College of Education Service-Learning Profile

Susan Carson

ED 315 Diverse Perspectives in Education

In the middle of the Fall 2011 semester, City Middle/High School (Grand Rapids Public Schools) administration approached Dr. Carson about inclusion issues. They reported that the programming for City students had so intensely ignited their passion on the subject that they wanted to work with the College of Education to provide supplementary programming in order to address student needs. This provided Dr. Carson with a very meaningful community issue that could be very applicable to the learning outcomes of the course.

Fall 2011

Instead of waiting a semester to ensure that City Middle/High’s needs were met, Dr. Carson found a way to begin with her current class and allow for the work to build onto programming in the winter. She brought Chad Beyer, an inclusion expert, into her class to talk about working on such issues with City students. Chad was a part of the conversations with City administration early on, and was working to develop the program with Dr. Carson. This semester, Dr. Carson’s students would be gathering information on school climate from City students.

Dr. Carson’s three classes coincided with three large groups—the entire 10th grade—of City students to work with for an hour. On the day of the event, Dr. Carson’s students debriefed with Chad at City Middle/High School before students arrived. In smaller groups facilitated by three COE students each, students responded to a variety of questions regarding school climate at City. COE students recorded City student responses and groups gathered together to report on results. At the end of each session, Dr. Carson and Chad debriefed with COE students.

For next semester, Dr. Carson’s incoming students will use the information gathered at this initial event to plan for inclusion activities throughout the winter and spring.