A Learning Experience

Thinking back to my volunteering at Bingham Elementary School puts a warm feeling in my heart. Seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces and the energy in their bodies made this Serving-Learning Experience well worth it. Volunteering at Bingham was a unique experience, changing my view on how I see myself and my own education.

My previous writing experiences were very different than this English class. In the past I was required to read and write based on in class discussions or assigned readings. This class was more than that because it was based on my volunteering. Instead of the whole class concentrating on the same area, every student worked with a different agency, therefore, we all “did our own thing.” It was also different from other classes in that I was writing for a very specific audience beyond my instructor. I consciously put myself in the lives of the people who would be viewing my writing and thought of attention-grabbing ideas.

This class is different from others in that I had to work with other people. My partner, Lauren Mahlstedt, and I got along great! Together we assembled an awesome brochure and webpage with the help of our contact person, Amy Lantis. Communication was an important key. We always took into account everyone’s ideas to help improve the final product. Amy provided us with the “meat and potatoes” of the brochure, so it was up to Lauren and I to put the creative touch on it and polish it up. Working with others abated a great deal of stress and made our final product turn out the best.

My volunteering at Bingham changed how I view my education. I have always valued my education because I know it is the one thing no one can take from me. From previous experiences I know I learn best from hands on learning and being in the environment I am learning about, that’s why I took the Service-Learning class. However, this experience also made me realize that not everything you need to learn in life is found in a textbook; working with people is a skill you develop over time.

This Service-Learning experience also changed me on a personal level. I learned I love working with children and have a natural desire to want to
help them become better students and citizens. While working at Bingham I realized how sheltered my elementary education was, coming from a class of the same twelve, white, Catholic kids for six years. At Bingham they have children from several different ethnic backgrounds and religions. They clearly have a fertile environment to learn about other cultures and religions. My volunteering also helped me realize how easy I had it growing up in a middle class family. At Bingham many families come from low-income, low-education families, which puts the children at risk in the community and in the school. With problems as those, it makes me want to get more involved with such agencies as Bingham, helping encourage the students to stay in school and – perhaps – even go to college.

I enjoyed this Service-Learning experience very much. It was a lot of work, but well worth it. Working with the children and experiencing the different cultures and backgrounds makes me want to volunteer all over again. This is an experience that touched my life and gave me valuable skills to use in the future.