

First Year Seminar Psychology Student Reflection on Service Learning Experience

(Student authorized use of this reflection for this project.)

Campus and Community Connections

The service-learning experience with second graders at the Center for Inquiry School #2 (725 W New Jersey St.) was enlightening and applicable to literally every class on my schedule. It was also humbling to have children simply enjoy my presence. I would go to the school on Mondays, 12:40-1:20. This experience occurred because the college students would gain perspective on what it is like to serve the community while the elementary students could have the opportunity to enhance their reading writing, and arithmetic abilities. Although it was required for Psychology 103, I feel that I gained much more than I gave. I aided in Ms. Fischer's class and typically read one-on-one with the students. The children had various reading levels, gauged by letters A-M. Once they came back to the personal table, I would ask if they brought their book from home. If so, then they would read it for me and choose another to take home; if they did not, then they chose a book to read but did not take it home. I would then listen and help the kids if they struggled, and then record what word gave them trouble. Once they made it through the book, I would praise them for their completion and ask them to get a different student. Ms. Fischer would teach her class the everyday lesson while I read quietly with the individuals.

Undoubtedly, the most important lesson I grasped from this service is that each child is the future college student that I am now. This realization led me to see how influential just one individual can be. Sometimes, I would have students ask, "Are you reading with me today?" I would reply, "Hmm... no you're not on the list today!" and they would show sadness. This displayed how tender children really are. My experience also helped me understand more about positive psychology, learning, and motivation.

Positive psychology is powerful. I applied this in the classroom by avoiding the individual flaws or mistakes and praising the correct answers and behavior. Some children seemed used to my compliments while others looked at me with bewilderment. Although it is sad that some children rarely experience positive remarks, this gives me a view into ways that teaching can be modified and improved. Also, operant conditioning helps the children make an association between being an obedient student and receiving reinforcements. In Psychology as a Biological Science, my professor mentioned how positive punishment is less effective than negative punishment. Illustrated quite blatantly, some children actually liked the attention of being scolded by the teacher. Keeping this in mind, if the students were not attentive I would somewhat shape them to pay attention and gradually read through the book. I did this by ignoring their fidgety actions and thanking them for sitting down, looking at the book, telling me what was in the picture, etc. Psychology amazes me; I felt like a scientist while applying what I have learned thus far. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, sleep, food, and physiological demands are required to gain any other motivation like and education or a compliment. Again, this was quite evident. I am not saying that I profited and it was

blatantly obvious that certain kids did not have food exactly; moreover, needs like medications and proper hygiene were visible. Considering the other side of the hierarchy of needs, I can confidently state that the children who confidently sped through their readings and rarely had to be told classroom rules were not in need of biological needs. They were in the safety level and some even in the belonging stage.

Going into the project, I honestly was not very thrilled. Coming from a family with seven siblings, I assumed that these kids would be pests. After the first time I met with the children, I realized how unfair my attitude was. When I walked into the room, the kids lit up. I then learned that my attitude would make the situation, so I stayed positive and applied my knowledge of psychology and I couldn't be happier. The realizations of how various individuals influence children made me speculate my prospective major (counseling). The combination of child psychology, school psychology, and industrial/organizational psychology could be properly applied to make a colossal difference for future generations. The importance of future generations stands evident in all institutions. There is always competition in the US and statistics show how American intelligence is declining rapidly. Instead of technology inhibiting potential, I/O psychologists can work to establish more creative, informative ways of using technology. School psychologists need to work on more ways to enhance student success by studying various teaching techniques and environments. Lastly, a child psychologist knows that a specific way of addressing a student is completely different from another student. The concoction of these different majors displays how vast the study of human behavior, mental processes, and experience really is. This experience actually made me think twice about counseling and consider other opportunities provided within the field.