

Service at the Salado: Key Findings and Recommendations from Term 1

About the Students

From Service Learning Interns' Perspectives Using Pre- and Post-Surveys:

- In the use of protocols: Students improved significantly on asking questions and being able to identify patterns and make connections.
- Working in Teams: Students improved significantly in staying on task, collaborating with peers, and acting as leaders.

From the Interns' Focus Groups:

- *The students showed excitement every time they attend the club meetings. The students loved South Mountain. They got to complete their picture keys by using cameras to shoot pictures of plants and animals. Also, the students demonstrated their leadership skills by making sure everyone stayed with the group and on task.*

From the Students' Perspectives Using Pre- and Post-Surveys:

- The data collected from the students were too inconsistent to report any findings.

From the Evaluators' Perspectives: The evaluator and her assistant attended the display of the students' projects. The projects aimed to enhance the Rio Salado Park. Both evaluators were amazed by the uniqueness and creativeness of the projects. The project products included field guides, decorated trash barrels, casted stepping-stones, and other park objects. The evaluators interviewed several teams about their projects. Each team clearly explained what their project was about, why they chose their project, and demonstrated cooperation by letting each member participate in the explanations.

About the Service Learning Interns

Three focus groups (beginning, middle, and end of program) were conducted with the interns. In the first focus group the interns shared their apprehensions as well as their excitement about being involved with children. During the second focus, the interns shared their frustrations with the program but provided recommendations to improve it. Also, they felt ambivalent about being able to make a difference but yet unanimously agreed that they felt validated in being role models for the students. In the last session the interns were positive about their experiences claiming they learned a lot about teaching and managing children and about the Phoenix area. Some stated the experience inspired them to consider a teaching career.

Recommendations

The evaluator has discussed the findings on the problems with the program. Thus, it is recommended that:

- The interns be taught about action research and be held accountable for scheduled data collection.
- The students and interns actually get to work at the Rio Salado Park site.
- Reassess the curriculum for appropriate grade-level understanding.
- Provide dependable transportation.