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Mutually Beneficial Service Learning: Language Teacher Candidates in a Local Community Center

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Abstract

This article reports on a project designed to provide mutually beneficial solutions to challenges faced by world language teacher candidates, their preparation program, and a local community center. The project provided opportunities for teacher candidates enrolled in a world language (WL) teacher education course to complete clinical experiences through a service learning experience at the center. Teaching Spanish to children from low-income families provided candidates valuable classroom experiences with younger learners. This article explores benefits and challenges of WL teacher candidates teaching Spanish in a local community center.

Background

A number of challenges face world language (WL) teacher candidates as they prepare to student teach and graduate. They may do little teaching, too often relegated to observe from the back of the room during pre-student teaching practicum experiences. Additionally, they often struggle to meet the Advanced-Low proficiency on an Oral Proficiency Interview required by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)/National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) *Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers* (2002). Furthermore, language teacher preparation programs can find it challenging to expose their teacher candidates to high quality elementary and secondary school settings prior to student teaching. Corresponding to the challenges outlined here and presented as a response to these challenges, local community centers struggle at times to provide high quality programs for youth and find volunteers who are able to communicate with parents who may not speak English.

The project described in this article sought to provide mutually beneficial solutions to the aforementioned concerns through a service-learning project. This research was conducted in the context of a WL teacher education course, in which teacher candidates were enrolled and during which they taught Spanish to K-4th graders at a community center, prior to their 10-week student teaching experience. In this article the author describes a pilot study that explores the benefits and challenges related to WL teacher candidates teaching Spanish in a local community center.

Literature Review

There exists a vast literature documenting the benefits and challenges of service learning related to language acquisition, particularly among Spanish students at the postsecondary level (Abbott & Lear, 2010; Caldwell, 2007; Hellebrandt, 2006; Lear & Abbott, 2009; Marks, 2008; Sanders, 2005; Zapata, 2011). Less robust is the literature related to WL teacher preparation and service learning. With the exception of Gascoigne Lally (2001) and Tilley-Lubbs (2004), few have explored the potentially fruitful connections between WL teacher preparation programs and the larger community.

Various definitions of service learning exist, but this author will use Jacoby's (1996) definition of service learning as a "form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (p. 5). When done well, service-learning projects can create "mutually beneficial relationships" among universities, students, and community partners (Lear & Abbott, 2009, p. 313). While service learning connects the subject matter under study, the student, and the outside world (Lisman, 1998), it "is not and cannot be simple charity" (Gascoigne Lally, 2001, p. 54). Rather, there must be a benefit to the student through additional engagement with the subject matter.

The *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st century*'s (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006) Communities standard encourages language instructors to construct learning events in which students "use the language both within and beyond the school setting" and "show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment" (p. 64). Polansky (2004) emphasized the Communities aspect of service learning through her description of a course called *Tutoring for Community Outreach*, in which undergraduates studying WLs tutored K-12 students in local schools. Positive impact on the part of both populations was documented, with undergraduates reaping the "rewards of helping others, the advantages of working off campus, [and] the joy of interacting with energetic, smiling children," among others (Polansky, 2004, p. 371-372). Students at the local schools enjoyed the extra attention afforded by undergraduates in the classroom, along with the personal relationships they established with older role models.

Many other advantages can present themselves to university students and those they serve. For those in the community, there is the obvious service provided and the benefits those services bring about (Gascoigne Lally, 2001). To universities, service learning may bridge the "town/gown gap" (Lisman, 1999, p. 41) by having students provide assistance to the community that would otherwise not be provided. Additionally, university students can develop their human empathy and increase tolerance of others (Guarassi & Mapstone, 1998). Engagement with the community can also help develop skills central to working with others (Gascoigne Lally, 2001), along with providing connections for an otherwise disconnected group (Claus & Ogden, 1999).

Challenges also exist when carrying out service learning projects. For example, mandatory service learning may be considered a drain on resources or against the constitutional rights of students required to participate in the service-learning proj-

ect (Yates & Youniss, 1999). Care must be taken too to avoid parachuting into a setting and attempting to treat societal symptoms, without working to solve the larger social problems themselves (Lisman, 1999). Furthermore, "using the community as a laboratory" (Lisman, 1998, p. 30) can work against the objectives of the service learning project, exposing community members to subpar versions of critical services. Additionally, measuring service learning program outcomes is difficult, with cause-effect relationships rarely found (Schine, 1999).

Service learning can, however, provide a powerful and practical means for WL teacher preparation programs to prepare teacher candidates to teach in K-12 settings. Practical teaching experiences can be the focus of any service-learning project for teacher candidates. In order to be called *service learning*, as opposed to *service*, the student experience must relate directly to course objectives (Jacoby, 1996). That is, language teacher candidates must carry out activities that benefit themselves as well as the community partners, specifically enhancing their professional development.

Among other benefits, a service-learning project can help teacher candidates get to know students like those they will teach during their career. Among their suggestions for the future, Bott-VanHouten, Hoyt-Oukada, and Scow (2003) recommend that "an orientation to service learning should be considered for inclusion in foreign language teacher preparation programs, as working in the community with diverse groups supports the national student standards goal of 'communities' and builds cultural competence" (p. 6). Tilley-Lubbs (2004) highlighted service-learning projects as a "means of giving pre-service teachers a firsthand understanding of the community and its culture" (p. 132). That focus on the local community helps teacher candidates develop a deeper connection to an environment that they might otherwise not experience during their undergraduate studies.

Teacher candidates can acquire real-time teaching experiences that assist in their professional development. Gascoigne Lally (2001) pointed out that in service-learning experiences teacher candidates can try out and refine their own teaching with real children, as an advantageous supplement to the laboratory-style microteaching activities with their peers. Service-learning opportunities can also help teacher candidates transition more easily from the role of student to that of teacher (Gascoigne Lally, 2001), a process that can be challenging for language teacher candidates (Vélez-Renden, 2006), as they initially focus on themselves and their own performance instead of on student learning.

Language proficiency development among WL teacher candidates can also be challenging, particularly in ACTFL/NCATE accredited programs that required Advanced-Low oral proficiency (ACTFL/NCATE, 2002). Fraga-Cañadas (2010) explains that too often WL teacher preparation programs do little to help teacher candidates develop and maintain the necessary oral proficiency in the target language to meet that goal. Service learning can assist WL teacher candidates in making authentic connections where they use the target language in purposeful ways with community members, particularly parents with whom they need practice communicating in meaningful ways.

Pedagogical, humanistic, and linguistic benefits are possible for WL teacher candidates as they carry out a service-learning project. Challenges still arise, however. This research, financially supported by Illinois State University's Scholarship

of Teaching and Learning civic engagement/service learning grant, explored both the benefits and the challenges of a service-learning project to provide K-4th graders Spanish instruction at a local community center. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What benefits, if any, do WL teacher candidates gain from teaching Spanish to K-4th grade children at a local community center as a service-learning project?

2. What challenges, if any, present themselves to WL teacher candidates during that experience?

Methods

Settings

The first of two settings in which this study takes place is Illinois State University, located in Normal, IL. Approximately 20,000 students attend Illinois State University, among whom approximately 5,000 are teacher candidates (Illinois State University, 2013). The WL teacher preparation program is housed within the College of Arts and Science's Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures with approximately 45% of graduates majoring in teacher education. At the time of this study, there were 130 teacher candidates in the program, ranging from freshmen to student teachers, with 22 French, nine German, and 99 Spanish teacher candidates. There are approximately 20 student teachers from the department every year. The students in the department have a long history of service learning, including Spanish club service learning trips to Costa Rica and Honduras, along with acting as spontaneous interpreters for parent-teacher conferences in the Chicago Public Schools.

The French, German, and Spanish teacher education sequence includes several general pedagogy courses in the College of Education, as well as six WL-specific methods credits. Those six credits are divided between a four-credit course entitled *Principles of Foreign Language Learning* and the two-credit *Foreign Language Teaching in the K-12 Setting*. The first course, which is more theoretical in nature, takes place during the entire fall semester with an Intermediate-High oral proficiency prerequisite and 35 clinical hours as part of the course. The more practical second course requires 12 clinical hours and takes place the first five weeks of the spring semester, after which many teacher candidates carry out 10 weeks of student teaching, which requires Advanced-Low oral proficiency. Most clinical hours and student teaching experiences take place in middle and/or high school settings. Approximately 22 to 26 teacher candidates enroll in each of these two courses each year, but several teacher candidates who take the methods classes are not able to proceed to student teaching because they cannot demonstrate Advanced-Low oral proficiency. Most of those who are not able to complete the teacher education sequence choose to graduate with a Spanish major instead of the major in Spanish Teacher Education. The K-12 WL teacher education program is currently in the midst of implementing curricular changes, with a movement toward integrating theory and practice during coursework and helping teacher candidates achieve Advanced-Low proficiency.

The WL teacher candidates at Illinois State University have several needs that this project attempted to address. First of all, in order to advance to student teaching,

an Advanced-Low oral proficiency is required of candidates. Additionally, a number of clinical hours must be completed before student teaching, with half of those hours completed in diverse settings. Further, candidates need a means to connect language acquisition theory to language teaching practice, along with practice communicating with families. Finally, in Illinois, WL teachers obtain a professional educator license endorsed in their language for grades K-12, but there is a paucity of local K-6 programs in the area. Therefore, WL teacher candidates typically lack experiences teaching K-6 learners.

Less than two miles from the Illinois State University campus is the UNITY Community Center (UCC), which is a community organization that serves local families with limited resources, some of whom do not speak English as a first language, and is supervised by monolingual program directors. UCC is a multicultural Out of School Time center that provides programming for youth and offers a positive, structured learning environment for those between five and 18 years of age (UCC, 2013). The community center serves 45 students, a growing number of whom are from French- or Spanish-speaking immigrant families. While many Illinois State University teacher candidates volunteer at this community center, there are few who are fluent in a language other than English. Speaking to non-English-speaking monolingual parents and children new to the United States can be difficult for program directors because they too are monolingual, with English as their only language. UCC's needs include volunteers, interpreters of Spanish and French, and role models for K-12 students, along with many other resources that fall outside the parameters of this project.

UCC also needs quality programming for their students who are at the center up to four hours each of five afternoons per week. None of the schools in which students are enrolled has world languages as part of their curriculum. This project was designed to give UCC students a language learning experience they might not otherwise have. Although not an ideal setting or schedule for develop learners' second language proficiency, this project attempts to introduce young learners to a new facet of their home language or a new language altogether.

In the spring of 2011, the UCC directors and the researcher initiated a conversation that led to collaboration on the present project. Collaboration among all parties, with respective needs clearly articulated, as an imperative component in effective service-learning projects, is corroborated in the literature (Gascoigne Lally, 2001; Hellebrandt & Wurr, 2007). During that initial conversation, UCC directors and the researcher discussed ways of addressing each party's challenges. The researcher realized the potential for Illinois State University teacher candidates to fill existing linguistic gaps, provide mentorship to K-12 students, and engage in an authentic teaching experience at UCC. The UCC directors recognized the potential for UCC families served to be better able to communicate with UCC staff, to learn more rapidly about the American educational system, and to continue the children's literacy development in the family's first language while learning English.

Intervention

Based on initial conversations with UCC directors, the researcher first encouraged WL teacher candidates in the fall of 2011 to participate in regular programming

at UCC. Such activities included one-on-one tutoring, 4-H, dance and gardening activities among others. Teacher candidates completed clinical hour course requirements, although no direct supervision from the methods instructor was provided. Later, in the spring of 2012, this pilot service-learning program to teach K-4th graders basic Spanish was implemented once a week for seven weeks, with methods-instructor supervision. Again, in the fall of 2012 WL teacher candidates were encouraged to complete clinical hours at UCC, and in the spring of 2013, seven weeks of Spanish instruction were offered to K-4th grade students with instructor supervision.

The decision to teach Spanish to the children at the UCC was based on a number of factors. First, approximately 85% of the teacher candidates taking the methods class are Spanish teacher education majors. As this was a pilot project, the researcher thought it best to begin modestly and add French and German to the UCC program later. Some UCC students were from Spanish-speaking homes, in which case teacher candidates had to provide differentiated activities for native speakers, a teaching opportunity not often encountered until student teaching.

During the first week of Spanish instruction, the methods instructor, the researcher of this study, modeled teaching that included nearly exclusive use of the target language and laid the foundation for the following six weeks of instruction. This modeling was deemed necessary because many of the teacher candidates did not have previous experience teaching such young learners, although they were familiar with language acquisition, general pedagogy, and child development. Most of teacher candidates' prior clinical hours were completed in local middle or high school classrooms.

For each of the following six weeks, three different Spanish teacher candidates co-taught 50 minutes of beginning Spanish lessons each week, based on a co-designed curriculum developed by the methods instructor and the teacher candidates during the fall of 2011. Having the opportunity to implement curriculum plans – designed during a previous methods course – in an authentic teaching context, represents a pedagogical endeavor that the teacher candidates typically did not encounter in their teacher education sequence. Spanish classes were given in an open area of the community center with six round tables that fit six to eight young students each. Young learners were seated at the tables with one teacher candidate who helped them carry out the activities while the three other teacher candidates co-taught. Any remaining teacher candidates sat on the floor around the perimeter of the teaching area. The only exception was the first week of the first year when the young learners seemed uncomfortable with so many adults standing around the back of their class.

Prior to participating in UCC activities and as preparation for the service learning experience, teacher candidates completed a mandatory 60-minute training session carried out by UCC directors during regular class time of the methods course, as well as a required three and a half hour poverty simulation workshop entitled *Living in the State of Poverty* outside of class time. That simulation was made available by the University of Illinois Extension-McLean County and addressed the challenges of the working poor and those in severe poverty (University of Illinois Board of Trustees, 2011). If teacher candidate schedules could not accommodate the simulation outside of class, they were permitted to engage in another online poverty simulation.

To defer program start-up costs, the researcher applied for and was awarded

an Illinois State University Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Civic Engagement/ Service Learning Small Grant, which was used to purchase a collection of age-appropriate, grade-level books on K-12 curricular topics in Spanish, French, and German for the UCC library. Book topics included science, fiction, music, and others themes connected to local schools' curricula for grades K-4. Also purchased were other miscellaneous items used during UCC teaching sessions, such as large post it notes, markers, and name tags.

Participants

Eight of 18 (44%) WL teacher candidates agreed to participate during the 2011-2012 academic year and seven of 24 (29%) participated during the 2012-2013 academic year. Of those 15 participants, three were male and 12 were female. All participants were Spanish teacher candidates and achieved at least an Intermediate-High level of oral proficiency in the target language by the beginning of the WL methods sequence. All participants were between 21 and 26 years of age.

Data Sources and Analysis

Following Institution Review Board approval in September 2011, data were collected from established assignments for the two required WL methods courses and included three drafts of a philosophy of teaching statements, seven brief reflective essays posted to the course wiki, and one written reflection on the 50-minute teaching experience at UCC. Additional data included the instructor's classroom observation notes and field notes related to teacher candidates' UCC lessons, as well as written and oral communication with UCC directors.

Qualitative analyses were deemed to be the most appropriate means of answering the research questions posed. Quantitative measurement was not used given the small number of participants, the nature of research questions, and the exploratory nature of the study. Both the researcher and a graduate assistant analyzed the data using recursive analysis to detect repeating patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Given their shared areas of interest and research specialties, a high inter-rater reliability between investigators was established.

Results

With respect to the first research question about the benefits, if any, WL teacher candidates gained from teaching Spanish to K-4th graders at a local community center, analysis of various candidate assignments collected as data sources revealed a number of benefits to teacher candidates. Stated benefits included an increased connection to the wider community, enhanced empathy and compassion, and additional practical experiences with classroom management and young language learners.

First, 80% (*n* = 12) participants mentioned in at least one of their written assignments the importance of connecting to the community outside of their own comfort zone. Many participants referenced their own past educational experiences and how they differed culturally and socioeconomically from those of the UCC students. One female participant addressed the topic of communities in a reflection of teaching wiki entry:

When I was in high school and learning Spanish, I had absolutely no

> experience with the Spanish-speaking community in my area. I live in a 90% Caucasian community and our largest minority is Arabic speakers, and I was a bit sheltered, and I do not want the same thing for my children or my students. There is a world out there, and we need to explore it (Participant 3).

Sixty-six percent (n = 10) of the participants also addressed the goals of the Communities standard and their desired fulfillment of that standard in their own instruction.

A second benefit to WL teacher candidates was enhanced empathy and compassion, with all 15 participants mentioning that topic in at least one assignment. One male participant in the final draft of his philosophy of teaching statement stated the following:

> I want to instill a more humanistic view of the world in my students through the use of culture and communication. I would like to inspire them to advocate for the needs and concerns of the people whose cultures and languages my students are learning about (Participant 15).

A similar realization that teaching is a human endeavor was at the center of five participants' philosophy of teaching statements.

Practical experiences with young learners were mentioned by 87% of participants (*n* = 13) in their reflection wiki entries. Seventy-seven percent of the participants who highlighted these practical experiences shared (*n* = 10) that they had no previous experience with K-6 WL learners. Sixty percent (*n* = 9) mentioned that they had no experiences with any younger learners in a classroom setting. All 15 participants expressed surprise at the level of energy exhibited by the younger learners and the classroom management challenges that resulted.

Gaining classroom management experience was another benefit pointed out by participants, with 67% (*n* = 10) mentioning it in at least one assignment. Eight of those ten mentioned that the service-learning experience allowed them to try out the classroom management strategies that they were learning in their methods course. Two of those 10 mentioned that while they had learned about classroom management in education courses, they never had the chance apply classroom management techniques themselves. While the service-learning experience featured the presence of many more adults than a normal classroom, participants were afforded some opportunity to assist in classroom management, either as the lead teacher or as a helper with students in small groups. Participants redirected student attention to the lesson at hand, assisted students as they completed activities, and quieted students who were disruptive during the lesson.

Turning to the second research question that was concerned with the challenges that presented themselves to WL candidates as they worked with a local community center teaching Spanish to K-4th graders, several participants mentioned the logistics of carrying out lessons at UCC. First, slightly more than half (*n* = 8) of the participants mentioned in at least one assignment the difficulty of getting to and from UCC and campus two miles away. Forty-six percent (*n* = 7) mentioned in at least one assignment the difficulty of effectively collaboratively implementing the UCC behavior management system across a number of adults. Additionally, 67% (*n* = 10) mentioned the difficulty of learning UCC students' names, particularly because the teacher candidate group was only there once a week for seven weeks.

Further challenges were noted by the researcher and UCC directors. One of the most challenging aspects of this service learning project was the WL teacher candidate to UCC student ratio, with teacher candidates occasionally outnumbering UCC students two to one, with 24 teacher candidates and 12 K-4 students. Another challenge concerned the difficulty of communication among stakeholders, particularly considering that the program described here is one of 17 programs that take place at the UCC. Follow-up discussions with community center directors, intended to make the experience better for both teacher candidates and those served by the center, were difficult to schedule in person and most took place via email. In one of the email exchanges the first year, one UCC director disclosed that "overall, we would admit that there are a lot of details to be ironed out as to how we can make this work better" (R. Young, personal communication, March 1, 2012). He went on to say that "We have seen a lot of disconnect and confusion and want to do whatever we can to amend those issues" (R. Young, personal communication, March 1, 2012). By the second year, many of the issues meriting attention were greatly improved, particularly related to teacher candidate concerns about classroom management vis-à-vis UCC expectations for student behavior and how to address such challenges in mutually satisfying ways.

Although it was anticipated that qualitative data sources would point to participation in the K-4th grade Spanish program as providing the benefit of bolstering teacher candidates' language skills, written data assignments did not elicit any mention of candidates' own linguistic development. Of the 15 participants, 80% ($n = 12$) already had demonstrated Advanced-Low oral proficiency and the remaining three had Intermediate-High oral proficiency, but none of these latter completed another Oral Proficiency Interview before the end of the seven-week-long program.

As outlined earlier, a number of benefits and challenges exist when implementing a service-learning project for WL teacher candidates. The humanistic, community-based, and classroom management benefits were slightly offset by logistical challenges and classroom management challenges, neither of which proved insurmountable.

Discussion

The WL teacher preparation program and local community organization described here developed a "mutually beneficial relationship" (Lear & Abbott, 2009, p. 313). Relatively modest challenges arose, but the experience ultimately offered active learning situations that enhanced "work readiness skills" (Gascoigne Lally, 2001, p. 55) to teacher candidates, while engaging with real K-4th grade language learners. Results indicated that benefits to teacher candidates, however, were less linguistic in nature than anticipated. While designed with the intent to heed Fraga-Cañadas' (2010) call to help teacher candidates develop their language skills through service learning, this project did not prove to afford those opportunities. Although unlike the linguistic benefits described by Lear and Abbott (2009), this study's participants did however develop valuable pedagogic skills and humanistic attitudes.

Teacher candidates who participated in this study were able to apply language teaching practices under study in their methods class while working with K-4th grade learners. Drawing on Gascoigne Lally's (2001) work, this project provided teacher

candidates practical experiences with young, energetic learners. Reinforcing course objectives differentiates service learning from service (Lisman, 1998), and teaching at the community center provided participants a way to experience the successes and disappointments of an authentic teaching environment. Teacher candidates were able to take on what Reagan and Osborn (2002, p. 21) called the *role of teacher as decision-maker*, albeit in a limited time frame, and develop their knowledge of learners.

Classroom management was a topic of particular focus for the teacher candidates in this study, with benefits and struggles found. The high energy levels of the young learners surprised and challenged participants. All too frequently, language teacher candidates are disconnected from real language learners, unable to connect what they are learning in language pedagogy classes to subsequent language learning situations. Additionally, teacher candidates often find it difficult to transition from their student/observer role to their teacher/leader role (Gascoigne Lally, 2001). The sheer amount of classroom commotion can stun new teachers who may able to pay attention to only one stimulus at a time (e.g., helping an individual student or erasing the board with back to the class and not seeing other students' actions). With few teacher candidates managing an authentic classroom before student teaching, these individuals can find it overwhelming when they finally get the chance. The transition from student to teacher can be difficult (Gascoigne Lally, 2001) and participants were able to enact their own authority with the support of the course instructor and UCC directors. While several participants mentioned the positive aspects of learning to manage a classroom of young learners, dissonance between participants' classroom management techniques and the student behavior plan of the community center proved to be a challenge. Continued communication with UCC directors and clarification of student behavior expectations will undoubtedly help in the future, and other WL teacher education programs would be wise to consider existing behavior management practices at the setting while preparing for a service-learning project like the one described above.

The Communities standard (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006) and connecting to members of the local community served emerged as benefits to teacher candidates. The *firsthand understanding* (Tilley-Lubbs, 2004) of the local community helps a teacher better meet the needs of the students in front of her. Teacher candidates were able to get to know students from backgrounds different from their own, an important part of learning to teach (Bott-VanHouten, Hoyt-Oukada, & Scow, 2003), as part of the described field experience. The enhanced cultural competence and sensitivity gained by participants were evident and allowed teacher candidates to reflect on their own role within and beyond the classroom (Bott-VanHouten, Hoyt-Oukada, & Scow, 2003).

Humanistic benefits, such as empathy and compassion, are frequently mentioned as benefits to service-learning project participants (Guarassi & Mapstone, 1998; Jacoby, 1996). This study is no different with all participants highlighting those attributes in at least one data source. Of course, teaching is a humanistic endeavor itself, so this result may not be surprising. Having students reflect on the service-learning experience, however, allowed all participants to articulate those attributes while engaging in what Reagan and Osborn (2002) call "reflection-on-practice" (p. 22) or the "retrospective reflection on what took place, both positive and negative,

during the classroom teaching event" (p. 23).

As their titles suggest, the WL methods courses at Illinois State University were originally developed with a distinction between theory and practice, with theory assumed to inform later practice. Previous student teacher observations and existing literature (Hellebrandt & Wurr, 2007; Gascoigne Lally, 2001) suggest that enforcing the paradigm of theory's superiority over practice leads to less effective language teacher learning and behaviors. With careful planning and open, ongoing communication, meaningful service-learning experiences can enhance WL teacher candidates' pedagogical development with opportunities for application of principles learned in the methods class. This article has reviewed some of the benefits and challenges faced by stakeholders of a Spanish teaching program for K-4th graders at a local community center, providing a promising service-learning model for other WL teacher education programs.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is not without its limitations. First, the researcher was also the methods instructor who oversaw implementation of the service-learning project. Her perceptions may have been affected by carrying out these two roles simultaneously. Additionally, this study did not address the outcomes of the service-learning project from the perspective of the students they served. Further, data were limited to existing methods course assignments because teacher candidates' schedules did not allow for follow-up interviews to be carried out. Pre-planning with candidates' schedules in mind would facilitate the inclusion of follow-up interviews. Interview data would support triangulation of results and enrich the findings.

In the future, it would be interesting to investigate and measure the outcomes of this type of service-learning project. Investigation of subsequent WL teacher candidate performance to explore pedagogical practices that may have been influenced by involvement with the UCC program and its students would add much to the existing literature on service learning in WL teacher preparation programs. Measurement of K-4th grade student learning outcomes, including possible gains in their Spanish competencies, could also be examined to investigate possible correlations to the instruction delivered via the university / community center partnership.

This project has already contributed to a restructuring of the existing Illinois State University WL teacher education program. For example, the two courses listed above have been more evenly divided with each contributing three credits to the WL teacher preparation curriculum. Each of those methods courses are also offered every semester, beginning in the fall of 2013, and 14 weeks of UCC programming will be carried out as an integral part of the practical course. For example, once a week during the semester, WL teacher candidates will teach 45-minute Spanish lessons at UCC and then immediately debrief with classmates, the methods instructor/investigator, and UCC directors to maximize impact of the teaching experience. It is anticipated that WL teacher candidates, UCC students and directors will therefore more effectively have their needs met. Finally, in the future, it is expected that this program will be expanded to include French for both native speakers and non-native speakers of French at UCC.

Service learning for WL teacher candidates is a fertile area of investigation,

and this article has taken initial steps to examine the benefits and challenges to teacher candidates participating in a service learning project. Much remains to be done, however. WL teacher education program directors and methods instructors may find that service-learning projects can help WL teacher candidates gain some "real world" experience in a less formal teaching environment, while also providing needed assistance in the community.

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