Community/Public Service Worksheet

Service Category: Educational Outreach Programs

Title: Elementary Family Nights

Primary UA Contact(s):
- Dr. Dee Goldston (name)
- Dr. Janie Hubbard (name)

Science Education (Office)
Social Studies Education (Office)

Community Partner(s) (If any):
- (name)
- (name)
- (Organization)
- (Organization)

Program Description: Elementary School Family Nights: Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction hosts Family Nights at elementary schools. In collaboration with the schools’ administrators, teachers, and PTA, one or more content areas are chosen as the focus of the evening: literacy, mathematics, science, and/or social studies. School Family Nights involve parents in working on activities with help from our undergraduate elementary education majors (pre-service teachers) and faculty. Parents learn how to assist their children with follow-up activities at home.

Objectives/Outcomes:
A) To build relationships with local schools by providing hands-on opportunities for children, parents and teachers to interact with each other through highly engaging science and social studies activities.
B) To provide UA pre-service teachers opportunities to interact with children and their parents while teaching social studies and science activities in an informal setting.
C) To provide UA pre-service teachers opportunities for community service.
D) To provide Alternative Certification Masters’ degree pre-service teachers with opportunities to learn ‘teacher leader’ skills.

Assessment Measures:
A measure of assessment is in the numbers of participants involved with the activity. The number of parents, guardians, and children tripled from the first time this was conducted. This year we had a large number of teachers present, which was not the case the first year. Through Family Nights, relationships have developed between teachers and UA educators who are now collaborating on research. Pre-service teachers' verbal and written accounts of the experiences acknowledge the value of doing such service. Elementary school administrators, children, parents, and guardians respond with sincere appreciation and invitations for annual Family Nights.

Results:
A) By engaging UA pre-service teachers in Family Nights, they learn how to use their elementary education skills and knowledge to serve and interact with families in local communities.
B) UA pre-service teachers learn how to collaborate and work toward a
common goal with different stakeholders within various communities. C) Alternative Certification Masters' degree level pre-service teachers learn 'teacher leader' skills as they are given great responsibility in planning, organizing, implementing, and managing the events with Elementary Education faculty. D) Collaborative partnerships are forged between the UA Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the local schools and community members. E) For some Family Nights, UA cross-discipline relationships occur through volunteer performance and/or collaboration (e.g., UA Afro-American Choir (Music Department), Holmes Scholar). F) Elementary students benefit through community and parental involvement in their academic lives.

Conclusions:

In sum, we engage in Family Night outreach by considering the overall needs of local schools; our most recent events were held at Crestmont Elementary School located in the Tuscaloosa County School District (Fall 2013 Semester) and University Place Elementary School located in the Tuscaloosa City School District (Spring 2014 Semester). We have found that the Family Night outreach program has benefited all participants; children, families, in-service teachers, administrators, UA pre-service teachers, and UA pre-service teacher faculty in each school community. We collaborate to work toward common goals, which are to provide the children with stimulating, academic, hands-on activities and the means for families to help their children. We are proud of the success that has been achieved with this particular outreach program and look forward to opportunities to serve others in the future.

Improvement Actions:

Need for better advertising for the event through the school and other venues. Set up a system to identify other schools interested in having Family Nights. Identify community partners to sponsor the events.