most public school teachers and administrators as well as parents and community members are aiming for success for all students. Brown (2004) suggests that if current and future educational leaders are to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, then substantive changes in educational leadership preparation and professional development programs are required (p. 80).

Curriculum for the Future

In 1979, Elliot W. Eisner formulated a concept of curriculum that he believes is useful, "The curriculum of a school, or a course, or a classroom can be conceived of as a series of events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students" (p. 31). Eisner further explained that a curriculum is a program that is intentionally designed to engage students in activities or events that will have educational benefits for them. He noted that what the teacher uses are initiating activities, but such activities are employed simply to get the ball rolling, to begin a process whose course is shaped in the conduct of teaching (p. 32).

A number of educators and scholars have acknowledged the fact that public education as we know it is not what it should be. Brooks (2002) suggested that, "Too many students experience school as a place to put in time…and view their lives within school walls as distinctly different from their lives at home and in their community." She also implied that, "Too many educators seem to share that point of view and focus more on lists of standards than the students they are supposed to serve." Her book *Schooling for Life: Reclaiming the Essence of Learning* (2002) is about how we might blur the distinctions between "school life" and "real life," between learning and teaching, between learning and living well.

In *Preparing for Today and Tomorrow*, Eisner (2003) expressed his desire for an educational process that is genuinely meaningful to students, challenging them with problems and ideas that they find both interesting and intellectually demanding (p. 8). He asserted that at a time when a sense of community seems to be dissipating in our

neighborhoods, the opportunity to form community through collaborative work in schools is especially important (p. 9). Eisner also suggested that we need a radically different conception of what matters in education. He cautioned that test scores need to take a back seat to more educationally significant outcomes. After all, the major lessons of schooling manifest themselves outside of the context of school (p. 10).

Perhaps this movement is the same curricular movement that reappeared at regular intervals throughout the 20th century. In examining *Crosscurrents in Curricular Reform and Reconstruction,* Tanner and Tanner (1980) stated,

> Eventually, it was realized that curriculum development requires (1) consideration of the nature and interests of the learner, (2) the problems of society, (3) the interdependence of knowledge, (4) the continuity between theoretical and applied knowledge, (5) the authentic function of general education as compared with that of specialized education, and (6) involvement of the whole school community, and not merely the scholar-specialist. (p. 561).

Another prominent curriculum theorist Fenwick English (1992) explained that to be effective in schools, a curriculum must have at least three essential characteristics. As a work plan, a curriculum must provide for *consistency* (or coordination). It must provide for *continuity* (or articulation). A curriculum must also provide for *flexibility* in adaptation as teachers interact with students. Flexibility means that the curriculum must be open to some interpretations in terms of how and under what classroom circumstances the content is most optimally taught (p. 16). Teachers ultimately have

control over these three areas and strive to coordinate their lessons with community expectations.

In *Making Connections,* Caine & Caine (1994) predicted that tomorrow's successful employees will have to be problem solvers, decision makers, adept negotiators, and thinkers who are at home with open-endedness, flexibility and resourcefulness. They must be able to deal with uncertainty, complexity, the global village, the information explosion, other technologies, and many different cultures—and still maintain a set of values that fosters an adequate degree of individual stability, integrity, and social harmony (p. 15). Caine and Caine (1994) also suggest that teachers can begin changing their thinking by designing thematic units that engage emotions, social relationships, and complex cognitive processing through intellectual challenge (p. 192).

Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) explain that the central idea of their view is simply that all teaching and learning questions—all curriculum matters—be looked at from the point of view of the involved persons. They believe that curriculum development and curriculum planning are fundamentally questions of teacher thinking and teacher doing (p. 4). With this in mind, I question, "What role do the students as involved persons play in the development and planning of curriculum?"

In *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners,* Tomlinson (1999) described hallmarks of differentiated classrooms, "In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide. They accept and build upon the premise that learners differ in important ways. Thus, they also

accept and act on the premise that teachers must be ready to engage students in instruction through different learning modalities, by appealing to different interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity" (p. 2).

Likewise, Winebrenner (2001) suggests the following ways to nurture creative thinking in gifted students: encourage children to observe and explore their environment from many perspectives; encourage children's natural curiosity; provide numerous open-ended learning experiences; provide many opportunities for children to engage in meaningful decision making; provide regular opportunities for daydreaming or reflection; group creatively gifted kids together with others like themselves on projects and activities; and help creative children find outlets and audiences for their creative projects (p. 17). Based on my review of the literature and service-learning programs, it appears that these are some of the same ways that service-learning teachers nurture creative thinking in the classroom. Perhaps in preparing all children for the future and the challenges of today, we need to begin using teaching methods that were traditionally used only with the gifted children.

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) acknowledged that teachers have a critical role in assisting learners to engage their understanding, building on learners' understanding, correcting misconceptions, and observing and engaging with learners during the process of learning (p. 238). Expert teachers know the structure of the knowledge in their disciplines. This knowledge provides them with cognitive roadmaps to guide the assignments they give students, the assessments they use to gauge student progress, and the questions they ask in the give-and-take of classroom life (p. 241).

It is obvious that in the future teachers will need more training and skills to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. Fullan (2003) asserted that the teachers we need are immersed in disciplined, informed professional inquiry and action that results in raising the bar and closing the gap by engaging all students in learning (p.11). Closing the achievement gap is indeed a complex process and one that most districts and teachers across the state are aiming to accomplish.

In addition to closing the achievement gap, Allen (2003) mentioned that one of the challenges of service-learning is integrating its goals into both the academic curriculum and the community's needs (p. 54). Beane (1997) noted that at its most sophisticated level, curriculum integration suggests that learning emerges from the students' own questions about the world, is driven by their own problem-posing and inquiry processes, and is geared towards taking meaningful action in the world. Susan Drake (1993) called this approach a "transdisciplinary" curriculum (As cited in Kesson and Oyler, 1999, p. 140).

Kesson and Oyler (1999) further explained that despite years of research and development on curriculum integration, schools remain amazingly resistant to broad-based, systemic reorganization necessary for curriculum integration. They noted that perhaps the most important aspect of curriculum integration is the way in which it organizes student learning around topics of vital relevance to the students themselves-instead of around the textbook. According to Kesson and Oyler (1999), disciplinary knowledge is utilized to the extent to which it illuminates real issues and solves real problems. Projects are often a vital component of integrated learning and authentic

assessments (performances, exhibitions) often replace and/or supplement letter grades and tests. (p. 140-141).

Integrated learning and authentic projects often involve students socially and emotionally. In *The Educator's Guide to Emotional Intelligence and Academic Achievement: Social-Emotional Learning in the Classroom*, Elias and Arnold (2006) described the background of social emotional learning (SEL) and service-learning in the Hudson Schools,

> Service-learning is an excellent instructional method for building character, developing effective social skills, understanding the perspectives of others, and developing students' self-confidence that they can make a difference in the world. In fact, service-learning enables students to apply their social-emotional skills in the real world. At the same time, it is also an excellent vehicle for bringing the academic curriculum to life and improving overall student performance. In Hudson, it is a comprehensive pre-K to 12 service-learning program that brings all the elements together (p. 50).

With regard to staff development, Wade (2000) concluded that service-learning allows us to prepare teachers who have the knowledge and skills to be efficient and effective educators, but more importantly, it allows us the opportunity to develop the dispositions and habits of mind that could transform their understanding about the meaning and purpose of their work with children (p. 90).

Service-Learning as a Strategy for Reform

Billig (2000) pointed out that nearly a decade ago, Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin wrote a synthesis of the research in service-learning. They cited a growing trend toward the adoption of service-learning in K-12 schools because of two perceived needs: the reform of youth and the reform of education (p. 658). In 1995, Kinsley and McPherson had also explained that advocates of service-learning and proponents of school reform are natural allies who share an understanding about what is important to the development of a strong education (p. vii.) Seymour Sarason, in *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform* (1990), stated that true school reform cannot be accomplished without a change in the traditional authoritarian classroom (As cited in Kinsley and McPherson, 1995, p. 7).

There have been a number of projects designed to reform public schools. In his Yale Child Study Center—New Haven School System project Comer (1993) concluded that, "most programs designed to improve schooling fail because they do not adequately address the developmental needs of children and the potential for conflict in the relationship between home and school, among school staff, and among staff and students. They do not consider the structural arrangements, specific skills, and conditions school people need to address the complexities of today's schools" (p. 38).

Heckman, Confer, and Peacock (1995) described another school reform project, the Educational Community Change Project (ECC), in *Creating New Educational Communities* (Oakes & Quartz, 1995). The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the applicability and effectiveness of three propositions:

(1) democratic norms will best promote reinvention of schools and communities;

(2) when adults and children change conditions in their own schools and communities, they further their educational development; and

(3) educational advancement is achieved and interconnections between school and community are best developed when all local learning resources work collectively as the axis for change.

The project contended that all children can learn if provided equal opportunities in the educational system. It promoted the concept that these opportunities are more likely to materialize for those now underserved by the system if traditional teaching processes are changed to an understandable format that relates directly to the "real" world of the students. According to Heckman, Confer, and Peacock (1995), the best vehicle for such change is an ongoing united effort of school faculty, parents, and the community (As cited in Oakes & Quartz, 1995, p. 188-189).

Inez Tenenbaum (2000), the state superintendent of education for South Carolina, explained how her state has linked service-learning to teacher education, strategic planning in schools, school-to-work, and educational accountability in *Building a Framework for Service-Learning: The South Carolina Experience.* In her reflections, Tenenbaum provided the following recommendations which might assist other states in developing, improving, and institutionalizing service-learning.

- Analyze local and state policies, plans, and programs to determine how service-learning might promote and enhance these efforts.

- Establish a statewide policy council composed of decision makers representing government, business and industry, education, and human services.
- Align service-learning initiatives with policy makers' visions, goals, and programs.
- Develop a well-defined staff development program that will ensure the implementation of high-quality service-learning programs.
- Link service-learning to state academic standards and with teacher education programs, and develop pre-kindergarten through teacher education partnerships.
- Finally, create a network of trained advocates, including young people, who can serve as ambassadors and providers of technical assistance (p. 668-669).

During the five years since they were first formulated, six principles of service-learning have been put into practice in numerous initiatives throughout the country. Riley and Wofford (2000) reviewed the principles in practice developed by the U.S. Department of Education and the Corporation for National Service and gave examples of a wide variety of projects and programs that reflect each one of them in their article *The Reaffirmation of the Declaration of Principles.*

- The first principle is that all children can achieve higher levels of academic success while learning to serve if they are provided challenging standards and given the opportunity to reach them.

- The second principle is that by solving real-life problems, students engaged in service-learning are challenged to exercise leadership and responsibility.
- The third principle is that teachers engaged in school improvement and service-learning require continuing professional development and training.
- The fourth principle is that improving our schools requires parent and community involvement.
- The fifth principle is that improving our schools requires the participation of the private sector and a full range of resources from every community.
- The sixth principle is that school improvement and service-learning build on the realization that ours is a nation of diverse cultures.

Riley and Wofford (2000) suggested that implementing the six principles must be the responsibility of everyone, and they noted that the six principles of *Declaration* are for all the children and young people of America (p. 670-672).

In his article *Service-Learning and Reform in the Philadelphia Public Schools*, David Hornbeck (2000), found teachers who report that, when students are given opportunities to investigate and solve pressing community problems, the students become intellectually engaged and personally empowered. Meanwhile, the teachers said that they feel inspired, creative, and passionate when they use constructivist teaching approaches to help their students meet academic standards (p. 665).

In summing the principles from the constructivist research, Sergiovanni (1996) pointed out that "Project planning and teaching is better than lesson planning and teaching." He further explained that project planning and teaching involves students in an in-depth investigation of disciplinary and interdisciplinary problems. Such problems require careful study of issues, histories, theories and other kinds of subject matter. Students master rigorous subject-matter content, problem-solving, and research skills while they also develop, practice, and expand such basic communication skills as reading, writing, and other symbolic forms of representation. (p. 133-134). These are some of the same skills that business leaders and employers are looking for in graduates of public schools.

In describing a special section on service-learning which deals with engaging young people in highly motivational, hands-on activities that are closely tied to the real world, Pauline B. Gough (2000), editor of the Phi Delta Kappan, mentioned authors Joe Nathan and James Kielsmeier who back in 1991 put together the first special section on that topic in which they dubbed service-learning "the sleeping giant" of school reform. They envisioned "service-learning as a way of changing pedagogy to make school more engaging for students. No more would the teacher serve as the sole transmitter of knowledge! Instead of treating young people as problems, adults would come to treat them as valued resources and producers of solutions" (p. 642). The metaphor of service-learning as a sleeping giant struck me as something really significant, and I have often wondered why more people have not attempted to awaken this giant.

According to Schmoker (1996) “Schools improve when purpose and effort unite. One key is leadership that recognizes its most vital function: to keep everyone’s eyes on the prize of improved student learning. The crush of competing agendas and distractions does not make that focus easy” (p. 103). As a teacher and campus principal, I have had firsthand experience with these kinds of competing agendas and distractions that keep me and other teachers from teaching and facilitating projects that result in improved student learning.

Schlechty (1997) described the task before us in inventing the future, “The capacity to establish and maintain focus on students and the quality of the experiences they are provided, the capacity to maintain direction, and the capacity to act strategically are the most critical components to be attended to if we are serious about developing an action plan to improve the quality of America’s schools” (p. 222). Furthermore, Fullan (1991) concluded that school improvement is related not just to what the teachers do and think. Equally important is what those around them at the school, district, provincial/state, and federal levels do. “If there is any changing to be done, *everyone is implicated* and must face it in relation to his or her own role. In this network, because of closeness to the classroom situation and opportunity to alter workplace conditions, probably the most powerful potential source of help or hindrance to the teacher is the school principal” (p. 143).

Ultimately, the decisions of campus principals and district administrators affect the teachers and students in a school. As a number of districts and schools involved in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant Project neared the end of the first three

year grant cycle a common question emerged, “How will we sustain service-learning in the absence of grant funds?” Perhaps a more systematic approach to sustaining service-learning in a school district should be explored. Fullan (2005) defined sustainability as “the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose” (p. ix). In *Leadership & Sustainability: Systems Thinkers in Action*, Fullan (2005, p. 14) described eight elements of sustainability:

1. Public service with a moral purpose
2. Commitment to changing context at all levels
3. Lateral capacity building through networks
4. Intelligent accountability and vertical relationships (encompassing both capacity building and accountability)
5. Deep learning
6. Dual commitment to short-term and long-term results
7. Cyclical energizing
8. The long lever of leadership

Some of the same elements that Fullan described above may sustain service-learning as well as other innovative teaching methods in our public schools.

Summary

In this chapter, a review of a number of definitions of service-learning is presented along with a review of literature in the following areas: the democratic aims of service-learning, leadership development for youths, moving from diversity to equity,

curriculum for the future, and service-learning as a strategy for reform. This review of literature provided the background knowledge that I needed to move forward in my study of teachers' perceptions of service-learning in Texas schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Service-learning research has come under recent criticism for not being grounded sufficiently in theory and for lacking precision in specification and measurement. A review of recent research in light of these criticisms reveals that these efforts are at a methodological crossroads. In *Adding Rigor to Service-Learning Research (2004),* Ziegert and McGoldrick insisted that service-learning research should be built on a strong foundation of theory, values discussion, and concern for context (As cited in Welch and Billig, 2004, p. 23). With this in mind, a qualitative research study aimed at discovering teachers' perceptions of service-learning was designed.

According to Schwandt (2001), "qualitative evaluation is a broad designation for a variety of approaches to evaluating (i.e., determining the merit, worth, or significance of) social and educational programs, policies, projects, and technologies that make use of typically 'qualitative' methods of generating data (e.g., unstructured interviewing, observation, and document analysis) and nonstatistical means of analyzing and interpreting those data" (p. 214).

As academic service-learning continued to grow rapidly, practitioners were discovering a pressing need for solid empirical research about service-learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1999). According to Shumer (1997) in *Service-Learning: Applications from the Research,* it is clear that qualitative studies in the past 20 years have uncovered a great deal about the experiential/service-learning process. For example, we have learned how programs get started, how programs are developed and implemented, and

how good learning occurs in community settings. Although we understand a lot, there is still much more to learn. We need to understand the effect of service-learning on social and civic behavior. Shumer (1997) posed the following questions for longitudinal study (as cited in Waterman, 1997, p. 37):

- Do people who practice service activities while in formal schooling continue on as a regular practice through life? If so, how and why is it done?
- How are program purposes carried out so that outcomes are achieved (or is experiential learning not very predictable)?
- How do people in schools responsible for establishing and monitoring service-learning programs actually perform their jobs and ensure the program quality one expects from professionals?
- What is the benefit to communities in having service-learning programs and how does this benefit manifest itself?

These are just a few of the many questions that as a researcher I share with authors such as Shumer. Qualitative research allowed me to answer some of the above mentioned questions as well as others that emerged through the interview process.

Selection of the Naturalistic Paradigm

According to Schwandt (2001), "naturalism or naturalistic inquiry is the name for a particular methodology that emphasizes understanding and portraying social action (i.e., the meaning, character, and nature of social life) from the point of view of social actors. It emphasizes that this kind of understanding can be forthcoming only from firsthand, eyewitness accounts of 'being there.' It aims at faithful, authentic reproduction

or representation of others' ways of life" (p. 173). I decided to use the naturalistic paradigm to capture the voices of service-learning teachers involved in the first three-year grant cycle facilitated by the Texas Center for Service-Learning. This study aimed to capture teachers' perceptions of service-learning to give others a better understanding of their thoughts and experiences.

Some of the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that were used in conducting this study include the following: several of the interviews occurred in the natural setting, the classroom where service-learning is implemented. As a human instrument in the data-gathering process, I scripted interviewee responses during the interview process. Because of shared language and experiences in the field of education, I was able to use tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge in addition to propositional knowledge (knowledge expressible in language form). Qualitative methods were utilized because they are more adaptable to dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39 & 40).

Site Selection

Twenty-nine K-12 public school districts participating in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant were targeted for this dissertation study. Four districts from Regions 14; three districts from Regions 4, 6, and 18; two districts from Regions 10, 12, 13, and 16; and one district from each of the following Regions 1, 3, 8, 11, 15, 17, 19, and 20 were asked to participate in this study (Texas Center for Service-Learning, 2005). These districts applied for a K-12 School Community Partnership Grant in the spring of 2003 and have been meeting periodically in Austin, Texas for

training sessions and Summer Service-Learning Institutes. Contact information for each of these districts was made available to all grant participants during the September, 2005 meeting of all grantees in Austin.

Informant Selection

The informant group that was used in this study included six elementary, four middle, and two high school teachers who have been involved in the development and implementation of service-learning programs in their districts through the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant 2003-2006. In addition to targeting teachers at the elementary and middle school level, I also interviewed both male and female service-learning teachers. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), all sampling is done with some purpose in mind. Within the conventional paradigm that purpose almost always is to define a sample that is in some sense representative of a population to which it is desired to generalize (p. 200). Because of the nature of the study and the relatively small population to select from, I used purposive sampling to select teachers for interviews. I specifically targeted teachers with an interest in implementing service-learning programs with children during their formative years who are early in their educational careers, rather than students involved with service-learning as the result of being enrolled in an elective class at the high school or college level or being placed in a service-learning program as an alternative education placement.

According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), a phenomenological study usually involves identifying and locating participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon that is being explored (p. 92). Participants who have been involved in

the service-learning grant project during the past three years were identified through contacts with the Texas Center for Service-Learning and were asked to participate in the study. Support staff from the Texas Center for Service-Learning e-mailed a list of possible interviewees along with contact information.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the tasks of contacting appropriate individuals at the inquiry site and of gaining entrée have both formal and informal aspects. The researcher must deal with multiple gatekeepers and repeat tasks of persuasion to strike a bargain and gain access to the interviewees (p. 252-253). As a participant in the grant project for the past three years, I have met and talked with a number of teachers involved in the grant project. The assistant director of the Texas Center for Service-Learning agreed to set aside time in the agenda during the Summer Service-Learning Institute agenda for me to talk about the dissertation study, and she designated a conference room for interviews.

The Texas Center for Service-Learning provided a list of districts participating in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant Project and contact information for district grantee contacts. Campus service-learning coordinators in participating districts were contacted by phone and e-mail to submit names and contact information for teachers participating in the service-learning program who might be willing to participate in the study. A letter inviting the designated service-learning teachers to participate in the study was also e-mailed and distributed at the summer conference.

Interview Procedures

The study was conducted during the late spring and summer months of 2006, and interviews were conducted on the campuses of participating districts as well as during the Summer Service-Learning Institute which was held at the Marriott Hotel in Austin, Texas, June 6-8, 2006. Ideally, an entire population would be used to gather information. However, this is usually not feasible as most groups of interest are either too large or scattered geographically (Roberts, 2004, p. 134). Therefore, in this doctoral study which involves teachers from school districts located throughout the state of Texas, I interviewed teachers whose districts are located in central and southeast Texas on their campuses, and teachers from more remote parts of Texas were interviewed in Austin during the Summer Service-Learning Institute.

The original plan was to interview 8-10 service-learning teachers at the Summer Service-Learning Institute. However, with the summer months and the end of the first three year grant cycle quickly approaching, I decided to interview at least six teachers prior to the end of the school year to maximize the number of participants within my late spring and early summer time frame.

Several unexpected events occurred early in the summer which reduced the number of possible interviewees attending the Summer Service-Learning Institute in Austin. First, a number of districts that had received the service-learning grant during the first three-year grant cycle, reapplied for the second three-year grant cycle, but were not awarded the second grant. Therefore, they did not send service-learning teachers to the summer conference. Some of the districts that were renewed decided to send

teachers new to service-learning rather than teachers who had had experience with service-learning during the first three year grant cycle. The director of the Texas Center for Service-Learning and other staff members from the Center also recognized the drop in attendance at the Summer Institute and made special efforts to recruit service-learning teachers for this study. At the conclusion of the institute, data had been collected from eleven service-learning teachers including those interviewed prior to and during the summer conference.

In this study, one elementary teacher was interviewed before school at a restaurant near her campus. One elementary teacher was interviewed in his classroom and on the school grounds after school hours. A middle school teacher was interviewed in his classroom during a field day. Two middle school teachers and three elementary teachers were interviewed in Austin during the Summer Service-Learning Institute. Two high school teachers were interviewed on their campuses as a result of acquaintances made with elementary teachers and service-learning coordinators. One interview was conducted primarily with the campus service-learning coordinator and several service-learning teachers responded to some of the interview questions as the coordinator gave me a tour of the school and discussed the school's involvement in service-learning in the teacher workroom. Due to time constraints and summer schedules, the last teacher interviewed had reviewed the questions and submitted a reflection for each question via e-mail and later discussed her responses, which tended to be deeper and more comprehensive than most other verbal responses.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described an “emergent design which allows the research design to emerge (flow, cascade, unfold) rather than to construct it preordinately (a priori) because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately” (p. 41). Although I originally intended to interview elementary service-learning teachers, the design of the study gradually emerged to include teachers, service-learning coordinators, and administrators involved with service-learning at a variety of levels, as well as data collected not only through face to face interviews but also through written reflections and telephone conversations.

This study included an ethnographic inquiry which sought to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people’s overall worldview or ‘culture’. In line with this approach, I was striving to see things from the perspective of the participant (Crotty, 2003, p. 7). Interview questions were structured to gather factual information regarding years of experience, training attendance, responsibilities, and leadership opportunities. The remainder of the interview consisted of open-ended questions aimed at teachers’ perceptions of and attitudes toward service-learning. The open-ended questions provided teachers with an opportunity to be specific with his/her thoughts and views about classroom implementation; community involvement; training experiences; impact of service-learning projects on student learning, standardized assessments such as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, student motivation, and student civic-mindedness.

In *Service-Learning: A Movement's Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future,* Stanton, Giles, and Cruz (1999) explained that numerous pioneers called for research to identify instructional strategies that ensure that "service combined with learning adds value to each and transforms both" (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989) (Taken from Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999, p. 223). By interviewing teachers who have been involved in service-learning projects, I intended to highlight teachers' perceptions and strategies which have resulted in this type of transformation of service and learning. Although the interview itself may be quite loosely structured and flexible, phenomenological researchers generally prepare some questions in advance, preferring to alter them if it seems appropriate as the interview progresses (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 95). Therefore, I altered my research questions throughout the interview process to include key ideas and concerns that emerged throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the service-learning teachers interviewed was analyzed to generate a composite picture of teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward service-learning. The issue of data analysis may be more problematic for those considering qualitative research than it is for those undertaking conventional quantitative research (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p.97). Lincoln and Guba (1985), stated, "Not very much can be said about data analysis in advance of the study," (p. 241) The data of naturalistic inquiry—the observational and interview notes accumulated in the field, documents and records, unobtrusive traces, and the like—demand a form of processing very similar to that which has traditionally characterized ethnographic inquiry (p. 333).

Once interviews were completed, data were transcribed, coded for audit trail purposes, printed onto separate sheets, and those sheets that apparently related to the same content were categorized into provisional categories. The coding system included the interview number, gender of the teacher being interviewed, instructional level, and date of the interview. The researcher also utilized different colored highlighters and pens to group similar responses to interview questions. Data on student achievement for core subject areas (mathematics, English/language arts, science, and social studies) were acquired from the Texas Education Agency's Division of Communication and Public Information and compared to the interview data as a method of triangulation and to corroborate evidence elicited during interviews.

A case study reporting mode was utilized because it is more adapted to a description of the multiple realities encountered at any given site (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 41). In *Naturalistic Inquiry,* Lincoln & Guba (1985) asserted, "We believe that the ultimate purpose of any report is to improve the reader's level of understanding of whatever the report deals with, whether some research finding, evaluative judgment, or policy formation. Further, the case study is a fitting capstone to the *continuous* reporting process that characterizes naturalistic inquiry—the culmination and codification of myriad formal and informal reports that have gone before" (p. 358).

In describing who should write the case study report, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, "The person ought to be someone who is intimately familiar with the case—certainly someone who was an active participant in gathering and processing the data and preferably someone in a leadership position in the inquiry. The tacit knowledge

such a person will have developed will be of immeasurable utility in organizing the report so that it makes sense and relates the several items of information in most meaningful ways" (p. 364). As a researcher, service-learning teacher, participant, I felt certain that I possessed the qualities necessary to write a case study report of teachers' perceptions of service-learning.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In *Naturalistic Inquiry* Lincoln & Guba (1985) pointed out that there are techniques the naturalist can employ that, while they fall short of guaranteeing balance and fairness, can nevertheless provide a system of useful checks and balances. Included among these techniques are:

- *member checks* (referring data and interpretations back to data sources for correction/verification/challenge);
- *debriefings by peers* (systematically talking through the research experiences, findings, and decisions with noninvolved professional peers for a variety of purposes—catharsis, challenge, design of steps, or legitimation, for example);
- *triangulation* (cross-checking of data and interpretations through the use of multiple data sources and/or data collection techniques, as well as different investigators);
- *prolonged engagement and persistent observation* (maintaining long-term, in-depth contact in relation to salient features);

- use of *reflexive journals* (introspective journals that display the investigator's mind processes, philosophical position, and bases of decisions about the inquiry); and
- the *independent audit* (a process similar to the fiscal audit, whereby an external auditor examines the inquiry to establish that the *process* was carried out in ways that fall within the bounds of good professional practice, and that the *products* are consistent with raw data)" (p. 108-109)

According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), trustworthiness is a general term representing what conventional researchers think of as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Qualitative researchers have developed their own language to describe these terms. In traditional empirical research, we are mindful of the importance of reliability, internal validity, and external validity of measures and procedures. The corresponding terms in naturalistic inquiry are auditability, credibility, and fittingness (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) (As cited in Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 98).

Reliability concerns the replication of the study under similar circumstances. First, the naturalistic investigator derives consistency through coding the raw data in ways that another person could understand the themes and arrive at similar conclusions (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 98).

Next, internal validity refers to the validity of a causal inference. In naturalistic inquiry, credibility or truth value is ascertained through structural corroboration. Such corroboration might be accomplished by spending sufficient time with subjects to check for distortions (prolonged engagement), exploring the participant's experience in

sufficient detail (persistent observation), and checking multiple sources of data such as other investigations, written records, diaries, field notes, and so on (triangulation). Peer debriefing, revising working hypotheses as more data become available, clarifying tentative findings with the participants, and taping interviews for comparisons with the recorded data are typical procedures for adding to the credibility of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 98).

The interviewees in this study were not audio-recorded or videotaped so that the interview could proceed as a casual conversation in a more natural setting. Some teachers are more likely to "open up" and say what they really want to say when they know they are not being taped. As a researcher, I wanted to provide interviewees with the most comfortable situation possible yet capture their perceptions of service-learning in my field notes.

Every effort was made to establish trustworthiness and credibility with interviewees during the naturalistic inquiry part of this dissertation study. A confidentiality statement was reviewed by both the interviewer and interviewee assuring that any information that is deemed detrimental to the employee in his/her current position will not be disclosed.

Finally, external validity refers to the generalizability of the findings of the study. The qualitative study emphasizes the "thick description" of a relatively small number of participants within the context of a specific setting. The descriptions of the participants or setting under study are sufficiently detailed to allow for transferability to other service-learning settings. Samples can change as the study proceeds, but generalizations

to other participants and situations are always modest and mindful of the context of individual lives (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p.98-99).

By coding the interview transcriptions and data sheets, I developed an audit trail, and interview responses will be kept in an electronic database for purposes of data analysis. According to Rudestam and Newton (2001), an audit trail refers to keeping a meticulous record of the process of the study so that others can recapture steps and reach the same conclusions. An audit trail includes not only the raw data but also evidence of how the data were reduced, analyzed, and synthesized, as well as process notes that reflect the ongoing inner thoughts, hunches, and reactions of the researcher (p. 99).

Participants were also consulted for member checks. It is common in the qualitative literature for researchers to return to informants to present the entire written narrative, as well as the interpretations derived from the information, with the intention of confirming the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 99).

One of the difficulties encountered in conducting member checks involved the service-learning teachers' infrequent use of e-mail during the summer months. Several teachers responded to e-mails during the summer to confirm the accuracy of their typed responses. Out of respect for the teachers' summer vacation time, phone calls were not made to teachers to check for accuracy until early August. I also utilized triangulation which refers to soliciting data from multiple and different sources as a means of corroborating evidence and illuminating a theme or a theory (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 100). Some additional sources of information that were used include district

websites, service-learning newsletters, and other publications and video clips highlighting service-learning projects.

Finally, peer review and debriefing (Creswell, 1998) was conducted on the researcher's campus where peers or colleagues played the role of "devil's advocate," asking tough questions about data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation in order to keep the researcher honest. The other role of the peer reviewers is to provide professional and emotional support by being empathetic listeners to the researcher along the way (Taken from Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 100).

Colleagues who were willing to take the time and genuinely interested in accurate representation of the data were consulted for peer review and debriefing. Due to the nature of my position as superintendent/principal, I was very selective in asking teachers to play this role so that teachers did not feel pressured into performing the duties or fear reprisal for their comments. As a result, one of the peer reviewers was one of my former teachers who is willing to ask the difficult questions and the other peer reviewers are generally comfortable with making suggestions and offering help to me despite my supervisory role.

Summary

This chapter presents a detailed outline of the procedures used in the study of teachers' perceptions of service-learning in the K-12 School Community Partnership Development grant project in Texas schools. Chapter IV provides profiles of service-learning teachers that were interviewed and a "thick description" of the participants' responses to interview questions as well as a discussion of patterns and themes that

emerged during the course of the study. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) a description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings (p. 125). Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. Chapter V includes a summary of the research findings, findings related to the research, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings and results of the study of teachers' perceptions of service-learning: K-12 school community partnership development in Texas Schools. The first section of this chapter, *Individual Profiles of Service-Learning Teachers*, provides portraits of elementary and middle school teachers who are actively involved in service-learning in their districts and their answers to interview questions and personal accounts of their experiences with service-learning. The second section, illustrates common responses to individual research questions and provides colorful descriptions of service-learning programs in a number of districts across Texas. Due to time constraints and summer schedules, the last teacher interviewed had reviewed the questions and submitted a reflection for each question via e-mail and later discussed her responses, which tended to be deeper and more comprehensive than most other verbal responses. These reflections entitled "Reflections of Grace" are included at the end of each section followed by my interpretation of Grace's ideas combined with a brief summary of responses to each research question. The final section is a summary of the analysis of data and findings of this study on teachers' perceptions of service-learning.

Individual Profiles of Service-Learning Teachers

Participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and to protect teachers who are currently employed in Texas public schools.

Nell Novak has taught kindergarten for nineteen years and is currently in her second year of teaching second grade in a large urban district. Nell has been a pioneer on her campus in implementing service-learning projects and this year was named Elementary Teacher of the Year in her district.

Randy Byrnes teaches science and coordinates service-learning projects in a mid-sized rural school district with a low socio-economic population. Randy has developed a partnership with a local university which recently gave 8th grade students in his school an opportunity to experience college life during a science field day organized by the university.

Marian Foreman is an elementary teacher who recently presented one of her district's service-learning projects at the National Youth Leadership Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has been instrumental in developing school-wide service-learning projects and has been searching for ways to help teachers to integrate service-learning into their curriculum plans.

Amanda Paterson teaches sixth grade science in addition to being the gifted and talented education coordinator and service-learning district coordinator for the past three years. Amanda has also been active in seeking project grants from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to support service-learning projects focused on the environment.

Candi Parmann said she was "right out of college" when she became involved with the service-learning three year grant project. She taught at the middle school level where a fellow service-learning teacher introduced her to service-learning and gained her interest because of her experience and knowledge. Candi is now teaching kindergarten

and has used distance technologies to implement service-learning projects with students and teachers in other countries.

Jan Matthews teaches in addition to being the campus technology coordinator and service-learning coordinator. Jan describes herself as the support for service-learning. Teachers contact Jan for resources, and she coordinates service-learning training with their Educational Service Center. She also communicates with the local media to spotlight service-learning projects in the local newspaper.

Javier Benevides has been a fourth grade bilingual teacher for the past nine years in a large urban district with a very diverse student population. Javier became involved in service-learning as part of a required experience while doing his undergraduate work. Javier has introduced diverse student groups to the university setting and continues to work with students, teachers, and administrators on a school-wide garden project.

Mindy Baines is the service-learning coordinator on her campus and teaches 8th grade speech and language arts. Mindy emphasizes student leadership and group roles in class projects. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Mindy's class developed and provided public service announcements among a number of other projects aimed at providing assistance to hurricane victims.

Elizabeth Reyes was with the original group that started service-learning in her district and has traveled out of state on several occasions for teacher training and student presentations. She is also the service-learning coordinator and high school theater arts teacher. Elizabeth has been on her campus for 27 years and is acutely aware of the growing feelings of apathy among high school students in her district.

Joan Rutherford teaches speech at a large urban high school. Joan's students identified a number of service-learning projects through studying current events in the local newspaper. A member of the Junior League, Joan, partners with other community organizations and businesses to develop successful service-learning projects within their community. Joan has also provided training for elementary teachers and shared the dramatic impact that service-learning has had on her personally.

Lily Stevenson formerly a teacher and campus principal is a service-learning campus coordinator in a large urban school district. Lily spends much of her time writing and implementing grant projects. She reviews teacher lesson plans, purchases supplies for class projects, and works with students and teachers to implement service-learning projects. Lily's school has recently received a number of awards for its innovative programs and success with diverse populations. In the past, Lily also designed and opened several parochial schools when she was approached by community leaders who were interested in starting exemplary private schools within their church communities.

Grace Brooks is a fourth grade teacher in a small rural district and has been teaching in her current district for the past 25 years. Grace, the daughter of a Lutheran minister, moved from Indiana to Texas in the mid-70's, and previously taught at the university level. In addition to being an instructional leader on her campus, Grace is also actively involved in her church community. Grace, who has multiple responsibilities on her campus including intermediate math coordinator, 4th grade homeroom teacher, and summer school teacher, chose to answer the research questions by submitting reflections via e-mail. Her reflections summarized some of the ideas expressed by other service-

learning teachers and pinpointed teachers' perceptions and feelings that are sometimes difficult to effectively communicate through conversation.

Research Question 1

How is service-learning perceived by classroom teachers as enhancement for student learning?

The teachers shared their perceptions of service-learning based on reflections of their own experiences as well as the experiences of their fellow teachers.

Marian: I think people perceive it as an enhancement, but it is an extra. There is not an automatic use of "service-learning" to get the service "learning". It can be, but it would take a lot of work. In elementary education there is authentic learning, and you can see where it ties in, but to bridge it to doing it, it is not there yet.

Marian expressed how teachers seem to see service-learning as a way to enrich the curriculum. However, they are not comfortable enough with it yet to implement curriculum aligned service-projects with ease. As a result, some may perceive it as extra work rather than an authentic experience that results in learning.

Some of the interviewees have also noticed how perceptions of service-learning have changed throughout the course of the grant project.

Randy: Things have changed. In the beginning, teachers did not know exactly what it was. Then they had the STARS training provided by the educational service center, and we've done some in-house stuff. Perceptions have changed. Some have been doing service projects. We

were asked, “How can you bring it into the classroom and relate it to the TEKS?” If so, then we can fund it, so boom! Things exploded! The social studies teacher picked up hand puppets in Philadelphia, and the social studies students built props and created a puppet show for the elementary students for environmental studies. We had a dash for trash that I brought into the classroom. I went over things that they needed to know as far as protecting the environment. The city provided trucks, drivers, and trailers and took the trash to the city dump. The perception of service-learning changed simply because teachers understand that it is not hard to make that extension to include community partners and helping the kids to learn the objectives.

In Randy’s district the STARS training and collaboration among teachers and community partners resulted in more teacher confidence and service-projects that were aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

Making Connections

Making connections was a theme that quickly began to emerge during interviews of service-learning teachers, as Javier described his pre-service and teaching experiences.

Javier: Service-learning was a required experience when I was doing my undergraduate work. Then, I came across a book called *Making Connections* that had to do with experiences. I was thinking about the kids and how I could use it. It wasn’t called service-learning. When you

> compare it with the traditional school, it is different. Schools often focus on the academics, but the social and emotional classes are not here where students learn to interact. They are left out and that is why we have a lot of problems. Service-learning is getting people together. It is a neat thing to get offered funds for gardening. I ordered $186 worth of plants and materials. We did a garden for this school. We started from scratch with something little and built on it. Then community members see what is going on and get involved. Even though they may not get as much out of it now, later, they will make the connection.

Javier's undergraduate experiences obviously had an effect on the development of his personal teaching philosophy, and he described service-learning as a way of not only bringing people and ideas together, but a way of helping children to develop socially and emotionally. In Javier's estimation, students may not fully understand how their learning experiences may help them until later in life.

Lily described a similar service-learning gardening project and several different kinds of connections. She also stressed the benefits of the grant funds in providing valuable learning experiences for the students.

Lily: It brings together the past and the present. The K-5 cylinder garden is school-wide. The first year, half of the teachers really got involved and more excited. Some were just sitting on the fence. Fourth grade just avoided it and me. Some because they were afraid… Others love it because they are learning so much and beginning to see the connection.

> If not for the service-learning grant, they wouldn't get to go on many field trips. They developed [instructional] road maps by teams. When they got their plans to me, they were the first ones who got to go. Monday, they will be going to NASA. They wouldn't have gone except for the grant.

Although it took some of the teachers in Lily's district a while to warm up to service-learning, they are evidently beginning to see how it is helping them to reach their instructional goals and giving them opportunities to take students outside of the classroom. According to Lily, service-learning also helps bring together different generations and parts of the school.

In discussing service-learning efforts on her campus, Elizabeth described the slow progress in getting teachers involved in service-learning.

> Elizabeth: Most have been very supportive and willing to help, but they soon find out that being involved makes them (students/teachers or both?) better in the classroom. That is what they like. There has been a lot of apathy lately in our school.

In a high school where teachers are desperately searching for ways to engage students in the learning process, service-learning is becoming a means of helping both teachers and students meet their goals.

Amanda described how she was introduced to service-learning and how she learned to make connections within her own community.

Amanda: It was funny because I did a G/T six-hour update, and the whole thing was on service-learning in Killeen. There was no funding with this workshop. We broke into groups to think of needs in our community. We identified two in our community: 1) connect with the city council and improve the city pool to make it a more appealing place for future kids, 2) develop a community center. There are things that teachers were already doing, and I asked them to just let me know what they need. For example, [some projects were] canned food drives, making dogs available to the blind, and bringing dogs in to help socialize and for companionship [at nursing homes].

Amanda realized during her workshop that her school was already addressing some of their community needs and that service-learning and the grant funds that were available could help them to accomplish goals that they have in common with other community members

Reaching Out to Others

Amanda also described how her school has attempted to reach more diverse families and parents.

Amanda: We are become a much larger integrated community. At one time it was more rural and white, but we now have more migrant families where the kids can speak English but there is only Spanish spoken in the home. We invite the parents up to *el jardin* (the garden). We've also made a Spanish/English cookbook with both Spanish and English recipes. We've

> also partnered with the Baptist church, and as part of the NCLB requirements, we've had more parental involvement.

These are just a few of the examples of how service learning can help bring together diverse groups in communities.

Candi also saw the benefits of service-learning at the middle school level and how she could connect better with her students during her first year of teaching, "When I was in middle school, it encouraged them to get involved and increased their motivation. There was not as much negativity." Prior to their involvement in service-learning, Candi's students were not engaged in learning. However, service-learning helped them to develop more positive attitudes toward school and become more engaged in their classes.

Elizabeth has noticed a similar form of indifference in the high school students.

> Elizabeth: The kids often don't care whether they pass or not. There is a lot of apathy. Parents and kids would rather go home and watch their comics. That's just the way it is. I learned a long time ago, you are not going to save all the kids, but I've had a lot of them come back and compliment me. One graduate this year, I tried to talk her father out of dropping out years ago. Now, they have one daughter, and are so thankful. He turned out o.k. after all, and then some don't. People who participate in this program really see the difference.

According to Elizabeth, generally, many students do not take interest or pride in their school work, and there appears to be a corresponding lack of parental involvement or

encouragement. However, Elizabeth, like Javier, acknowledged how there is sometimes a delay in seeing the benefits of service-learning, and in the long run, parents recognize the positive impact of service-learning projects.

Elizabeth described how her high school worked with students through service-learning projects to help them build pride in their school.

Elizabeth: We have some fantastic artists. We did a survey of what they wanted in the restroom. The students painted a beach mural, and now kids don't mess with it [vandalize it]. The key is to find their talents—music, art, ROTC—they have a wonderful military ball!

Elizabeth also beamed with pride and showed me some of the student paintings in the hallway depicting members of classic and contemporary rock bands.

Making Learning Meaningful

Several teachers described how service-learning experiences can be more meaningful to students than traditional classroom lessons. For example, Mindy commented, "I think it gives real life experience. There is a reason for learning what it is you are trying to teach. We are often inside the school bubble where nothing relates." Mindy, like many other service-learning teachers, realizes the importance of authentic learning experiences. Nell also mentioned the importance of facilitating service-learning projects to engage students.

Nell: All learners are actively engaged and motivated. Service-learning incorporates all learning styles and learner abilities. Students have a higher interest in and ownership of their learning/school/community.

> Students who perform service-learning challenge themselves and one another to greater goals. Students who perform service-learning are more connected to their community/world. Students who perform service-learning know they can make a difference in their world.

Nell's comments acknowledge how service-learning accommodates students with varying learning styles and abilities. Student initiative apparently pushes students to challenge themselves and helps them to see how their contributions make the world a better place.

Service-learning was also described as a way of appealing to special needs students and students who have difficulty sitting still.

Jan: It takes the staleness out of learning, when you take away the books and allow students to use Internet resources. You bring in the technology aspect and give students an opportunity to get out of class besides the once a year field trip. For those ADHD students, they have an opportunity to stand and stretch and do other things whereas it is more difficult to do seatwork. It allows students who are outspoken to show their skills and interests. It also opens eyes when teachers not knowing that students who are introverts can bring a different aspect of learning when they work in small groups. You can extend the TEKS and find things in the community to do. They were already doing some, but not tying it to the classroom. Tying it into academics makes it a process.

Jan described how students who may not have traditionally been successful in the classroom may be successful in a classroom during their involvement in a service-learning project.

Like Jan, Marian realizes the importance of authentic learning. Marian recalled something she had recently heard, "Cathy said, When it is real, they remember it. If it is just a dusty old book, they won't remember it. It is two things. It's right, and it's real." Marian was referring to a comment that one of the trainers made during a workshop on aligning service-learning projects with the curriculum. Evidently, Cathy's comment struck her and she agreed that a service-learning experience is more likely to result in authentic learning.

Student Leadership in Action

Student leadership opportunities and collaborating with the community seemed to make a significant difference in Amanda's school community.

Amanda: In my experience, I think it's giving kids (6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th} grades) an opportunity to take on the leadership skills of making decisions on projects and communicating with community partners on what needs are in the community. The connectedness between students and the teachers and the community has enriched everyone. There were all of those lines in the beginning that first year. Then, it was a definition that kids began to understand. As the years evolved, I've never seen so much excitement! It really helped connect.

The connection that Amanda seemed to be describing is one between the students and teachers that ultimately resulted in a stronger connection with the community.

Nell also described how her students realized that they were part of a much larger community and had something positive to contribute.

Nell: Once we did one service-learning project, students were looking at "news of the day" in a new light. They looked for new projects they could do to make a difference! They literally took charge of their own learning! The students were given the name "the caring class" by the rest of the school. They were very honored and humbled. Now, the class that I was dreading getting is the class I don't want to let go of! They have truly changed, and now they know they belong! This is now the group of students that all the 3rd grade teachers want!

The positive transformation in the students in Nell's class as a result of their experiences in service-learning was obviously recognized by the teachers as well as the school and the teachers at the next grade level.

A couple of other teachers mentioned staying abreast of current events and making connections to outside agencies as part of their service-learning programs.

Elizabeth: We have a news quiz each week on world, city, state, and local level. They start to learn about their own community. I have newspapers in my room, and they ask, "What kind of questions will you ask?" One of the hottest things lately has been, "Why are they fighting so much over school finance?"

Clearly, the comments that Elizabeth made about their current events assignment illustrate the students' interest in what is going on in the news and an increased curiosity about how topics in the news might relate to them.

In talking with Randy, it was obvious that service-learning experiences outside of the school environment was a learning experience itself.

Randy: The science fair at A&M was a service project just to get the kids (8th grade science) outside of the school and show them the world. Half have never been to the mall. The ones involved in service-learning have a general idea of what is going on nationally.

The science fair that was organized for Randy's 8th grade students was another attempt at getting students "outside of the school bubble" as Mindy called it earlier. Randy also credited service-learning with students being more familiar with current events.

Candi used distance technologies to help her students break out of the school bubble, "We adopted a school in Guatemala and looked at the differences between government and leadership. It [service-learning] is a different outlet for teaching." Tying social studies and technology into a service-learning project is an example of how Candi was able to use an innovative approach to helping her students learn about another form of government in a different part of the world.

Joan also emphasized the importance of having student driven service-learning projects.

Joan: We have a current event weekly assignment. The more successful [service-learning] projects are the ones where they [the students] direct

how they want it to occur. Some of my kids are street kids and have been in TWC. Service-learning has changed them to have compassion.

Evidently, Joan uses the current event assignments to appeal to students who may not have previously felt compassion for others in their community. Once students take an interest in a project or need, they are more likely to turn it into a successful service-learning project.

Elizabeth described her role as a teacher facilitator of service-learning, "I find out what they want to do, and I am the guide. I let them take responsibility until they are doing it all." By describing herself as the guide, Elizabeth made it clear that she is more of a facilitator of service-learning rather than the organizer or director of a project.

Randy also emphasized how students took the lead in his district.

Randy: When they saw what was going on with service-learning, kids were like, "I want a piece of this!" If you start with a core group and build it into the student body, they can lead and [you can] watch it take off.

Ultimately, service-learning teachers such as Randy want their students to take the initiative to begin projects and follow through on their own. The success and motivation that is experienced by just a small group of student leaders can then trickle down to the entire student body.

First Reflection of Grace

During her 32 years of teaching, Grace has spent a lot of time reflecting on her

teaching experiences as well as those of her colleagues. She eloquently described how different levels of experience, in-service training, and personal philosophy of education affect a teacher's perception of service-learning.

Grace: Classroom teachers can certainly see service-learning as an enhancement for student learning when it is applied as a learner-centered instructional strategy. Some "traditional" teachers who base their classroom management and instructional style on teacher-centered control, dictated top-down authority, and lecture, test, paper-and-pencil instruction probably would not be able to see value in service-learning as an enhancement to their classrooms. They might view service-learning as a distraction or even a threat to their authority since service-learning centers on student-activated involvement. This type of teacher most likely would not have the "servant heart" that it would take to model and encourage service to others. However, other teachers enter their profession to serve others and see their roles as facilitators, viewing their work as callings rather that jobs. These educators have the "servant heart" and could more readily see service-learning as an enhancement. If teachers have the genuine "servant heart", even if they teach in a more traditional teacher-centered situation, they may alter their traditional instructional strategies as they perceive the value in service-learning. Recently trained teachers may be more well versed in the mechanics of cooperative learning and learner-centered instructional strategies and

> adopt service-learning more quickly. However, in my opinion, the factor that most affects the perception of service-learning is not the age or instructional style of a particular teacher, but rather the philosophical orientation of that educator and the degree to which that he or she models and lives service to others as a personal life style.

Grace recognizes that teachers' perceptions of service-learning may vary due to their experience levels and personal philosophies of teaching. Grace also seems to suggests that teachers who see their profession as more of a "calling" that just a job may be more likely to serve others and see the benefits of service-learning.

Summary of Responses

In general, service-learning teachers believe that people who participate in the program really see the difference. However, some admit that although people often perceive it as an enhancement, they may also see it as "an extra" and "a lot of work". In listening to their experiences and perceptions, I gathered that many of the teachers have adopted service-learning as part of their teaching repertoire to help them reconnect students to the curriculum, their communities, and to the real world. They also seem to subscribe to the service-learning method of teaching and learning because of their genuine desire to want to grow, learn, and serve their communities along with their students.

Service-learning teachers recognize how service-learning allows their students to make connections within and outside of their school communities. Teachers described how service-learning brings together the past, the present, and the future. They

commented how service-learning gets people together and provides opportunities for students to work with community leaders to address real community needs. Service-learning teachers shared examples of how they are able to reach more diverse populations and families and ultimately provide a more personal connection for students and parents. They mentioned how service-learning projects appeal to a variety of learning styles and learner abilities and allow teachers to develop effective leadership skills in both extroverted and introverted students.

By studying current events, many students become more aware of what is happening in their communities and in the world. Teachers explained that service-learning experiences are often more meaningful to students than traditional classroom lessons, and this is critical during a time when students feel less connected to school. Teachers commented that it "takes the staleness out of learning" and "gives real life experience". It allows students to use technology and stand and stretch and do other things instead of just seatwork. Most importantly, it is a way for students to take charge of their own learning and for teachers to function as guides or facilitators in the learning process.

Service-learning teachers noted that perceptions of service-learning have changed throughout the grant project, and many discovered that they were already doing some service projects. They have seen the benefits of getting the grant funds to involve community partners and help the students learn the objectives. Teachers have also mentioned how service-learning helps students to develop socially and emotionally and

how students have become more compassionate as a result of their involvement in service-learning.

Research Question 2

What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning strategies on the accomplishment of national, state, district and/or campus goals?

Most teachers hesitated briefly before answering the second research question, and their responses illustrated their uncertainty of the impact of service-learning on national, state, district and/or campus goals.

Lily: It is all so integrated. Scores have gone up every year. To isolate it out to say that it is service-learning, I don't know that I could say that… Enrichment helps indirectly. The kids take the direction. A lot of times, I just wait to see what they tell me. Then, I direct them toward something they are interested in.

Lily was clearly ambivalent about linking service-learning directly to increases in student achievement although she mentioned that service-learning as an enrichment activity helps indirectly. She also described how she lets the students take the lead in service-projects and how she facilitates their learning experiences.

Social and Emotional Development

Some teachers stressed the accomplishment of unwritten goals that teachers have for their students.

Randy: We try to get the kids to have a sense of self-worth/pride to think they can be successful. If they think they can, they will. Service is currently in

> our mission statement. I see the impact in discipline and at the classroom level. Students who gave teachers grief have taken up leadership roles and participate and learn to improve academics and self-image. It's hard to see on the national level. Now, it is on a classroom level. Hopefully, it will spread from class to class and then throughout the district.

Evidently, Randy sees an improvement in student discipline and explained that by building self-esteem and self-efficacy among students, teachers have enabled students to assume leadership roles and become more successful in the classroom.

Mindy also described how service-learning builds confidence and allows students to meet their goals.

> Mindy: It gives kids self-confidence. Lack of confidence sometimes keeps kids from accomplishing goals that we have. They are often told by their parents, "You are stupid!" or "Lazy!" It [service-learning] sets them up for success. Even if you are not great at something, you can be successful with service-learning. There is a spot for you.

In other words, service-learning has allowed students in Mindy's class to experience a feeling of success despite the fact that they may often be made to feel like failures in their home environments.

Mindy added how she also teaches students how to manage the various roles in group projects.

> Mindy: I teach speech where students have group roles: tension reliever, leader, and moderator. Roles change. Sometimes the wallflowers (the quiet

> kids) emerge as a leader. In everyday life, you take on roles or a different combination of roles. Service-learning is what real life is about, including collaboration. You try to figure out a problem and find something that each can contribute. I work with people I don't necessarily like.

Mindy acknowledged how problem-solving, assuming various roles, cooperating with difficult co-workers, and looking for unique contributions is an on-going challenge for everyone including her.

Clearly, Javier also recognizes the complexities of facilitating a service-learning project described how the benefits of service-learning may be somewhat delayed and expressed satisfaction in knowing that he has impacted just a few students.

> Javier: As far as the impact of service-learning on goals, when you plant seeds, you set expectations. I don't think that you see it until later on. You see the fruit develop later on in life. In other words, service-learning impacts kids' attitudes. When they see their accomplishments, they light up, and this little tiny fire builds and develops. If you get just get a few…if just a few develop socially and emotionally, they will want to develop and grow, some because of the teacher, and they realize it is worth it.

Therefore, the positive attitudes that students develop as a result of their experiences in service-learning help them to develop socially and emotionally and stimulate success later in life.

Lily also referred to social and emotional development as a result of involvement in service-learning, “It is socially and emotionally integrated and has an impact on academics. Lily’s comment inferred a positive impact on academics due to service-learning experiences.

Collaboration Among Teachers

Several teachers explained the slow and difficult process of changing instructional practices and how service-learning holds promise for those who are adequately trained.

Jan: Planting an idea in a teacher is harder than planting it in a student. At first teachers were hesitant to start. We couldn’t hardly get rid of [the grant] money the first few years. They just didn’t realize how easy it was to take it, to do a service-learning project. We went over STARS but…we just had to plant an idea in their heads. They didn’t know how to get it started. It allows us to reach our goals better and reach kids who may not normally succeed.

According to Jan, perhaps the hesitancy to become involved in service-learning was due to their lack of information and uncertainty about what service-learning actually looks like. Once they discovered how to implement a service-learning project, they were more apt to ask for funds, and ultimately, they were able to help more students to be successful.

Joan emphasized the importance of connecting a service-learning class to other content areas. She also recognizes how using service-learning can be difficult and unsettling to some teachers.

Joan: Sometimes there is no value attached to an elective class. A service-learning class has to be directly related to content and curriculum, and the service-learning instructional delivery method really meets those needs. They plug into it. Those unteachables…there is a way to reach them. You just have to be creative and [think] out of that box! It is challenging, and it takes teachers out of their comfort zones.

Joan expressed how although service-learning may require more work and thought for the teachers working to align their curriculum and instruction with service-learning projects, it may be a solution to engaging students who may have had difficulties learning in the past.

According to Nell, collaboration seemed to be the key ingredient that allows campuses to meet their goals, "Service-learning increases collaborative learning environments. Student academic achievement is enhanced and thus increased. Nell was referring to the way that her students and parents have become more involved in the learning process and how students have become more successful in the classroom as a result of this collaboration.

Elizabeth who had mentioned the apathy in her school earlier has also noticed more subject area integration at the high school level and more collaboration among staff members, "Teachers are realizing that they need to help. The English teacher, science

and math teachers coordinate to help."

Despite the fact that teachers are beginning to come together to plan service learning projects and align their curriculum, many service-learning teachers recognize the need for more training. Marian expressed her assessment of teachers' competence in the area of service-learning and her hope that staff development opportunities will help teachers to make the connections and see possible applications for service-learning.

Marian: I don't think they see it yet. I see the potential there. I'm excited about the workshop that I recently attended which had the rubric and the TEKS right there. For some teachers who need that concrete bridge to apply it, it will really light up their thinking.

The rubric with the TEKS listed that Marian described may help novice service-learning teachers to visualize how service-learning can help teachers to teach in a more integrated manner.

Second Reflection of Grace

Grace seemed to summarize the ambiguity of some of the responses to the second research question relating to the impact of service-learning on goals at different levels.

Grace: Teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning on the accomplishment of goals depend upon the implementation level of this approach. A look at successful, established model programs of service-learning would display that these programs definitely impact the achievement of goals in a positive way. However, the fledgling service-

> learning program may not demonstrate as clear a relationship. For the teacher, service-learning has to be embraced with a certain "leap of faith". Only an approach that is fully endorsed and implemented by the individual committed classroom teacher can be perceived as a positive impact. Unfortunately, the achievement of many national, state, district and/or campus goals is measured primarily by standardized test scores. The accountability pressure of this testing is very intense for the classroom teacher. As a result, teachers may not feel they are able to spend the time to build a service-learning environment in their classrooms since paper-and-pencil test taking strategies must be taught for standardized test survival. Most teacher level perceptions, therefore, get caught between seeing that ideally service-learning is a life approach essential to our society, yet because of standardized testing pressures, classroom time is diverted from the service-learning goal to testing survival.

Grace's reflection illustrates the struggle that many service-learning teachers face daily in making sure that their students are able to pass standardized tests and in teaching what they believe the children really need to learn. The "leap of faith" that Grace described seems to be a hope that students will be able to pass the test despite class time that has been diverted to implementing service-learning projects that may or may not be completely aligned with the curriculum and district or state expectations.

Summary of Responses

Service-learning teachers seemed reluctant to say that service-learning has a direct impact on the accomplishment of national, state, district, and/or campus goals. Perhaps it is because many goals are based upon standardized test scores rather than on broad general goals related to the overall development of students. Teachers identified a number of goals that they had for their students which they believe can be accomplished through participation in service-learning projects. For example, teachers are more concerned with developing a sense of self-worth, pride, and self-confidence in their students. They indicated that all students can be successful with service-learning and that there is a way to reach those students who may be described by some teachers and parents as "unteachables". They admitted that service-learning is challenging and that it often takes teachers out of their "comfort zones". However, it "holds promise" for those who are adequately trained. Several teachers also mentioned a positive impact on student discipline and how social and emotional development as a result of service-learning indirectly has an impact on academics and student achievement.

Because of the intense pressure of the state-wide accountability system and the need to meet adequate yearly progress according to national standards, teachers have begun to coordinate and work together in their respective subject areas and grade levels to involve students in service-learning projects that address grade level objectives. Service-learning teachers seem to recognize the complexities involved in implementing service-learning as an integrated real life approach to teaching and learning while at the

same time meeting the demands of school administrators, legislators, and the general public.

Research Question 3

What experiences, training and support have allowed service-learning teachers to be successful with their students?

Nell described the dramatic impact that a service-learning in-service had on her and her fellow teachers during their initial training session.

Nell: Some of the high school service-learning representatives came to the elementary campus, and some of the teachers began crying when they heard their presentation. When the main presenter started crying, I could see how much it impacted her. Her showing herself is what impacted other teachers.

The approach that Nell's district used to introduce teachers to service-learning was a personal approach to which teachers could relate.

Nell also described how changing grade levels presented some challenges for her in terms of grade level expectations.

Nell: As a teacher of kindergarten for 19 years, I was used to focusing on character building, caring, and sharing. When I moved to second grade, I noticed that the focus was not on character anymore, and there was a piece missing for me. Through service-learning, I can teach the whole child, teach academics and moral character.

Fortunately, for Nell and other teachers who are concerned about teaching the whole child rather than just academics, service-learning provides a framework for helping students to develop socially, emotionally, and ethically.

Models of Professional Development

Service-learning was introduced into Lily's school through a visit to another school and a training session provided by an educational service center.

Lily: The first year we visited an elementary school in a neighboring district and Dr. Lowry from the service center came in and did the STARS and Learn and Serve America Training with the principal's permission. We had an all-day training for teachers and learned we were far ahead. We already had it going in spite of ourselves. The training helped to reinforce what we were already doing. It was a framework to organize what we were doing. The reflection helped us to realize where we were…People are training by sharing with each other.

The teachers in my district had a similar reaction to the first service-learning training session that they attended. The session reaffirmed what they knew to be right in educating young people and inspired them to rekindle partnerships with community groups in our area.

Amanda commented on the success of service-learning projects after she organized a service-learning workshop for the teachers on her campus to introduce them to service-learning.

Amanda: By making a workshop and making them aware of two major needs, they see that it is beneficial. Community partners include business people, city council, the fire department and librarian. After the workshop, the teachers were flying with me, the elementary teachers particularly. Several projects this year were stimulated by last year's success. Wonderful projects!

The teachers on Amanda's campus seemed to experience a similar form of inspiration from the workshop and from the success that they experienced during prior years of service-learning.

Several teachers shared that they had attended conferences out of state, and as a result of their attendance were able to share their knowledge and resources with other teachers.

Randy: We've taken a core group of teachers to the National Conference, but not this year. Last year we went to Long Beach, and several teachers started service-learning fires on their campuses. When others see, hopefully they'll want a piece of the action. After attending the conference, it is sometimes a matter of pounding the pavement and talking to teachers. We are also taking a student to Austin for the summer service-learning conference…

Likewise, during the first year of our district's grant project, one of the primary goals was to build support among staff members. Shortly, after the district was notified that the grant had been awarded, a service-learning leadership team was formed that included

two dedicated parents and two key staff members: a lead teacher and a teacher with a strong interest in civic and character education. During the next two years, a business partner and a student leader joined the service-learning leadership team and attended summer conferences.

Finding key staff and community members and giving them opportunities to learn more about service-learning seems to be a common practice among service-learning coordinators.

Randy: There are some teachers that are on fire and then others that burn bright as the sun. Susan Holman is the heart and soul of service-learning at the high school. She has worked it into National Honor Society and Student Council. My goal is to find just one [teacher] at each campus, and then others will see and learn.

Not only are service-learning coordinators such as Randy concerned about finding dedicated teachers like Susan, they are also hopeful that their impact will influence other teachers to become more service-oriented.

Student leaders can also have an impact on their fellow students as Elizabeth explained.

Elizabeth: We have attended training in Santa Monica, California and New Hampshire. We went to workshops out there and had to do something back in the district. Students share and listen to other service-learning groups talk about their projects and presentations.

Teachers and students who have attended training sessions out of state are often expected to make presentations in their home districts and share what they have learned at conferences.

Like Elizabeth, Amanda also shared examples of involving students in training, "Some went to Pennsylvania for the National Service-Learning Conference, and this year we took two seventh graders and one senior. We also attend training sessions sponsored by the Texas Center for Service-Learning." Since student leadership is a key component of service-learning, coordinators are seeking opportunities for training student leaders at both the middle and high school levels.

Service-Learning Support

Mindy seemed to really appreciate the kind of service-learning support provided at the district and state level, "Our district grant coordinator is helpful. Susan Sneller from the Texas Center for Service-Learning is helpful. She is flexible with reports which takes some of the pressure off."

As a district grant coordinator, I had also noticed a general willingness to help and serve on the part of Regional Service Center and Texas Center for Service-Learning staff. The flexibility that Mindy described also illustrates an understanding of the complexity of implementing high-quality service-learning projects and willingness to work with teachers and coordinators who are juggling multiple roles.

Nell described a combination of local, state, and national training opportunities as well as on-line resources that she uses.

Nell: Teachers have local service-learning workshops provided by the school district. A core group of teachers attend the national conferences and then come back to the district to present. The district service-learning coordinator provides support/assistance. Teachers attend the state service-learning summer conference and the national service-learning conference. Resources and materials are provided, and there are also many service-learning web sites (invaluable tool) including the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse and www.kidsthatcare.com.

In addition to building a network of support through regular attendance as service-learning meetings and conferences, service-learning campus coordinators seem to be passing the torch to their fellow teachers who appear to have the right dispositions for the job. For example, Mindy noted, "I'm a teacher that doesn't mind giving up control. I never mind being wrong or corrected. My personality helps a lot. I had a really good service-learning coordinator at Middle School. She left and told me that I'd be the new service-learning coordinator."

Mindy described herself as flexible and cooperative, much like the service-learning coordinators at the state level and educational service centers. Apparently, service-learning coordinators looking to pass the torch are fully aware of the personality traits that will most likely result in genuine service to teachers and students in the classroom.

Candi: We were very lucky to have the three year grant. We had a coordinator three days a week. Her experience and knowledge gained my interest. I

was right out of college and had no clue. I got to go to Philadelphia for the National Youth Leadership Conference for the first time. The school has been very supportive in sending us to training. We are also attending soil and water conservation training at a ranch retreat. We have a three year renewal, and the middle school principal and I are co-coordinators.

Candi seemed to be impressed by the leadership provided by her former service-learning coordinator and more than willing to assume her role as co-coordinator with the middle school principal.

Jan, the service-learning coordinator on her campus, described some of the ways that she provides support to her fellow teachers, "On campus support is provided by e-mailing. Teachers contact me for resources and [service-learning] partners." Jan also depends on others for training and support.

Jan: The service center provides training for new teachers and consolidated schools. There is a girl that works under me to help teachers get ideas. There is a contact person at each campus that keeps things going. We've been with the Texas Center for Service-Learning and attend three [meetings] a year. We also have distance learning. We had a service-learning celebration at Region 14 where we have various workshops including the STARS workshop.

Obviously, the educational service center has played a key role in training teachers and providing support to teachers in Jan's district through distance technologies.

Amanda shared an alternative method of training and motivating service-learning teachers.

Amanda: A lady from Killeen did a six-hour workshop in six days. We did it on six Wednesdays for an hour each day. This kind of hands-on learning got teachers pumped into realizing what they could do with service-learning, and then some went to training at the regional service center.

By training the teachers over an extended period of time, Amanda and service-learning coordinators in her district were able to provide on-going support that motivated teachers and allowed them to continue their learning outside of the district.

Joan explained the importance of selling service-learning to teachers and then providing the support they need, "Buy-in is essential so that the teacher doesn't get frustrated because she has to do it all by herself." According to Joan, teachers need to feel reassured during their training that they will be provided the support that they need so that service-learning doesn't become a great deal of extra work for the individual teacher.

Despite successes and strong administrative support, service-learning coordinators like Marian are still looking for more training.

Marian: Every project they've done, they feel wonderful about it, and the kids feel wonderful. Training, I would like to see so much more of it. We are on the cusp of finding out if it is just a fluffy thing to do or if it will really apply towards the kids learning. I'm looking for a comprehensive district staff development which we don't have yet.

In Marian's assessment of service-learning in her district, the teachers and students have a good feeling about it. However, they are still trying to determine whether or not it is having a genuine impact on academic learning. Marian's solution to tying it all together is a comprehensive district staff development that will bring together various grade levels and subject areas and align learning inside the classroom with service outside of the classroom.

Third Reflection of Grace

Building support for service-learning and training teachers is a delicate and time intensive process, as described by Grace:

Grace: Training and support for service-learning is essential. To build the philosophical base needed to embrace service-learning, character education trainings such as Capturing Kids Hearts or CHAMPS can promote the interpersonal skills necessary to build the mutual trust and respect needed for service-learning to flourish. This is essential in order to have service-learning work as a paired mutually beneficial relationship and not as a one-way humanitarian or missionary-type effort. This mutual trust and respect must be embedded between teachers and students as well as school and community. Obviously building trust and respect takes time and attention. Thus, continued long term administrative encouragement is vital for service-learning to become effective district or campus wide. While an individual teacher may be successful with students because of his or her strong philosophical beliefs, sustainability of service-learning

> within a district must be driven by administrative support, renewal, and networking with other service-learning programs at state or national meetings or symposiums.

Grace, like most of the service-learning teachers and coordinators interviewed, recognizes the importance of networking opportunities and administrative support. She also acknowledges the need for training that helps teachers to build trust and respect with their students. Most importantly, Grace realizes that building these kinds of relationships takes time and a conscious effort on the part of teachers, service-learning coordinators and administrators.

Summary of Responses

Service-learning teachers described a number of ways that they have been involved in training and in the implementation of service-learning programs in their districts. In some cases, teachers were moved by the dramatic impact that service-learning had on their trainers or on teachers in neighboring schools and districts. Reflection time has allowed service-learning teachers to realize their current level of implementation and focus on needs of their campuses and communities. Both service-learning teachers and student leaders have attended national and state conferences and workshops and returned to their home districts to share new strategies and ideas for service projects. Often presenting for fellow teachers or students is a requirement following attendance at a conference. Teachers talking to one another and sharing successes seems to be the primary method of professional development in the districts studied. They also mentioned on-line resources that have been helpful.

Some of the words that teachers used in describing support for service-learning include “vital” and “essential”. They acknowledged the efforts of staff members from the Texas Center for Service-Learning, Educational Service Center personnel, and district and campus grant coordinators who provide training and support as needed. Many of the teachers interviewed also serve as service-learning coordinators and support staff members on their own campuses. It appears that through the years, service-learning teachers have identified teachers with similar philosophical orientations and teaching styles and encouraged them to take the lead on their campuses.

Despite successes and strong administrative support, teachers are still looking for more training and a more comprehensive approach to district staff development. They recognize that sustainability of service-learning depends upon administrative support in addition to opportunities for reflection, renewal, and networking with other service-learning teachers and coordinators.

Research Question 4

What are teachers’ perceptions of engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness as a result of participating in service-learning projects?

Nell referred to service-learning research in answering the fourth research question, “As we know, research has shown that students who participate in service-learning have the proven potential to increase in all of these areas. Student voice creates interest and a direct connection to projects and the learning involved.” According to Nell, when students have a voice in their learning, they are more likely to become engaged and learn something through the process.

Attempts to Engage Learners

Elizabeth commented that teachers in her school who are dealing with a growing feeling of apathy among students are using service-learning in an attempt to involve more students in learning experiences, "One of the things that teachers realize is that a lot of the regular students are not as involved. They are trying to get more the kids involved including the special ed[education] and LEP [limited English proficient] students." In Elizabeth's school, teachers are not only trying to engage students who may have been traditionally been less involved but they are also trying to involve regular students who seem to be less engaged than they were in the past.

Service-learning teachers shared examples of how students became engaged in learning as a result of being involved in service-learning projects.

Mindy: When you turn the class over to the kids they don't have a choice but to become engaged because they are in charge. I ask, "What do you need? Make a list. Get on-line and find books." They are engaged because they are not relying on me.

Mindy described a certain level of responsibility that she gives her students which forces them to take action in her classroom.

Javier expressed frustration with some of his fellow teachers and described his attempt to engage students in meaningful projects with community partners at different levels of the educational system.

Javier: I feel that many teachers don't know how important these experiences are. I suggested that we take them to the university, high school, and

> middle school and create science experiences that they are now getting from just the teacher. I thought, "But if we could get high school, middle school, and other people coming in, it would be much more meaningful." Many [teachers] just don't want to do it. A lot just don't know how and are just concerned with one thing—TAKS #'s. I have to make mine, too!

Javier seems to realize that students could gain much more from their learning experiences by becoming involved with people at different levels of the educational system rather than just one teacher. According to Javier, teacher resistance to service-learning projects may be due to a lack of knowledge and/or preoccupation with standardized test scores.

Increased Respect and Responsibility

According to several teachers, another result of involvement in service-learning appears to be decreased discipline problems and an increase in respect and responsibility, "During a patriotic program, some of the students started to talk, and other students told them to be quiet. It was very uplifting to see them encourage others to show respect." Evidently students in Elizabeth's district have taken it upon themselves to redirect inappropriate behaviors that have occurred during a service-learning program.

Randy has also seen the positive impact of service-learning on student performance.

Randy: If you get the kids involved and taking on leadership and responsibility then they will be a natural success. I can't think of one (SL project) that flopped. From teachers who have actually done it, the perception is that

> they see kids motivated. They see kids care. When I talk to colleagues and they talk about the students' lack of motivation, they are astonished when they hear that the students can be so good for me. I take that ball and run with it.

Randy recognizes the positive impact of service-learning on student behavior and continues to use service-learning strategies as a way to improve classroom discipline and engage learners. Randy continued to share the differences between his classroom and others in his school.

> Randy: When you see what they have in other classrooms, you may be astonished. You would think it would spread. 90% of the students involved in service-learning don't give teachers issues, the other 10% sometimes do. It is amazing that I don't have issues. I don't know if it may be a male/female issue? I have built a bond of responsibility and respect that other teachers haven't had a chance to build yet. The kids want to be there [in my class].

Although Randy is aware that gender may make a difference in how his students behave in his classroom, he attributes the positive classroom environment to the relationships that he has built with his students due to their involvement in service-learning projects.

Likewise, Mindy explained how her students have become more successful due to the way that she guides them and sets her expectations.

> Mindy: When my kids go into my classroom, I give them a rubric and they may or may not take my advice. Then if things don't work out they ask each

> other, "What are we going to do next time?" and answer, "We will do this," [referring to the rubric] without an adult telling them.

Although students in Mindy's class may fail to meet expectations at times, they are aware of what they need to do to be successful in future attempts at a project.

Candi described a similar way that her students monitor themselves, "In sixth grade we had calendars. After they finished a project, we looked at marks for discipline and saw a dramatic decrease in discipline problems. They did not want to leave or miss class and a project." Evidently, students in Candi's class have learned more self-discipline so that they can remain in class and involved in service-projects.

Javier also noticed a similar response to service-learning in his class, "Some have straightened up and see service-learning as a fun reward." Whereas many students perceive school as boring and act out to gain attention, Javier views service-learning as a motivator and a means of engaging his students and helping them to stay out of trouble.

Motivation to Learn

The teachers described a number of ways that service-learning seems to motivate students to learn.

> Amanda: It's kind of funny because it's learning but a fun kind of learning. Because we are so focused on TAKS and drive them so hard, it's a break. It stimulates motivation and creates civic-mindedness…It is not like a normal perception of school. Kids think it is more of a reward type.

Although service-learning still involves learning, Amanda sensed that students see it as fun, a break, and a reward.

The authentic nature of the assignment that Lily described seemed to motivate the students at her school.

Lily: They are much more motivated. One class chose to make a book to hand to a special visitor. They had to know the names of important characters and places and had to get on the Internet as part of the planning. A lot of times if you have stories about your own experiences in the community, it motivates them to think about that.

According to Lily, it is much more interesting and fun for the children to learn about real people and places and to hear about things that have actually happened or are happening in their own communities.

Developing Civic-Mindedness

As a result of their experiences inside and outside of the classroom, students demonstrated increased civic-mindedness and student responsibility.

Amanda: The students presented at the city council meeting and for the school board and have made a civic connection. The older community members on the leadership board have shared their wisdom with these kids. They have been sharing their expertise of life experiences, and then they all have shared ideas in how to address community needs.

Attending community meetings has helped students to make connections with different generations and with the “powers that be” in their communities. These meetings have also presented opportunities for sharing and problem-solving.

Students involved in service-learning have also made connections with people in a variety of faith communities.

Mindy: During the aftermath of [Hurricane] Katrina, my speech class did some projects. There were a lot of refugees at one church, and we were thinking, "We are a speech class, what could we do?" We decided to make announcements and contacted local shelters to find out what they needed. We wrote public service announcements and partnered with radio stations. I teach Sunday school with the D.J. We are doing service-learning if we see a problem, and we can solve it. They are starting to see that they can make a difference with what they do.

Apparently, students and teachers are also coordinating with their community churches to become involved in service-projects aimed at helping the general public.

On a similar note, Marian described a school-wide project aimed at building civic-mindedness.

Marian: Civic-mindedness strikes me as the strongest. Our students are extremely civic-minded. A city was developed within the school with a post office, green team [student conservation group], parks and rec, and bank. The kids give feedback. Kids go to a job fair and fill out job applications. This was our first year for student council. For one hour a week, the whole school goes to town and their jobs. It gives them an idea of a small community and how to carry it on. Oh my gosh! The kids are so

motivated by that – service that the city provides. There is a realness of their contributions.

This is the same type of realness that Lily described in one of her school's service learning projects. Marian continued.

Marian: The student council interviewed kids around the school about what we needed. They had a cookie sale, bought an air pump for each grade level (to air up balls) and new basketball nets. From the kids' perspective, it was a need, and they got it done. On Fridays, we go to town for 55 minutes in the morning.

The school-wide city service-project that Marian described undoubtedly required coordination and planning among teachers and administrators in Marian's school. However, the motivation and learning that resulted from student involvement in service-learning has allowed students to address real needs in their school community.

Compassionate Classes

After reading about a deadly house fire in their community, Joan's service-learning class researched and purchased household items that were presented to the family at the end of the school year. During the presentation, Joan commented, "This class has blown me away. It has shown a great deal of compassion. This class is the essence of 'Minds that think, hearts that care, hands that serve' [the district motto]."

During my interview with Lily, a third grade teacher came in and commented on her students involvement in service-learning, "A lot of times they are more in depth than

I would have dreamed." Other service-learning teachers seemed to be just as surprised at how students responded to service-learning projects.

Jan: The teachers were surprised at how even the young children care for the community and the things they were able to do. If you don't do service-learning then there is an aspect of a child that you will never get to know. They like to be responsible for the environment and their community. Teachers were amazed at their caring personalities.

Jan expressed her belief that teachers need to involve students in service-learning projects so that they can see for themselves how children genuinely care about their environments and communities.

During our conversation, Nell shared how the perception of her class changed drastically over time.

Nell: You must know that this particular group of students had a "reputation" for not fitting in at school. They didn't have a sense of belonging at all! And behavior was a huge issue in 1st grade. I knew I had to do something!

Nell admitted that she didn't know whether or not she would be able to meet the needs of this particular group of students. She continued.

Nell: This is my first year to be involved in service-learning, and I see a marked difference in the compassion and civic-mindedness of my 2nd graders. When they entered the room in August their mind set was "it's all about me". Now, as a result of our service-learning projects, their

mind set is “It’s all about how I can make a difference for others.” It is truly awesome! Student behavior has greatly improved!

In addition to becoming less self-centered, Nell’s students also became more concerned about their individual contributions to making their community a better place for everyone.

Fourth Reflection of Grace

In her reflection, Grace considered service-learning teachers’ experiences at various grade levels and considered district level expectations and how they might impact engagement, motivation and civic-mindedness.

Grace: Teachers’ perceptions of engagement, motivation, and civic-mindedness can be directly affected by successful service-learning projects. At the elementary level, student-centered involvement is modeled particularly in the primary grades though hands-on activities, learning centers, etc. This would seem to make service-learning a natural partner in the early grades. (What might also help is that primary grades do not solely depend upon standardized testing to measure achievement of goals). The teacher at this level who sees the “big picture” of student growth and development could more readily see service-learning projects as a natural support of classroom goals. However, primary teachers bound by strict district curriculum time tables and upper grade teachers who may have both district time tables and standardized testing demands would be less likely to implement successful service-learning projects. As a result, teachers

> would not observe first hand the engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness that can result from service-learning participation in their own classrooms. However, teachers exposed to service-learning success stories in other districts might perceive the benefits of such programs in those environments.

According to Grace, the integrated nature of service-learning projects at the primary levels seems to contribute to overall motivation, engagement, and civic-mindedness. Grace acknowledged that as students progress through higher grade levels, teachers may not perceive as high of a level of engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness that results from involvement in service-learning projects. Nell seemed to have had this experience in her move from kindergarten to second grade which she described earlier. However, teachers such as Nell and Joan have successfully implemented service-learning projects at upper grade levels, and their successes have motivated other teachers to do the same.

Summary of Responses

According to service-learning teachers, students become more engaged in learning as a result of their participation in service-learning projects for a number of reasons. Student voice creates interest and requires students to take charge of their own learning instead of relying on their teachers. Getting the kids involved and taking on leadership roles and responsibility allows them to experience what one teacher referred to as "natural success." Another teacher explained how service-learning is a "natural partner" in the early grades and may be viewed by teachers as a "natural support" of

classroom goals. Service-learning addresses the growth and development of the whole child and provides opportunities for teachers to involve special needs students and students with limited English proficiency.

One result of engagement in service-learning is a marked improvement in student behavior. Some teachers described how students have straightened up because they did not want to leave or miss class and a service-learning project. The students often see service-learning as a "fun reward" or a "fun kind of learning", not like the normal perception of school. Along with the decrease in discipline problems, teachers have also seen how kids are more motivated. They see kids care, and they sense a bond of responsibility and respect that has been formed in their classes. Not only are teachers seeing how kids care for their communities, but they also see how kids like to be responsible for the environment and their community. Students have presented at city council meetings and at school board meetings and have learned from community leaders and shared ideas in how to address community needs. According to service-learning teachers, students are starting to see that they can make a difference with what they do. There is a realness of their contributions, and teachers have been amazed at their caring personalities.

Research Question 5

What are teachers' perceptions of administrator involvement as it affects the success of service-learning in a school district?

As the service-learning teachers spoke of their administrator's involvement, it became obvious that their perceptions resulted from both their past experiences with service-learning and their ideal method of administrative support.

Nell: For service-learning to be successful many things are needed. First, administrators should recognize and encourage service-learning as a valuable instructional strategy. If it is supported, service-learning can be very beneficial to the entire community. Administrators should also provide resources such as time, facilities and funding as needed for projects. Helping them see the difference between community service and service-learning is important. Sometimes administrators don't see that it needs to be student initiated. I'm hoping for a service-learning workshop for administrators.

In Nell's opinion, administrators need training to effectively support service-learning efforts in their schools and districts.

Models of Administrative Support

Mindy described a sort of professional freedom afforded her by her administration.

Mindy: The principal supported it. I could leave and come back within one class period. I also drive the bus. Service-learning isn't required. Administration is not in there hands-on, but anything we are doing, he is supportive, was on the phone with maintenance people, and sometimes I think it is better that they are not so involved because they

> [administrators] want to run things and it is not supposed to be run by them or us but the kids. Support and knowledge is a good level of involvement…Administration lets you go and do what you need to do with kids. People are there you can call and resources are there.

In other words, Mindy would like to have financial and human resource support as well as administrator awareness and understanding. However, she doesn't want administrators to become too involved so that they might begin to micromanage service-learning projects and sabotage the efforts of student leaders who are supposed to take charge of their own learning.

Based on his experiences and comments, Javier seems to appreciate his administrators support, but longs to see service-learning implemented campus-wide and district wide.

Javier: If a teacher is involved, they generally support him or her. My administrator likes it and gets the kids out there. He is a big supporter, but I just can't get any help from the other teachers. The first garden was destroyed because of a building project. Now we are starting all over. My challenge is to get the teachers involved even if it is just this [made hand motion like planting a plant or seed]. I will see if there will be some responsibility taken. This is elementary and a little garden, but hopefully by middle and high school it will be more. If you had a lot of teachers that think like we do and plan, we could do it. A lot don't really care. They are tired and don't want to do it.

In Javier's school, although the principal is very supportive, there appears to be very little support provided by fellow teachers.

Not surprisingly, several service-learning teachers that were interviewed also serve as campus coordinators and act as liaisons between the teachers and administration.

Jan: I am the support. I go through the principal and administrators for the o.k. The principals attend service programs. They support it, but they don't physically support it. A few of the school board members support and attend. I meet with them one time a year.

The type of support that Jan described also seems to be along the lines of awareness and providing resources to support programs.

Other teachers such as Randy also serve their fellow teachers in this manner.

Randy: My perceptions are different. I have a unique role being teacher and service-learning coordinator. The teachers go through me, and I go to the superintendent. They know that they have administrator support. They haven't done anything to discourage it. For me, it is different. The principal now is a go-getter and supports me in whatever I want to do. For example, we were able to take our students to A&M, and they were given a personal tour of the library. A&M has really done a lot, and I see the administration involved. My principal whole-heartedly supports the partnership.

Randy seems to recognize the critical role that his principal plays in providing support for service-learning and in supporting partnerships with other institutions such as A&M.

Lily is another service-learning coordinator who described her level of involvement and support in service-learning projects.

Lily: I'm very involved in it [as service-learning coordinator], always looking into things. The teachers see that and want to be involved. They say, "You are always doing something!" The 5th graders got me wet two days in a row in the garden, and the 3rd day, I got out of their way.

During my visit to her school, Lily showed me around the garden that they have grown and talked with the students that we met along the way. It was obvious that she is actively involved in service-learning, and that others in her school appreciate and enjoy her involvement.

To clarify her point, Lily described a different type of involvement and support that her administrator provides.

Lily: The principal is supportive in the sense that she is philosophically. She went to Philadelphia. She does not directly get involved. She is much more involved in administrative things. She sees the success and makes sure that they follow through. I learn a lot from it an enjoy it. For the principal and the service-learning coordinator, the process is different, but we both get to the same end result. The principal is more bottom line, active. I am more of a passive, global thinker. We gather the facts differently. Critical, crucial, conversation…[is the key].

In my estimation, communication between the service-learning coordinator and administrator is the key to maintaining positive relations with staff and providing support for service-learning projects.

Sustaining Service-Learning

Some school boards have endorsed service-learning district-wide and have worked it into district goals and policy. Teachers like Marian seem to appreciate the support but still recognize the needs of their district and others.

Marian: To have the district endorse it is vital! When we've talked to other districts, we often hear them 'crying in the wind'. To have our half-time service-learning coordinator is great! She actually does two full time jobs. From my perspective, we could use a full time service-learning person, but we are lucky.

Marian also stressed the importance of a principal's comments to the students on their campus.

Marian: At an assembly, the principal got up and said that our school has a culture of service, and you are going to be leaders in the world like business owners and managers, and I want you to carry that with you. As a teacher, I really appreciated my administrator saying something like that.

Evidently, having faith and high expectations for students and publicly communicating that vision was very important to Marian.

Teachers perceive different levels of support at different levels of administration.

Candi: Middle school and elementary are fabulous! Now, if I asked the high school principal, he'd say, "Huh?" Most have seen high school [smiled and laughed]. We are elementary! We are hoping that 8th grade this year will have the push and drive to motivate those high school teachers. That takes away from the service-learning idea. Where do you integrate?

As an administrator in a Pre-K through 8th grade district, I also hope that student leaders from our district will be able to continue service-learning in their high schools where service-learning has not yet been established.

Like Candi, Marian seemed to question her superintendent's genuine commitment to service-learning.

Marian: The superintendent, my little hunch is that it [service-learning] is not huge for him. We had pulled together 30 people and spent three days together writing district goals. It is since he came in that it [board approval/policy] came into place. In some ways, we feel left out to dry because we don't have enough staff and training, but it could be worse. I would just like for it [service-learning support] to go a little farther.

Marian seemed to be referring to the need for more staff members and training dedicated to service-learning projects in their district.

As administrators change, so does the level of administrative support, according to Amanda.

Amanda: The elementary principal required it, demanded it, and then it got put in

> the CIP [campus improvement plan]. Unfortunately, he just left us to take a superintendent job. The middle school principal went to the national conference, but she's so busy. She's all about it. The new superintendent, he's like, "What's service-learning?" Somewhat of a curriculum superintendent, he's heard it already and is getting more familiar with it. By having administrators demand it, requires support and that we have no choice but to be successful. The former superintendent was very supportive.

It was apparent that Amanda misses the knowledge and support of her former superintendent and seems to be somewhat frustrated by the lack of knowledge of her current superintendent. She seems to appreciate her middle-school principal's support, but she also recognizes how she is very busy which limits her level of involvement.

Service-learning teachers at Randy's school have seen some resistance from administrators in their attempts to get service-learning into their campus plan, "We are trying to expand service-learning into our campus plan, but our administration hasn't seen the light. They preach it, but as far as making the actual jump, there has been a lag in implementation." Although district administrators in Randy's district appear to be philosophically supportive, they haven't actually written service-learning into their campus plan. Randy seemed to be disappointed by this inaction or apparent lack of concern about formalizing service-learning as a program in the district.

Frustrations with Administration

At times, service-learning teachers seemed to be frustrated by inconsistent administrative decisions and lack of involvement in service-learning projects/programs.

Joan: Project success often hinges on administrative support. There have been times when we've had our wings clipped. It would have flown, but the service-learning project would have directly conflicted with another district project – for example, another district fundraiser. Service-learning needs to be a priority.

Joan seemed to recognize how administrators also have competing priorities. However, she believes that service-learning should take precedence over projects that do not have a social, emotional, or academic impact on students.

As Elizabeth's school became involved in service-learning, she seemed to be concerned about how administrators on her campus would perceive service-learning projects.

Elizabeth: Administrators weren't sure how the students would behave or react to service-learning programs or projects, but they have been amazed. When I did the 9/11 program, administration was behind me 100% and with the outdoor classroom, they are behind me.

Obviously, administrators in Elizabeth's district were very supportive of her efforts to involve the students in service-learning projects, but despite these successes, Elizabeth still seemed to be concerned about the relationship between teachers and administrators.

Elizabeth: It has just been a terrible year. Many of the teachers are not happy with administration. Both are frustrated with each other. When you talk about student involvement and service-learning it looks good on record, but many don't really want to do it. We have science speakers coming from NASA, and we are hoping that is a new involvement. When administrators didn't show up for a service-learning project/program, the kids noticed it. We don't always have the best of everything.

Lack of administrator involvement at a service-learning program seemed to be the biggest disappointment for the students and seemed to be what bothered Elizabeth most.

Likewise, Lily recognizes how administrators do not personally get involved and how this lack of involvement is felt by the students and staff members.

Lily: Sometimes administrators don't get to know the children personally. 99% of the time a principal may be putting out calendars and newsletters, scheduling a meeting, then scheduling the next meeting, checking it off while the AP [assistant principal] runs around the building handling maintenance and 5th grade discipline, textbooks, and TAKS stuff.

Randy made a similar observation of assistant principals on his campus, "If you asked the assistant principals, they wouldn't know what it was." Randy was also referring to his frustration with the level of knowledge and familiarity that assistant principals on his campus had with service-learning.

Fifth Reflection of Grace

The nature and level of administrative support seem to determine the success of service-learning on particular campuses and in districts involved in the K-12 School Community Grant Project. Grace has reflected on both the readily visible and hidden aspects of administrative support of service-learning in formulating her recommendation for sustaining service-learning.

Grace: Teacher perception of administrative involvement can directly affect the success of service-learning. Indifference, total lack of support, or hostility from an administrator would impact most teachers negatively in their implementation of service-learning. Top-down pressure from an administrator to "do" service-learning could also have an inverse reaction from teachers who are not yet in the philosophical position to embrace service-learning or teachers who sense hypocrisy from an administrator who talks service-learning but does not model service to others. In essence, the administrator must model service and teacher support in order to have a positive impact on service-learning at the campus or district level. Again, it takes time to build the mutual trust and respect between administrator and faculty. Many teachers (and administrators) come with preconceived notions of what is expected or what the "hidden agenda" in a district might be. To break this chain and implement successful service-learning, the administrator must model service in a genuine, supportive manner. When teachers perceive this support and

> accept it as genuine, great progress can be made in the implementation of service-learning. Because of human nature and the natural glitches and discouragements in education, a foundation of consistent genuine administrative support and encouragement is probably the greatest factor in the success and sustainability of service-learning in a school district.

Grace highlighted the importance of genuine support from administrators rather than support for service-learning for ulterior motives, such as an administrator promoting his or her own career or working to implement a hidden agenda. According to Grace, administrators who truly function as servant leaders are probably the most genuine form of support that can be provided to service-learning teachers and students in a district.

Summary of Responses

According to service-learning teachers, administrators have provided support for service-learning in a number of ways. They have provided resources such as time, facilities, funding, and flexibility for the implementation service projects. In some districts, administrators have attended training sessions, service-learning programs and events, and spoken to the students about the importance of being leaders and providing service in their communities. They have also designated staff members as service-learning coordinators, and in some districts, they have worked it into district and campus goals and policy.

Although teachers are very appreciative of their administrators' support, they were vocal about the kind of support that they preferred from their administrators. One teacher explained that "support and knowledge is a good level of involvement for an

administrator". She added, "Sometimes I think it is better that they are not so involved because they (administrators) want to run things, and it is not supposed to be run by them or us but the kids." Another teacher agreed, "Sometimes administrators don't see that it needs to be student initiated." The teachers that were interviewed sometimes also function as the support for service-learning and described how other teachers go through them to get the o.k. and resources from principals. Some teachers acknowledged how they see administrators involved, but others commented how their administrators do not directly get involved. One teacher clarified that her principal is supportive in the sense that she is "philosophically supportive".

Service-learning teachers want administrators to recognize and encourage service-learning as a valuable instructional strategy. They would like to see more training for administrators and although they appreciate the service-learning support staff members that have been provided in their districts. They would like more support in terms of designated service-learning staff members and district endorsement in the form of policy and a district expectation. Teachers are concerned about integrating service-learning district-wide and shared how some of the secondary principals and teachers, and assistant principals at all levels are unfamiliar with service-learning. Teachers expressed hope that student leaders would motivate teachers at the upper levels and the service-learning would expand from the elementary level, to the middle and then high school levels until it is in effect district-wide.

Service-learning teachers realize that project success hinges on administrative support. They recognize how busy their administrators are and seem to be somewhat

frustrated by the turn-over in administration and the fact that some of their projects do not “take off” because of competing interests such as fund-raisers in their district. Although they appreciate the support and interest that their administrators have taken in service-learning, service-learning teachers have been discouraged by instances where administrators have not shown their support by attending special events or modeling an ethic of “service” for their faculty and staff members in their day to day interactions. According to at least one veteran teacher who has spent a great deal of time reflecting on leadership, “modeling service in a genuine and supportive manner and providing administrative support and encouragement seem to be the greatest factor in the success and sustainability of service-learning in a school district.”

Research Question 6

What are teachers’ perceptions of how the community perceives service-learning projects in the community, and do they see them as mutually beneficial?

Service-learning teachers were quick to respond to the sixth and final research question, and the enthusiasm in their voices illustrated their passion for building partnerships within their communities.

Lily: Without a question, they have been very responsive. One way that I know is that they ask us back! Service-learning is just about children reaching out to the community and them finding their place in the community. We do programs in the community: nursing homes, family clinic, and HEB… They wanted the students to go to their other stores.

According to Lily, their community partners support service-learning because they ask them to continue their programs out in the community.

Nell has also seen a positive response from community partners and has noticed how students benefit from their involvement.

Nell: All of the "community" that were a part of service-learning saw it as highly beneficial! They appreciate the benefits of the project and are excited to see this type of learning take place in our schools! This includes the businesses that donated materials, etc. to the projects. The students performing service-learning benefit greatly also! For example, through service-learning, my second grade students see themselves as a vital part of their world.

Evidently, the interaction between Nell's second graders and community partners has helped community partners to have a better insight as to what is going on in public schools and has helped students to see how they are an important part of their communities.

Pulling Together

Randy described how his community views service-learning and how service-learning projects have brought together different generations and institutions.

Randy: Yes, yes, yes! The support is there. The nursing home is next to the high school, and those two institutions never crossed paths. It was like the Great Wall of China. Through some of the mini-grants, teachers take kids over to the nursing home and have built relationships with staff,

patients and families. They now look at geriatric care in a different light. The kids even go over and visit on their own.

Randy seemed very pleased with the bonding that is taking place between the students at his school and the residents and staff at the nursing home.

During my interview with Randy, we discussed other partnerships in their community and how students have shared their projects with community partners.

Randy: The community sees service-learning as something that is genuinely good. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of civic organizations such as Rotary and Lions to make presentations to. 4-H and the school board are aware, but there are parts of the community that haven't seen it. We still have a lot of work to do. Who knows? The job will never be 100% complete. There is a lot of room for improvement in this area.

Randy acknowledged that there are segments of the community that are not familiar with service-learning. However, he expressed a commitment to fostering relationships with community partners at various levels.

In talking about her school community, Elizabeth described a renewed partnership with parents due to the service-learning initiative at the high school level.

Elizabeth: When you are at high school, maybe you get ¼ of parents if you are lucky. Anything to do with community… The kids saw when the school was about to be closed. The district representative met with student council and that was involvement. When we had this tree thing, and I saw parents I hadn't seen in years. I've been in the district 27 years.

As Elizabeth described these reunions, you could sense the pride and joy in her voice, and she was obviously moved by having parents get involved in service-projects and programs at the high school level.

As we visited about the impact of service-learning on her school community, Elizabeth added how service-learning can be mutually beneficial.

Elizabeth: People who participate in this program really see the difference. It is not just cleaning up the streets. It is different from community service. They learn something, take possession, take pride in their project. The kids also took part in a health fair to teach about obesity. There was a service-learning project on diabetes with families. They have now taken out the sweets and replaced them with water, juices and healthy foods. There is a mutual benefit for kids' health.

By organizing a health fair to teach about obesity, students are not only providing information to families in their community, but they are also educating themselves in the process.

In some cases, projects were consciously designed to involve parents. However, in other cases parents became involved in service-learning as a result of some unexpected event. For example, Javier explained how excited his students were about the school garden and then how their families became involved during an unexpected building project. The original garden that they had planted had to be uprooted for a new edition to the school building, "They came in and took plants and trees when they started the building project, but at least they planted them at their homes."

Although he seemed somewhat disappointed about losing the original garden, Javier seemed to be content knowing that the students had taken enough of an interest in gardening to work with their parents to transplant the plants and trees at their homes, "We are creating service-learning programs that are effective and affect a lot of people and make them want to do something on their own." This transfer of learning seemed to be Javier's main goal in involving his students in service-learning projects.

Candi also seemed to be surprised and pleased with the level of parental and community involvement during their service-learning banquet, "We had a banquet this year and invited our community partners. To hear them speak was rewarding enough. We had just a few RSVP, but we had a full banquet room!" Candi seemed to be very pleased with the attendance at the end of year service-learning banquet. However, it was what the parents had to say about service-learning that really seemed to move her.

Public Relations

Mindy explained how community partners are now contacting their school to arrange service-learning projects.

Mindy: Someone in the community knew we were doing things and contacted us for help. "We have this idea…" so they came to us. Word is starting to get out. I have this TV class. We cover a lot of school news and it airs at school and on local stations.

Service-learning projects are also highlighted on Mindy's district website and in 5th grade orientation and graduate farewell video clips.

Mindy further described the benefits of service-learning to business partners.

Mindy: The community sees this [referring to school news], and thinks "I'll scratch your back, and you scratch mine." For example, we credit them in our video clips with some line like, "This project was completed with a grant from the Texas Center for Service-Learning and a Lowe's Grant", and they also get some advertisement.

Not only are the students in Mindy's district getting the supplies and materials that they need for their service-learning projects, but the business partners in the community are also getting some recognition and perhaps more business as a result of their generous contributions.

Jan also stressed the importance of working with the local media to bring the school and community together.

Jan: We do so much media work. If we didn't put it in articles, our town paper would be one page. It is well advertised. We are constantly putting articles and pictures and constantly asking for support. We go to civic and organizational meetings and ask for help. They definitely are becoming used to us and are more free to let us do that. Just this year we started inviting them to celebrate and had an awards ceremony. The community sees it as something that the school is involved in. It is making our school more a part of the community than set apart.

Clearly, Jan recognizes how critical communication is between the school and the community and has used the media and presentations at meetings to get the word out about service learning. Her district has also made a conscious effort to bring community

partners onto their campus to give them some recognition and insights at to what is going in their school

Service-learning appears to be part of the long standing community culture in Marian's town.

Marian: We have a group in our town called "The Assistance League". They are ready to enhance and give a lot of support. If it [service-learning] makes the news, the community, in general, feels we are service-oriented. The school community knows of the green team [student conservation group]. It is a matter of P.R. What the community actually perceives, I don't know. As a teacher, I would think they appreciate the service. It wouldn't hold us back because I feel it would be well received. I feel they are receptive and appreciative. That is the goal. It [service] is what our community and town is known for.

Although Marian could not say for sure that the community perceives service-learning in a positive light, she suspects that they appreciate it and see it as a branch of what other community organizations are already doing in their town.

Sixth Reflection of Grace

Grace's final reflection echoes some of Marian's and others' observations of the positive effects of service-learning on the community.

Grace: Teachers can readily see the positive effects of service-learning in community relationships. For one thing, service-learning can impact population groups not normally involved in school activities such as the

> elderly, disabled, or childless. Service-learning forges a connection between these various groups and the school, which in turn can build into community support of the school, and evolve into a mutually beneficial support link between school and community. At the very least, successful service-learning projects create a climate of solid public relations. Rather than embracing the media's barrage of negative commentary on education, the community can perceive education, at least locally, in a positive light. This respect and support can trickle down to the administrators and individual teachers as well, giving them recognition for a job well done.

As a public school teacher in a small school district for the past 25 years, Grace knows all too well that teachers must continually work toward building positive relations with the community in order to survive. She also knows that communication is key to fostering mutually beneficial relationships and that teachers need to feel like they are making a positive contribution to their communities.

Summary of Responses

Although service-learning teachers could not say what the community actually perceives, the enthusiasm in their voices illustrated their passion for building partnerships in their communities and their belief that they are accomplishing mutually beneficial goals. Several teachers asserted that "people who participate in this program really see the difference," and "all of the community that were part of service-learning saw it as highly beneficial." How do the teachers know that? They commented that

community partners have asked them to continue their projects and are now approaching them with new project ideas. Teachers described how students were reaching out to the community, finding their place in the community, and seeing themselves as a vital part of the world. Teachers have noticed how students are learning something, taking possession and pride in their projects and how the community appreciates the benefits of their projects and are excited to see this type of learning taking place in schools.

According to service-learning teachers, community partners are seeing how the school is becoming more of an integrated part of the community. Individuals from institutions and businesses that have not traditionally "crossed paths" are now interacting with one another on a regular basis and working toward mutually beneficial goals. By highlighting service-learning projects and successes, districts have made efforts to improve public relations with community partners through local newspapers and other forms of media.

As a result of their involvement in service-learning, some of the local businesses have an opportunity to get some advertisement through commercials and video clips acknowledging their participation and support. There has also been a renewed partnership with parents who have not been as involved in their school communities in recent years, and teachers have sensed that both community partners and parents are receptive and appreciate of their efforts. During a time of increasing criticisms of public schools and educators, the positive comments made by parents and the media about service-learning projects are perceived by service-learning teachers, as one of the teachers put it, as "recognition for a job well done."

Service-learning builds support for public schools among the general public and engages students in civic activities that they may continue throughout their lives. Service-learning welcomes the larger community into the schools that they financially support, and it gives students and teachers a chance to give back to the local community that supports them. It has the potential to change the public perception of schools squandering public dollars on meaningless curriculum, and it fosters a sense of service and develops stewardship in students to replace the self-centeredness that is so prevalent in today's society. Most importantly, service-learning creates a spirit of community and involves all segments of the community in the learning process for the children who embody the promise of a bright future.

Summary

Through the course of twelve interviews, I identified a number of themes related to each interview question. Themes that emerged in responses to the first question about teachers' perceptions of service-learning as an enhancement for student learning include: making connections, reaching out to others, making learning meaningful, and student leadership in action. Social and emotional development and collaboration among teachers were themes that emerged in response to the second question about teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning strategies on the accomplishment of goals. Models of professional development and service-learning support were areas discussed in response to the third research question about experiences, training and support that have allowed service-learning teachers to be successful with their students. The five themes that emerged during analysis of the fourth research question include: attempts to

engage learners, increased respect and responsibility, motivation to learn, developing civic-mindedness, and compassionate classes. Teachers shared models of administrative support, methods of sustaining service-learning district-wide, and frustrations with administration in response to the fifth research question. Finally, pulling together and public relations were common threads in response to the sixth research question about teachers' perceptions of how the community perceives service-learning.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

Introduction

Service-learning teachers across the state of Texas have stepped forward to engage their students in lessons and projects that have increased civic responsibility and respect, given students voice and choice, and helped students to see the connections between academic curriculum and real life. At a time when students are becoming increasingly disengaged in public schools, these teachers are trying desperately to invigorate students and awaken and engage even the most reluctant learners. This study provides insight to the experiences of these service-learning teachers as they vividly shared their thoughts in conversation and in written reflections. Without a record of their perceptions of service-learning, we may never know the implicit or explicit impact that they believe service-learning has on the young people of Texas.

In this closing chapter, I provide a brief summary of the research followed by findings related to the research and findings related to the literature. Next, I present my conclusions drawn as a result of being an active participant in this naturalistic inquiry process. Then, I outline recommendations for practice and suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Research

Statement of the Problem

Teachers and administrators as well as school boards in Texas have invested a considerable amount of time and resources in developing service-learning programs in their districts, and the question remains as to whether or not these programs are having a positive impact on student learning, attitude, and achievement.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses specifically on the teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning on student learning. As a researcher, I intended to measure the perceived effectiveness of service-learning and its impact on student learning according to teachers in districts participating in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant Project 2003-2006.

Research Questions

1. How is service-learning perceived by classroom teachers as enhancement for student learning?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning strategies on the accomplishment of national, state, district, and/or campus goals?
3. What experiences, training and support have allowed service-learning teachers to be successful with their students?
4. What are teachers' perceptions of engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness as a result of participating in service-learning projects?

5. What are teachers' perceptions of administrator involvement as it affects the success of service-learning in a school district?
6. What are teachers' perceptions of how the community perceives service-learning projects in the community, and do they see them as mutually beneficial?

Review of the Literature

To gain a better understanding of developments in the field of service-learning, I reviewed articles and books focused on service-learning and related concepts including: definitions of service-learning; the democratic aims of service-learning; leadership development for youths; moving from diversity to equity; curriculum for the future; and service-learning as a strategy for reform.

Methodology

The Texas Center for Service-Learning provided a list of districts participating in the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant Project and contact information for district grant coordinators. Campus service-learning coordinators in participating districts were then contacted by phone and e-mail to submit names and contact information for teachers participating in the service-learning program who might be willing to participate in the study. A letter inviting the designated service-learning teachers to participate in the study was also e-mailed and distributed at the Service Learning Summer Institute held in Austin, Texas, June 6-8, 2006.

The study was conducted during the late spring and summer months of 2006, and interviews were conducted on the campuses of participating districts as well as during the Summer Service-Learning Institute which was held at the Marriott Hotel in Austin,

Texas, June 6-8, 2006. Teachers whose districts are located in central and southeast Texas were interviewed on their campuses, and teachers from more remote parts of Texas were interviewed in Austin during the Summer Service-Learning Institute.

The sample that was used in this study includes six elementary, four middle, and two high school teachers who have been involved in the development and implementation of service-learning programs in their districts through the K-12 School Community Partnership Grant. In addition to targeting teachers at the elementary and middle school level, I interviewed both male and female service-learning teachers and teachers who also assumed the role as campus and/or district service-learning coordinator.

Findings Related to the Research

Just how effective and feasible is service-learning as an instructional strategy for improving student learning and achievement? Service-learning teachers who were interviewed through the course of this study commented that it "holds promise" and "has potential". However, they were very honest in saying that it "is difficult" and in some cases, "it is not there yet." Finding the time for planning and building commitment to service-learning is an on-going challenge, and many teachers realize that service-learning involves a lot of work.

Heckman, Confer, and Peacock asked some similar questions in their evaluation of the Educational Community Change Project (ECC) which is very similar to many of the service-learning models that I have studied. While efforts such as the ECC Project are under way to develop more contextualized knowledge and skills and activities, how

far can schools and communities go in contextualizing their educational efforts in this democratic fashion? Is it possible to sustain, day after day and year after year, a curriculum based on finding and solving community problems through a democratic process? (As cited in Oakes and Quarts, 1995, p. 198).

Some of the enhancements for student learning that service-learning teachers mentioned in this study include helping students to make connections to the required curriculum inside and outside of the classroom. Other types of connections that are being made in some of the schools in this study involve connections between different generations and between more diverse groups in the community.

Unfortunately, most service-learning teachers could not state a direct impact that service-learning has on the accomplishment of national, state, district, and/or campus goals. However, they described an indirect impact that service-learning has on student achievement. This indirect impact was generally related to the social and emotional development of children and young adults, and teachers have noticed increased collaboration between teachers on the same grade level and between various departments. In their responses to the second research question, service-learning teachers inferred that a positive impact on social and emotional development and increased collaboration could potentially have a positive impact on student achievement.

In response to the third research question about service-learning training and support, teachers described experiences where their trainers shared the emotional impact that service-learning had on them and their students. During many of their professional development sessions, teachers had opportunities to interact with other service-learning

teachers by talking and sharing ideas. They also mentioned essential training provided through educational service centers and beneficial curriculum alignment sessions that they had attended at national and state conferences. Several teachers described how service-learning teachers are passing the torch in their districts as the move on to other positions and schools.

As a result of their participation in service-learning projects, students appear to be more engaged and motivated to learn. Service-learning teachers implied that student voice and opportunities for student leadership and responsibility have also resulted in improved student behavior and a bond of responsibility and respect that forms between service-learning teachers and their students. Most importantly, service-learning teachers have been impressed to see how much "kids care".

Although they appreciate the resources including time, facilities, funding, and designated support staff that are available to them, most service-learning teachers interviewed in this study would agree that "support and knowledge is a good level of involvement" for administrators. Teachers would also like for their principals and superintendents to recognize and encourage service-learning and provide consistent, genuine administrative support.

Through their service-learning projects, community partners have seen students learning and taking possession and pride in their projects. Service-learning teachers perceive that there are improved public relations as a result of mutually beneficial partnerships. They have also publicly recognized business partners for their

contributions and hope that their students involvement in service-learning projects will ultimately build a spirit of community and support for public schools.

Conclusions

This section contains five important salient themes that emerged as conclusions of the study. The first conclusion relates to service-learning work and competing priorities. The second conclusion illustrates service-learning as having a higher purpose for the teachers who have chosen to become involved in it. The third conclusion was reached by examining the role of grant funding. The fourth conclusion was drawn from situations where teachers and communities are promoting a culture of service, and the fifth and final conclusion stresses the importance of teacher leadership in the success of service-learning programs.

(1) The amount of work and competing priorities may keep teachers from using service-learning strategies with their students and implementing service-learning projects.

Service-learning teachers interviewed in this study shared examples of how service-learning enhances student learning by helping students to make connections inside and outside of the classroom and by making learning more meaningful to students. However, there were some conflicting and somewhat ambiguous responses to the first two research questions (1) How is service-learning perceived by the classroom teachers as an enhancement for student learning? (2) What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning strategies on the accomplishment of national, state, district, and/or campus goals?

Clearly many service-learning teachers are concerned about implementing the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) and preparing students for the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) while at the same time involving students in meaningful projects that address real community needs. They realize the need for long-range planning and integrating projects across all curriculum areas. They continually struggle with finding the time for planning and following through with projects under the pressure of meeting accountability standards, and they recognize the need for more resources and support to accomplish all of their goals.

Some service-learning teachers insist that if you are doing your job as a teacher, there is no need to worry about TAKS. Others seem to be less confident that they can do it all. Most appear to be more concerned with developing the whole child rather than focusing on just meeting the academic standards. As a result of these competing priorities, teachers sometimes feel caught between teaching what the students need to know to be successful in life and what students need to know to be able to pass standardized tests which are not the tests that they will face in real life.

These conclusions are supported by Elliott Eisner (2003) who cautioned that test scores need to take a back seat to more educationally significant outcomes, and that the major lessons of schooling manifest themselves outside of the context of school (p. 10). John Dewey (1916) also emphasized that the community is an integral part of educational experiences because what is learned in the school must be taken and utilized beyond its bounds, both for the advancement of the student and the betterment of future societies (As cited in Waterman, 1997, p. 2). Ultimately, most of the service-learning

teachers interviewed and educational theorists studied are concerned about the transfer of learning into the community, but the accountability pressures are keeping some from engaging in service-learning projects.

(2) Service-learning teachers become involved in service-learning as a result of their philosophical beliefs about their roles as educators and a belief in a higher purpose of their profession.

In my literature review, I found that throughout history, reformers have attempted to infuse moral and character education into the curriculum. One of the earliest attempts to integrate moral instruction into the school was made by Horace Mann, the 19th-century father of state-supported universal education, who saw moral instruction as an essential element of the common school (Archer, 1999). In more recent years, theorists such as Lickona (1993) have described how concern over the moral condition of American society is prompting a reevaluation of the school's role in teaching values. Likewise, Howard (2005) insisted that schools have a responsibility to prepare good citizens. Responses to the fourth research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of engagement in learning, motivation to learn, and civic-mindedness as a result of participating in service-learning projects?" were related to teacher philosophies and beliefs about the purposes and outcomes of education.

During this study, I met a number of dedicated service-learning teachers who spoke of "raising these kids," "making them leaders," "building mutual respect, trust, and responsibility," and "strengthening good moral character." These purposes are usually not mentioned in a formal discussion of how we educate public school children.

However, many people, especially teachers, realize that teaching young people has become an increasingly more complex task through the years. This not only requires educating the whole child, but it involves a deeper level of commitment and collaboration on the part of educators, parents, and community members. These goals can only be accomplished through the concerted efforts of everyone involved in educating children and preparing for the future.

As I listened to the service-learning teachers speak of the higher purposes of education, I was reminded of Michael Fullan's (2005) eight elements of sustainability. Fullan who defined sustainability as "the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose," (p. ix) also recognized the importance of public service with a moral purpose and a commitment to changing, collaboration, and accountability at all levels. These elements appear to be consistent with the idea that if we are to sustain public education, we must reexamine our own beliefs and purposes of education.

(3) Grant funding has primarily provided resources to train teachers, develop community partnerships, and introduce students and teachers to other resources in the community.

In general, the grant funding provided through the Texas Center for Service-learning has allowed teachers and students opportunities for networking and sharing service-learning projects and ideas. In many cases, teachers who already had a service-oriented curriculum and corresponding teaching philosophy were reaffirmed that they were on the right track in developing the whole child. They also learned ways to

integrate service projects into their core curriculum areas and strategies for involving community partners in meaningful projects. These conclusions address the third research question which aims to identify what experiences, training and support have allowed service-learning teachers to be successful with their students.

In some cases, grant funding was not utilized immediately for student projects and was diverted to priority projects identified by administrators. However, as teachers became more familiar with the importance of student leadership and initiative and benefits of aligning service-learning projects with their curriculum, they began to see the value of the grant funds and became more comfortable in requesting funds and resources. In some districts where the initial service-learning grant provided by the TXCSL was not renewed, teachers expressed their determination to find alternate grant funding sources to continue service-learning projects and a commitment to making it happen without the funds provided through the grant renewal.

(4) Success of service-learning projects is dependent upon situating projects in communities and schools where a culture of service is nurtured and shared.

Service-learning can only be sustained in a district where teachers and administrators have a true commitment to service-learning as a valuable and mutually beneficial instructional strategy. Teachers and administrators who genuinely believe that service-learning can help them to accomplish district, state, and national goals, model an ethic of 'service' in their communities and schools. They collaboratively develop belief, mission, and vision statements and district policies with stakeholders that communicate the importance and value of service-learning and communicate them in through the local

media in speech, writing, and their actions. This final conclusion was drawn from a careful analysis of the responses to the fifth and sixth research questions about teachers' perceptions of administrator involvement as it affects the success of service-learning in a school district and community perceptions of service-learning.

In my literature review, I found that Caine & Caine (1994) suggest that tomorrow's successful employees will have to be problem solvers, decision makers, adept negotiators, and thinkers who are at home with open-endedness, flexibility and resourcefulness. They must be able to deal with uncertainty, complexity, the global village, the information explosion, other technologies, and many different cultures—and still maintain a set of values that fosters an adequate degree of individual stability, integrity, and social harmony (p. 15). Therefore situating service-learning programs in communities that foster a culture of service may be a solution to growing our next generation of citizens to maintain our democratic society.

(5) Service-learning must be initiated, supported, and nurtured by a teacher leader on a campus in order for students, teachers, and community partners to benefit from service-learning projects.

My fifth and final conclusion was drawn from interviews with all twelve service-learning teachers/coordinators who participated in this doctoral study. As a result of their outstanding accomplishments as service-learning teachers and/or service-learning coordinators, these individuals were recommended to participate in the study by staff members from the Texas Center for Service-Learning and from their Educational Service Centers. In talking with each of the teachers, I discovered how important it is

for service-learning teacher leaders to have a strong curriculum background, organizational skills, and a commitment to education. Positive interpersonal skills also play a key role in supporting and guiding fellow teachers and helping them to secure resources that they need to make projects successful. Looking back at my initial rationale for conducting this study, I reflected on how I had hoped to meet with elementary teachers who are "making it happen". In conducting this study, I found those teachers. Through this dissertation and the following recommendations, I am able to share their suggestions for implementing effective service-learning programs with teachers, young people, and their communities.

Recommendations for Practice

University Preparation Programs

Early in his interview, Javier commented that his exposure to service-learning as part of his undergraduate program had a profound impact on the development of his philosophy of education. Javier implied that college professors and department heads interested in introducing teachers to a wide variety of instructional strategies and forming PK-16 partnerships may consider working with public school districts to make service-learning part of their teacher education programs. Not only would this give pre-service teachers an opportunity to become more involved in public schools and the communities where they are located, but it would also give them an opportunity to further develop their own personal teaching philosophies that may include service-learning as an effective strategy

State Agencies, Educator, Administrator, and Youth Organizations

Most service-learning teachers who were interviewed commented on the benefits of attending state and national conferences where they gathered additional ideas for service-learning projects. State agencies as well as educator, administrator, and youth organizations should continue to organize these networking opportunities. Organizations that are not specifically focused on service-learning may consider promoting service-learning as a means to accomplish some of their organizational goals and objectives. Information about service-learning can be made available on websites, in journal articles, and through local and state conferences that showcase exemplary instructional practices.

Education Service Centers

According to Jan, Randy, Lily and Amanda, Educational Service Centers have played a critical role in providing service-learning training and support in their school districts and area. Since the training and support that Service Centers have provided has played such a critical role in the success of service-learning programs, Service Centers should continue to act as liaisons between state agencies such as the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Center for Service-Learning and communicate the needs of the districts that they represent.

School Districts

Marian emphasized the importance of aligning service-learning with curriculum and instruction in her district. According to Marian, school districts should provide opportunities for teachers from different instructional levels to interact and align

curriculum district-wide. They can also set aside time for all stakeholders in the school community to develop and/or revise district mission and vision statements to incorporate the values and beliefs of the people they represent.

Administrators

Grace, as well as other service-learning teachers interviewed in this study, recognizes the importance of administrator support and involvement. Administrators would best demonstrate their support of service-learning by budgeting for service-learning projects and training for both teachers and students, setting aside time for teacher planning and curriculum alignment and integration, and designating support staff for service-learning. Identifying and encouraging teacher leaders who are motivating and inspiring is a key way to garner support for service-learning on their campuses. Administrators could also show their support by increasing their knowledge of service-learning and attending special service-learning events that are meaningful to the students and the community.

Teachers

In *Teachers as Curriculum Planners, Narratives of Experience,* F. Michael Connely and D. Jean Clandinin point out that there was a time in North America when the school principal was thought of as a "head teacher," and there are still places in the world where this is true. The idea was that the principal was a kind of master teacher chosen for his or her teaching abilities as a model and symbol of the best there is in teaching. One of the main functions of the principal's job was to teach demonstration lessons and to work supportively with teachers. This ideal is still alive in some measure

in small elementary schools and, of course, in varying degrees elsewhere (Connely & Clandinin, 1988, p. 187).

As I met and interviewed service-learning teachers through this study, I kept thinking that they actually are serving as the principals that Connely and Clandinin described. Although they are not formally called principals, the way that they freely share their knowledge, provide expertise on effective service-learning strategies, and support one another, illustrates a level of professionalism that is uncommon, yet in high demand in our public schools. This type of leader could best be described as a true servant leader which Grace described in her fifth reflection.

In his book *Leadership for the Schoolhouse,* Thomas Sergiovanni (1996) explains that the roots of school leadership reach not only into the moral voice of community and the ministerial role of the principal, but reach as well to our own personal commitments as parents, teachers, and principals to do the right thing for our children; to accept as part of our responsibilities the necessity to practice leadership as a form of pedagogy (p. 96). In my opinion, the service-learning teachers interviewed in this study have demonstrated a strong commitment to educating young people and a deeper level of responsibility for doing the right things for children in an educational system that sometimes loses sight of what is really important.

I believe that teachers who are dedicated to a lifetime of teaching and learning should use their own expert knowledge of teaching and service-learning as a strategy to help them not only achieve academic goals but to help them to develop students' individual talents, abilities, and dispositions for a life of continuous growth and

community development. Service-learning can enrich and enliven the curriculum and the classroom and provide students with opportunities for real, meaningful learning. As one teacher said, “Service-learning is so much a part of us and what we are doing here.” Instead of viewing service-learning as an extra, teachers need to begin to see service-learning as a part of themselves and a lever to help them accomplish much more than they had ever dreamed was possible.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following areas are recommended for further research. Whereas this study focused specifically on Texas teachers involved in K-12 school community partnership development, another area of research may examine how other states have attempted to initiate service-learning as a strategy for educational reform in their districts and the impact of their service-learning efforts.

Additional research on individual school districts that have sustained service-learning over an extended period of time (five or more years) may illustrate what it is that has allowed districts to continue to use service-learning as a strategy for improving student learning amid the changes in administration and reforms in public schools.

Although this study provides a brief snapshot of what twelve Texas teachers at various levels are doing with service-learning at their respective instructional levels, perhaps a more in depth study of just a few teachers concentrated at a certain grade level could illustrate the mental processes involved in implementing service-learning at the classroom level.

Final Thoughts

Our individual roles, our responsibilities, and our beliefs are so interdependent. As a teacher, principal, and superintendent in a small rural district for the past seven years, I still struggle with deciding where I need to concentrate my time and efforts on a daily basis. We all have an interest in the success of children despite our varied roles, and we all know that our futures depend on their success. Every child is different. They bring their own personal histories and opinions to the classroom. How do we tap into their interests and help them to see that learning is important and related to real life?

Every adult involved in a child's life has his or her own expectations of what they want for that child. Parents naturally want their children to be successful and happy in life. Teachers and administrators want their students to perform satisfactorily on exams, graduate, and return years later to share personal successes stories. Governmental officials and legislators want to appease their constituents and be re-elected to office. Taxpayers want to know that their tax dollars are being well spent and that our education system is adequately preparing the next generation of citizens. As Americans, we have to look for common ground in our personal mission and belief statements and commit to shared goals by providing the resources necessary to provide the kind of education that each child needs.

In studying the work of pioneers in the field of education as well as the experiences and perceptions of teachers practicing service-learning, I have found that the individual philosophies and thoughts shared by service-learning teachers and proponents of service-learning strategies are very much aligned with my own beliefs and mission for

public schools. In the interest of building support for public education, I will continue to use service-learning as a method of forming productive, mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and communities for many years to come because in the words of a service-learning teacher, “It’s right, and it’s real!”

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET

Teachers' Perceptions of Service-Learning: K-12 School Community Partnership Development in Texas Schools

You have been asked to participate in a research study that will focus on teachers' perceptions of the impact of service-learning on student learning. You were selected to be a possible participant because your district participates in the grant project funded through the Texas Center for Service-Learning. A total of 15 people have been asked to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to measure the perceived effectiveness of service-learning and its impact on student learning according to teachers in districts participating in the K-12 School Community Grant Project 2003-2006.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer six open-ended questions aimed at discovering teachers' perceptions of service-learning. This study will take approximately 30-45 minutes of your time. The risks or possible discomforts associated with this study are the length of the interview and that the subject will be asked to share his or her perceptions of service-learning which may be in contrast to commonly held beliefs in his or her district. Teachers' perceptions may also differ drastically from administrator perceptions.

This study is anonymous. Responses will be coded to maintain confidentiality and participants will be assigned pseudonyms. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Jo Ann Bludau will have access to this data. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University, job, benefits, etc., being affected. You can contact Jo Ann Bludau at (361) 293-3221, jbludau@sweethomeisd.org or Linda Skrla at (979) 862-8373, lskrla@tamu.edu with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through Ms. Angelia M. Raines, Director of Research Compliance, Office of the Vice-President for Research at (979) 458-4067, araines@vprmail.tamu.edu.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the information sheet for your records.

By answering the following questions, you hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

VITA

Jo Ann [Pekar] Bludau graduated from Sweet Home Elementary School in 1986. She attended Yoakum High School and graduated with honors in 1990. She entered Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, where she earned a Bachelor of Sciece degree in interdisciplinary studies and was recognized as a Distinguished Honor Graduate in the College of Education in May of 1994. She earned a Master of Education degree in educational administration from The University of Texas in Austin while working for the Austin Independent School District as a teacher and assistant principal. In 1999, she was named Superintendent of the Sweet Home Independent School District where she has served as superintendent/principal and teacher for the past seven years. In 2003, Bludau was recognized by the Region 3 Education Service Center and named one of five finalists for the Texas Association of School Boards Superintendent of the Year Recognition Program.

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