

NOMINATION FORM
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICE LEARNING COMPETITION

Institution: Tri-County Technical College

Title of Project: MENTOR; Meeting Early Needs Through Oral Reading

Project Director: Meredith McClure

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Establishment Date of Project: Fall 2015

Unit That Administers Project: Early Childhood Development Program

Total Number of Students Involved: @20 TCTC ECD students per application

PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE GUIDELINES WHEN ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NOMINATED PROJECT:

- A. Insert your response after each question; the response to each question should be no more than one page.
- B. Refer to the accompanying rubric when responding to these questions, and provide responses that directly address each question.
- C. Respond to each question with appropriate detail so that the reader can clearly understand the particulars about your service learning project. *Assume the reader has no knowledge of your service learning project!*

1. For purposes of this competition, the Commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is *linked* in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution *and is related* to a college course with some type of reflection activity. How does your project meet the parameters of this definition?

The Early Childhood Development program at Tri-County Technical College has adopted a mission statement that says, "Through outstanding instruction, practical hands-on experience, and personal relationships, the Early Childhood Development program supports prepares, and empowers individuals from diverse backgrounds enabling them to make a positive impact in the Early Childhood community." In an effort to serve our mission, the ECD program has integrated a special service learning opportunity for students who are enrolled in ECD 131, Language Arts. Per the syllabus, "This course is a study of methods and materials in age appropriate language experiences. Opportunities are provided to develop listening, speaking, pre-reading, and prewriting skills through planning; implementation; and evaluation of media, methods, techniques, and equipment. Methods of selection, evaluation, and presentation of children's literature are included."

Through the MENTOR program, each ECD 131 student was partnered with a kindergarten student from LaFrance Elementary School, a Title 1 school located a few miles from the college. These kindergarten students were selected by their teachers due to needing additional support in reading and writing skills. The TCTC students were tasked with creating activities to engage these "At-Risk" children using strategies that had been introduced and studied during the lecture portion of the ECD 131 class. Before making their initial visit, each student was asked to write about his or her expectations for this project.

The ECD student learned methods for helping children develop language skills in the lecture portion of the course. At the end of the lecture, students were tasked to focus on a particular aspect of the lecture's content to create an active learning plan to implement with his or her kindergarten buddy. These included listening, reading, writing, and phonics skills. After each of the 25 minute, weekly visits, students were assigned reflection questions to contemplate and write about. Many of the reflections included satisfaction with their planned activities, but many others also shared that the experiences were eye opening and surprising. The activity level of the children, the short attention spans, and even blatant disinterest in the selected activities were all mentioned as TCTC student concerns. This created a disequilibrium for students and led to peer collaboration and attempts at new methods of encouraging the kindergarten buddy. As the semester continued, bonds were formed and growth was seen in both the kindergarten student and the TCTC ECD 131 student. As we shared observations and experiences in both small and whole group discussions, the concept of choosing Developmentally Appropriate Practices became very relevant. For a task to be DAP, it must be appropriate for a child in three ways; Age Appropriate, Individually Appropriate, and Culturally Appropriate. Again, these lessons were read in the text, but actually came to life when applied to the planning of activities for a particular child.

Our final reflections were very introspective and often very honest. The TCTC ECD 131 students all remarked at the importance of not only reading about topics and methods of language activities, but of also putting those ideas into practice with a real child. They became much more capable of flexibility in thinking and began to improve as task planners for their individual kindergarten buddy.

2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve?

The MENTOR project was designed to be implemented within the ECD 131 course. This is a recommended first semester ECD class. This service learning project is a required and graded part of the course. Every daytime ECD 131 student participates in the ECD 131 MENTOR project.

3. How many students (specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect?

ECD 131 enrollment is typically around 20 students. This course is taught in the fall semester, and this was the second application. ECD 131 students are usually in the first semester of the ECD program.

4. Describe the target community or communities your project serves.

La France Elementary School is located in Anderson County and is part of the Anderson School District 4 located in Pendleton, SC. This school is an arts focused creative learning environment and serves 421 students in 4K – 6th grade, with 51% of this population being eligible for free or reduced lunch. The school has a diversity score rating of 0.43, with 4% identifying as Hispanic, 16% as Black, 6% as multi-racial, and 74% as White. 64.3% of the LaFrance student population was listed as participating in Medicaid, SNAP, or TANF; homeless, foster, or migrant students. On the Spring 2015 SC School Report card, the LaFrance students were reported as having an 82% proficiency rate on the ACT Aspire testing for students in the 3-8 grade. The reading proficiency was reported at 40.6%, and writing was reported at 27.1%.

5. Describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community.

The Kindergarten teachers reported that the children who participated with a TCTC ECD MENTOR showed improvements in confidence levels and willingness to participate in class activities. The participating children also demonstrated growth and maturity that was noted by the TCTC ECD students in their reflections.

Anderson County reported 38.6% of children were living in single parent families and 41.5% of Anderson County births were to teen mothers between the ages of 15 and 19. While the exact impact upon the Kindergarten child's well-being may not be measurable, the addition of a responsive and engaged MENTOR was worth the time invested, if only for the social and emotional development supports that were fostered through the relationships built through the weekly reading and activity times spent together.

6. Describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning while providing specific examples of the service learning activities the college students engage in. Also explain how the service learning activities reinforce or apply what the college students learn in the classroom.

The MENTOR service learning project allowed the TCTC ECD 131 student to take classroom knowledge and apply it in a practical hands on application. This course has 9 Course Competencies that are each related to the NAEYC, ECD's accrediting body, standards. These Standards are also the ECD Student Learner Outcomes for the program. The MENTOR service learning opportunities course competencies address each of the 9 competencies.

- 1 Identify language arts activities that are appropriate for the different stages of development. (NAEYC 1a)
- 2 Utilize a variety of media, methods, techniques, and equipment to support age-appropriate language arts experiences for young children. (NAEYC 1c)
- 3 Interrelate language activities, in all areas of curriculum. (NAEYC 4b)
- 4 Present quality literature that is appropriate for various stages of development. (NAEYC 4c)
- 5 Print consistently with the style of manuscript that is used in public schools. (NAEYC 4d)
- 6 Explain typical patterns of language arts acquisition for children birth to age eight. (NAEYC 1a)
- 7 Explain the teacher's role in modeling Standard English for and with young children. (NAEYC 1b)
- 8 Explain the teacher's role with young children who speak another language or speak a dialect. (NAEYC 2b)
- 9 Identify common signs of and discuss the role of teachers' observations in identifying language delays. (NAEYC 3b)

Students are tasked with selecting appropriate literature materials to engage their Kindergarten Buddy, as well as to create engaging activities that give the child appealing opportunities to use writing skills, story telling skills, listening skills, and creativity. The reflections require the ECD 131 student to explain their rationale for material selection to demonstrate the understanding of the stage(s) of language development for his or her Kindergarten Buddy. The ECD 131 student also had to use appropriate manuscript printing skills for communication, model Standard English, and evaluate his or her Kindergarten Buddy's strengths and weaknesses.

The ECD 131 students were not tasked with investigating a community need, the project was already embedded in the course. However, each week, the ECD 131 student was required to synthesize the materials covered in class and to create connections between the course material and the individual needs of the Kindergarten Buddy that he or she was partnered with. Every week required investigation, planning, action, reflection, and demonstration of knowledge to be prepared for the MENTOR session. At the end of the semester, the ECD 131 students prepared a celebration activity to wrap up the time with the Kindergartners and to highlight the accomplishments achieved together. For the fall 2015 celebration, the ECD 131 students decided to use the school-wide Super Hero theme to plan a language game, healthy snacks, and to share the a special book that each ECD 131 student created as part of the course requirements. The ECD 131 students also decided to dress in super hero themed attire. (Pictures are attached.)

The weekly assigned reflections were also a valuable learning tool for each ECD 131 student to self-evaluate the activity preparation, delivery, and outcomes as well as the Kindergarten Buddy's development and cognition. Early Childhood Educators are expected to be reflective thinkers, and this was a concrete example of ways to do so. The ECD 131 students were asked to compare the expectations with the realities of the student experiences, to discuss the child's ability to attend to the planned activity, and to make the learning of the experience personal by sharing emotional responses, concerns, and opportunities for improvement in future applications.

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars.

This course is a required course for completion of the ECD degree program. Participation, activities, and reflections were all graded and counted towards the final grade awarded for ECD 131.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the project?

This project celebration was funded through the ECD student group's, Inspiring Futures, budget. It would be nice to expand the funding to include a celebration book and a t-shirt for each child and ECD 131 student who participate.

9. Add any other comments you may have about your project.

The MENTOR program was piloted in the fall of 2014. It was repeated in fall 2015, and will become an embedded Program High Impact Practice as part of the ECD program's fulfillment to the college's QEP for SACSCOS. This partnership has also led to the investigation of adding a service learning component to the ECD 133 , Math and Science Concepts, course.

You may also include supplemental information about the project (such as brochures, pictures, etc.).











