

Frank Spina
Discovering Community Workshop
Reflection
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Instr. - Gregory Sharrow

Expectations - Going in I was not quite sure what to expect from the workshop. My role as Educational Technologist in my school is a collaborative one and I had intended to spark interest in some classroom teachers to join me. There were two who planned to attend but then family obligations got in the way and they needed to bow out. So, set a drift, so to speak, I decided I would make the best of it and hope I could bring something back to share with my colleagues. I was more than pleased with the results.

Content - The content of this workshop, service learning and place based education, were married perfectly with arts based activities. This type of curriculum is an excellent fit for Robinson Elementary. Robinson's action plan calls for curricula that is arts and place based. It was encouraging to hear from presenters that shared our view of instructional practices that make sense for kids. In addition, the fact that the bulk of the workshop was to be activity based made great sense to me because it would place me in situations similar to those I would place our students. One eye opener was the realization that much of what I considered service learning was in the genre of a one time activity, and hence not really service learning. I am sure I am not alone in this misconception. I am still struggling a bit with a concrete definition that I can present to our staff, so I am thankful for the contacts I have available to me through this workshop.

The interviews - I really experienced the power of community based, ethnographic studies through the interviews that we conducted. Enthusiasm for their work was a theme common to all the interviewees. What better lesson could students learn about having a positive work ethic? This was a topic definitely worth exploring in depth. Furthermore, in exploring their own communities I am sure students would find similar stories that would bring to them worthwhile life lessons. Coupled with the elements of problem

solving, artistic and otherwise, that final presentations require presents the perfect dovetailing of skill acquisition and real world experiences that I have always felt is necessary for a great learning experience.

Final thoughts - I only wish I had been accompanied by a few classroom teachers, it might have made my job come fall a little easier. However, I have been in contact with one who is definitely interested in the project I have developed for this workshop. The proof is in the pudding so my plan is to showcase this type of work through what I hope will be a successful project for the selected students and one that will give our staff a better understanding of the resources available within our small community.