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***Reflection: So to Teach, So to Serve, So to Live***

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in a professional education conference. I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent networking and discussing issues of education with other pre-service and classroom teachers. Not only was it a privilege meeting these people, but it was a breath-taking experience to know thousands of influential teachers will soon be entering the profession. In addition, it was a humbling experience to meet and listen to teachers who have made an impact in many children's lives. Throughout the conference when attending the many insightful sessions and presenting our Reading Is Fun community service project, I gain a deeper knowledge about my future profession.

Presenting at this conference was not only a great honor, but also a significant learning experience. The planning and preparation involved with this presentation provided me the opportunity to further develop my leadership skills. As the lead presenter, I coordinated many of the details and organization of the presentation. However, I developed my communication, delegation, and time management skills from being part of the presentation team. The main purpose of our presentation was to inform other members about our community service project, which provided kindergarten students from one of Cape Girardeau's lower socio-economic elementary school different activities relating to reading, higher education, and careers. From our presentation, we networked with members from different states and offered them a resource and guide to complete a similar project. The most powerful aspect was others saying they want to perform a similar community service project to help the children in their own communities. Most importantly, after all our hard work in planning and presenting, our presentation, which

was a concrete display of our chapter making a difference in children's lives, influenced and motivated others to give and serve to children in a similar powerful and meaningful way.

One of the first sessions I attended called "Welcome to America! 10 Essential Teaching Qualities for Introducing ELLs to Your Classroom" was one of the best experiences I had at the conference. One of the individuals presenting the session was a college student who experienced the English as Second Language program as a fourth grade student from Vietnam. For the first three minutes of the session, she spoke to us in Vietnamese and mocked how it feels as a non-English speaking individual inside a classroom. After those three minutes, I felt very discouraged and frightened, similar to the way she and many other children feel everyday in English speaking classrooms. The presenter talked about her education experiences and how she struggled to fully participate in and enjoy school. She provided several suggestions to make a student, who has no or limited English language skills, feel comfortable and accepted within the classroom. My favorite tips are using hands-on experiences, incorporating the student's culture into lessons and visuals on the walls, and make the child just as important as the next child not because he/she is different but because he/she is a student in your classroom. Wanting to become a special education teacher and knowing many of these students are misdiagnosed and placed into special education services, this session taught me valuable lessons. On Tuesday, I went to my field experience, where I am working with kindergarten and first grade students who are mildly mental retarded with very limited language skills, understanding their frustrations when they are communicating with others. Therefore, I have learned to introduce new words with visuals or demonstrations and speak slower, more clearly, and simpler. I have and will continue using some of this presenter's suggestions when interacting with individuals whose native language is not English.

Another session I felt was beneficial for my future as a teacher was “Using Literacy Totes to Support Home-School Connections.” Five college students from Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg presented the concept of improving a child’s literacy and family involvement through literacy totes. Basically, the tote contains a book and activities for the students and may be one of their family members to complete. Not only is it important to involve the family members in the students’ learning, but also it allows the students to increase their skills in and attitudes about literacy in the home environment as well as in the school. The literacy totes can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of all students’ reading abilities and learning styles. These modifications provide the students with literature on their instructional reading level, which increasing their fluency, comprehension, and attitudes towards reading. Therefore, when working with special education students, who are struggling readers, I think using the literacy tote will help the student feel privileged to experience a book with their family. In addition, the literacy tote is a new and exciting way for students to read. Instead of just simply bringing any book home, they are taking one of the teacher’s books in a special bag with fun activities inside. It becomes like a present, but instead of it being a toy, it is the gift of literacy.

I have already applied directly the knowledge and skills from presenting and attending these two sessions explained and many others to my field experience classroom and I will continue to use them in my future classroom. With every day of the conference, I meet more individuals, who like me want to make that difference in children’s lives. I left the conference enthused about entering the teaching profession and helping children every day. Through listening to several different sessions and interacting with others during the conference, I feel empowered to carry out the Kappa Delta Pi mission of “so to teach, so to serve, so to live.”