

CPCC SERVICE-LEARNING *connections*



SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER FOR THE SERVICE-LEARNING CENTER AT CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Service-Learning and Student Success: A Strong Correlation!

Dean of Student Life and Service-Learning, Mark Helms, shares research results comparing student success of service-learning students to non-service-learning students for the past four years.

The Service-Learning Center has been working closely with the CPCC Office of Planning and Research to collect, analyze, and interpret research data focusing on the impact of service-learning on student success. Previous research at CPCC, and similar studies at other colleges and universities, suggest that students who participate in service-learning earn better grades and are more persistent and successful in their academic pursuits than other students who do not participate in service-learning. Our recent research efforts focused on 2773 CPCC students who enrolled in an academic course with a service-learning component between Fall Semester 2006 and Spring 2010. These students were compared to a randomly selected group of 4237 students who were enrolled in a different section of the same course during the same semester, but were not offered a service-learning component.

We collected the following data on these two groups of students: grades earned, completions and graduations, student retention from fall to spring semester, and student retention from fall to the subsequent fall semester. An overview of our results can be shown in the box to the right.

These initial research results are stunning, indicating that there is a very high correlation between service-learning and student success. But what does this really mean? Can we use this data to extrapolate that any student who enrolls in a service-learning course will enjoy a significantly greater likelihood of success at CPCC? Or does it mean that, since service-learning is nearly always presented as an optional component of a course, the students who follow through on a service-learning component are a self-selecting

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Assesment Results

- Service-learning students earn an A, B, or C and successfully complete their service-learning courses at a 23% higher rate than non-service-learning students enrolled in the same course, same semester.
- Service-learning students earn graduation credentials at a 17% higher rate than non-service-learning students.
- Service-learning students are retained as a CPCC student from Fall to Spring at a 20-25% higher rate than non-service-learning students.
- Service-learning students are retained as a CPCC student from Fall to Fall at a 13-23% higher rate than non-service-learning students.

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Proof in the numbers at Lincoln Heights

Dr. Amy Hawn-Nelson, a former administrator at Lincoln Heights Elementary, shares the impact of CPCC student and America Reads tutor Lashona Byrd.

AMERICA READS:
Making a
Difference

One person truly can make a difference, and CPCC student Lashona Byrd has done just that for a few lucky fifth graders.

At Lincoln Heights Elementary School, a K-5 grade school located in West Charlotte, the majority of students continue to read below grade level, with an overall reading proficiency of 49%. Even though our school succeeded in making improvements by meeting all goals, we still faced this major hurdle for student learning. After further analysis, we found that our students that were most behind were in the 5th grade.

As a school leadership team, we quickly decided that any extra support should be targeted at students working more than two levels below grade level. Since the beginning of fall 2010, Lincoln Heights has been a placement site for the Service-Learning Center's Federal Work-Study Program, America Reads. Back in August when we first met tutors for the academic year, we immediately knew that Lashona Byrd would be a great fit to work with our oldest students. Lashona would be responsible for helping re-establish the reading and comprehension abilities of these struggling fifth graders.

Ms. Byrd began working with small groups during the school day and after school. At any given time, Lashona could be seen working with up to five students at once. In these study sessions, she focuses on developing comprehension skills and, more importantly, reading fluency. While comprehension is important to a young student's education, many of our struggling readers are not fluent and struggle to sound-out words and read at a normal reading speed.

To track the students' progression, we tested their Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) or the speed they read a text fluently

with expression. In August, October, and December (see chart below). Not surprisingly, each of the five students Lashona worked with significantly increased their ORF scores during the fall semester alone.

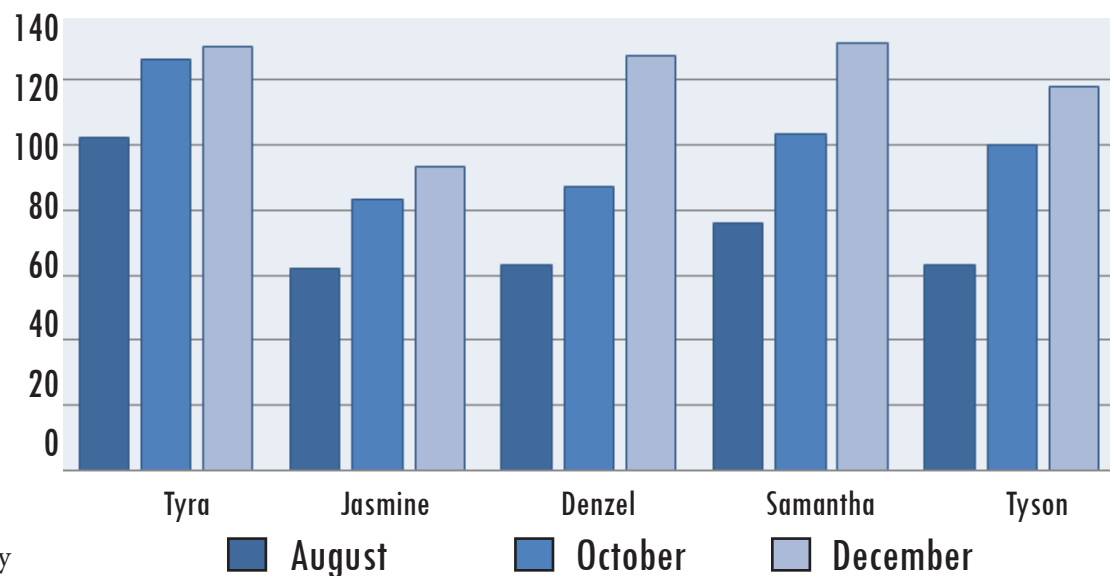
When asked about her time with Ms. Byrd, LHE student, Tyra, said, "She gets really excited when I do a good job." Jasmine, another student of Ms. Byrd's, said, "When I feel down [Lashona] tells me to keep on trying my best, so I do." Denzel talked about how Ms. Byrd has made his reading workshop time more interesting. He stated, "She tries to make our learning really exciting."

While the student comments are important, the proof is in the numbers. Through their work with Ms. Byrd and other America Reads tutors at Lincoln Heights, our students have not only gained important skills academically, but they have also benefitted from gaining confidence in their reading skills, developing personal connections with adults, and knowing that there are several adults who are willing to put in the time and energy to make sure they are achieving their goals. The service of our tutors and the time and relationships they are developing have made all the difference in the lives of many of our students.



Lashona Byrd (bottom left) reads to children at Lincoln Heights Elem.

Impact of Tutors on Oral Reading Fluency



Two sides of life: a student reflection

Service Club treasurer Ariel Sturdivant shares an excerpt from her CPCC World Religions class reflection paper, relating her service to Pema Chodron's *When Things Fall Apart*.



Ariel (second from left) volunteering with the Dept. of Natural Resources in Charleston SC. Ariel was part of a team helping to restore the habitat of oysters. Ariel currently has served over 70 hours with CPCC Service-Learning

My most memorable service event was playing bingo with the residents of Weddington Assisted Living in Matthews. When our Service in Action group first arrived, I felt uneasy; I was not used to being around elderly people. I only saw my grandparents twice a year, and besides them, my contact with senior citizens was limited.

Then the bingo game began. All the women at my table were capable of hearing, and acted offended when I tried to help. I was completely lost on what I was supposed to do or why they needed my service. I sat there and tried to put myself in their position, wondering what I would want if I was an old person, in a nursing home, surrounded by young people. Then it hit me: I would want them to not further remind me of my old age; talk to me like a person, not a senile old woman.

I let go of my assumptions about old people and began to see them for who they really were. I loosened up and began to talk with them, instead of at them. The conversation ranged from my lip piercings, to deceased husbands, to their children and grandchildren, and eventually to their own childhood. To my surprise, we had many things in common. Many laughs circulated around the table, and before the end of the day, we formed a special bond. I experienced a unique connection with these women, and I realize the bond between the old and the young is a beautiful thing.

In this one afternoon, those women made a positive impact on my life by opening my eyes to the false assumptions and stereotypes I held of the elderly. From speaking with them, I opened my mind, expanded my thoughts, and realized life

is a cycle and if we achieve old age it's a blessing rather than a curse.

This past year, service has taught me a lot of things, one being that suffering is a part of life we should all embrace. According to Chodron's book, without suffering, how valuable would happiness be? There will always be two sides of life such as pleasure and pain, praise and blame, old and

young, or gain and loss. Each word has either a negative or positive connotation, but negative or positive is only apart of our subjective reality.

For example, as people get older, birthdays turn from a positive time of the year to a negative one simply because the threat of old age and death lingers closer. However, death does not have to be a negative, as without it there could be no life. There has to be a balance in the world to

maintain stability. Without the Yin there could be no Yang. Without the old there could be no young. Without the poor there could be no rich. The main lesson I learned from this entire experience (serving others and reading *When Things Fall Apart*) is that we all have a role to play in this world. Regardless of the role (i.e., rich or poor, old or young), we will all encounter pain and suffering. However, our mind dictates how we deal with our circumstances and how we allow ourselves to perceive them. Service-learning opened me up to a whole new way of living and thinking. Through my own pain, I find compassion for all others. I no longer isolate myself, but instead become unified with others who are suffering. After all, we are all in this thing together.

“ There will always be two sides of life such as pleasure and pain, praise and blame, old and young...there has to be a balance in the world to maintain stability.

ARIEL STURDIVANT ”

EcoBox making strides in sustainable living

Service-Learning Coordinator Cassie Moore reports on the latest and greatest from Sustainable Technologies.



In 2008, CPCC faculty members DI Von Briesen and Terence Fagan were awarded a Faculty Fellowship for the academic year 2008-2009 to design and create a self-contained & environmentally sustainable workshop built from a standard shipping container.

In order for their idea to come to fruition, they were given half of their normal teaching load in order to have extra time to devote to such an ambitious undertaking. Ever since then and through the help of many faculty, staff, and students at the College, the EcoBox has been progressing nicely from a cold, metal box, to a happy, comfortable, and sustainable domicile that can comfortably accommodate two people for extended periods. In addition to windows and doors, the EcoBox includes all energy needs and waste disposal without connections to outside systems, excepting sunshine and rain.

The EcoBox attempts to create these spaces with minimal energy consumption and requirements, with minimal waste and footprint, and in a manner that is light on the land and temporary or semi-permanent (i.e. able to be disassembled and reconstructed elsewhere).

Essentially, the EcoBox would be a self-sufficient free-

standing structure. Because of this ability to be “off the grid”, it seeks to solve the demonstrated need of various community, industrial, government, and recreational needs such as:

- * Refugees
- * Homeless housing
- * Temporary housing
- * FEMA applications
- * First Responder office/HQ
- * Temporary Medical Office
- * Construction Management Office
- * Back-yard workshop
- * “Mother-in-law” Apartment
- * “Man Cave”
- * Artists-in-residence

Currently, the EcoBox sits on a trailer behind our Pease auditorium on Central Campus. It has a secondary 500sq. foot roof of galvanized steel and a gutter system. Therefore, it is able to capture over 300 gallons of water each time it rains an inch. 400W of solar panels also run through a system that charges eight batteries in two banks to create a 24Volt system. Indoor wiring can be tricky in a shipping container, so special equipment has been installed; residents of the EcoBox can control all of the lights with wireless switches!

Lots and lots of engineering, science, and good ol’ manual labor went into this project, and continue to do so. But why devote so much time and energy to such a project? Well, as DI puts it, “We are educators, visionaries, scientists, and children at heart. We are parents and siblings and care deeply about the world that our families are growing up in, and that our descendants will inherit.”

Top left picture: DI VonBriesen (right) prepares to install solar panels for the EcoBox.

Bottom right: The EcoBox at its former location behind the Kratt building.



For more information, visit <http://ecobox.me>

**CROWDER
CONSTRUCTION:
TURNING SERVING
INTO LEARNING**

Building a future, one home at a time

Instructor Rod Foley and his Carpentry 111 class team up with Olympic High School students to work on Habitat for Humanity home together.



The Fall 2010 semester presented a partnership opportunity with Olympic High School (OHS) that my Carpentry 111 class and I could not turn down. This partnership we were about to embark on would provide the opportunity for my students to provide meaningful service to the community in the form of a Habitat for Humanity Build, but it would also bridge the gap from high school to college for many OHS Vocational Students.

Currently, Olympic High School works as a feeder school for CPCC's Applied Technology Programs at the Crowder Construction Institute (CCI). OHS also actively raises funds for the construction of a Habitat Home and uses the construction of that home as a teaching practical for the high school students. Albert Ashley, Olympic HS Carpentry Instructor and graduate of the mid-1990's Carpentry Framing Program, asked if my Carpentry 111

class wanted to collaborate on the 2010-2011 build. I readily volunteered my class to help out as apart of their course work.

Although CCI has been a constant partner with Habitat for Humanity

for many years and projects, it is usually at the class' own pace. However, this collaboration called for a different recipe. In order to meet our commitment to the production schedule, the five students in the CAR 111 class had three days to start and finish installing over 1,900 sq. ft. of shingles and 48 ft. of ridge vent and shingle caps.

To my delight, my students came early and stayed late on all three production days despite a cloudy, cold and rainy forecast! Because of their efforts, a "dried in" house ensured Habitat for Humanity would stay on schedule with the work that followed by the OHS students. Because of the success of this project, my students not only helped a deserving homeowner from the Charlotte area, they also learned proper and effective roof lay-out & installation techniques.

Furthermore, about a week later when the CAR 111 class was working on another building, I could only watch (aside from an occasional suggestion, and carrying up the shingles for them to use) as my students used what they had learned from the OHS/CHfH project to independently set up and install another usable, safe, and properly installed roof.

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group, and are better prepared and more likely to succeed anyway? Bobbie Frye, CPCC Director of Institutional Research, has worked with First Year Experience Director Brad Bostian to develop a research method that may help answer these questions. Using a technique known as Propensity Modeling, Frye intends to create a second comparison group which will more closely match our service-learning students. Propensity Modeling involves utilizing comparison data based on additional criteria including age, race, gender, financial need, and full-time/part-time status. The added value of this new layer of research is that we will be more confident that we're "comparing apples to apples" when we compare grades, retention, and completion data for service-learning students with non-service-learning students. We look forward to analyzing the data after the Propensity Modeling adjustments have been made.

This new data supports existing research data and anecdotal information about the benefits of service-learning for our students. A high quality service-learning experience enhances student learning, provides meaningful job readiness and career exploration opportunities, and strengthens commitment to community engagement and volunteerism. Our service-learning students are serving the local community while they learn, meeting real needs, and helping make the Charlotte region a better place to learn, work, and live. It's clear that there are many good reasons for CPCC students and faculty to sign up for service-learning!



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Things happening around us...

- ▶ When registering for an upcoming semester, it will now be easier for students to search and register for service-learning courses and sections. A Service-Learning course offering guide has been created and hard copies will be available at all Student Success Centers on all campuses. An electronic PDF can also be viewed on our website.
- ▶ The Service-Learning Center is proud to announce new partnerships with In Good Company After School Program and Project Lead the Way, Inc (PLTW).
- ▶ Eleven students and two advisors traveled to Charleston, SC for Alternative Spring Break. The CPCC group spent the week creating care packages for Low Country Orphanage, building compost bins at Sweet Grass Co-op farm, and rebuilding Oyster habitats with the Department of Natural Resources.