



4th Annual Service-Learning & the Arts Conference Evaluation Report

Florida Learn & Service

**Prepared
by
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Introduction

Florida Learn & Serve, a federally funded grant program that awards grants to schools and school districts to engage youth in service learning through the Florida Department of Education, hosts an annual Service-Learning & the Arts conference to promote the integration of arts-based service-learning in K-12 curriculum. The Institute for Learning Innovation, (the Institute), an Annapolis, MD-based non-profit learning research and development organization, has been engaged to conduct an evaluation of the 4th Annual Service Learning & the Arts Conference held on March 30-April 1, 2006, in Miami, Florida. The focus of the conference was community revitalization and development through service-learning and art projects and targeted towards K-12 art teachers/administrators as well as higher education art faculty/administrators with a special emphasis on community partners.

The Institute and Florida Learn & Serve staff worked collaboratively to design evaluation efforts and implement data collection; analysis of data was conducted solely by the Institute. The following report provides detailed findings and recommendations meant to inform future conference planning as well as begin to understand how the annual conference impacts attendees understanding of arts-based service-learning and how use of knowledge gained at the conference is used.

Methodology

Florida Learn & Serve, in collaboration with the Institute, developed and posted a web-based survey using SurveyMonkey software. The survey contained both open-ended qualitative and Likert scale quantitative questions aimed at understanding conference participants' prior arts-based service-learning conference experiences, experiences from the 2006 conference as well as how the conference might influence their future arts-based service-learning endeavors. Specifically, a set of retrospective pre/post-scales were included to measure change in respondents understanding and perception of arts-based service-learning. Retrospective pre/post-scales allow for more accurate self-reporting than traditional pre/post scales, e.g., people answer a set of questions at the beginning of a program and then answer the same set of questions at the end of the program, because pre questions are answered in the same frame of reference as the post-questions (Rockwell and Kohn 1989).¹ When given an opportunity to learn how much they know about a subject prior to responding to a questionnaire, respondents can more accurately report on changes in knowledge, interest, and attitudes (Davis 2003).²

The survey was posted for two weeks following the conclusion of the conference. Attendees were contacted immediately after the conference by email, invited to click on the survey link provided and complete a survey. To insure a high response rate, the names of all attendees who

¹ Rockwell, S. Kay and Harriet Kohn. "Post-Then-Pre Evaluation." *Journal of Extension*, 27, no. 2 (1989). <http://www.joe.org/joe/1989summer/a5.html>.

² Davis, Gregory A. "Using a Retrospective Pre-Post Questionnaire to Determine Program Impact." *Journal of Extension*, 41, no. 4 (2003). <http://www.joe.org/joe/2003august/tt4.shtml>.

completed a survey were entered in a raffle for several prizes donated by conference sponsors. Raffle winners were chosen at random by Florida Learn & Serve at the close of the survey period (April 21, 2006) and notified of their selection. A total of 80 conference attendees completed a survey.

Findings

The majority (72.5%, n=58) of survey respondents were first-time attendees to a Florida Learn & Serve Service-Learning & the Arts conference; 27.5% (n=24) reported that they had attended one or two previous conferences hosted by Florida Learn & Serve. A minority (13%, n=9) indicated that they had attended a Service-Learning & the Arts Conference not hosted by Florida Learn & Serve. Other non-Florida Learn & Service Service-Learning & the Arts conferences included those hosted by Minnesota Campus Compact National Youth Leadership Council, VA COOL, Miami-Dade County, Lakeland, FL educators, and Wendy Doromal in Orange County. Fifty-eight percent (n=39) indicated that they currently use service-learning in their arts instruction.

Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about their conference experience. Data revealed that respondents felt comfortable in their surroundings, were satisfied with the conference program and events, gained perspective, understanding, and tools for developing and maintaining arts-based service-learning, and made connections with like-minded colleagues.

Understanding and perception of arts-based service-learning

To begin to identify how educators' understanding and perception of arts-based service-learning changed as a result of attending the 4th annual conference, a post with a retrospective pre-measure was taken. The six item scale ranged from respondents understanding arts-based service-learning to their perception of the level of difficulty involved in doing arts-based service-learning projects. The table below shows the percentage in change from pre to post.

Item	Pre (% Agree/ Somewhat Agree)	Post (% Agree/ Somewhat Agree)	% change from pre to post
I have specific strategies to implement arts-based service-learning	56%	92%	+36%
I feel confident about implementing arts-based service-learning in my curriculum	58%	89%	+31%
I have a clear understanding of arts-based service-learning	70%	100%	+30%
I have specific ideas for arts-based service-learning projects	71%	97%	+26%
I have access to resources (people & materials) for doing arts-based service-learning in my school	58%	82%	+24%
Arts-based service-learning is difficult to do	37%	19%	-18%*

*The negative change is considered positive here given the negative stance of the question.

Clearly, respondents' conference experience impacted their understanding of arts-based service-learning, provided opportunities to gain specific ideas for projects and strategies for implementing such projects into their curriculum. To further understand how arts-based service-learning is understood, respondents were asked how they would describe arts-based service-learning to a colleague. Descriptions ranged from simple statements to pedagogical philosophy:

Using the arts for both service and learning as an approach to community development and educational innovation.

Service learning that uses art as a medium to affect community change.

Using the creative spirit we all have to build and bridge communities while teaching our students how to become productive members of society.

Making practical use of art in the community to express, help, teach, share, inspire, and/or challenge. Having student art serve as a means and expression of learning.

It is my understanding that arts-based service-learning incorporates the arts as a key tool for transferring knowledge, building relationships, bettering the community, making the learning process more tangible than figurative in which every person involved is both teacher and student. Everyone comes to the table with something to contribute for the betterment of the whole and using the arts as the conductor.

Developing projects or programs that incorporate your regular curriculum objectives while addressing a need at your school or community. It must be designed so that everyone gains skills and understanding... it must be a 'win-win' situation. Finally, you must evaluate as you go to make changes as necessary and process the outcomes at the end. Stakeholders (including students) should be able to articulate several outcomes and 'a-ha's' after the processing.

Noticeable among many of the descriptions was the idea that service-learning must address a community need, often identified by students. What is noticeably missing is the notion of reciprocity that is a key element of service-learning.

The increase in agreement with statements related to understanding arts-based service-learning, strategies for implementing projects, resources and confidence for doing arts-based service-learning is further supported by data regarding what respondents found most memorable and beneficial about conference attendance. Specifically, the opportunities afforded at the conference to see examples, share ideas, and interact with like-minded colleagues increased confidence to do arts-based service-learning and reduced the perception that such projects are difficult to do.

Most Memorable

Responses to what was most memorable about can be divided into five general categories: 1) events/presenters/location/organization ; 2) examples/ideas; 3) passion/enthusiasm; 4) like-minded colleagues/camaraderie; and 5) learning about service-learning and the arts.

Events/Presenters/Location/Organization

Several respondents felt the conference was very well organized. From the opening dinner to the closing session, attendees enjoyed the programs offered, the speakers and presenters, and the locations selected for sessions and activities:

It was very well organized. I liked the excellent way the conference began -- at the gorgeous Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, with the delicious dinner and the inspirational talks after dinner. The sessions on the Friday were good, and the staff members were very helpful and knowledgeable regarding questions I had about my presentation. I liked the trip we all made to ArtSouth too -- that was fun and interesting.

I remember the reception the opening night at the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens to be the most pleasant conference dinner I have ever experienced! The sessions on Saturday were very well run. I was especially impressed by the issues raised in the presentation by Flavia Bastos and the discussion which followed. I also enjoyed the session by Rob Shumer, especially the pedagogical methods that he employed in his presentation/demonstration.

The conference was masterfully organized. The workshops I attended were well presented by well qualified professionals and extremely informative and enriching.

Examples/Ideas

For many respondents seeing examples and sharing ideas with colleagues was most memorable experience. The data suggests that the “willingness” to share ideas was as memorable as the examples and ideas presented:

I loved seeing all the other projects that other schools are doing. It really inspired me in what I want to do at my own school.

A willingness to share information and experiences regarding service learning projects.

Meeting and sharing ideas with others.

The willingness to share both the positives and the challenges. .

Passion/Enthusiasm

Similarly, the data revealed that respondents experienced a strong sense of passion and enthusiasm for arts-based service-learning, which suggests a comfortable and nurturing environment for asking questions and exploring ideas:

The intense feeling of caring and camaraderie.

Unlike other conferences, the sincerity and passion participants have for their mission of service learning and the arts was clearly evident. There was a warmth and genuineness of concern and interest in one another and providing information that would help

newcomers, such as myself, and veterans alike to be successful in implementing arts and service learning projects

The power and enthusiasm of the attendees and presenters.

Like-minded colleagues/camaraderie

Given that the nature of conferences is to bring like-minded people together for discussion and debate, it is not surprising that respondents mentioned interacting with like-minded individuals as memorable. That several respondents felt it was the most memorable thing about the conference is of interest in that it reflects the supportive nature of service-learning, Florida Learn & Serve, as well as the community of arts-based service-learning educators:

A gathering of like-minded and dedicated people who freely share and celebrate each others successes. Honoring what we do and the contribution the arts makes to education and life. Meeting new people and making great new contacts.

The feeling that everyone there was interested in the advancement of students, even troubled ones, and not in their own agenda.

Collaborations with other arts educators -- at dinner, at the opening sessions, throughout the breakout sessions, even at informal chats during lunches and at the end of the day.

The camaraderie, the willingness to share ideas, and the obvious love of what they are doing in the schools.

Within this category were comments related specifically to networking. For example:

It was great to network with colleagues from all over the country in Service-Learning in the Arts.

Meeting other people who are using the arts to impact their communities.

Learning about service-learning and the arts.

The data also revealed that learning about service-learning, the arts, and how and where they intersect proved memorable for participants:

What I remember most is how informative many of the workshops were in both explaining and demonstrating the HOW and WHY of service learning.

Seeing Service through a new lens. So much of Service is already being done through the 'arts' without the schools, administrators, teachers, and students recognizing the link! The Arts was an excellent way to become introduced to the concept of service learning and how it can have such an impact on the life a child, as well as the community in which they live!

What is most outstanding for me as a participant of this conference is that the arts were addressed from many perspectives. Also it was the first conference I've attended that focused on the arts and arts education as an integral component of the education process.

Examples of how arts education and service learning can be integrated to create effective and powerful examples for innovative education successfully reaching diverse populations.

Conference Benefits

Many of the most memorable categories also emerged from data related to what respondents saw as the main benefit of attending the conference. Participating in events, specifically at Art South, was beneficial for many. Feeling inspired by others projects and motivated by session speakers was also seen as beneficial. One respondent found that the main benefit of the conference was the services provided by Florida Learn & Serve:

[B]eing reminded of how 'user friendly' Florida Learn and Serve is. It would seem like a crime not to apply for a grant through them after seeing how supportive and caring they are about helping grantees through the process. They don't just want to give out the \$, they want to help make sure the projects are as successful as they can be.

However, data revealed three primary areas that respondents found most beneficial: 1) examples/ideas; 2) like-minded colleagues/camaraderie; and 3) learning about service-learning and the arts.

Examples/Ideas

In addition to seeing examples of arts-based service-learning and getting/sharing ideas with colleagues, respondents reported gaining perspective and knowledge related to how service-learning works and benefits particular students:

I feel that I benefited from seeing different perspectives in areas that I am not familiar with as well as participating the art experience with mediums that I am not familiar with.

I realized that as an English and Reading teacher of struggling students, I can use service learning as readily as I could with average and above average achievers.

Projects that were shared included discussion either among the presenters and/or with the audience about adaptations to the project that were possible. This enabled me to envision ways I could make the project my own and adapt it to the needs of my own community and using my own particular resources.

The main benefit was the acquisition of new ideas for helping students who do not succeed in the mainstream curriculum.

The main benefit was learning how to reach my low performing students through art and providing an opportunity for them to develop self esteem, civic pride while fulfilling their academic needs.

Like-minded colleagues/camaraderie

Networking was often cited as the main benefit of their conference experience. Different from the comments in the previous section, the benefit of interacting with like-minded colleagues was more about collaboration and sharing than camaraderie. This suggests that the nurturing environment of the conference increased attendees' level of confidence to pursue connections made at the conference.

Collaboration - I will be in contact with many of the conference participants. Some of them are veterans - and some of them are infants - like me! (That made me feel a lot more at ease...I wasn't so afraid to ask questions)!

Networking with other professionals who are implementing innovative ideas really energized me. I met the woman in my district who is in charge of assisting schools to carry out projects in their communities. I know this connection will bear fruit for our initiatives here on the grass roots level.

Meeting people who are doing what I want to be doing. Making friends and contacts, so if I need help or advice, it's just a phone call or email away.

Access to teachers who are doing this successfully and well, ability to ask questions about process and 'how to.'

Learning about service-learning and the arts.

Data revealed that the aspects of learning about service-learning and the arts that respondents felt were most memorable were also considered to be the main benefit of attending the conference.

As a Service Learning facilitator, I gained a broader scope of project ideas and how to approach teachers with these ideas.

The main benefit was being exposed to the existence of service learning and the art connection. This instilled inspiration in me to develop tangible learning experiences which connect the arts, students and community.

The conference definitely enhanced my own knowledge and awareness of Service Learning (in particular, through the Arts) and how beneficial it can be both instructionally and behaviorally to students.

A majority of respondents (80%, n=56) also indicated that they learned something at the conference that surprised them. Comments ranged from being impressed by the quantity and variation of arts-based service-learning projects and how the arts fit into service-learning to the realization that one does not have to be artistic to incorporate art into service-learning and feeling confident about doing so.

I was surprised to learn of so many great projects that I am looking forward to implementing in my community. I knew I would learn valuable information, but I was surprised by the volume of good information.

I have always thought that I was 'artistically challenged' and uncomfortable with actually doing art. Having the opportunity to participate with artists at Art South gave me more confidence. After having personally experienced being 'artistically creative' for the first time, I feel I will be more effective assisting art teachers with their project ideas.

That I could use service learning and the arts without being in the arts or personally artistic.

Ideas and issues related to the implementation, support, and effectiveness of service-learning and the arts were most prominent. Seeing “real” arts-based service-learning and learning how to implement a program, the level and impact of internal (teachers, school districts, etc.) and external (political) support, and specific ways in which arts-based service influence students development proved enlightening for respondents.

I learned how other teachers are using art to reach the learners who have previously not responded to a school setting.

How easy it can be to get a community behind a project that will make them feel better about themselves and where they live.

Once again Funding is threatened by political times.

How powerful arts teachers can be in promoting s-l and the importance of the s-l field to reach out to others teachers and administrators.

Talking with the student artists from McArthur HS at ArtSouth was great! I learned just how powerful the learning was for the McArthur student artists – and how powerful their work is.

How effective learn and serve projects can be to help students connect with their community and other cultures.

Finally, for some respondents were surprised to discover that they had been doing service-learning and could now define and differentiate between community service and service-learning:

That my community service projects that I have been doing for 9 years are actually service-learning projects.

I learned the main difference between service learning and community service. That reflection and exploration by the individual student will not only improve knowledge base but also help a child better cope with their daily interactions in the school environment and better prepare that child for transcending into the community as they mature.

That service-learning does not always look like service-learning!

Intentions for using arts-based service-learning

To understand how conference programming and attendance impacted educators current and future decisions, respondents were asked to indicate how they anticipated using the information they gathered at the conference. The table below provides a breakdown of the percentage respondents who selected a specific action.

Item	% of Respondents
Present information to colleagues at school	76%
Increase my involvement in service-learning	74%
Follow up with contacts I've made	72%
Develop service-learning projects for my class	70%
Write a grant for service-learning projects	66%
Propose a conference session	29%

Note: Respondents were encouraged to check more than one action

Examples of how the conference experience will influence and inform their use of arts-based service-learning support these ideas. Specifically respondents' examples focused on sharing what they learned with other teachers and colleagues and increasing their involvement in service-learning.

Sharing

Several respondents said they planned to share ideas and information with colleagues and community members to promote the concept of arts-based service-learning and its benefits:

I thought of using the arts in service learning projects as just doing murals, but my participation broadened my concept. I have a number of ideas I will promote to colleagues here at the school and with the Chamber of Commerce.

I plan to mentor the faculty in my department more closely on ways of making clear the objectives of the experience (although flexible----we need to start with something) and the responsibilities of all parties involved.

I am hopeful and confident that through staff development training, our District will embrace upon this concept of 'Service as a means and application of learning.'

Increased involvement

Data revealed that many respondents had very specific plans for supporting arts-based service learning already in place:

1) I will be sure to spend more time getting input from stakeholders and 'assessing the assets' (determining the resources, especially human resources-available before finalizing the plan; 2) I will continue to find innovative ways to gather formative

assessment data along the way; 3) Better advertise the projects to the community; 4) apply, apply, apply!

I will bring in more partners both within the school and the outside community. Our project next year will incorporate the band, chorus, art, and theater departments at my school as well as bring in community groups such as the YMCA and the Youth Arts Corp.

As a result of the conference, I will expand the service learning component across the program. Elementary, middle school as well as high school aged students will be engaged in arts-based service learning.

The conference influenced me in continuing to utilize arts-based service-learning not only in the classrooms but throughout the community, parent meetings, PTA meetings, and etc

As in previous sections, access to examples of arts-based service-learning played a meaningful role in how participants' planned to transfer knowledge gained at the conference to classroom resources:

The ideas and confidence to try them was paramount. I plan to try at least one of the projects introduced ('bowls'), have shared info w/colleagues and may collaborate w/them. Also look forward to utilizing Robin's book of lessons!! A great take-away resource -- you can't absorb everything in one conference. I'd like to have a e-mail, snail mail, affiliation list of the participants, so I can contact people, especially presenters.

In the session led by Rob Shumer, as well as the session led by Flavia Bastos, we discussed the way that gentrification is a threat to low-income communities, including those that were in the process of implementing public beautification projects and other arts-related activities. It occurred to me after the conference that the gentrification issue is very strong in my community as well, and I resolve to confront these issues more openly in my teaching as well as my art-based community development work. It strikes me that the arts can help low-income people to marshal their creative assets and talents in a way that promotes indigenous community development while protecting them from the whims of market forces that threaten them with displacement through gentrification.

Recommendations

Survey respondents clearly articulated the conference experience as being positive and useful for them, their students, colleagues, and community. The following recommendations are offered for consideration in future conference planning efforts.

- Continue to provide high quality and relevant sessions, presenters/speakers, and events. Respondents overwhelmingly reported that the 2006 conference provided rich and worthwhile programs which they found inspired and supported their current and future involvement with arts-based service-learning.

- Provide a detailed contact list of conference attendees. Networking was a prime benefit and memorable experience for respondents. Being able to reconnect and build relationships begun at the conference adds to the bedrock of service-learning understanding and growth.
- Consider including more community members served. While community was the focus of the conference and community members served were present, the conference was overwhelmingly attended by educators. Including more community partners could serve to deepen the understanding of what it takes – roles and responsibilities – to work with community groups as well as further the rich range of examples so useful to conference attendees.
- Follow-up with 2006 attendees on their use of the *My Art...My World* publication. This publication was mentioned by only one respondent but provides useful information and resources for arts-based service-learning. Respondents most likely had not had an opportunity to carefully review this resource when the survey was completed.
- Encourage teachers and community partners to propose sessions/papers for next year. The data clearly showed that examples and ideas for “real” arts-based service-learning projects were found to be extremely useful.
 - Invite 2006 attendees who utilized *My Art...My World* to present their projects at a “Marketplace of Ideas” poster session.
 - Offer a “how to create a session proposal” workshop just after posting the 2007 call for presentations/papers.
 - Consider a set of working sessions to address specific issues that result in three to five publishable papers for the arts-based service-learning community.