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VOLUNTEERING AT HYDE PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Justice Williams

Service Learning Experience and Making a Difference

Introduction

History and Purpose of Service Site:

Hyde Park Middle school is 60 years old and began as a neighborhood school. About 20 year ago It became the first middle school magnet school, accepting kids from all over Las Vegas valley. The main purpose of Hyde Park, being a school, is obviously education, however it provides an array of services for the children who attend. They provide free or reduced lunch to over 60% of the students. There are nurses, counselors, social workers, and more on campus to assist the students in their everyday problems and needs. Anna Belknap, the principal at Hyde Park, is a firm believe that anything that happens in the community affects the school also, and therefore should be address in school.

Community Service Paradigm:

The service site I volunteered at best fits into the “social change” spectrum of the community service paradigm. Social change is about progress, not fixing a problem by creating a solution, however removing the problem all together. This version of service works hand and hand with those whom are being served, not just working for them. In a classroom the students must work for their own education, as well as the rest of the community must help in giving them the best opportunities possible.

Social Issue Research

Social Issue Addressed:

The main social issue addressed at Hyde Park Middle School is education. The students attend school to get an education and learn, and the teachers went to college so they would be qualified to teach. However, when students other needs are not meet, they will not focus on their education. This is why the school does what they can to address other issues that the students may be experiencing. They provide free and reduced breakfast and lunches for students who cannot necessarily afford to eat otherwise. This makes it so they can focus on the lessons rather than their hunger. The school also is great about discussing issues going on in the community, and providing counselors to those who need them in time of distress. The schools main focus is education, and they are open and willing to address other issues in order to make sure that their goal of educating students is met.

My Approach to the Issue:

As someone who is entering the teaching field, I can do everything to prepare myself for the struggles students may have in my classroom. I will make sure that I do everything in my power to personally help those student that are struggling and hold them accountable for their grades. I can try to hold every student to a high standard and not have low expectations of any of my students based on their past performance. I can also obtain materials to give to students who are not able to afford material of their own, doing what I can to make sure they have what they need to succeed.

Current and Ideal State of Social Issues:

The education system in Nevada is less than thriving. Statistically, Nevada is doing worse than the majority of the United states when it comes to test scores. “The median percentage of students scoring in the bottom quarter for the designated schools ranged from 48-57 and 43-55 for reading and mathematics, respectively” (Chen and Valverde, 2007, p. 18-19). This means that about half of the students in Nevada schools are performing below 75% of students nationwide, which is a sad statistic.

A basic education would be completely free and available to everyone, worldwide. All of the students would finish “high school”, or their countries equivalent, and the quality of education received would be equivalent, despite the school. People would genuinely value education at a high level and teachers would have high expectation for all their students and their ability to teach would be immaculate.

References:

Chen, L., & Valverde, Gilbert A. (2007). Effects of the Nevada Education Reform Act on Public School Performance, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
Burris, Carol. Mathis, William. Weiner, Kevin. (2010). Issue 4: Can Schools Close the Achievement Gap between Students from Different Ethnic and Racial Backgrounds. *Taking sides; clashing views in educational psychology*
UNLV College of Education. (2017). Fast Facts: Policy Issues in Nevada Education.

Service to Community: I do not believe I affected the whole community in any way, however I think that a drop in the water creates a ripple affect. If I affected one student, then they can go on to affect others, so on and so forth.

Semester Reflection: Being in a classroom and helping students learn material they were struggling with was extremely rewarding and made me extremely excited to start my career as an educator. I may not have made a huge impact, however it think that I taught at least one student that they were smarter than they think, and that in itself is worth it.

Expectations: I expected that I would be doing a lot of busy work for the teachers whose classroom I was assigned to, however that was not the case. Rather than serving the teacher I was truly serving he students and being an extra resource to them instead.

Differences in My Own Views:

Although I have learned to sympathize with the teachers in most situations throughout the past few years, I have also learned that not all teachers are good teachers. Often the children deserve better than they are getting.

Differences I Made for the Site: I did not make any extensive differences for the site, however I believe I made a difference in a few students grades and hopefully in their learning habits.

Personal/Professional Learning: I would say that much of my learning was personal, however most of it was professional. I learned a awful lot about magnet schools, magnet programs, what resources teachers have, and just the dynamic of a middle school classroom from an adult perspective.

