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“College, Community, Collaboration: A Professional Development School Model” (C3)

Birmingham-Southern College

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\$6,500

1. Original goals included for C3 included:

1. The strengthening of partnerships between B-SC and its community,
2. Improved quality of teaching and learning experiences for Woodrow Wilson Elementary teachers and students,
3. Access to ability-appropriate resources for Woodrow Wilson students,
4. The practice and sharing of teaching pedagogy and knowledge by B-SC education majors, and
5. B-SC education faculty will be able to reflect, reinforce, and reaffirm that our program for teacher education truly embodies our philosophies and practices about teaching.

Ultimately, workshop pedagogy curriculum, article collections, text set lists, and operations and assessments of C3’s tutoring program can be published, presented, and disseminated as a model for other Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) institutions.

2. Goals and objectives had to be altered slightly due to the unfortunate passing of Woodrow Wilson’s principal in May of last year. Therefore, Woodrow Wilson teachers were unable to attend workshops.

However, Woodrow Wilson students were still able to participate and in order to reach more children the boundaries of the community outreach were expanded to include other Birmingham City Schools, such as Central Park Elementary, and Rutledge Middle School.

3. The following goals and objectives were met:

1) The partnerships between B-SC and its community were strengthened through increased awareness of the Bunting Center programs and interdisciplinary cooperation between and within campus departments.

Specifically, the education department became a more viable, active participant in the campus community,

2) Ability text sets were purchased and made available for B-SC tutors and Birmingham City School students,

3) Tutoring curriculum was created and a workshop facilitated by B-SC students and faculty with additional resources made available online, and

4) Students and faculty are working together on continual best practices for educating tutors and writing materials for publication and dissemination.

4. Evaluation of school test scores was not used, as was originally planned, due to the unfortunate passing of the Woodrow Wilson principal in May of last year. The new principal, in taking on her new role, was difficult to reach, and Woodrow Wilson teachers were not able to participate in the tutoring workshops. Utilizing assessments comparable to *AfterSchool* curriculum to analyze initial miscues and plan subsequent tutoring lessons, the B-SC tutors monitored the progress of Birmingham City School children. All children showed improvement in reading achievement with the exception of one student, whose assessment data was used for special education evaluation and eventual placement.

Further assessment of the tutoring program was conducted by short, open-ended surveys requesting the comfort-levels of tutor volunteers before and after the tutoring workshop. An email survey was sent to tutor volunteers at the end of the semester requesting their evaluation on the success of their tutoring and their evaluation of the materials provided.

Survey sent to Student Volunteers via Email before tutor training workshop

1. Have you tutored students in the past?
2. Have you had any guidance on the way to best tutor students in your subject area?
3. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being most comfortable), rate your comfort level in tutoring students in your subject area.

Survey sent to Student Volunteers via Email after tutor training workshop

1. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being most comfortable), rate your comfort level in tutoring students in your subject area, after the tutor workshop.
2. Do you feel your student had a greater understanding/knowledge of the subject areas after your tutoring sessions? Please provide examples.
3. Please describe the most beneficial resource/ information from the tutor

Out of the 25 tutors, 16 responded with varying levels of comfort with none self-rating themselves higher than a 3 before the tutor training. 10 had some past experiences in tutoring and all 16 had worked with children in some avenue. The same 16 students shared an increase in comfort levels of 1 to 2 points after the tutor workshop.

Unfortunately, most respondents did not elaborate a great deal about the workshop benefits other than they were grateful to have the resources and stating that they felt much more prepared to work with the students in the schools and had a better understanding of how to include student interest in their teaching. One student commented, "This makes me feel so much more competent as a tutor. I know what I should listen and look for in reading learning. It had never been explained to me that way before."

5. Upon completion of this project, we feel that it would have been valuable to meet with community stakeholders, specifically principals before starting the program. This would have enabled us to provide an outline of the program and hopefully recruit larger numbers of children and teachers. Additionally, including the B-SC students more in this planning process would have helped to provide them with even more ownership of the program and the results from the tutoring. It was often difficult to communicate with the student volunteers in other departments. In the initial project, B-SC education students were asked to help the Bunting Center recruit volunteers for tutoring and the tutoring workshop. We realized through this project that our students are by in large not invested in the Bunting Center on campus. As a result, the students proved to be ineffective recruiters, which seems to explain the small number of student volunteers. This was an unexpected shortcoming which has encouraged us to work towards more inter-campus participation for our students. Due to this finding, we have begun work on a service learning experience, slated to begin Fall 2011.

Additionally, we believe that many students shy away from tutoring because of their fear of "not knowing what to do" once they are sitting in front of the children. Ultimately, as word of our program spreads, we hope they will be more willing to attempt tutoring with the understanding that they will have support and guidance.

6. Many faculty, after hearing about this project, requested more information from B-SC Education faculty regarding teaching pedagogy and knowledge. Many recounted that they were unprepared to provide feedback to our secondary education majors when observing in the field. Based on these insecurities, many faculty requested a workshop on pedagogy, similar to the methods used in the tutoring workshop, which would prove to be beneficial to the entire campus. We are currently looking to schedule time with faculty in Spring 2012.

7. C3 ignited education students to feel more included within the campus. The culture within the education department at B-SC has often been a cloistering of talent and resources. The education students and faculty have not felt as instrumental in the college as a whole. With the tutoring workshop, the education faculty and students were able to utilize their talents and resources for the good of the college and the community.

While we believe that teaching is an art form, we also know that with some very practical knowledge, tutors can be more effective and feel more useful. The purpose of the tutoring workshop was to educate B-SC tutors in research-based, pedagogically sound strategies, and provide easily available resources to improve the tutoring outreach to Birmingham City Schools.

8. B-SC education students had their knowledge valued by other departments and this led to a more inclusive, true liberal arts feeling overall. Non-education majors who helped with the tutoring felt more comfortable working with children and many appreciated the pedagogical knowledge they acquired, feeling it would serve them in other avenues of their lives as leaders. Education students' abilities to articulate their knowledge was increased as well as their abilities to translate what they learned to future educational situations. In the case of tutors who were not education majors, the tutor workshop provided greater insight into the literacy acquisition process.

9. B-SC education students who were involved will submit a proposal to present findings from this project in poster form at the Mid-South Reading and Writing Conference during the summer of 2012. Additional campus and professional journals (i.e., *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Reading Education*, and *The Alabama Reading Journal*) will be reviewed for possible article submission. The results of this study have not yet been disseminated to those involved in the ASC.

10. Currently, we are working on an article on the creation of a constructivist teacher education program within a liberal arts setting in which data and information from this project is being used. Additionally, an article on the actual project will be pieced together after a year of data is collected, allowing for more reliable results and conclusions to be discussed. Possible journal submissions will be sent to *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Reading Education*, and *The Alabama Reading Journal*.

11. Another tutor workshop will be held in September of 2011. At the conclusion of the fall semester, the data collected from another semester using the program will be analyzed and used for publication to broaden the scope of the results. Finally, the written tutoring materials created by B-SC faculty and students will be uploaded and available for assimilation to other teacher education programs.

12. Our curriculum and instruction for the tutoring workshop was based upon a compilation of materials from PEAR (Programs in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency) and SEDL (Southwest Education Development Laboratory). Because the majority of the materials for the workshop were accessed online, the need for the workshop materials and supplies was avoided all together. Text sets and a resource library were purchased out of the budget from the C3 project. The total amount of money spent on resources was \$4000. Please refer to attached expenditure breakdown.

13. The professional development program, “College, Community, Collaboration: A Professional Development School Model” (C3), was a combined effort between Birmingham-Southern College and Birmingham City Schools. The project was developed to draw upon the vast resources of Birmingham-Southern College (B-SC), one of the most prestigious colleges in the state of Alabama, located just west of downtown Birmingham. Close-by are several public schools where individual attention for academically struggling students is needed. During the past 15 years, B-SC’s Bunting Center of Engaged Learning and Community Action has responded to this great need by providing undergraduate volunteers to work with students from these impoverished schools. Although altruistic in their ambitions, the B-SC undergraduates admitted to being skilled in their curriculum knowledge but desperately lacking in the pedagogical skills necessary to work with elementary school children. One B-SC participant said that he knew, “a lot about math,” but wasn’t sure if he could even “recognize a first-grader!” Moreover, meager resources for urban school programs have allotted limited student supplies and minimal support.

Through monies provided from the ACS Faculty Renewal Grant, B-SC’s education faculty and education majors designed and implemented a pedagogical-training workshop for the B-SC tutor volunteers. Workshop

participants received training, online resources, and student interest text sets as supplemental teaching materials for their students. With this program, the B-SC students were able to more effectively tutor in their major areas of study through a literacy lens.

The C3 project inspired a training program that; 1) improved the quality of tutoring, learning experiences, resources, and reading abilities for Birmingham City School students, 2) strengthened the partnerships between B-SC and its community, and 3) provided experience to B-SC pre-service teachers that enabled them to practice and share their knowledge of teaching pedagogy.