SERVICE LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION: EVALUATING CHANGE IN COMMITMENT, CONNECTEDNESS AND SELF-EFFICACY AND COURSE OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of the effects of service learning on pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy and commitment to teaching in urban settings, feelings of connection to community, and the effectiveness of service learning in meeting course objectives in a graduate level children’s literature course. Participants took a pre- and post-service learning experience survey that measured the constructs of commitment to teaching, self-efficacy about teaching in urban settings, and connection to community which were analyzed using a two-group MANOVA. The results indicate at least one significant univariate comparison $F(3, 30) = 11.492, p = .001$. Two-way t-tests were run for all three subscales using the adjusted alpha above. All of the comparisons were statistically significant, indicating that students were more committed to teaching in urban settings $t(16) = 3.64, p = .002$, felt more connected to the community $t(16) = 6.19, p = .001$, but had lower self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings $t(16) = -4.39, p = .001$ after their service learning experience. In terms of evaluating pre-service teachers mastery of course objects, reflective journals were analyzed using a rubric (Appendix A) for instances of ability to pre-assess writing process, ability develop appropriate instruction based on pre-assessment, ability to use post-assessment to evaluate learning outcomes, and ability to reflect critically on teaching of writing process.
and self-evaluate. On a scale of 0-8, the pre-service teachers whose CSLP students completed the project scored a mean of 6.90. In terms of mastering these course objectives, the mastery rate was 85%.

**INTRODUCTION**

Children in urban schools do not have the same access to qualified/certified teachers that other children have. While there are many factors that comprise a quality educational experience for our nation’s children, the quality of a teacher has been identified as one of the most critical components.

“The results show large differences among schools in their impact on student achievement. These differences are centered on the differential impact of teachers, rather than on the overall school organization, leadership, or even financial condition” (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999).

A look at who is likely to teach in our nation’s urban (high minority and high poverty) schools paints a disturbing picture. Compared to their counterparts in low-minority and low-poverty schools, students in public urban schools are twice as likely to be taught by teachers who lack certification or a major in the field. This is particularly true in the areas of Mathematics, English, and Science. In some areas such as life sciences as many as 71% of children in grades 7-12 in urban schools are being taught by unqualified and uncertified teachers (United States Department of Education, 1999). Teacher turnover in urban schools is also a serious problem. The national average for teacher turnover is 15.7%, but in urban or at-risk schools teacher turnover can reach as high as 50% (Caroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004). Also, on the national level, inequalities include unprepared teachers, unfilled teacher vacancies, and large numbers of
substitute teachers. These discrepancies add up to “... a two-tiered education system” (Caroll et al., 2004).

The effects of the two-tiered educational system’s under-qualified teachers may play a large role in poor student outcomes. Nationally, children in urban schools perform lower on achievement tests. For instance, standardized writing scores in 4th, 8th, and 12th grade reveal performance gaps for Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged children (identified as eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch). In 2002, 90% of white 4th grade students scored at the basic level in writing compared to 77% of Black students and 77% of Hispanic students. By the time students reach 12th grade the numbers drop for all groups, but not in a proportional way. White students drop 11% to 79%, Black students drop 16% to 59% and Hispanic students drop 13% to 64%. The contrast is even more stark at the higher benchmark of “proficient” in writing, achieved by 34% of 4th grade White students, but only 14% of Black students, and 17% of Hispanic students (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). Ultimately, low achievement mirrors low graduation rates in urban schools. In fact, a child of color in an American urban school is less likely to graduate high school than a child who has been identified has having a learning handicap (Haberman, 2004).

While there is no denying that there is an urgent need for qualified/certified committed teachers in urban schools, there seem to be some critical questions for teacher educators—what are the characteristics of highly qualified teachers for urban settings, and what is the best means of preparing teachers for these high minority and high poverty schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Preparing teachers for urban settings with diverse populations is complex because it includes a transformation of traditional concepts of knowing and pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Haberman, 2004) and extends them to include factors such as caring and connectedness to community, sensitivity to diversity, and commitment to teaching (Root, 1997; Waterman, 1993). Teachers in urban settings need “specialized knowledge of the lives and learning styles of the urban child, first-hand experiences in urban schools, and an understanding of the community from which the child comes” (Reed & Simon, 1991). But the fact is that there is a “growing racial/ethnic imbalance between the student population and the teaching force” (Clewell, 2001). Furthermore, teachers lack pedagogical skills needed to successfully teach in urban settings—a very different pedagogical skill set argues Haberman (1991) and one that is rooted in a transformation away from traditional transmissive ideas about teaching and student learning.

Theorists such as Paulo Freire (1970) in his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and Haberman (1991) in describing his “The Pedagogy of Poverty versus Good Teaching,” put forth the idea that traditional approaches to teaching and learning are oppressive in nature and sustain a pedagogical soup de jour that is aligned with a transmissive paradigm in which a teacher’s prime function is “an act of depositing, ... students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 72). This pedagogical model, Haberman (1991) argues, is perpetuated and reinforced by society, institutional norms, teachers, and students and has little to do with the creation of a learning environment and, most critically, is an ineffective instructional model for urban settings. (Liu, 1995) contends that these transmissive pedagogical underpinnings are rooted in the dominate Western
Post-Enlightenment epistemological assumptions linked to foundationalism and its quest for knowledge as certainty and, further, emphasizes a dualistic approach that separate mind and world. Thus, attempts at pedagogical change must be considered within epistemological frameworks and reform aimed at explicitly examining assumptions and belief systems that guide pedagogy within the context of societal complexities.

Various educational organizations have responded to the need for revised frameworks and pedagogical shifts (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; United States National Research Council, 1995) by expanding educational goals and reorganizing and modernizing curriculum with an emphasis on a process-oriented approach to teaching and learning. Zemelman, Daniels, Hyde, & Varner (1998) outline thirteen interlocking principles, assumptions, and theories that underscore “a more general, progressive educational paradigm that is emerging across content boundaries and grade levels” (p. 7). These include experiences that are: Student centered, experiential, holistic, authentic, expressive, reflective, social, collaborative, democratic, cognitive, developmental, constructivist, and challenging.

These revised notions of best pedagogical practices stress the importance of learning as a process of inquiry and exploration that facilitates student understanding through active construction of knowledge--i.e constructivist learning. A constructivist learning environment engages learners in active manipulation “of objects and tools of the trade and observation of the effects of what they have done” (Jonassen, 2003, p. 7). It is constructive in nature as learners reflect on the processes they employ, describe their experiences, and engage in self-regulation and analysis of their learning and adjust conceptual understandings. Further, learners intentionally set goals that are focused
toward conceptual change by reflecting, evaluating, and articulating the processes they use and the “decisions they make, strategies they use, and the answers they found” (Jonassen, 2003, p. 8).

Teaching standards have also undergone similar reforms (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2005; Marxen, 2003; Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2001). These pedagogical reforms are aligned with progressive ideology and are constructivist in nature. Teaching is being redefined as setting the stage for learning by challenging, probing, redirecting, questioning, creating doubt or disequilibrium in conceptual understanding so that students become actively engaged in learning and self-evaluation of their understandings.

To initiate and support such a transformation of ideas about learning and the nature of teaching, systemic change is required in a system of policies that promotes and rewards compliance with “test-based accountability.” “The goal should not be ‘compliance’ with current policies, whatever these might be, but a long-term steady progress that enhances student learning” (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2004).

Benson & Harkavy (1997) call for systemic social and institutional transformation:

To transform conventional public schools into innovative community schools, we have painfully discovered, requires (at a minimum) two different types of “revolutions”: (1) a revolution in the highly bureaucratic, highly dysfunctional, American public school system for which American universities in general, and [education schools] in particular, bear such heavy responsibility; (2) a revolution in universities…(p. 88).

Transformation of public education such as that called for by Benson & Harkavy (Benson & Harkavy, 1997) and Harvard Graduate School of Education (2004) require teachers to be willing to become involved in political issues, engage in social activism,
and to become socially responsible. In fact, Haberman (2004), points out that an effective educational leader “becomes a strong persistent advocate of his constituents against the system” (para. 7).

We are now in an era where our government’s educational mantra is “no child left behind,” yet the reality of children in urban schools is that unqualified teachers leave behind many children. While the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) addresses the issue of providing quality teachers for every student and acknowledges the pressing need for highly qualified teachers in urban settings (United States Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2003), the benchmarks of a “highly qualified teacher” are somewhat low—“hold at least a bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution; hold full state certification; demonstrate competency in their subject area” (p. 4).

The report No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003), extends the definition of highly qualified urban teachers to include:

- “A firm understanding of how students learn;”
- Teaching skills necessary to ensure that all students achieve high standards:”
- Create a positive learning environment
- Use a variety of assessment strategies to diagnose and respond to individual learning needs;
- Demonstrate and integrate technology into curriculum, collaboration with colleagues;
- Collaborate with colleagues, parents, and community members, and other educators to improve student learning;
• Reflect on their practice to improve future teaching and student achievement;
• Pursue professional growth in both content and pedagogy;
• Instill a passion for learning in their students” (p. 7).

In a study of the preparation for teachers in urban schools, Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair (1996) held focus groups, individual interviews, and used questionnaires with twenty-seven urban teachers and administrators to identify challenges in urban teaching as well as characteristics of successful urban teachers. Among those challenges and characteristics was an ability to continually modify the program and curriculum to accommodate the intellectual and academic needs of each student based on individualized assessment. The participants in the study defined this characteristic of successful urban teachers as being flexible and added it to seven others---empathy, respect for students, self-care, patience, collegiality, sense of humor, and high-energy level.

In sum, the characteristics of a well qualified urban teacher include the following:

• Caring and connectedness to community (Root, 1997; Wade, 1997).
• Sensitivity to diversity (Root, 1997; Wade, 1997).
• Commitment to teaching (Root, 1997; Wade, 1997).
• Reflective practioneer (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).
• Ability to modify curriculum using individual assessment and continual program modification to accommodate the intellectual and academic needs of each student (Erskine-Cullen & Sinclair, 1996).
• Social activism (Benson & Harkavy, 1997; Haberman, 1991).

SERVICE LEARNING IN URBAN TEACHER PREPARATION

A promising urban teacher preparation model is service learning. Service learning, that is providing pre-service teachers the opportunity to acquire, use, and reflect upon teaching skills, knowledge, students, community, and the interplay between and among all of those, in real-life situations (authentic) that address community needs is a method that holds promise for filling gaps in urban teaching (Anderson, 1998). In fact, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (2003) declares the value of service learning in teacher education as a viable and critical part of teacher education programs for meeting NCATE standards. These benefits of service learning to the community and pre-service teachers are echoed by Erickson & Anderson (1997).

Service learning is aligned with various theoretical and philosophical frameworks, most notably experiential learning associated with Kurt Lewin (Kolb, 1984), social reconstructionist theory (Allam & Zerkin, 1993; Miller, 1988), multicultural education approaches (Guadarrama, 2000; Sleeter & Tettegah, 2002), critical and intentional conceptual reflection (Sinatra & Pintrich, 2003; Sparks-Langer & M., 1990), and civic responsibility and engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995).

Sleeter (2002) distinguishes community-based service learning experiences from school-based service-learning experiences, with a preference of the former as it challenges the “deficit perspective more powerfully than school field placements” (p.
267) by situating pre-service teachers in the community as it is—rich and complex, not the frequently decontextualized setting of “school.”

Among the benefits of participating in service learning for pre-service teachers are gains in the commitment to teaching, caring (which is defined as a commitment to students’ well-being and development as whole persons), warmth, concern, compassion, connectedness, increased insight into social problems experienced by students, and the ability to adapt curriculum and pedagogical methods to meet the specific needs of children (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Maeroff, 1988; McKenna & Ward, 1996; Noddings, 1998; Potthoff et al., 2000; Root, 1997; Seigel, 1994; Tellez, Hiebouvish, Cohen, & Norwood, 1995). Studies into the effects of service learning on the dimensions of involvement in political issues, engagement in social activism, and social responsibility also indicate significant gains (D. Conrad, 1980; D Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Crosman, 1989; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; Marks, 1994; Marsh, 1973; Melchior, 1995; Ridgell, 1995; Rutter & Newmann, 1989; Silcox, 1993; Waterman, 1993). Most importantly, these outcomes and gains align well to the previously stated characteristics of highly qualified teachers in urban settings.

In terms of teaching techniques and innovative instructional reforms, participating in service learning experiences positively effects teachers' use of progressive pedagogical practices such as hands-on learning, learning by doing, or experiential learning, individualized learning process, cooperative learning/group work among students, planning with other teachers, interdisciplinary teaching, thematic instruction, use of reflective activities, use of community resources, project-based learning, student engagement in determining curricular topics, and alternative assessment techniques.
(Bradley, 2001). However, while service learning is a model that is widely used in education, Bringle & Hatcher (2000) note a lack of research that evaluates the “effectiveness of service learning in reaching educational course objectives, the curriculum, and the institutional mission” (p. 68).

**PURPOSE**

This study addresses the effectiveness of service learning in meeting course objectives in a graduate level children’s literature course; provides some insight into aspects of the participants in the study; and changes that happened in terms of participants’ self-efficacy and commitment to teaching in urban settings in addition to feelings of connection to community.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Question 1: Does situating pre-service teachers in service learning increase their commitment to teaching in an urban setting, self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings, and feelings of connectedness to the community.

Question 2: During a service learning experience embedded in a children’s literature course, do pre-service teachers pre-assess children’s knowledge of the writing process, differentiate contextualized writing-process instruction based on pre-assessment data, post-assess learning gains, and reflect on their teaching (see Appendix A).

**RESEARCH METHODS**

**DESIGN**

Quasi-experimental designs were employed for both of the research questions listed above. Specifically, for question 1, a one-group pretest-postest (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) design was employed. For question 2, a rubric was developed and aligned
to the specific course objectives for the service learning project in terms of best practices in children’s literature and a content analysis of pre-service teachers’ reflective journals was done to determine if those course objectives were mastered.

SAMPLE.

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS. The seventeen students in this study were enrolled in an elective three semester hour children’s literature course as part of their graduate level professional teacher preparation program that ultimately leads to teacher certification and a master’s degree. While the teacher preparation curriculum at this institution has several fieldwork experiences built into the curriculum, service learning is not part of that planned curriculum. In fact, in this teacher preparation program, this is the first community service-learning partnership that has been embedded in coursework. Participation in the study was voluntary and pre-service teachers were informed that at any time during the study they could withdraw. Participants were assured of anonymity and their grade in the course was in no way effected by their participation in the study. All seventeen students agreed to be part of the study and none dropped the class during the course of the investigation.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PARTNER. The CSLP has been serving [location omitted for purpose of blind review] as a nonprofit agency since 1966. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life of individuals and families residing in [location omitted for purpose of blind review] through programs and supportive services that build community and lead to self-sufficiency. CSLP has a food bank, helps with employment counseling, aids in rental assistance, community outreach, adult education, and youth programming including an after school homework club during the school year and a
summer day camp from June to August. The children who participate in the after school homework club and summer day camp run by CSLP are students in three local neighborhood schools—two elementary and one middle school. Sixty-four percent of the children who attend these schools have been identified as economically disadvantaged and 60% are Latino/Hispanic. At all three schools between 40%-54% of the children are performing at the basic or below basic level in reading and 50%- 54% are at the basic or below basic level in math. It is clear that there is a critical need to provide educational experiences that address the needs of these children. The CSLP currently has 100 children enrolled in the homework clubs and annually sign-up 100 children in the summer day camps. Only 10 percent of these children are registered in both programs. The CSLP serves these children with the help of local churches and organizations that serve as site hosts.

PROCEDURES

SERVICE LEARNING SURVEY 1. On the first day of class, participants were asked to complete the Service Learning Survey 1. Service Learning Survey 1 was aimed at identifying prior service learning experiences and reactions to those prior experiences, gathering demographic information related to the respondent’s place of origin in relationship with the local community, feelings of connectedness and involvement in the local community, levels of commitment to teaching in an urban setting as well as self-efficacy in relationship to teaching in urban settings.

SERVICE LEARNING SURVEY 2. On the last day of class, participants were asked to complete Service Learning Survey 2, which was aimed at identifying changes in the above variables. Additionally participants were asked to rank this service learning
experience in terms of educational value, personal fulfillment, effectiveness in meeting
community needs, effectiveness in developing skills in informal reading assessment,
designing and implementing literature based activities, likeliness to recommend
involvement in service learning to others, likeliness to be become involved in another
service learning project, likeliness to plan and implement a service learning project with
their students, and the value of their service learning project in comparison to other
course assignments.

SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT. To identify a community partner, the
service-learning faculty member met with a local community service advisory agency
and several nonprofit agencies that provided after school educational support were
recommended. The service learning faculty member met with several of the
recommended agencies, but there appeared to be a mismatch between the needs of the
pre-service teachers and the agencies. As with the other agencies, the service learning
faculty member contacted the CSLP’s educational director to discuss the needs of the
CSLP as well as the requirements of the course. A common area of need was identified--
pre-service teachers were enrolled in a course in children’s literature where one of the
main course objectives was to develop their ability to use informal assessment strategies
to evaluate student’s knowledge of the writing process and to translate that knowledge
into individualized teaching strategies. Many of the children in the CSLP’s after school
program needed focused instruction on writing process. Thus is was agreed upon that the
partnership would consist of pre-service teachers teamed individually with children
enrolled in the CSLP’s after school homework program and these teams would work on
co-authoring books which would be published electronically. The semantics of how this
would ultimately play out were collaboratively developed by the CSLP’s educational director and the service learning faculty. In terms of the teacher preparation curriculum, the project would allow the pre-service teachers to meet the state department of education certification requirements as well as meet objectives of the class using a constructivist approach to help students to acquire writing process skills while they co-author and electronic book. A rubric was developed to set guidelines and to allow pre-service teachers to evaluate their own performance. Pre-service teachers kept reflective journals that provided insight for them and for the service learning faculty member into instructional decisions, issues, and feelings related to working with their service learning project, the community, or their student (Shulman, 1991). Although the time they spent with their student was variable, a guideline of one hour per week was established.

It is critical to note that pre-service teachers did not receive explicit instruction in assessing or teaching writing processes and co-authoring. The intent of the service learning for the pre-service teacher was to allow them to explore the process contextually via a concrete experience (actually co-authoring with the student), reflect critically on the interactions with the student, from those concrete experiences and reflections as well as discussions/collaborations with peers, self-targeted and self-initiated exploration to clarify, explore, or refine ideas, and then to test those ideas via active experimentation followed by more critical reflection (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2002). The process was cyclical and followed Lewin’s model of adult learning/experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).

It is also important to note the level of collaboration and the relationship between the CSLP and service learning faculty was nurtured and expanded in a variety of ways.
Trust is a critical component of that relationship (Shumer, 1992). The service learning faculty member volunteered at the CSLP to work with children in the production of personal or family digital stories that engaged the children in using video to tell a story. Grants to provide materials to meet the needs of this and other service learning projects were co-authored. Donated computers were collaboratively acquired and set-up at the after school sites. The teacher preparation program’s College of Education has donated rebuilt computers to support the partnership. The university’s community service office has provided two student volunteers to rebuilt, install software, and maintain the computers. Conversations related to the pre-service teachers, the students, the community, and the teacher education program were ongoing. The CSLP educational director has worked to develop schedules, team pre-service teachers with specific students, and other tasks to support the collaboration.

RESULTS

SURVEY 1

PRIOR SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCES. Of the seventeen participants, ten had prior service learning experiences. For one of those students the prior service learning experience occurred while he/she was in high school, but the majority of the students who had prior service learning experiences were in their undergraduate programs (six) and three were in graduate programs.

Using a 5 point Likert-scale with one being the least and five being the most, participants who had prior service learning experiences were asked to rate the educational value of their prior service learning experiences, their personal fulfillment, and their perception of the effectiveness of the experience in meeting the needs of the community
as well as how likely they are to recommend involvement in service learning (see Table 1). Although there were varied responses to the educational value of their prior service learning, levels of personal fulfillment, effectiveness in meeting community needs, all ten participants reported the highest level of being likely to recommend involvement in service learning.

[place table 1 about here]

COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN. To contextualize the connections or affiliation with the local community, participants were asked if they were originally from [location omitted for purpose of blind review]. Thirteen of the participants in the study were not from the area, four were. Of the thirteen not from the area, four report their place of origin as within 50 miles from [location omitted for purpose of blind review], two are from places 51-100 miles of [location omitted for purpose of blind review], two are from places 101-200 miles of [location omitted for purpose of blind review], one is from a place over 200 miles from [location omitted for purpose of blind review] but still in [location omitted for purpose of blind review], and four are from outside [location omitted for purpose of blind review]. Additionally, ten of the participants identified their places of origin as suburban, four as rural, and three as urban.

SURVEY 2.

A reliability analysis was run on subscales for commitment to teaching in urban settings (questions 12, 13, 15, 17), self-efficacy about teaching in urban settings (questions 14, 16, 18), and connection to community (questions 26, 27) for Service Learning Survey 1 with resulting Alphas of .91, .87, .50 respectively. Although the Alpha for connection to community was disappointing, the others were quite high and the
decision was made to collapse these data for purposes of further analysis. Table 2 reports
the mean, sample size, and standard deviation for all three sub-scales pre- and post along
with effect size differences.

[place Table 2 about here]

Additionally survey 2 included an open-ended prompt for participants to make
comments about the service learning experienced and resulted in three comments. All
three of the comments spoke to perceived instructional of learning skills while working
with a student. As one participant put it, “I enjoyed the service learning because it
allowed me have the actual experience of assessing and implementing learning activities
with a student.” Another stated it similarly:

I really enjoyed participating in this project. I felt like I didn’t want it to
end. I felt the time period was too short. I wanted to extend my lesson to
incorporate more students and try other teaching methods.

All three of the participants who answered the open-ended prompt, felt the
experience exposed them to a “different group of students.”

It is difficult for me to admit, but I used to have a fear of working with
students from urban, lower-income neighborhoods because I didn’t know
what to expect. I was afraid that they would not respect me because I am
so different from them.

COMPARISON OF SURVEY 1 AND 2.

A two-group MANOVA was used to compare differences between the service
learning sub-scales of commitment to teaching in urban settings, self-efficacy about
teaching in urban settings, and connection to community, where the groups are time (pre
and post). The results indicate at least one significant univariate comparison, $F(3, 30) =
11.492$, $p < .001$. To make those comparisons, t-tests were performed using a
Bonferroni correction. Essentially, the new benchmark for significance is .017, arrived at by dividing the initial alpha of .05 by three, the number of comparisons (Stevens, 2002).

One-way t-tests were run for all three subscales using the adjusted alpha above. Two of the comparisons were statistically significant, indicating that students were more committed to teaching in urban settings $t(16) = 3.64, p < .01$ and felt more connected to the community $t(16) = 6.19, p < .01$. There was not, however, a corresponding increase in self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings $t(16) = -4.39, p > .01$. In fact, upon finding such a large difference in the reverse direction, a two-tailed t-test was run, detecting a statistically significant ($p < .01$) drop in self-efficacy after the service learning experience.

**EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS IN REACHING COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

**REFLECTIVE JOURNALS**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the service learning experience in meeting the course objectives as detailed in research question 2, pre-service teachers were asked to journal each contact they had with their CSLP student over the course of the semester. Journal guidelines asked them to focus their entries on descriptions of their instructional activities and assessments of their CSLP student in addition to engaging in reflection on these tasks and more holistically their service learning experience. An analytic rubric was used to evaluate learning outcomes for the pre-service teachers as evidenced in their journals (Appendix A) evaluating their pre-assessment, instructional methods, post-assessment, and ability to engage in reflective practice.

To establish inter-rater reliability, five journals were independently coded using the rubric as a guide. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the five sets of scores
revealed significant agreement, $r(3) = .95$, $p < .05$. Thus the decision was made to divide the remaining twelve journals among the two researchers for coding with descriptive data reported below in Table 3.

[place Table 3 about here]

Out of a possible score of eight points pre-service teachers scored a mean of six. Overwhelming the low scores were due to zero points received for completing a post-assessment. In part this was due to the fact that almost half of the CLSP students ($n=7$) dropped and were not available for post-assessment. This is exemplified above with the increased mean for the ten cases in which CSLP students did not drop.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of this study are mixed. While huge gains were observed in both commitment to teach in urban settings, and feelings of connectedness to their local community (it bears mentioning that the University is situated within the same urban location as the CSLP), pre-service teachers had an equally dramatic drop in their feelings of self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings. It is likely that the increased commitment and feelings of connectedness were driven by the children that study participants worked with. One participant wrote in his service-learning journal:

I do not remember exactly when, but at some point [my student] hugged me. I felt like crying, I am such a sensitive guy. I think he was happy that we put our story up. He even asked if he could keep our paper copy of the story. I was so surprised. I did not realize what an impact I had on him, just doing the project with him.

While participants had their share of difficulties and obstacles, some of which certainly came from their students, many of them had similar experiences to the one
described above. The CSLP students were enthusiastic about working with the pre-service teachers and tended to show their enthusiasm and appreciation for the experience. The journals tell a story of initial trepidation on the part of pre-service teachers changing to a similar level of appreciation for the experience.

While the levels of commitment and feelings of connectedness were encouraging, the drop in feelings of self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings came as no surprise. Several authors (A. W. Hoy, 2000; W. K. Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990; Spector, 1990) found a similar trend among pre-service during their student teaching experiences. They found that pre-service teacher efficacy beliefs tend to increase during coursework and then decrease during student teaching. This suggests “that the optimism of young teachers may be somewhat tarnished when confronted with the realities and complexities of the teaching task” (A. W. Hoy, 2000). This, in itself, makes a very strong case for restructuring teacher education programs so that experiential learning opportunities are inherent in and critical to the teacher training process. The participants in this study came to the experience concerned about the setting and their ability to commit to it, but with an over-estimate of their ability to teach. It is evidenced in the survey. The commitment to teach mean of 13.94 fall 6 points shy of the maximum possible value, leaving lots of room to grow. Similarly, the low initial mean for connection to community (5.52 out of a possible 10), allowed for growth and may have been due in large part to the fact that only 4 of the 17 students were from the area and only 3 of the 17 were from an urban setting. In contrast, the self-efficacy with respect to teaching in urban settings started off with a fairly large mean, 13.06, only 2 points shy of the maximum possible value. Consequently, there was little direction to move other than down.
At first glance, the results regarding whether or not pre-service teachers engaged in the kinds of pedagogical practices used by teachers who are successful in urban settings look disappointing. However, it should be noted that seven of the CSLP students dropped out of the service-learning experience before their pre-service teachers were able to conduct a post-assessment. Among those who had CSLP students finish, only two failed to do any sort of post-assessment. Thus the lack of post-assessments is mostly a function of student drop-out as opposed to a deficiency among the pre-service teachers. It is worth noting that on a scale of 0-8, the pre-service teachers whose CSLP students completed the project scored a mean of 6.90. In terms of mastering the course objectives as defined on the rubric, (Appendix A) the mastery rate was 85%.

Several limitations of this study bear mentioning. Obviously, the small sample size and the fact that students were master’s level pre-service teachers enrolled in a summer course at a private university limit the generalizability of this study. In addition, as noted above the CSLP covers both grade and middle level schools, encompassing a wide range of ages. Since the study is quasi-experimental in design it is difficult to attribute changes in pre-service teacher self-efficacy, feelings of connectedness and commitment to teach in urban settings to the service learning experience. It is perhaps more difficult to attribute the somewhat favorable alignment to course objectives to the experiences they had with their students. With no pre-test of pre-service teachers’ ability to engage in things like reflection and differentiated instruction it is impossible to claim that their ability to do these things is a result of participation in service learning as opposed to skills that they already had coming in to the study.
Future work should examine changes in pre-service teachers’ skill sets to more directly link service-learning to preparation for teaching in urban settings. In addition, it remains to be seen whether or not any skills that are learned can be effectively translated into classroom practice. Specifically, it is important to examine whether or not these practices scale well to large groups of students. Moving beyond self-reporting should also prove useful. It is one thing for students to report they are more committed to working in urban settings, but it is much more interesting to see if there is a corresponding increase in the number of pre-service teachers who go on to select urban placements. Additionally, because service learning is rooted in a reciprocal process, measures of benefits in terms of CSLP student academic growth and other benefits from the experience should be investigated.

**SUMMARY**

The data related to urban teacher recruitment, retention, and lack of qualifications reveals the effects of a chronic shortage of well-prepared, successful urban teachers on many of our nation’s children: low academic success and achievement that often result in dropping out of school. The task is before us—build a cadre of skilled urban teachers equipped with the knowledge, the skills, and the experiences they need to become successful, highly qualified, committed urban teachers so that no child is left behind. The responsibility for structuring teacher education programs that infuse curriculum with best practices in urban teacher training falls on teacher educators. We must move our practices outside the ivory towers thereby offering our future teachers opportunities to learn to teach by teaching in authentic, rich, contextualized settings with children. This natural and reciprocally beneficial team—pre-service teachers and urban children—via a service
learning model holds promise in preparing skilled, connected, and committed urban teachers. At the same time, we must systematically investigate the outcomes of those experiences so that we can make informed decisions about teacher education curricula.
REFERENCES


