College of Education Service-Learning Profile

Chris Hanks

ED 180 Introduction to Teaching

Because policy changes currently under consideration would require students applying to the College of Education to complete 25 hours of volunteer work in a diverse education setting, the SEFT department (Special Education, Foundations, and Technology) created a one-credit course for prospective students to complete their hours in a structured setting where they truly grapple with a range of educational topics. Students are not required to take the course; they are able to complete their requirements independently. However, this offers students a structured option that is sure to be meaningful and relevant to both the application process for the College of Education and their future endeavors in education.

Fall 2011

This semester marks the first implementation of this course. Since it is being piloted for possible expansion, there are currently two courses of approximately 10 students each who meet at the Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center, a Reggio Emilia inspired school in Grand Rapids Public Schools. Classes are structured for inquiry- and project-based learning, in which students develop a series of questions to a problem and work together to solve the problem. Such a school setting allows for great volunteer participation in a diverse setting, and is therefore an ideal fit for the ED 180 coursework. Each week, students meet with Dr. Hanks for five minutes to quickly debrief and exchange paperwork. Then the GVSU students move to their respective classes and begin participating in one-on-one or small group tutoring, project/station management with small groups, or any other student-centered task the teacher assigns. Away from class, students participate in an online discussion board, where they can further process and share their experiences.

The course requires that GVSU students read and respond to five articles on education related to the work they do at the Child Development Center, ranging from issues such as diversity, service-learning, and social class. They also fill out a detailed reporting sheet that helps them track and explain the hours they have completed. Each student is observed twice throughout the semester and is given specific feedback about their effectiveness in the classroom. Finally, two reflective essays are due by the end of the course, which the prospective COE students can submit as part of their required submissions when applying to the College of Education.