



### Early Field Experiences for Pre-Service Teachers

This service learning project was first implemented by the University of South Carolina Aiken in Spring 2009. Pre-service teachers enrolled in an Adolescent Growth and Development class were asked to volunteer for 10 – 20 hours at a diverse, high-needs Title I middle school that was located less than three miles from the college campus. The teachers had expressed a need for hands-on help in their classrooms, and this project grew out of that need. Each pre-service teacher was paired with a classroom teacher and matched by content area. The data suggests that this approach has worked well. Classroom teachers have become mentor teachers, and pre-service teachers have gained valuable field experience early in their teacher preparation program.

Qualitative data was collected through written reflections, open-ended questions, and exit interviews. The comments were organized to reflect common themes including “Cultural Responsiveness,” “Making a Difference,” and “Life Changing Experience.” Pre-service teachers and mentor teachers also evaluated the experience each semester using a five-point Likert scale.

This study was sponsored by the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Middle-level Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching (CE-MIST). The purpose of CE-MIST is to develop and model state-of-the-art in-service and pre-service teacher training programs that concentrate on interdisciplinary curriculum development and implementation at the middle school level. CE-MIST is made possible under a grant from the SC Commission on Higher Education under the auspices of the Education Improvement Act (EIA) Teacher Education Centers of Excellence Grant Program.

For more information about this project, please contact Deborah McMurtrie at [DeborahMc@usca.edu](mailto:DeborahMc@usca.edu) or Bridget Coleman at [BridgetC@usca.edu](mailto:BridgetC@usca.edu).

#### IMPACT DATA

Semester	Number of Pre-Service Teachers	Number of Mentor Teachers	Number of Service Learning Hours
	<i>n</i> =		
Spring 2009	24	**0	412
Fall 2009	21	10	303
Spring 2010	25	12	410
Fall 2010	19	10	304
Spring 2011	21	10	350
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1,779</b>

\*\* Paraprofessional proctors were used instead of mentor teachers Spr 09

### Pre-Service Teacher Comments: Cultural Responsiveness

- My experience at LMMS was definitely an eye-opener. I was around an environment that I wasn't raised in, so it was shocking to hear about family and home situations.
- On one of my visits I helped a Mexican student who did not speak good English at all. He did not know what the teacher had said while she was explaining the lesson. After about ten minutes of me re-explaining it to him, it seemed to click. This really made my day.
- It was shocking to see how grown up these 13 and 14 year olds were, and some of the things they talked about (pregnancy, sex, and drugs).
- Kids are kids everywhere; their socioeconomic status doesn't matter. This made me realize that my job is to teach, educate, and motivate students, no matter where I am. This job is not about me; it's about the kids I will have a positive impact on.

### Pre-Service Teacher Comments: Making a Difference

- I felt I connected with some of the students. A lot of them are smart and downplay their potential. I enjoyed talking to them and encouraging them.
- I helped them with homework and by listening and showing I cared. The students gave me insight into their lives, thoughts, struggles, and successes.
- With a little understanding and showing her that I cared, one student opened right up to me. She was in the habit of not turning in her homework and by the end of my time, she was turning in her assignments and focusing better in class. I realized that this particular instance is really what teaching is about, touching lives.

### Pre-Service Teacher Comments: Life Changing

- This has been a life changing experience for me. I will definitely take the things I have learned and apply them to my job as an educator in the future.
- I had never considered teaching in middle school but because of this placement, I learned that I am passionate about this age group. I am changing my major to middle-level education.
- I realized why I want to become a teacher. I want to be able to help change children's lives, and help them become something greater than they were before they met me. I wouldn't have been able to come to this conclusion if it wasn't for this assignment.
- I had lost my vision, my passion, and my desire to become a teacher at one point this semester....[This project] has encouraged me to keep striving to do my best so that I can impact the lives of adolescents through teaching.
- At the beginning of this semester I was planning to teach high school chemistry; however, I recently changed my major to middle level math and science because of the things that I have seen during my service learning.
- I enjoyed the middle school grade level more than I really thought that I would. After observing at this middle school my whole train of thought has changed.



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For more information about this project, go to:  
<http://rpsec.usca.edu/Presentations/AMLE2011/>

### Pre-Service Teachers' Evaluations

110 Surveys from Spring 2009 – Spring 2011

Using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate the following:

1. My service learning placement helped middle school students.
2. My service learning placement helped middle school teachers.
3. This experience gave me new insights into adolescent development.
4. This experience provided opportunities for professional growth.
5. This experience increased my confidence in working with students.
6. The classroom teacher was a positive role model for instruction.
7. My knowledge and interest in middle level education increased.
8. I had opportunities to work effectively with at-risk students.
9. This experience will positively affect my teaching.
10. I would recommend this service learning placement to others.

### Mentor Teachers' Evaluations

42 Surveys from Fall 2009 – Spring 2011

Using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate the following:

1. This service learning placement helped middle school students.
2. This service learning placement helped middle school teachers.
3. Pre-service teachers gained new insights into adolescent development.
4. This experience provided opportunities for professional growth.
5. Pre-service teachers gained confidence in working with students.
6. Pre-service teachers were positive role models for students.
7. Pre-service teachers showed interest in middle school students.
8. Pre-service teachers worked effectively with at-risk students.
9. This experience positively affected our school.
10. I would recommend continuing this service learning placement.

**PRE-SERVICE TEACHER DATA (Mean Scores)**

	Spr 09	Fall 09	Spr 10	Fall 10	Spr 11
	$\bar{x} =$				
<b>Q 1</b>	4.38	4.05	3.75	3.95	3.95
<b>Q 2</b>	3.75	4.26	4.00	4.05	4.05
<b>Q 3</b>	4.83	4.84	4.58	4.47	4.68
<b>Q 4</b>	4.71	4.79	4.42	4.58	4.63
<b>Q 5</b>	4.29	4.42	4.46	4.37	4.47
<b>Q 6</b>	3.00	4.32	4.42	4.26	3.84
<b>Q 7</b>	4.00	4.26	3.79	4.11	3.95
<b>Q 8</b>	4.33	3.95	3.46	3.74	3.78
<b>Q 9</b>	4.58	4.74	4.71	4.74	4.47
<b>Q 10</b>	4.58	4.74	4.46	5.00	4.63

**MENTOR TEACHER DATA (Mean Scores)**

	Spr 09	Fall 09	Spr 10	Fall 10	Spr 11
	$\bar{x} =$				
<b>Q 1</b>	**	3.80	4.00	4.40	4.22
<b>Q 2</b>	**	3.60	4.17	4.40	4.56
<b>Q 3</b>	**	4.40	4.50	4.75	4.89
<b>Q 4</b>	**	3.90	4.33	4.50	4.67
<b>Q 5</b>	**	4.00	4.17	4.40	4.11
<b>Q 6</b>	**	4.10	4.25	4.40	4.33
<b>Q 7</b>	**	4.20	4.17	4.63	4.56
<b>Q 8</b>	**	3.90	3.75	4.40	4.22
<b>Q 9</b>	**	4.00	4.33	4.63	4.67
<b>Q 10</b>	**	4.50	4.75	4.63	5.00

\*\* Paraprofessional proctors were used instead of mentor teachers