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Service-Learning in First-Year Composition:
Programmatic Approaches and Measurable Effects
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Composition instructors cite numerous reasons to couple service-learning with composition courses. Some practitioners believe that integrating service-learning activities allows students to bridge the gap between academic writing and the real world (Dorman & Dorman, 1997) while offering opportunities for civic engagement (Adler-Kassner *et al*., 1997; Arca, 1997). Professors who teach composition with service-learning requirements have reported that students in these courses write higher quality papers (Adler-Kassner *et al.*, 1997; Arca, 1997; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 1997; Deans, 1998; Dorman & Dorman, 1997; Shutz & Gere, 1998) and tend to be more actively engaged (Arca, 1997; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 1997; Deans, 1997; Dorman & Dorman, 1997), motivated (Adler-Kassner *et al.*, 1997; Bacon, 1997; Brack & Hall, 1997), and satisfied (Bacon, 1997). However, the wide range of possibilities for carrying out service-learning opportunities makes aligning a service-learning approach with programmatic goals challenging for WPAs. Additionally, a service-learning component requires a great deal of planning and collaboration between students, instructors, and administrators in organizations, and WPAs may question whether service projects are worth the taxing effort or even if such projects might actually hinder student achievement of intended learning outcomes. The research annotated below suggests that while service-learning projects are demanding, the benefits make the endeavor worthwhile. WPAs will find that it is possible to achieve learning outcomes in a course through careful planning and organization, although certain conditions must exist for students to achieve learning outcomes (Cushman, 2002; Hutchinson, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Shutz and Gere, 1998). To assist WPAs in the task of evaluating the options, benefits, and outcomes that can be realized through different approaches, resources that focus on specific approaches to service-learning projects along with the expected benefits or outcomes from each are included in this bibliography.

A number of books and articles provide guidance in developing service-learning courses and offering tools for assessing learning outcomes and student perceptions. For instance, Deans (2000) provides a theoretical groundwork for newcomers to service-learning by offering guidance on three paradigms of service-learning and the expected outcomes typically found in each venue. On the practical side, Watters and Ford (1995) offer a well-organized approach for tackling service projects by giving detailed instructions, forms, and student samples to help instructors organize, prepare, and assess service projects. Other authors describe their service projects and discuss the factors that lead to successful service-learning initiatives, differing outcomes that resulted from service-learning projects, and benefits and drawbacks from service-learning composition approaches. Finally, Bringle *et al.* help WPAs evaluate attributes in service-learning composition courses through the use of multiple-item scales.

As the sources in this bibliography suggest, the integration of service-learning with a composition program can be a positive experience for instructors and students. Nevertheless, more research should be conducted to measure the impact upon learning outcomes. Bringle *et al.* (2004) argue for incorporating well-constructed scales to evaluate programs, improve the practice of service-learning, and test theories; future research should focus on empirical studies that determine whether or not learning outcomes are consistently met better through a service-learning model; factors related to service-learning that have the greatest impact on student perceptions and quality of work; methods and procedures that facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes through service-learning initiatives; and longitudinal studies to determine if long-term effects persist from service-learning activities. More systematic qualitative and quantitative research (like that of Wurr 2002, annotated below) could build a stronger theoretical base for service-learning's position in composition studies, one that positions educators to make informed decisions in their practice and improve their understanding of the interaction between outcomes and service.

Adler-Kassner, Linda; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters

Service-learning and composition at the crossroads

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997),   1-17

> In this chapter, the authors discuss the demands and benefits of incorporating service-learning into composition courses. Challenging tasks in service-learning courses include forming relationships, developing projects with agencies, transporting students to outside locations, and coordinating academic and non-academic schedules. On the other hand, there are a number of benefits from integrating service-learning into composition courses:
>
> - Improves student understanding of education's relationship to outside communities
> - Motivates students
> - Helps instructors feel a greater sense of purpose and meaning
> - Enhances students' sense of responsibility and accountability
> - Makes concealing failure more difficult
> - Helps student transition to a fuller participant in a larger social world
> - Brings together individuals with common causes that foster communication and social bonds
> - Satisfies students while enhancing academic skills
> - Connects the college with the local community
> - Helps students gain a greater consciousness of their connected places in larger social systems
> - Offers students real rhetorical situations in which to work that include real tasks, real audiences, and real purposes for writing
> - Encourages students to form connections across various social boundaries
>
> However, despite the benefits of service-learning initiatives in composition programs, the authors state that improved understandings are needed regarding how ideologies connect

and affect the interactions between students, instructors, academic and nonacademic institutions, and community members.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, needs-analysis, outcomes, pedagogy, community, real-world, situational, crisis, change, future

Arca, Rosemary

Systems thinking, symbiosis, and service: The road to authority for basic writers

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), 133-142

Arca contends that basic writers begin their introduction to higher education with a diminished view of themselves and of the power they possess to effect change. According to Arca, basic writers often enter classrooms with no sense of authority in their lives, expression in written text, or participation in classroom discussions. Through her research and practice she has found that although most developmental programs do not incorporate service-learning, when community service writing becomes part of a basic writing course, it can improve basic writers' thinking, writing, and interaction with their communities. Throughout the essay she explains how she has incorporated service-learning in a basic writing course and provides examples of student responses. She has found that community service writing can help basic writers change their thinking, writing, and interaction with communities. From Arca's experiences with teaching community service writing, she has found that students write more complex and thoughtful papers and include more rich resources. Arca states that community service writing profoundly changes basic writers, helping them to appreciate their fundamental role in the system and the nature of their authority.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, community, critical-thinking, symbiosis, systemic, authority, basic, community, change, power

Bacon, Nora

Community service writing: Problems, challenges, questions

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), 19-28

Bacon describes both the positive outcomes and problems encountered in her community service writing program. She states the benefits of her program included the following:
- Writing was meaningful because there was a "real audience" and purpose
- The assignment exposed students to new people and environments
- The project gave students valuable information or insight into social issues
- Students took pride in their final projects
- The assignment lent itself to collaboration
- The assignment gave students a leg up in work on a research paper

- The writing made a genuine contribution to a community
- Students were highly motivated and thoroughly engaged in their writing

Bacon also candidly discusses the problems inherent in incorporating community service writing into a course. She found that this model can deny students the authenticity of their own opinions or voices to satisfy the expectations of an agency or a teacher, make it difficult for students to assume an agency's voice, and pose grading challenges since teachers are distanced from the rhetorical context. Bacon acknowledges that integrating community-based writing assignments can be complex and makes the following suggestions: help students accept the responsibility of writing for a community readership and multiple audiences, provide choices among community agencies, help staff members at agencies identify appropriate assignments, and develop context-sensitive criteria for evaluating students' work.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, community, real-world, situational, multi-discourse, voice, grade, choice, student-motivation, student-engagement, meaningfulness

Bacon, Nora

Building a swan's nest for instruction in rhetoric

College Composition and Communication 5.14 (2000), 589-609

Bacon describes the process by which "Nancy," a composition teacher at San Francisco State University, transformed her existing assumptions about what writers need to know and developed a new vision of writing instruction grounded in rhetorical theory. When Nancy incorporated community-based writing assignments the first time she taught the course, she found that her existing curriculum did not support students' transitions to the nonacademic settings where community-based writing is positioned. Students' comments about the course revealed their belief that the course's focus on structure was misguided, suggesting that students found the curriculum irrelevant to their community-based writing. Bacon explains how Nancy transformed her curriculum for the second semester to ensure that the course would not only provide general writing skills instruction, but that the course would also provide opportunities for analysis of rhetorical variation, especially in the context of situated community writing projects. This shift in curriculum resulted in positive student reactions. According to interviews, evaluation forms, reflective essays, and their general demeanor throughout the semester, students perceived the course as successful. Nancy reexamined her assumptions and developed a working theory of textual studies that led to a new curriculum where instruction was directed to the real needs of students writing in multiple discourse communities. In conclusion, to experience success in a community-based writing course, Bacon cautions instructors to reexamine their assumptions about what student writers need to know and ensure that students examine a wide range of texts and determine how text form corresponds to rhetorical function.

KEYWORDS: community-based, assignment, curriculum, rhetorical, gen-ed, practice, service-learning, San Francisco State University, audience, purpose, theory

Brack, Gay; Leanna Hall

Combining the classroom and the community: Service-learning in composition at Arizona State University

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), 143-152

> In an effort to overcome the "empty assignment syndrome" and assist a local school district, Arizona State University developed a service-learning composition course to address these concerns. This initiative partnered at-risk children with university students in composition courses to help the children succeed in school and enhance university students' development of academic skills and civic commitment. University students tutored at-risk children under the supervision of graduate intern students. For the composition component of the course, students completed five writing assignments based on topics related to the service-learning project and two longer research essays focused on the role of schools in children's development of self-esteem. Student reflection was accomplished through writing asynchronous posts where they shared mutual concerns, discussed practical matters, and worked on issues related to discipline, motivation, and self-esteem. Assessment of the project focused on four key areas:
> 1. Progress of children being tutored
> 2. Progress of university students and graduate interns
> 3. Undergraduate students' development as writers
> 4. Program effectiveness
>
> To assess these areas, portfolio systems tracked the progress of the children, undergraduate students, and interns. Brack and Hall found that university students benefited socially through their interactions with culturally diverse populations. In conclusion, they determined that their program created an environment that enhanced the learning of the community's children while provided university students with genuine and meaningful writing experiences.
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> KEYWORDS: student-engagement, researching, academy-workplace, problem-solving, internship, term-paper, tutoring, reflection, outcomes, practice

Bringle, Robert; Mindy Phillips; Michael Hudson

The Measure of Service Learning: Research Scales to Assess Student Experiences (Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association), 2004

> In the first three chapters, this resource provides a rationale for implementing service-learning in higher education classrooms, a primer on measurement theory, and justification for how scales can used for evaluating programs, improving the practice of service-learning, and testing theories. The second part of the book provides a range of

scales intended to measure motives and values, moral development, self and self-concept, student development, attitudes, and critical thinking. For each scale, there is a description of the construct that is measured, an explanation of the scale, and evidence regarding the scales' psychometric properties. Researchers in composition could benefit from the array of valid and reliable scales in this book to measure the processes and outcomes of students. By having a variety of constructs from which to choose, WPAs can select the scales best suited for their research interests.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogy, research-method, scientific, measurement, scale, program-validation, quantitative, attitudes, construct-validity

Cushman, Ellen

Sustainable service learning programs

College Composition and Communication 54.1 (2002), 40-65

Cushman elaborates on the crucial role of a professor in service-learning programs from the perspective of existing research on service-learning programs and her own data collected from her outreach initiative at the University of California, Berkley. She discusses the obstacles that hinder the sustainability of community literacy programs such as inappropriate methodology, lack of professor involvement on site, and poor integration of course goals and assignments. However, Cushman proposes that professors who go on site and conduct their research, instruction, and service in a community will help create more sustainable programs, contribute to the community's self-defined needs, and improve student learning. Cushman developed a program for sustainability by training students in sound methodology for primary research that included writing observations in field note style, obtaining literacy artifacts, and conducting interviews. Students were also taught how to use their primary research along with secondary research to write case studies about their work in the literacy program. Finally, Cushman employed an on-site researcher role where she accompanied students to the site and continually integrated the reading and writing tasks in the course by addressing problems as they arose. According to Cushman, research-based service-learning can be sustained through inquiry spurred by community concerns and guided in a large part by the partner's needs.

KEYWORDS: sustainability, needs-analysis, teacher-role, service-learning, consistency, research-methodology, community literacy, inquiry

Deans, Thomas; Zan Meyer-Gonclaves

Service-learning projects in composition and beyond

College Teaching 46.1 (1998), 12-15

The authors provided detailed steps of how they combined community service with an academic writing course. In these classes, students completed writing projects for

agencies after they had conducted research on the agency, interviewed stakeholders, and generated a project agreement that both parties approved. Deans and Meyer-Gonclaves believe that this model of instruction encourages the development of real-world writing, social awareness, and civic responsibility. These authors state that students learn to view writing as a way of acting in the world while meeting the needs of community agencies

KEYWORDS: service-learning, community service, real world, social-awareness, civic, responsibility, social action

Deans, Thomas

Writing partnerships: Service-learning in composition

Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (2000)

In Chapters One and Two, Deans incorporates the works of Dewey and Freire in order to lay the theoretical groundwork for the placement of service-learning in composition classrooms. In Chapters Three through Five, he uses a case study approach to analyze and compare the three main types of service-learning initiatives: writing *for* the community, writing *with* the community, and writing *about* the community. In each of these chapters, Deans discusses the curricular and pedagogical arrangements as it relates to rhetorical, critical, and composition theory. Chapter Six discusses the similarities and differences between the three types of service-learning in order to clarify the range and variation of community writing programs, which can help instructors make informed choices about pedagogy and curriculum. Deans then presents his own service-learning model that is a mixture of writing *about* the community and writing *for* the community. The book closes with a well-stocked appendix that includes samples of course materials and student work, a listing of courses and programs, and contact information for organizations and networks.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, community, real-world, extra-curricular, nonacademic, literacy, critical-pedagogy, FYC, sports management, community literacy center, intercultural, future, public service, WAC, assessment, reflection, multiliteracy

Dorman, Wade; Susann Dorman

Service-learning: Bridging the gap between the real world and composition class

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), 119-132

Dorman & Dorman describe three versions of service-learning writing courses and the outcomes produced from each. The first service-learning model wrote *about* the community, the second model wrote *for* the community, and the third model wrote for publication for a nonprofit group or cause. To evaluate effectiveness of the first model, Dorman and Dorman administered end-of-semester questionnaires where students

reported gains in life skills and civic responsibility. Using students' reflective journals and formal essays as evidence, the authors determined that student achievement of learning outcomes had occurred as evidenced by students' increased investments in their arguments, greater awareness of audience, the realities of the situation they were writing about, more thorough research, and use of real-life examples. In the second service-learning version, anonymous student responses revealed praise for their learning and some frustration with the difficulty of the projects. Dorman and Dorman rated the third version as a positive experience in terms of their objectives, citing student comments to verify their claims. According to Dorman and Dorman, in all three versions of the service-learning courses, students experienced increased opportunities to exercise autonomy as writers in response to real-world complexities, enhanced engagement, improved literacies, confidence in enacting change, and more connectedness to the learning process.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, community, real-world, practice, academy-workplace, outcomes, student-engagement, life-long, civic responsibility, academic-achievement, autonomy

Herzberg, Bruce

Community service and critical thinking

In Linda Adler-Kassner; Robert Crooks; Ann Watters (Eds.), *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition* (1997), 57-69

Herzberg details a description of a freshman composition course along with the outcomes that resulted from the service-learning experience and student research. He provides a rationale for including democracy and social justice in a composition course, setting the stage for the course's goals of requiring student investigation into the social and cultural reasons for illiteracy. Although Herzberg does not provide the process for evaluating the tutoring, he stated that tutoring appeared to be productive for learners at the shelter. Herzberg provides examples of student comments to substantiate his claims that his students' final papers revealed a growing sophistication about the social forces at work in the creation o illiteracy. Through his examination of students' final papers, he concludes that students gain an understanding of the way social institutions affect lives and develop a sense that responsibility for social justice includes, but also goes beyond, personal acts of charity.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, FYC, outcomes, critical-thinking, social-awareness, literacy, tutoring, illiteracy, social justice

Hutchinson, Mary

Living the rhetoric: Service-learning and increased value of social responsibility

Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture
05.3 (2005), 427-444

> Hutchinson conducted research in an advanced business writing course to determine if service-learning increases students' understanding of the community and their sense of civic and social responsibility. She employed service-learning to encourage students to experience "business" from a nonprofit viewpoint so they could gain insight on societal issues and civic engagement. She found that many students had difficulty grasping the significance of their work within the community. Hutchinson concluded that for service-learning to be successful, the following conditions must be present: service-learning must be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum; faculty must connect with the community to reinforce the service-learning model; and students must engage with the clients as well as the administrator in order to get a broad-based view of the agency, its mission, and its role in addressing community needs.
>
> KEYWORDS: theory, academic, discourse, service-learning, social responsibility, student-engagement, civic, rhetorical, real-world

Johnson, Karen Gabrielle

Bridging academic writing with service-learning: Measuring student perceptions and learning outcomes of an academic writing course [doctoral thesis]

Lynchburg, VA: Liberty University (2009)

> This researcher used empirical testing to determine if there were significant differences between students who completed a service-learning component and those who did not complete a service-learning component in the areas of student achievement of learning outcomes and perceptions of the course. Specifically, this study sought to empirically verify service-learning proponents' claims, generally based on anecdotal and qualitative evidence, that students in a service-learning course write higher quality papers and are more engaged, motivated, and satisfied when they complete a service-learning component. This study employed a quasi-experimental design using static group comparison to measure differences between the groups. Student perceptions of the course were measured by the Service-Learning Student Perceptions Likert Scale that demonstrated high reliability through Cronbach's alpha. To assess learning outcomes, students' academic papers were evaluated by the Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric, which was based on the national standards in the WPA Outcomes Statement. To compare the groups, *t*-tests for independent samples and Cohen's *d* were utilized to determine significant differences and the effect size. Results indicated significant differences in student perceptions and in the achievement of learning outcomes. Medium effect sizes were found in student perceptions and large effect sizes were demonstrated in

achievement of learning outcomes. These findings provide empirical evidence of the positive influence that a service-learning component can have on an academic writing course. Implications for practice included the following: service-learning helps students find appropriate, reasonable research topics that motivates them to conduct deeper, solid research; service-learning projects can deter students from simplistic topics due to authentic rhetorical situations found in the community; writing assignments need to be designed in ways that motivate students; service-learning assignments tend to curb plagiarism due to student interest in the topic and the design of writing assignments; and service-learning projects can help students effectively explore their majors. Johnson recommends more empirical research to determine whether learning outcomes are consistently better met through a service-learning model. Additionally, she recommends initiating longitudinal studies in order to explore residual long-term effects related to service-learning courses.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, academic, student-engagement, student-motivation, student-satisfaction, outcomes, quasi-experimental, research-design, contrast-group, data

McGarrell, Faith-Ann

Teacher success, assessment, and evaluation practices in service-learning composition courses [doctoral thesis]

Battle Creek, MI: Andrews University (2007)

McGarrell conducted research to explore the alignment between outcomes in a composition course and service. She sought to gain a better understanding of the compatibility between course outcomes, which are based on the WPA Outcomes Statement, and service outcomes in order to improve practice and convince others to adopt service-learning practices. To study teachers' perceptions of their success in aligning learning and service outcomes, she gathered data from interviews, surveys, and course documents. Her study revealed that a seamless integration of service with composition remains a challenge, but it is still sought after by practitioners. Respondents also reported that students' written reflections did not achieve the level of depth they desired, although instructors felt more successful in providing opportunities for oral reflection during class discussions. Finally, seamlessly integrating service-learning and composition depends on intentional connections between community partners, teachers, and students; however, in practice, this is difficult to achieve. Results of this study revealed that service outcomes and content outcomes were not evenly integrated, and one type of outcome tended to overshadow the other, revealing the challenge of aligning content outcomes with service. Nevertheless, McGarrell contends that alignment is possible through intentional planning and a shift in instructors' thinking about which composition outcomes could be achieved in one course. She suggests that sustainability of service-learning composition programs will be dependent upon the buy-in of program directors at the departmental levels, mentoring opportunities for new faculty and faculty new to service-learning pedagogy, and instructors' ability to integrate service into a course rather than employ a 'tack-on' approach.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, FYC, outcomes, WPA Outcomes Statement, data, teacher-opinion, survey, text-analysis, reflection, community, needs-analysis, program sustainability, faculty-mentoring

Schutz, Aaron; Anne Ruggles Gere

Service learning and English studies: Rethinking "public" service

College English 60:2 (1998), 129-149

Schutz and Gere argue for considering alternative forms of service-learning that do not require direct forms of service or "caring" to individuals outside the university. The authors discuss the limitations in Bruce Herzberg's tutoring model of service-learning and provide a different approach where more academic study and discourse took place. In this model, students chose a problem based in their community, wrote a paper arguing for a specific change to a real audience, and composed a paper that they would be willing to share with the intended audience. The authors contend that although a service to others is not directly given, it constitutes a service to others because students respond to a community need and address the issues in a public space. When service-learning initiatives are carefully constructed, Gere and Schutz assert that service-learning can fit well into English studies because it can bring activities from outside the academy into classroom discourse and mediate the relationships between these two different entities.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, department, social, tutoring, caring, Nel Noddings, practice, community, advanced, student-project, publishing, growth, private-public, argumentative, impact, English-studies

Watters, Ann; Marjorie Ford

A guide for change: Resources for implementing community service writing

New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995

This book serves as a guide for both instructors and students in service-learning composition courses. In Chapter One, Watters and Ford provide background information on the concept of service-learning through articles and their own interpretations of service-learning. Chapter Two supplies resources on carrying out a community service writing project in the form of logs, worksheets, guidelines, and examples. Chapter Three illustrates the full process undertaken for two types of completed community service writing projects with samples of proposals, journal entries, projects, and evaluations. In the fourth chapter, samples of research papers and writing projects are displayed, which include articles for newsletters and newspapers, fact sheets, handouts, reports, and brochures. Completed student writing projects offer readers samples of outcomes that have occurred in the author's courses in order to help readers envision the types of projects that can be undertaken in a service-learning course.

KEYWORDS: service-learning, resources, worksheet, log, sample, project, journal-writing, proposal-writing, evaluation, term-paper, article-writing, newsletter, newspaper, fact-sheet, report-writing, brochure-writing, handout, real-world, reflection, guidelines

Wurr, Adrian

Text-based measures of service-learning writing quality

Reflections: A Journal of Writing, Service-Learning, and Community Literacy 02.2 (2002), 41-56

Two groups of students in a service-learning course were compared to two groups who were not in a service-learning course in order to determine if service-learning impacted student writing in a first-year composition course. The second purpose of this study sought to investigate valid and reliable methods for describing student writing quality based on current linguistic and rhetorical theories. Wurr emphasizes persuasive writing since this form of writing is given precedence in many service-learning writing courses. The experimental group of students participated in a service-learning curricula where they read and wrote about issues related to the Southwest and lead small group discussions at local elementary schools. Holistic and analytic writing assessments were conducted by a team of independent evaluators using a five-point scale. Results from this study demonstrated that incorporating service-learning in composition improves student writing on holistic measures as well as analytic measures of rhetorical appeals, logic, coherence, and mechanics. Wurr also believes that this model of assessing growth in student writing is a viable model for measuring improvement.

KEYWORDS: text-analysis, persuasive, scale, assessment, service-learning, FYC, quality, holistic, analytic, data, linguistic, rhetorical appeal, logic, cohesion, MX, gain, contrast-group