FOLLOWING SERVICE LEARNING PARTICIPANTS OVER TIME: EVIDENCE OF LASTING IMPACT

Celeste Coleman
ccoleman@csusm.edu
California State University,
San Marcos
Outline

- What is service learning?
- Why service learning?
- Service learning at ALCI: A Case Study
  - Example assignments
- Research methods
- Findings
- Implications
- References
What is service learning?

“A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2011).
Why service learning?

**Sociocultural Considerations**

- Growing body of research shows importance of cultural interaction for international students (e.g. Elwell & Bean, 2001)

- Improves morale by putting students into meaningful social contact with local community members (Poyrazli & Maraj, 2007)

- Offers students a position of power that may be difficult to otherwise access in the US, allowing them to regain position as a contributing community member (Perren, 2013)
Why service learning?

Language Learning Considerations

- Promotes learner autonomy by building on students’ natural curiosity (Beames, Higgins, & Nicol, 2012)
- Brings to life social issues students hear about in other classes, increasing motivation (Perren, 2013)
- Increased opportunities to participate in negotiation of meaning (Askildson, Kelly, & Mick, 2013; Perren, 2013)
- Gets students out of comfort zone, increasing willingness to communicate in a variety of circumstances (Stewart, 2009)
Service Learning at ALCI: A Case Study

- **Background**
  - Division of Extended Learning
  - Serve newly-arrived international students developing English-language and academic skills to university level
    - Care taken to facilitate cultural integration
  - Students from wide variety of countries
  - Nearly all intend to pursue degree in the United States
  - 25 hours of courses per week in core skills of writing, grammar, speaking, listening, reading
  - Student-selected enrichment courses also offered
  - University-wide emphasis on service learning
Course Description

This course is designed to help you improve your English skills by interacting with native speakers through community service projects. Students will plan and carry out volunteer work with various organizations near the University. We will learn vocabulary and strategies for speaking and listening that will assist you in your work and help you to become more confident with your skills.
Service Learning at ALCI: A Case Study

- **Class Objectives**

  At the end of this course, students will be able to:
  - Plan and carry out a volunteer project
  - Successfully communicate with native English speakers in a variety of settings
You will receive a Pass or No Pass for your work in this class. You must receive a grade of 73% or higher to pass the class. Here is how your grade will be calculated:

- Class Participation …………………… 25%
- Project Participation………………… 25%
- Final Project………………………… 25%
- Homework…………………………… 25%
# September Service Learning Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juniper Village, 4-6</td>
<td>Senior Center, 11-1</td>
<td>Gardening, 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening, 8-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juniper Village, 4-6</td>
<td>Senior Center, 11-1</td>
<td>Nature Walk, 9-11 Water Quality, 12-2 River Cleanup, 9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening, 9-11 Bowling, 1:30-3:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juniper Village, 4-6</td>
<td>Senior Center, 11-1</td>
<td>Coastal Cleanup Day, 9-12 Food Bank Event, 7-11, 10-2, or 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening, 8-10 Bowling, 1:30-3:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Juniper Village, 4-6</td>
<td>Senior Center, 11-1</td>
<td>Beach Walk and Cleanup, 9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Public Lands Day, 9-12 Bowling, 1:30-3:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service Learning at ALCI: A Case Study

October

23: Volleyball: Volunteer coaches work under the direction of the head coach and assist with league play by coaching, scorekeeping and/or refereeing individuals with developmental disabilities. (15 minutes by car from CSUSM)

24: Juniper Village: 215 E. Washington Ave., Escondido. Spend time with seniors, chatting and playing games including dominos, Yahtzee, and Nintendo Wii. The seniors will teach you how to play! (15 minutes by car from CSUSM)

26: Clean the Bay Day: San Diego Coastkeeper is teaming up with Sea World Cares for the 2nd Mission Possible: Clean the Bay Day! Last year, 150 volunteers help clear over 450 pounds of trash. Join us this year on National Make a Difference Day to enjoy a day on Mission Bay and help keep it clean! Participants have the chance to win SeaWorld prizes and can enjoy lunch from Rubio's following the event. If you have a boat, bring it to join the on-water effort! (30 minutes by car from CSUSM)
Example assignment: Donation drive

- Students organized all aspects of a drive from start to finish
  - Brainstormed social problems they’d seen in their community
  - Summarized, presented newspaper articles about these issues
  - Found local charities devoted to helping with each issue, did background research
  - Contacted charities, interviewed coordinator/director
  - Class debated merits of each, voted on donation recipient
  - Created promotional posters and flyers; announced to other classes
  - Made weekly reminders
  - Counted and delivered donated goods
Example assignment: In-class discussion

- Students give weekly oral summaries of their work from the previous week
- Help each other to troubleshoot problems that were experienced
- Get ideas for next week
- Those who attended educational projects give a short informational presentation to their classmates
Example assignment: Written reflection

- Students complete weekly journal entries, reflecting on what they learned about American culture, themselves, English, etc.
  - Instructor responds with affirmations, advice, etc.
- Periodic anonymous surveys allow for unfiltered expression
- Articles for background information, comprehension and analysis questions
- Quizzes and tests on readings, presentations by other students
Research methods

- Action research
  
  “It is long past time to raise the profile of teachers’ experiential knowledge in the research literature, and it is the duty of classroom teachers to do this” (Stewart, 2013, p. 33).
Research methods

- Research question:
  “What are longer-term impacts of service learning on university IEP students?”

- Type of study
  - Qualitative
  - Longitudinal cohort study
  - Observational
Research methods

- Description of participants
  - Students took Leadership and Service Learning course in Fall 2013 as part of IEP curriculum

Composition of cohort (n=12)

- Japan
- China
- Saudi Arabia
- Sweden
- Uganda
- Germany
Research methods

- Study design
  - Students surveyed annually to obtain feedback on progress in variety of personal and professional areas
  - Initial survey completed on paper at conclusion of course
  - Subsequent surveys sent to students via Survey Monkey each fall
    - Personal email address
    - Social media
Research methods

- Survey design (cont.)
  - Four standard questions:
    - Are you likely to continue volunteering in the future? Why or why not? How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
    - Describe how comfortable you feel speaking English with native speakers. How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
    - Describe how connected you feel to your local community. How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
    - Do you see yourself as a leader? Why or why not? How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
  - Each question accompanied by space for free-form reflection
Research methods

- **Survey administered total of four times**
  - Initial survey given at conclusion of course in fall 2013
  - Subsequent surveys sent out each fall (2014, 2015, 2016)

![Bar chart showing number of responses over years 2013 to 2016.](chart.png)
Analysis

- Thematic analysis: What trends emerge in relation to each question?
Findings

- Question 1: Are you likely to continue volunteering in the future? Why or why not? How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?

![Graph showing the trend of volunteering from 2013 to 2016. The graph indicates an increase in the likelihood of continuing to volunteer, with a slight plateau around 2015 and a slight decrease after that. The line is labeled 'I am still volunteering.'
Findings

- "I never thought about volunteering before I entered that class. But the seniors were very friendly and we could have good conversation there. They are like my grandparents in a new country. I go there although the school is closed" (2013).

- "Some of my classes in the university have required service learning. Because I already did that at ALCI, I knew what I should do" (2015).
Findings

- **Question 2:** Describe how comfortable you feel speaking English with native speakers. How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
Findings

Service learning helps me find opportunities to interact with native speakers.
Findings

- “I wouldn’t think about meeting an American soldier, but I did because of this class. We worked at the food bank together each week, and he made me think about many things” (2013).
- “I didn’t know how it can be to talk to some Americans that I never met before. But they were helpful to me. If I don’t understand, I can ask that” (2015).
Question 3: Describe how connected you feel to your local community. How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?
Findings

- “I did go to some places that I could not find alone. For example, I worked with the special needs in basketball” (2013).
- “I feel ok to know some problems here. My hometown has some problems too, and maybe I know something so I can help here” (2015).
Findings

Question 4: Do you see yourself as a leader? Why or why not? How does this compare with how you felt one year ago?

![Graph showing the trend of seeing oneself as a leader from 2013 to 2016]

- I see myself as a leader.
Findings

- “We learned that the leader is every day, like the lali pop. So I help my friends to feel better when they sad” (2013).
- “Last year, I did TLC. This helped me have more volunteering and continue to improve my leader skills” (2016).
Implications

- **Trends**
  
  Students felt that all aspects of their proficiency and cultural awareness increased after three years. Students reported that they were…
  
  - …more likely to continue volunteering.
  - …better able to find opportunities to interact with native speakers and more comfortable doing so.
  - …more connected to the local community.
  - …more likely to view themselves as leaders.
Implications

- Weaknesses
  - Attrition
  - Participants gave less written feedback in subsequent years
  - Results not generalizable
    - Very small sample size
    - Study design (not empirical)
  - Confounding variables
Implications

- Areas for future research
  - Larger sample size representative of student population
  - Compare students who took service learning with those who did not
  - Examine what kinds of students enroll in service learning courses
    - Can later success be attributed to taking the course, or is it something in their personality?
    - Control for confounding variables
References

Thank you! 😊