



Minneapolis Campus students integrate in the community

by Jennifer Haut While most students and faculty are taking it easy during the long weeks of January, several faculty and students from the associate programs on the Minneapolis campus were delving into the community, learning how their health profession would impact the greater world through CIL 150 courses. An interdisciplinary team of faculty teaches CIL 150, or Core Integrated Learning, Transcultural Learning through Community Connections. The purpose of the course is to develop student's self-awareness with emphasis placed on the development of culturally competent communication and an understanding of social justice issues as they relate to

healthcare fields. Though the class is offered each semester, the greatest number of these courses is taught during January. This past J-term, five courses took place on the Minneapolis campus and out in the community at various sites that enabled students to practice cultural communication skills and apply the social justice that is core to the course out into the community setting. Many of these sites have worked with CIL students in past semesters and were eager to have St. Kate's students during January. I had the opportunity to visit each of the sites and engage in conversations about the work with the students. As the theme of charity versus justice resounded, it was apparent the mission of the course was fulfilled.

CIL 150: Jane Addams School for Democracy

The philosophy of Jane Addams School for Democracy is based on a fundamental philosophy of citizenship—the concept of public work. The school works within the community bringing together a diverse and dynamic concept of democracy and citizenship. Participants gather at Humboldt High School on St. Paul's West Side on Monday and Wednesday evenings to engage in conversations and learning about what it means to be a citizen. The participants come from diverse backgrounds and meet in one of five learning circles, including Spanish, Hmong, East African, Children's and a Hmong Teen circle. One of the values at Jane Addams is that everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner. Before the circles begin, reflection sessions are held for participants at Jane Addams, including many college students who come to participate in the work.

During J-term, a group of St. Kate's CIL students met twice a week at Jane Addams. On one of their last days on site, I listened in on the reflection session centered on democracy and what it means to be a citizen. At the end of the term, the students shared their experiences from the semester—what surprised them, what they learned about the participants, and how they would take the experience with them once the class was over.

A concept that was shared during the reflection was you are never too old to learn and never too young to teach. One student shared her experience working with a man that spoke Spanish. When she later realized he also could speak English she wondered why he participated at Jane

Addams, but then she found out he was there to learn how to write in another language. Other students worked with participants studying for their citizenship test. They reflected on how tired they were after studying the monotonous facts on the tests and could empathize with the men and women who were worn out memorizing facts that didn't seem to make a difference whether or not a citizen knew them. "What do those facts matter?" a student asked. "It should be about the hopes and dreams you want to accomplish here. What does it [citizenship test] have to do with being a good citizen?"

A St. Kate's student remarked that situations he learned in class mirrored his experience at Jane Addams, particularly as it related to healthcare. A student made a comment that she was able to learn much more from the class by being immersed in the community as well. Faculty member Kari Smalkoski spoke highly of the course and the site, saying, "Jane Addams is an amazing community site for students to have hands-on experiences learning about immigration issues and citizenship. So many positive things came out of the course this semester. Students learned a great deal about their own biases, misperceptions and feelings toward immigrants. They learned factual information about why immigrants come to the U.S. and the challenges that immigrants face while here. They also learned some powerful lessons about stereotyping and interacting with people who come from a different language and/or cultural background."

CIL 150: Roosevelt High School

One section of CIL 150, taught by Merry Richards and Bev Tuckwell, held class at Roosevelt High School. There, St. Kate's students worked one-on-one or in small groups tutoring the high schoolers.

At the beginning of the semester, I had the opportunity to meet with the class and engage in a conversation about social justice. Each of the CIL courses includes readings and lessons centered upon social justice teachings, particularly with how it relates to the health-care profession. Faculty member Merry Richards noted that, "The course puts sensitive cultural and racial issues right on the table in a safe atmosphere of inquiry and discovery. We all found the readings inspirational and sometimes eye-opening." When I visited the class, it wasn't clear just yet how working with high school students would be a model of charity based work, or if it would move to principles of social justice.

On the last day of the semester, I again visited the class at Roosevelt. The students in this section enlightened me on what they had taken part in the previous few weeks. For the most part, they shared positive experiences of working with students on subjects such as geometry or chemistry, and they joked that they had to brush up on those subjects that seemed so distant from their own high school education. Even in some classes where the Roosevelt students were disruptive or harder to control, a lesson was learned from these situations. Now, the conversation of charity versus justice was understood.

For Khadra Abdulle, a Roosevelt graduate, she recognized how many more opportunities the students have now that she didn't. Though it was sometimes frustrating working with the students, she enjoyed working with

them. She could tell the impact of having more volunteers, and that students could get more attention than they sometimes could with just one teacher in the room. This factor crossed into our earlier conversation about the systemic justice of public schools and the amount of funding allotted for additional classroom help.

The justice aspect went far beyond the funding structure. A few weeks at Roosevelt allowed Becky Allen to see how the justice in this situation is challenged. She commented on entering the school and seeing cops outside: "How do you learn in that environment? They have no safety, the focus is gone," she commented. She realized now that the students might have acted out to get attention or because at that age, there is pressure to conform. Barbara Portillos saw it too. While tutoring, she overheard a student telling another that the lights in his house were



Becky Allen (above) and Dave Myhre (right) work with the Roosevelt High School students integrating a healthy food lesson into their classroom work.



turned off because they couldn't pay the bill and his family had been eating crackers all week. "It's hard to focus and learn

when you're hungry," Becky added.

Beth Dodd agreed, taking into consideration why some of the students acted the way they did. "You don't just give them the answers; you help them help themselves, give them the tools to get out of the situation," she said about her experience in a difficult classroom. Becky concluded by commenting on how powerful it was for teenagers to see older adult learners—to have them realize that life might not always turn out as planned or that different paths are taken along the way. The impact that was left extended to both the students at Roosevelt and from St. Kate's. Merry Richards summed it up by saying, "The experience at Roosevelt brought out feelings of empathy, empowerment, and justice within our students. They overcame their own fears of inadequacy and saw how a single person can affect the lives of others. The Roosevelt students were appreciative and got a chance to see that there are people out there who care about their success."

CIL 150: Anishinabe Academy

Anishinabe Academy serves as an America Reads site during the fall and winter semesters. When students are away for the long January break, the Minneapolis campus students fill a much-needed void working with elementary and middle school students at this Native American magnet school.

During the term, as with most other CIL courses, the class was held at the community site and was taught by Damon Klaphake and Julie Ashland. The structured time together was broken down into classroom instruction and time to work at the community site. Many of the classes also took time after the community work to return to regular instruction to engage in conversation about the events that had just taken place.

I visited the St. Kate's students at Anishinabe near the end of their semester when they were discussing charity versus justice. As Professor Damon Klaphake led the class in this discussion, he asked about the difference between the two. Students commented that with the notion of charity, they feel guilty and question themselves—why don't we do this more? The CIL course made it possible for them to feel more connected to the community amidst their busy schedules. They

cited feeling useful and helpful to the children at Anishinabe. "Giving money doesn't feel as good as helping the kids," one student remarked.

"The kids don't see it as charity. They don't know why, you're just here to help," a St. Kate's student explained. The class had seen in just a few weeks on site the difference a role model made in the lives of the children, though they wondered what might happen after they leave. They hoped to leave a lasting effect, but at the same time questioned how many other volunteers or mentors had entered in and out of these children's lives. They hoped they had at least helped the Anishinabe students realize they were just like them once, and now they've made it to college. In the big picture of charity versus justice, what took place in January at Anishinabe Academy could be seen from both angles—though the tutoring took place for a short period of time, the difference was made up in the insights the CIL students gained. It was apparent that they were able to see their efforts through a different lens, one that dug deeper and looked at the justice of the work.

CIL 150: Even Start Family School

At Even Start Family School, St. Kate's students, taught by Sue Nelson and Kim Vu, worked at two sites one-on-one with infants, preschoolers, and their parents in ESL courses. Even Start, a literacy program that aims to enhance a family's educational status by offering a family-centered, holistic approach to literacy, does so through adult education, early childhood education, parent education, and parent and child time together. These courses offer an array of services from English Language Learning to classes focusing on school readiness for children to providing support to parents raising children in the United States. When I dropped in to visit the St. Kate's students they were actively engaged in all of these endeavors.

Monica Fischer was helping adult immigrants and refugees with English language skills. Laylo Abdi was on her toes in a room full of preschoolers. During January she drew pictures with the children and communicated with them, citing she was provided lots of experience working one-on-one with the children at the school. As a radiology

Zeinab Sheikh Mohamud (right) and Laylo Abdi (below) work on reading and writing skills with the children at Even Start Family School.



student, Laylo told me, "This would give me my future. I've learned a lot about diverse communication, especially with children. I hope to work with children someday." She told me she would like to come back and volunteer even after the course was over.

Julie Sharpe, who works at Even Start Family School, gushed about her excitement when the St. Kate's CIL students come in January and also during the summer:

"Our teachers are always excited because the students make such a difference. They specialize in service and meet individual needs more effectively. In a



Above: Monica Fischer works with a participant at Even Start on English language skills.

classroom with 14 preschoolers who speak little English, two

extra volunteers allows more dialogue, one-to-one conversations because of the ratios. Not only that, but the quality of St. Kate's students is superior to any other college or university we work with because that is the focus of the school. It's not an add-on; it's the main event. There is a lot of support from the professors and in the class."

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CIL 150: Brian Coyle Community Center and Volunteers of America

On the final day of Elizabeth Fontaine and Holly Clynych's CIL section, I sat in on a class discussion about charity versus justice. Students in this course shared their ideas of what the two meant and how they saw each in action at one of their two sites, the Brian Coyle Community Center and Volunteers of America. At these sites, students worked with adults learning English at Brian Coyle, located in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis. At Volunteers of America, St. Kate's students worked with junior high students.

Through their support helping adults learn English and working closely with teenagers, thoughts of charity surfaced—there is pride in the ability to be charitable, or knowing what you have and being able to give it to someone else. As our conversation continued, the students shared with me a small glimpse into the work they engaged in over the semester.

As they went around in a circle, stories were shared about the community members that had also made up a part of this class. For many who worked at the Brian Coyle Community Center, their perspective on the community and the neighborhood was changed. "It makes me think of a living in a neighborhood differently," one student remarked, "I have mutual respect for the neighborhood." They also mentioned sharing with friends and family the work they were a part of during the semester, and the feedback they received when they told others they were working in this area. Only a few weeks before, many recalled feeling the same way—nervous, naïve, unsure, but after experiencing the lives of the people and building relationships with those who are a part of the community, they know there is nothing to fear.

One student had the opportunity to work with three Somali women and while helping them, she was able to learn something

and overcome her stereotypical fears about religion. "I don't have to be fearful about clients from other cultures," she expressed. In relating this experience to a future in healthcare, the students were optimistic now about cross-cultural communication with potential clients. Working with adults that often didn't speak English was a new challenge, but the CIL students recognized the potential for this to happen with a client: "It taught me how to improvise when you don't speak the same language," a student said.



Junior high students at Volunteers of America quickly befriend the students from St. Kate's.

The students came away with a heightened understanding of models of charity and justice. They cited being more understanding, knowing that people don't always have the tools to learn English, and that they are real people with their own challenges and struggles. Kelly Miklethun cited that "the process of social justice is educating yourself. You can't just throw money," she said. "It's better

to help them, to take action, to ask why refugees are here," she expressed thinking systematically about the situation of the people she served. Eileen McNulty was reminded of a Mother Teresa quote that if you want to see things change, you have to get involved in the laws. She expressed her view as "finding out what you're good at and what is more or less important." For Eileen, she was thinking about teaching preventative healthcare. In the end, the conversation was summed up best when Emily Teich, said, "Charity is immediate gratification. Justice is working on the long-term solution." It was evident then, as part of this conversation, that though the students were able to help at these sites short-term, a real impact was made on their future careers.