

Chapter 9

Service Learning in the Sullivan Literacy Center

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Abstract The preservice teacher candidates (PTCs) in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Education at Valdosta State University (VSU) participate in three SERVICE LEARNING experiences during their first, second, and third professional semesters which occur prior to their full-time student teaching semester. The back-to-back consecutive SERVICE LEARNING experiences specifically help the PTCs apply what they are learning in their literacy methods courses with the local community children who are struggling/reluctant readers and writers. In this chapter, we will be following one cohort of PTCs' (n = 98) journey throughout their SERVICE LEARNING experiences over the three semesters. Qualitative data consists of the PTCs' field reflections and course evaluations, as well as parent exit surveys regarding program quality and effectiveness for their child's specific literacy needs. Quantitative data consists of the PTCs' scores on their literacy lessons and literacy assessment data. These SERVICE LEARNING experiences are meaningful, relevant, and purposeful for these VSU PTCs.

Keywords Service learning • Teacher education • One-on-one literacy instruction • Struggling/reluctant readers and writers

The preservice teacher candidates nervously stood in the entrance of the Sullivan Literacy Center holding their signs up high while anxiously awaiting the arrival of their new “study buddy” they were going to tutor throughout the semester.

Flashback to the week prior to the big “meet-and-greet”—the preservice teacher candidates were instructed by their professor to create a sign with their “study buddy’s” name on it so their buddy could easily find them as they entered the building on the first day of tutoring. Their professor stated, “It will be like at the airport when you are meeting someone for the first time as they get off of the plane. How do they find you? They look for their name. This is the same thing. The children will be looking for their names.” The preservice teacher candidates excitedly created

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127

signs that were large, colorful, and creative in order to showcase their new study buddy's name as well as serve as an icebreaker in those first few awkward meet-and-greet minutes. It seemed to become a creativity competition among the preservice teacher candidates as to who could have the biggest, most creative sign. They clearly wanted to impress their soon-to-be "study buddy."

Flash forward—the scene was like Christmas morning with all the glitter, sparkles, and vibrant colors that adorned the preservice teacher candidates' name signs. The anticipation and anxiety were building as the preservice teacher candidates could see the children entering the doors of the Sullivan Literacy Center. The big question was, "Who is my study buddy?" Similarly, the children had looks of anticipation and anxiety on their faces because they were also asking the question, "Who is my study buddy?" As the children began to find their names, the anxiety in the room began to dissipate while the excitement and enthusiasm began to ensue as the preservice teacher candidates walked their new "study buddy" to their tutoring room and proudly posted their study buddy's name sign on their tutoring door. The preservice teacher candidates' confidence level began to rise as they started their interest inventories with their study buddies, followed by a reading attitude survey and letter identification task. The preservice teacher candidates spent several weeks planning and preparing for this very moment, and it was better than expected. This was the beginning of a new learning experience for both the preservice teacher candidates and their study buddies. One preservice teacher candidate made the comment at the end of the semester, "Reflecting upon the improvements that my study buddy has made, I can rightfully say that the literacy skills I learned and used with her helped. She enjoyed learning and I enjoyed teaching her."

Introduction

Service learning goes beyond Dewey's (1938) foundational notion of "learning by doing" because learning by doing does not fully capture the essence of the actual service involved. Service learning encapsulates a more humanistic quality of learning, in that the individuals involved in the learning are participating in experiences that are not contrived, but instead are genuine and warranted by a realistic need for the specified service. As a result, service learning can be a powerful instructional approach in teacher education.

Sigmon (1996) operationalized the different degrees of service learning into four categories: service-LEARNING where the learning outcomes take priority over the service, SERVICE-learning where the service outcomes take priority over the learning, service learning where the service goals and learning goals are disconnected goals, and SERVICE LEARNING. In SERVICE LEARNING, the service outcomes and learning outcomes are of equal priority for all participants. Preservice teacher candidates (PTCs) have an awesome opportunity to apply what they are learning in their teacher education classes with the priority agenda of purposefully SERVING

the local community children while LEARNING their academic coursework at the same time. There is also a potential secondary underlying positive outcome that these same PTCs will be inspired by their SERVICE LEARNING experience enough to want to continue with the SERVICE beyond their required academic course requirements.

The PTCs in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Education at Valdosta State University (VSU) participate in three SERVICE LEARNING experiences during their first, second, and third professional semesters which occur prior to their full-time student teaching semester. These SERVICE LEARNING experiences are directly related to VSU's Sullivan Literacy Center's (SLC) literacy programs: *Reading is R.A.D.* (Radiant, Aromatic, Delicious), *Blazing LitES* (Literacy Education Success), and *L.E.A.P.* (Literacy Education Assessment Program). The back-to-back consecutive SERVICE LEARNING experiences specifically help the PTCs apply what they are learning in their literacy methods courses with the local community children who are struggling/reluctant readers and writers. The three SERVICE LEARNING literacy courses are LITR 3110 *Emergent Literacy*, LITR 3120 *Early Literacy*, and LITR 4120 *Literacy Assessment and Applications*.

In this chapter, we will be following one PTC cohort's (n = 98) journey throughout their SERVICE LEARNING experiences during the fall 2013 semester, spring 2014 semester, and fall 2014 semester. For the purpose of this chapter, the term preservice teacher candidate (PTC) is defined as an undergraduate (junior/senior level) teacher education student prior to their full-time student teaching clinical field experience. Qualitative data consists of the PTCs' field reflections and course evaluations, as well as parent exit surveys regarding program quality and effectiveness for their child's specific literacy needs. Quantitative data consists of the PTCs' scores on their literacy lessons and literacy assessment data. These SERVICE LEARNING experiences are meaningful, relevant, and purposeful for the Valdosta State University PTCs.

The Sullivan Literacy Center

The Sullivan Literacy Center is a literacy center that was founded in August 2011 and is housed in the Valdosta State University Dewar College of Education and Human Services. The Sullivan Literacy Center provides supplementary literacy support programs for the local community children in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. "The Sullivan Literacy Center's mission is to be an integrated system of care for the children and families of Valdosta and the surrounding communities with a focus on building children's literacy skills, motivation, and confidence" (Valdosta State University 2015, para. 1). The identified goals of the Sullivan Literacy Center include:

1. To assess the children's current literacy abilities in order to determine their literacy strengths and weaknesses.
2. To implement research-based reading and writing strategies based on the child's individual literacy needs.
3. To help children to improve in their reading and writing skills, attitudes, confidence, and motivation.
4. To help children move in the direction of becoming lifelong readers (Valdosta State University 2015, para. 2).

The VSU College of Education and Human Service is partners with several public schools throughout Valdosta and the surrounding communities. As a result of this partnership, some of the children who participate in the Sullivan Literacy Center programs were referred by their classroom teachers (many who are former VSU PTCs) who are aware of the existence of the Sullivan Literacy Center. The biggest partnership is with the parents themselves. Most of the marketing for the Sullivan Literacy Center literacy programs is done through current and former parents' "word-of-mouth." As a result of the teacher and parent referrals, the enrollment continues to grow. The children ($n =$ approximately 100+) who are enrolled in the various literacy programs in the Sullivan Literacy Center specifically need supplemental literacy support to increase their reading and writing levels. Most of the children in the Sullivan Literacy Center can be identified as struggling readers and writers. Their parents may have noticed a deficiency in their child's reading and writing grades, so they contacted the Sullivan Literacy Center to enroll their child in the various literacy programs. Likewise, the child's teacher may have recommended to the parents that they seek supplemental literacy support for their child to help increase the child's reading and writing skills. One could easily make the claim that these children may have experienced multiple negative reading and writing experiences in the classroom which could have resulted in feeling humiliation and embarrassment in front of their peers. Because of these negative experiences, these children may have also become reluctant to read and write, or avoid reading and writing all together. Beers (1996) explains that the unmotivated reader "expressed negative feelings about those who enjoyed reading . . . [and] they did not plan to read in the future" (p. 33). This negative attitude towards reading could stem from their poor reading ability. As a result of this avoidance to read and write, their reading and writing skill development is hindered. Thus, these children have been unintentionally sucked into a vicious cycle of literacy deprivation which, unfortunately, may increase the literacy achievement gap between themselves and their peers. This well-researched phenomenon is better known as the Matthew Effect where the "rich get richer while the poor get poorer" (Stanovich 1986).

The Sullivan Literacy Center PTCs may help these children to break out of this vortex of literacy deprivation by helping them to learn how to apply research-based reading and writing strategies. The additive benefits of this supplemental literacy support potentially begin with an increase in the children's reading and writing confidence, which may lead to an increased motivation to read and write, which

may ignite a more positive attitude towards reading and writing, and ultimately lead to an increase in their reading and writing skills. This is the fundamental goal of the Sullivan Literacy Center.

The first step is to increase the children's reading and writing confidence which is not an easy task. The PTCs are taught how to plan and implement literacy lessons that will give the children many opportunities to experience positive and successful reading and writing experiences. It is also important that these literacy lessons be educational as well as fun, interactive, and engaging. In essence, the children are learning essential reading and writing strategies in an educational atmosphere that is encouraging and playful.

Literacy Support Programs and Course Correlations

The Sullivan Literacy Center literacy support programs were purposefully created by the Sullivan Literacy Center Director as SERVICE LEARNING experiences which directly correlate with the literacy methods courses for the PTCs in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Education at Valdosta State University. The Sullivan Literacy Center Director is also an associate professor in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Education and is responsible for teaching all sections of LITR 3120 and LITR 4120 which both contain a service-learning component. The SLC Director also works closely with the instructors of LITR 3110 to ensure that the service-learning component of the course is effective for the needs of the PTCs as well as the community children. The PTCs complete their literacy course work with the community children in the Sullivan Literacy Center in the following sequence:

- Fall Semester (Junior Status)
 - First Professional Semester
 - Course: LITR 3110 – *Emergent Literacy*
 - SLC Program: *Reading is R.A.D. (Radiant, Aromatic, Delicious)*
 - Service Learning Assignment: PTCs work as partners to plan and implement a read aloud/comprehension extension lesson to a small group of children.

Total Lessons = 1
- Spring Semester (Junior Status)
 - Second Professional Semester
 - Course: LITR 3120 – *Early Literacy*
 - SLC Program: *Blazing LitES (Literacy Education Success)*
 - Service Learning Assignment: PTCs work as partners to plan literacy lessons and implement the lessons over 2 days (Monday & Wednesday) for a 10 week period of time.

Total Lessons = 10

- Fall Semester (Senior Status)
 - Third Professional Semester
 - Course: LITR 4120 – *Literacy Assessment and Applications*
 - SLC Program: *L.E.A.P.* (Literacy Education Assessment Program)
 - Service Learning Assignment: PTCs work independently to pre-assess, plan, and implement one-on-one literacy lessons, and then post-assess the child in the Sullivan Literacy Center over a 10 week period of time.
- Pre-Assess (2 Weeks)
 Total Lessons = 12
 Post-Assess (2 Weeks)

The Service Learning Journey Begins: Fall 2013

Reading Is R.A.D.: Radiant, Aromatic, Delicious

The *Reading is RAD* program is offered to the children and families in the Sullivan Literacy Center during the fall semester and involves small group supplementary comprehension instruction in order to help build the children's comprehension of text through a multisensory interactive experience. The goal of the *Reading is RAD* program is to have the children metaphorically see the radiance, smell the aroma, and taste the deliciousness of high quality children's literature in order to ultimately build their comprehension of the text.

The PTCs (during their first professional semester course LITR 3110 – *Emergent Literacy*) work as partners to plan and implement an engaging read aloud for a small group of children in the Sullivan Literacy Center. This was the first semester that the PTCs planned and implemented the read aloud/comprehension extension activity for the children in the Sullivan Literacy Center. These PTCs preselect a specific age group (PreK-1st, 2nd-3rd, or 4th-5th) to complete this read-aloud assignment. Once an age group has been determined, the PTCs must select a piece of high quality children's literature to read aloud to a small group of children. They must plan how they will actively engage the children before reading, during reading, and after reading. They also must plan a comprehension extension activity that is interactive and multisensory. The PTCs have approximately 45 min to implement their read aloud and comprehension extension activity with the children. Through informal observation of the children's responses, the PTCs assess the children's level of comprehension of the text. Following the lesson, the PTCs must reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction throughout the lesson and consider their instructional strengths and weaknesses as well as consider how they could have implemented their comprehension instruction more effectively. The Sullivan Literacy Center graduate assistants also observe the PTC's read aloud/comprehension extension lessons and complete an informal evaluation which they share with the PTCs and LITR 3110 course instructor. It must be noted that this one-time, read-aloud comprehension extension assignment is the PTCs'

introduction to SERVICE LEARNING within the Sullivan Literacy Center. In the two subsequent semesters the service learning course requirements are more rigorous and extend over a 10-week period of time twice per week (Mondays and Wednesdays) during each semester.

Program Effectiveness Results

Completing the parent exit survey was voluntary to provide feedback regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the different literacy programs offered at the Sullivan Literacy Center. Parents were encouraged, but not required, to provide feedback for each question asked on the exit survey. The fall 2013 survey asked the following six open-ended questions:

Fall 2013 Parent (P) Exit Survey Response Examples

Question #1 – Describe how you and your child(ren) used the services in the Sullivan Literacy Center.

P1 – They use the knowledge that they learn here and was able to apply it in class.

Question #2 – In what ways did your child’s literacy attitude change during this semester?

P1 – He responds more positively when I tell him to turn off the TV and read.

Question #3 – In what ways did your child’s literacy skills change over the semester?

P1 – He reads with more animation and articulates words better.

Question #4 – How would you rate your child’s confidence in literacy as a result of this semester’s participation in the Sullivan Literacy Center.

P1 – His confidence has improved greatly. He is voluntarily trying to read instead of asking me to help.

Question #5 – How would you rate your child’s literacy motivation as a result of this semester’s participation in the Sullivan Literacy Center?

P1 – I definitely would give the program an A+. She is very motivated now.

Question #6 – What suggestion can you offer the Sullivan Literacy Center to better assist you and your child(ren)’s needs?

P1 – You all have done a fantastic job helping my son and understanding his needs. Please continue to offer this service. Homeschooling a child with LDS is stressful so knowing I have backup makes me feel better.

Although the feedback from parents was positive, this service-learning experience was not void of some challenges. The PTCs worked as partners to plan and implement these multisensory read alouds, but PTC collaboration proved to be ineffective for some partners. Due to time constraints (or possibly procrastination) some partners did not have enough time to adequately plan and prepare for their lessons resulting in ineffective read alouds. A few partners did not follow the assignment expectations, and their read aloud lessons were incomplete which resulted in the children having limited comprehension of the books being read as well as the PTCs' instinctual impulse response to have the children color random pictures to fill the time. While these ineffective read alouds resulted in a poor grade for the PTCs, it also provided limited comprehension instruction for the children. This is an issue that needs to be resolved for future implementation of the program.

When the PTC partners planned and implemented effective lessons, the children were actively engaged and exhibited an enthusiastic response to their instruction. After the lessons were complete, the children were excited to share what they did during the lesson with their parents. On several occasions, the director would ask the children follow-up questions regarding the comprehension extension activities to see if the children were able to make the important connections between the fine arts (i.e. seeing, smelling, tasting, touching) extension activities and the book that was read aloud. The children easily made the connections and proudly demonstrated their comprehension of the book which is a positive outcome of the *Reading is RAD* program.

The Service Learning Journey Continues: Spring 2014

Blazing LitES: Literacy Education Success

The *Blazing LitES* program is offered to the children and families in the Sullivan Literacy Center during the spring semester on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 4:00 to 4:50 and involves focused small group guided reading and guided writing instruction. The *Blazing LitES* small group literacy tutoring lasts for a 10-week period of time. The goal of the *Blazing LitES* program is to increase the children's reading and writing confidence, motivation, attitude, and skills. On Mondays, the children are involved in guided reading and receive word attack strategy instruction, fluency strategy instruction, and comprehension strategy instruction. On Wednesdays, the children receive word work instruction which could include: phonemic awareness, letter recognition, sight word recognition, phonics, and/or vocabulary strategy instruction. Also on Wednesdays, the children receive focused, guided writing strategy instruction that incorporates the stages of the writing process (i.e. prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish) and could include: letter formation instruction, shared writing, interactive writing, sentence formation, conventions, and/or spelling strategy instruction.

Given that the children in grades Pre-K through fifth grade are all at different developmental levels, and that the PTCs have not yet received literacy assessment training, the Sullivan Literacy Center graduate assistants (who have received literacy assessment training) first pre-assess the children's instructional reading levels and then purposefully form the small guided reading groups based on the children's similar instructional reading levels. The PTCs (during their second professional semester course LITR 3120 – *Early Literacy*) work as partners to plan and implement the guided reading, word work, and guided writing instruction for their assigned small group of children in the Sullivan Literacy Center. It must be noted that spring 2014 was the first semester that a SERVICE LEARNING component was added to LITR 3120.

The Sullivan Literacy Center Director received Reading Recovery© training from the Ohio State University and purposefully designed the guided reading, word work, and guided writing instructional lesson plan format used by the Valdosta State University PTCs to follow a similar research-based format as the Reading Recovery© lesson plan format. “The objective of the Reading Recovery lesson plan is to promote accelerated learning so that students catch up to their peers, close the achievement gap as quickly as possible, and can benefit from classroom instruction without supplemental help” (Reading Recovery Council of North America 2015, para. 1). These Sullivan Literacy Center literacy lessons are the supplemental help that these children need to accelerate their literacy learning and potentially bring them closer to their on-level peers. The LITR 3120 literacy lesson specifically involves:

- Monday: Guided Reading Instruction
 - Before Reading
 - New Book Introduction
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction
 - During Reading
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction
 - After Reading
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction

- Wednesday:
 - Word Work (depending on developmental level)
 - Phonemic Awareness
 - Letter Recognition
 - Phonics
 - Sight Words/High Frequency Words
 - Vocabulary Strategy Instruction
 - Guided Writing Instruction
 - Writing Process (prewrite, draft, revise, edit, publish)
 - Writing Strategy Instruction
 - Spelling Strategy Instruction

The guided reading lesson plan used in both LITR 3120 and LITR 4120 is broken into five indicators. The following rubric was used to determine if the LITR 3120 and LITR 4120 students provided tutoring sessions using a balanced guided reading approach to literacy instruction.

Rating →	10	5	1
Indicator ↓	Met	Partially met	Not met
	100 % LPs turned in	At least 80 % LPs turned in	Less than 80 % LPs turned in
Lesson planning	All lesson plans (PART 1, PART 2, and PART 3) were correctly completed and very detailed	At least 80 % of the lesson plans (PART 1, PART 2, and PART 3) were correctly completed	Less than 80 % of the lesson plans (PART 1, PART 2, and PART 3) were correctly completed
	All PART 1 lesson plans were completed prior to the lesson and were directly used (displayed) during the lesson	At least 80 % of the PART 1 lesson plans were completed prior to the lesson and were directly used (displayed) during the lesson	Less than 80 % of the PART 1 lesson plans were completed prior to the lesson and were directly used (displayed) during the lesson
Literacy strategy instruction	All lesson plans were thoughtfully developed to meet the needs of the child	At least 80 % of the lesson plans were developed to meet the needs of the child	Less than 80 % of the lesson plans were developed to meet the needs of the child
	All lesson plans showed evidence of teaching for research-based reading, writing, and word work/vocabulary strategies	At least 80 % of the lesson plans showed evidence of teaching for research-based reading, writing, and word work/vocabulary strategies	Less than 80 % of the lesson plans showed evidence of teaching for research-based reading, writing, and word work/vocabulary strategies

Rating →	10	5	1
Indicator ↓	Met	Partially met	Not met
	100 % LPs turned in	At least 80 % LPs turned in	Less than 80 % LPs turned in
Anecdotal notes	All PART 2 lesson plans contained very detailed anecdotal notes regarding the child's reading and writing behaviors	At least 80 % of the PART 2 lesson plans contained anecdotal notes regarding the child's reading and writing behaviors	Less than 80 % of the PART 2 lesson plans contained anecdotal notes regarding the child's reading and writing behaviors
	All PART 2 lesson plans contained handwritten anecdotal notes that were taken while the lesson was in progress	At least 80 % of the PART 2 lesson plans contained handwritten anecdotal notes that were taken while the lesson was in progress	Less than 80 % of the PART 2 lesson plans contained handwritten anecdotal notes that were taken while the lesson was in progress
Guided reading	All texts selected for guided reading were on the child's instructional reading level	80 % of texts selected for guided reading were on the child's instructional reading level	Less than 80 % of texts selected for guided reading were on the child's instruction level
Discussions, observations, post-lesson commentary	All lesson plans contained ALL of the following discussions, observations, and reflections:	At least 80 % of the lesson plans contained the following discussions, observations, and reflections:	Less than 80 % of the lesson plans contained the following discussions, observations, and reflections:
	Discussed the word attack strategies that were prompted and reviewed before, during, and after guided reading	Discussed the word attack strategies that were prompted and reviewed before, during, and after guided reading	Discussed the word attack strategies that were prompted and reviewed before, during, and after guided reading.
	Discussed "tricky" words that were revisited after the reading	Discussed "tricky" words that were revisited after the reading	Discussed "tricky" words that were revisited after the reading
	Reflected on the effectiveness of the lesson in the PART 3 post-lesson commentary	Reflected on the effectiveness of the lesson in the PART 3 post-lesson commentary	Reflected on the effectiveness of the lesson in the PART 3 post-lesson commentary

Table 9.1 Lesson observation

Spring 2014 (n = 98)	Met	Partially met	Not met
Section A (n = 35)	77 %	23 %	0 %
Section B (n = 31)	100 %	0 %	0 %
Section C (n = 32)	88 %	12 %	0 %

Program Effectiveness Results

One hundred percent of the LITR 3120 PTCs met or partially met using a balanced guided reading approach to literacy instruction during the spring 2014 lesson observations (Table 9.1).

Along with the quantitative data collected, there was also qualitative data collected from the PTCs' lesson reflections in their post-lesson commentary, informal course evaluation, as well as the formal university course evaluation. This data adds the PTCs' personal voices regarding their literacy lessons and service-learning experience throughout the semester.

Spring 2014 PTCs' Post-Lesson Commentary

Q 2. Describe how you engaged your students in developing literacy strategies.

PTC1. *We remind C. of the word attack strategies prior to helping him with a word he finds challenging; instead of asking us what the word is, he tries to figure it out on his own first.*

PTC2. *We chose a topic that they would be interested in writing about, therefore this would allow them to want to develop literacy strategies. We also gave this activity purpose. In the end, their published piece will be in the form of a commercial. Since our students are older, we gave them the opportunity to choose what they wanted their final format to be.*

PTC3. *R. loved our activity! We started by helping him make a few different types of paper airplanes. We had previously made flash cards with his required sight words on them. We scattered the flash cards on the ground and had him throw a paper airplane. He had to read the card closest to where the airplane landed.*

PTC4. *We encouraged them to attempt the difficult words and then request our help. We got them excited about the story by having them look at the picture on the front cover and infer what the book could be about. We also did a picture walk and wrote down all of their predictions for each picture before we read.*

PTC5. *We helped K. by modeling how to decode words by breaking them down by sound and using the knowledge we have of letter sounds to put the words back together to be able to read the words.*

Spring 2014 PTCs' Informal Final Course Evaluations

Q1. What aspects of tutoring do you consider to be the MOST important or beneficial to you personally and professionally?

PTC1. *I think building a relationship with the student was the most important. Enhancing their literacy through reading leveled books for their grade.*

PTC2. *Getting the opportunity to work with students and really see them grow was amazing. Also building that bond and seeing the various things that work/don't work really makes the time spent worthwhile.*

PTC3. *Getting one-on-one experience with struggling readers and helping them progress and seeing them shine throughout the semester.*

PTC4. *Finding how to modify your lesson and activities in order to meet your students' needs.*

PTC5. *Actually working with the students. Seeing a child blossom into an excellent reader who takes pride in reading is rewarding.*

PTC6. *Learning how to plan accordingly and writing a lesson plan to benefit my students.*

PTC7. *Tutoring benefited me by teaching me and giving me hands-on experience with guided reading. Before tutoring, I didn't know what "guided reading" was or how to perform it.*

Spring 2014 PTCs' Formal University Online Final Course Evaluation

Q#14 What were the best features about this course?

PTC1. *I loved tutoring and learning how to tutor kids with specific needs*

PTC2. *One of the best features is the tutoring! Tutoring has had a profound effect on me. That my instructor would give me the autonomy to plan, execute, and make a difference in someone else's life was WAY up there! The second best feature was the curriculum; it seemed custom-tailored for me to use the learned strategies on my study buddy.*

PTC3. *This was my favorite class I have ever taken! It is engaging and interesting, not because of the content, but because of the way it is taught. I learned so much!*

PTC4. *Getting hands-on tutoring experience was very helpful to my future career.*

PTC5. *Learning how to support students with their reading/writing skills.*

Completing the parent exit survey was voluntary to provide feedback regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the different literacy programs offered at the Sullivan Literacy Center. Parents were encouraged, but not required, to provide feedback for each question asked on the exit survey. The spring 2014 survey asked the following six open-ended questions:

Spring 2014 Parent (P) Exit Survey Responses

Question #1 – Were you SATISFIED or DISSATISFIED with the services that you and your child received at the Sullivan Literacy Center? Please explain.

P1 – Satisfied! My child looked forward to coming every day! She had so much fun! Learning should be fun and this was!

P2 – Very satisfied. My son had wonderful tutors this semester. His reading level improves as a result. He's more confident about reading.

Question #2 – In what ways did your child's literacy ATTITUDE, MOTIVATION, and/or CONFIDENCE change over the semester? Please explain.

P1 – She was motivated to pick up books on her own and began reading.

P2 – He has started to read because he wants to and not because we are making him.

Question #3 – In what ways did your child's literacy SKILLS change over the semester? Please explain.

P1 – My daughter's literacy has changed in a positive way. She tends to take her time to write and read now.

Question #4 – What suggestions do you have for us to improve the services offered at the Sullivan Literacy Center?

P1 – Everything was great but if I had to come up with something it would be the area kids come to meet the students, it can get very overcrowded and loud.

Question #5 – If another parent approached you regarding the Sullivan Literacy Center, how would you describe the potential experience for their child and themselves? Please explain.

P1 – It has been a great "personal" experience for us. I love that they work with them on their own level. I really feel they spent time getting to know J. and his different learning style. They are also helpful to me as a home-schooling mom. It's reassuring to know I can ask for and get advice or guidance on his reading and writing. I highly recommend the program and have told many others about it.

There were many positive learning outcomes for both the PTCs and the children as a result of this service-learning experience, but there were also some challenges as well. Again, there were some issues with the PTCs' collaboration in planning and implementing the literacy lessons, but there were also some logistical challenges like finding enough tutoring rooms for all the PTCs and children. Ultimately, some groups had to share a classroom with other groups which definitely was not an ideal learning situation given inevitable distractions and an elevated noise level that was

disruptive to the children in the classrooms. Unfortunately, the lack of appropriate tutoring spaces is an unavoidable issue that may not get resolved in future semesters.

Most children respond positively to the *Blazing LitES* program because the instruction is in a small group setting and the goal is that the children have many positive, successful reading and writing experiences. This helps to build the children's reading and writing confidence and motivation. The PTCs implement research-based reading and writing strategies that are also game-like and playful which is fun and enjoyable for the children. The children do not even realize they are learning by playing games (i.e. phonics bingo, word sorts, sight word scavenger hunts, comprehension jeopardy, etc.). For writing, the children are actually pen pals with the VSU students across the campus (i.e. football players, cheerleaders, soccer players, etc.). They write and receive letters throughout the semester. When the children receive their letters, they are so excited to write back as soon as possible. The Sullivan Literacy Center even has an authentic-looking mailbox where they mail their letters. Sometimes they even get to meet their pen pals at the end of the semester. This is an authentic, purposeful, and meaningful writing experience for the children.

The Service Learning Journey Ends: Fall 2014

L.E.A.P.: Literacy Education Assessment Program

LEAP is offered to the children and families in the Sullivan Literacy Center during the fall semester and involves one-on-one literacy assessment and literacy instruction that is purposeful to build the children's identified areas of weaknesses in reading and writing. Similar to *Blazing LitES*, the children receive guided reading instruction, word work, and guided writing instruction for the purpose of building the children's reading and writing confidence, motivation, attitude, and skills. The main difference between *Blazing LitES* and *LEAP* is that the children enrolled in *LEAP* are no longer in a small group setting, but instead receive literacy instruction that is one-on-one and based on their individual reading and writing needs.

The PTCs (during their third professional semester course LITR 4120 – *Literacy Assessment and Applications*) work one-on-one with a struggling/reluctant reader and writer. (It must be noted that there was one section of LITR 4120 (n = 31 PTCs) offered during the summer semester who completed their service learning at the Sullivan Literacy Center, two sections of LITR 4120 (n = 28 PTCs) offered during the fall 2014 semester who completed their service learning at the local elementary schools, and one section of LITR 4120 (n = 22 PTCs) offered during the fall 2014 semester who completed their service learning at the Sullivan Literacy Center.) The PTCs are responsible to first pre-test their student's current literacy skills using a battery of literacy assessments. After all the literacy assessments are complete, the PTCs then analyze their assessment data to determine at least four prominent reading and writing goals based on their child's identified literacy needs.

They then plan and implement purposeful instruction based on the specific reading and writing goals. The lesson plan for each one-on-one tutoring session is focused on the four literacy goals based on the child's individual literacy needs. Each LITR 4120 literacy lesson specifically involves:

- Reading familiar books to build confidence and promote strategic reading
- Taking a running record of the new book introduced in the previous lesson to determine instructional reading level
- Word Work (focused on individual reading goal)
 - Phonemic Awareness
 - Letter Recognition
 - Phonics
 - Sight Words/High Frequency Words
 - Vocabulary Strategy Instruction
- Guided Writing Instruction (focused on individual writing goal)
 - Writing Process (prewrite, draft, revise, edit, publish)
 - Writing Strategy Instruction
 - Spelling Strategy Instruction
- Guided Reading Instruction (focused on individual reading goal)
 - Before Reading
 - New Book Introduction
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction
 - During Reading
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction
 - After Reading
 - Word Attack Strategy Instruction
 - Fluency Strategy Instruction
 - Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Throughout the semester, the PTCs are required to monitor their child's progress through continual assessments such as performing running records and taking anecdotal notes of the child's observed reading and writing strengths and weaknesses. After each lesson, the PTCs must reflect on the success of their instruction as it directly relates to the child's progress. This reflection informs their next instructional step. Finally, the PTCs post-test their child's developmental growth in the literacy skills following the focused literacy instruction. The PTCs are also required to write and discuss a summary report of findings with the child's

Table 9.2 Literacy goal impact

	4/4 Goals positive impact	3/4 Goals positive impact	2/4 Goals positive impact	1/4 Goals positive impact	0/4 Goals positive impact
Summer 2014 (n = 31)	26 %	29 %	39 %	6 %	0 %
Fall SLC 2014 (n = 50)	20 %	60 %	20 %	0 %	0 %

parents/guardians, or teacher if they are tutoring at a local school, at the end of tutoring which details their child's literacy progress throughout the semester.

Program Effectiveness Results

One hundred percent of the LITR 4120 PTCs showed a positive impact in a least one out of the four goals they set for the child they tutored during the summer 2014 and fall 2014 semesters (Table 9.2).

Similar to spring 2014, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the PTCs. The qualitative data consisted of their lesson reflections in their post-lesson commentary, informal course evaluation, as well as the formal university course evaluation. This data continues to add the PTCs' personal voices regarding their literacy lessons and service-learning experience throughout the semester.

Fall 2014 PTCs' Post-Lesson Commentary

Q1. Describe the effectiveness of the leveled text used during your guided reading lesson.

PTC1. *We continue to use the same text as we have been during our tutoring sessions. This text is VERY effective because it is something that she has shown much joy and excitement about reading. Since some of the events and characters are people that she can relate to, it makes reading and comprehension less difficult for her. Now that we have gotten further into the book, she is beginning to like it more and more. I've had a lot of teaching moments in this book as well!*

PTC2. *L. is on a level C book. She is doing great on the C because she is challenged. It makes her really think about the word attack strategies. I can tell when we are reading the strategies that we previously discuss go through her brain while we are doing running records and guided reading.*

PTC3. *J. is now at a Level E. This seems to be the perfect level for him right now, as there are many words he knows but it is still challenging for him. Since these books have more detail, they also seem more engaging to him,*

(continued)

which helps him not only want to read, but also read with expression and fluency.

PTC4. The level of the text included vocabulary words that were academically challenging and comprehension was not so far out of reach that my reader was not able to adequately make meaning of the reading. It was challenging but also instructional.

PTC5. This leveled text was really good for M. She enjoyed reading this book and did really well with it. She had few mistakes and was good about self-correcting her mistakes.

Fall 2014 PTCs' Informal Final Course Evaluation

Q1. What class activities, books read, assignments completed, knowledge gained do you consider to be the MOST important or beneficial to you personally and professionally?

PTC1. Tutoring with the students was the most beneficial classroom activity that I participated in throughout the whole semester in all of my classes.

PTC2. The portfolios were very helpful to have during tutoring and helped me to see where my student needed more work. Gaining knowledge on how to do running records, miscue analysis, etc. will greatly benefit me in the future.

PTC3. Learning how to assess students for literacy and also making lesson plans so that they can be successful.

PTC4. Guided reading. It really helps the student grow and it helps me grow as a teacher.

PTC5. The overall tutoring experience provided great practice for future references with literacy assessment and strategies.

PTC6. Learning how to test a student's current reading level was helpful and also learning the many literacy strategies I can use for improvement.

Fall 2014 PTCs' Formal University Online Final Course Evaluations

Q14. What were the best features about this course?

PTC1. The course provided students with real applications, real classroom experiences, and the opportunity to work with peers, students, and parents in a cooperative learning environment. These are all things that teachers do each day and this course gave me the opportunity to engage in these

(continued)

- real world practices. I am amazed at the success I have seen firsthand with my student in the organization and proven results of the reading program.*
- PTC2.** *The L.E.A.P. tutoring program and being able to practice different literacy strategies with our study buddies to help them improve in certain areas. Also, learning the different types of assessments and their purposes.*
- PTC3.** *I felt like I really learned strategies that I will use in my future classroom and also when I tutored!*
- PTC4.** *Being able to see the improvements of my study buddy at the end of the semester.*
- PTC5.** *We learned a lot about how to teach reading and writing to students. This course really helped me and I know I will be using the information when I begin teaching. Especially the Portfolio Assessment Materials!*

Again, completing the parent exit survey was voluntary to provide feedback regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the different literacy programs offered at the Sullivan Literacy Center. Parents were encouraged, but not required, to provide feedback for each question asked on the exit survey. The fall 2014 survey asked the following six open-ended questions:

Fall 2014 Parent (P) Exit Survey Responses

Question #1 – Were you **SATISFIED** or **DISSATISFIED** with the services that you and your child received at the Sullivan Literacy Center? Please explain.

P1 – *Satisfied. My son truly enjoyed his experience. He was eager to attend his class every week. It was a blessing for us to live in a place where we could take advantage of the learning opportunities available at a local university.*

P2 – *Very satisfied. We have seen clear improvement in B.'s reading skills.*

P3 – *Satisfied. I think that this program is helping A. with his reading and to get where he should be at in his reading level.*

P4 – *I was extremely satisfied with the services that my child and myself received. He enjoys reading and it has become fun to him along with progressing in his reading.*

P5 – *R. has picked up the joy of reading books while attending this program.*

Question #2 – In what ways did your child's literacy **ATTITUDE**, **MOTIVATION**, and/or **CONFIDENCE** change over the semester? Please explain.

P1 – *Very confident in reading in front of his class now.*

P2 – *Seems more prone to go find books and read based on his interests instead of only picking books with illustrations.*

(continued)

P3 – *It seemed that he was reading because he knew he had to but now he enjoys and finds reading fun.*

P4 – *She has more confidence when she reads alone. Her attitude toward homework is much better and her motivation has greatly improved.*

Question #3 – *In what ways did your child's literacy SKILLS change over the semester? Please explain.*

P1 – *Noticeable desire to pick up a book and read alone versus me reading to my child.*

P2 – *D.'s reading skills have improved tremendously in fluency, level on reading, and confidence.*

P3 – *It went up. She wants to read more.*

P4 – *She is more willing to break apart words to pronounce them. We are still working on not sounding them out. This is still a problem, since I have a tendency to sound them out too.*

Question #4 – *What suggestions do you have for us to improve the services offered at the Sullivan Literacy Center?*

P1 – *I can't think of any – the children are safe, cared for, parents are kept informed – children are learning – yea!*

P2 – *I wish you could make the sessions longer.*

Question #5 – *If another parent approached you regarding the Sullivan Literacy Center, how would you describe the potential experience for their child and themselves? Please explain.*

P1 – *A blessing! Just do it!*

P2 – *It is an excellent program and very essential to any child's academic performance! Great resource for the Valdosta community.*

P3 – *It is a great place to help your child's reading. The teachers are eager to help students learn to read.*

P4 – *It is a wonderful service that you are providing for the children. The children benefit greatly and reading scores at school improve as far as comprehension and fluency.*

The children's motivation, confidence, and skills increased as a result of the literacy instruction, but there were still challenges that the PTCs experienced throughout the semester. Since the PTCs were working one-on-one with a student this semester, they specifically had difficulty keeping up with the lesson plans two times a week in conjunction with all their other course work. Also, how to administer and score all the literacy assessments was overwhelming to many of the PTCs because they have never experienced the literacy assessments before. Their confidence level in administering, scoring, and analyzing the assessment data was

very low, and they were worried that they would not choose the most important literacy goals for their study buddy based on their analysis. The instructor for the course reviewed the PTCs' pre-test charts and analysis and gave them feedback that guided their decision for their four literacy goals. Fortunately, their confidence level with administering, scoring, and analyzing the post-test data was much higher at the end of the semester.

The children really benefitted from the one-on-one literacy instruction that they received from the PTCs throughout the semester. They experienced instruction that was specifically catered to their individual reading and writing needs. They enjoyed many positive and successful reading and writing experiences that helped to build their reading and writing confidence, motivation, and skills. It was rewarding to see the children running towards the door for tutoring even at the end of the semester because they were learning, but they were also having fun learning.

Discussion

Based on the data collected over three semesters of this one cohort of preservice teacher candidates ($n = 98$), the consecutive SERVICE LEARNING experiences had a positive impact on the preservice teacher candidates as well as the community children. The PTCs gained knowledge of literacy assessment and effective literacy instruction and helped the children they were tutoring to make gains in their targeted literacy goals by the end of the third semester. Parents' survey responses revealed that their children experienced positive outcomes in their reading and writing confidence, motivation, attitude, and skills as a result of participating in the different literacy programs at the Sullivan Literacy Center. Some parents even reported that the positive outcomes transferred to their children's home and school literacy performance, suggesting that there has been a turn away from literacy deprivation towards an increase in literacy development. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate the long-term effects of the literacy support and instruction for both the PTCs and the community children.

The service-learning benefits also continued to have positive outcomes for the preservice teacher candidates as some of them continued to tutor their study buddy even though the semester requirements had ended. They saw the value in their service for this one child. Some of the preservice teacher candidates even started tutoring other children that could not attend the program due to time conflicts. Wade (1995) also conducted a study using service learning as a means to increase preservice teacher candidates' social studies methods content knowledge and likewise noted, "The most prevalent service-oriented outcomes involved learning new information about community service and planning to continue the present service activity beyond the completion of the assignment for the methods course" (para. 23). Similarly, some of the Sullivan Literacy Center preservice teacher candidates' service to the community children continued beyond the program requirements.

Sullivan Literacy Center Program Limitations

We are always continually striving for program improvement and institutional effectiveness, but one of the main limitations we have experienced which is very hard to control is the absentee rate for the children enrolled in the different SLC programs. The attendance rate for the children varies from perfect attendance, to absent one or two times, to multiple and/or frequent absences. Despite efforts to inform the parents that the children's attendance is extremely important for program success, as well as for the VSU PTCs to adequately complete their course assignments, there are still absences. Unfortunately, these absences could affect their child's ability to progress in their literacy development, as well as affect the VSU PTC's ability to learn and apply the literacy concepts presented in each LITR course. Other minor program limitations include: limited classroom space, limited times to check out materials for literacy lessons, and a slowly- decreasing amount of PTCs to complete the literacy tutoring. (Unfortunately, this latter limitation is an institutional limitation and a growing national trend that the Sullivan Literacy Center has limited control over. We are currently considering recruitment and retention options to increase the PTC enrollment.)

Summary

Service learning can be a powerful instructional approach in teacher education, and these SERVICE LEARNING experiences in LITR 3110, LITR 3120, and LITR 4120 are very meaningful for the PTCs at the Sullivan Literacy Center. They definitely LEARN a lot about literacy assessment and literacy instruction while SERVING the individual needs of the struggling/reluctant reader and writers. Wilkinson et al. (2012) likewise reported that "service-learning experiences in the undergraduate course in reading had beneficial effects on prospective teacher education students' ability to make connections between theory and practice and on their overall experience of the course" (p. 118). Yes, these VSU PTCs are making the important connections between theory and practice, but they are also learning the importance of using this knowledge to serve the community children who need the extra literacy support to help build their literacy confidence, motivation, attitudes, and skills by providing literacy instruction that is meaningful, relevant, purposeful, and fun.

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