

Diane B. Russell

The Community Service and I.B. CAS Programmes at the International School of Luxembourg

“Service-learning has to do with powerful purposes – getting kids into the world. Jean Piaget says that schooling isn’t worth anything unless it creates for people the capacity to believe that they can change the world. If our kids don’t believe they can change the world, then I think we ought to say that our education has not been powerful enough.” (Vito Perrone).

This quotation was recently used as a catalyst for discussion at The First International Conference on Service-Learning in Teacher Education held in Brussels on July 5-7, 2007. There, a group of more than one hundred international educators gathered for “Conversations that Matter” under the sponsorship of Clemson University’s College of Health, Education, and Human Development¹, and the Eugene T. Moore School of Education.

The basic principle that students who complement their academic learning with experiences in giving voluntary service to others give growth to their self-development and can become sensitive, global citizens. The Brussels conference did not attempt to give only one definition of service learning, for the interpretation and practice of this ideal varies greatly and is still developing as a

quasi-academic discipline. A key component is that the students need to prepare their projects and to reflect upon them before, during, and after; it is not enough just to be a volunteer.

I had the opportunity to present a workshop at the Brussels conference on how community service and the International Baccalaureate CAS (creativity, action, service) Programmes are important components of the curriculum in the Upper School of the International School of Luxembourg (ISL).

Mr. John Cannings of the Intercommunity School of Zurich, Switzerland joined me in presenting his school’s I.B. CAS projects, followed by a discussion of whether or not the I.B. programme can be called “service-learning” in its strictest interpretation. The difference is that in the I.B. programme, activities in creativity, action (i.e. sports), service, can be accomplished separately or part of the whole. Also, some proponents of service learning emphasize detailed planning and reflection time. The I.B. CAS programme is at this time

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Diane Russell was IB CAS Coordinator at the International School of Luxembourg from the programme's inception until July 2007.

being revised by the International Baccalaureate Organization to incorporate more of this planning and reflection in conjunction with the Theory of Knowledge curriculum.

To outline briefly the programme at ISL, students in grades 9-12 are required to perform at least 20 hours of service to the community in order to receive an ISL diploma. In addition, for students in grades 11 and 12 who are full I.B. diploma candidates, completion of CAS is a requirement for the I.B. diploma. This involves that the student does a minimum of 50 hours in two years in each of the components: creativity; action; service. An ideal project would combine all three. Community can be viewed as within the infrastructure of ISL or more broadly, the Luxembourg community or that of other countries. Students are encouraged to perform projects which involve the global com-

munity. For example, within ISL itself, Upper School students can take CAS as a scheduled activity, during which they give assistance in Lower School classrooms in such disciplines as English as a second language, French, the arts, music, maths, physical education, drama. In the Luxembourg community, CAS students have served as assistant football coaches for Luxembourg Special Olympics, promoters of campaigns by Handicap International, being interactors in arts and crafts projects with Kriibskrank Kanner cancer children, or working voluntarily for their specific commune's events. On a global scale, ISL has well-established CAS projects in Orhaniye, Turkey and Moshi, Tanzania. Students might also find their individual projects in their native countries in hospitals, nursing homes, schools or with recognized service programmes in other developing countries.

The oral and written reflections are an integral part of the programme. Students tend to be very honest in their comments about the projects and what they have gained from not only the activities themselves, but from the interaction with people from many different backgrounds. The relationships of the students with those they are serving reinforce the relationship of schools and the communities in which they are located. Certainly, there is a period of growth and development for all parties concerned as the students fulfill the mission statement of "contributors to the community as concerned, global citizens".

¹ Clemson University is in the U.S.A. in the state of South Carolina.



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