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# The Impact of International Experiential Learning and the Community and University Partnership Supporting Global Citizenship in U.S. Schools

Elisabeth Krimbill, Texas A&M University-San Antonio, Lawrence Scott, Texas A&M University-San Antonio, and Amy Carter, Texas A&M University-San Antonio

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## Summary

As global citizens, we have an increasing international interdependence that now impacts the way we solve problems and interact with one another. Intentionally planned travel abroad has the potential to transform lives by creating a greater global and personal awareness, where adolescents see themselves as not just members of their local community, but also a global community. In an attempt to prepare students for an international and interdependent world, one inner-city nonprofit agency partnered with a local university in South Texas to provide overseas experiential learning opportunities paired with service-learning projects. Through one innovative program, more than 600 students have traveled to more than 20 countries as a full-immersion experience, most of which were centered on service-learning opportunities. The students in this program had the opportunity to examine their prejudices, assumptions, and fears while learning about themselves and developing deeper relationships with members of their school and local community through global outreach.

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**Keywords:** experiential learning, service-learning, university partnership, service-learning project, global citizenship, adolescent global awareness, collaborative learning, global outreach, real-world experiences, student enrichment

**Subjects:** Alternative and Non-formal Education , Education, Change, and Development, Education, Health, and Social Services, Globalization, Economics, and Education, Education and Society

## Introduction

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As the world becomes more connected, global citizenship and intercultural communication skills are crucial in our communities and in the workplace. “The concept of global citizenship arises from the increasing interdependence between nations and the perceived need to think globally in decision making instead of only nationally” (Moffa, 2016, p. 145). With regard to our connections in every country, as global citizens we must examine the way we solve

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problems and interact with one another. Experiential learning in this context is any learning resulting in real-world knowledge and conceptual understanding gained through planned overseas travel experiences, particularly those designed for adolescents.

No matter the decade, the country, or the school, many educators state that students learn best through active learning (DiYanni & Borst, 2020). Teachers emphasize that students must be engaged with content and activities to critically work through concepts and engage in higher-order cognition (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). Whether the active learning is through small-group assignments, whole-group instruction, working in pairs, or one-on-one interactions, if students do not engage with the material, they are less likely to be successful. Teachers can select from various instructional methods in creating their lessons and designing their curricula; “the most commonly discussed contemporary methods include collaborative learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning” (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 571).

The term “experiential learning,” though not a new term to education, is not a widely researched term or concept with respect to adolescent’s cultural self-efficacy. Experiential learning can be defined as “a particular phrase and concept that rose to prominence in the late 20th century and started to be used generically to refer to relations between experience and learning” (Seaman et al., 2017, p. 2). “Experiential learning is learning by doing. In this kind of hands-on learning, students assume responsibility for their learning, taking control of both the learning experience and their reflection on it” (DiYanni & Borst, 2020, p. 145). Students take control of their own learning, determining “what to do, when to do it, and how” as they learn from authentic, real-world experiences (DiYanni & Borst, 2020, p. 145).

## Experiential Learning

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Experiential learning began in the 1940s as a human relations training concept that soon sparked interest in the field of education. From the late 1940s through the mid-1950s, psychologist Kurt Lewin and his team of experts designed training modules aimed at improving civic policies needed to address racial and religious differences that were permeating a small community in Connecticut. Lewin’s work exemplified a new practice that was dubbed “action research” (Seaman et al., 2017). The creation of the action research methodology resulted in new clinical models of training, and as the models of training advanced in use and design, the term “experiential analysis” emerged (Seaman et al., 2017). Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s and 1970s, experiential learning became a practice in adult education. In its beginnings, experiential learning was more of a psychological tool used to enhance the experiences of those beginning work in human relations; it then moved into other fields and is now solidly grounded in the field of education. What experiential learning looks like now in the field of education is quite different from its beginnings, and what it looks like in the different areas of education differs as well. However, the benefits to students have bearings in the original uses of experiential learning in that “experiential lessons have the ability to shape students’ beliefs about learning and about the self” (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 594).

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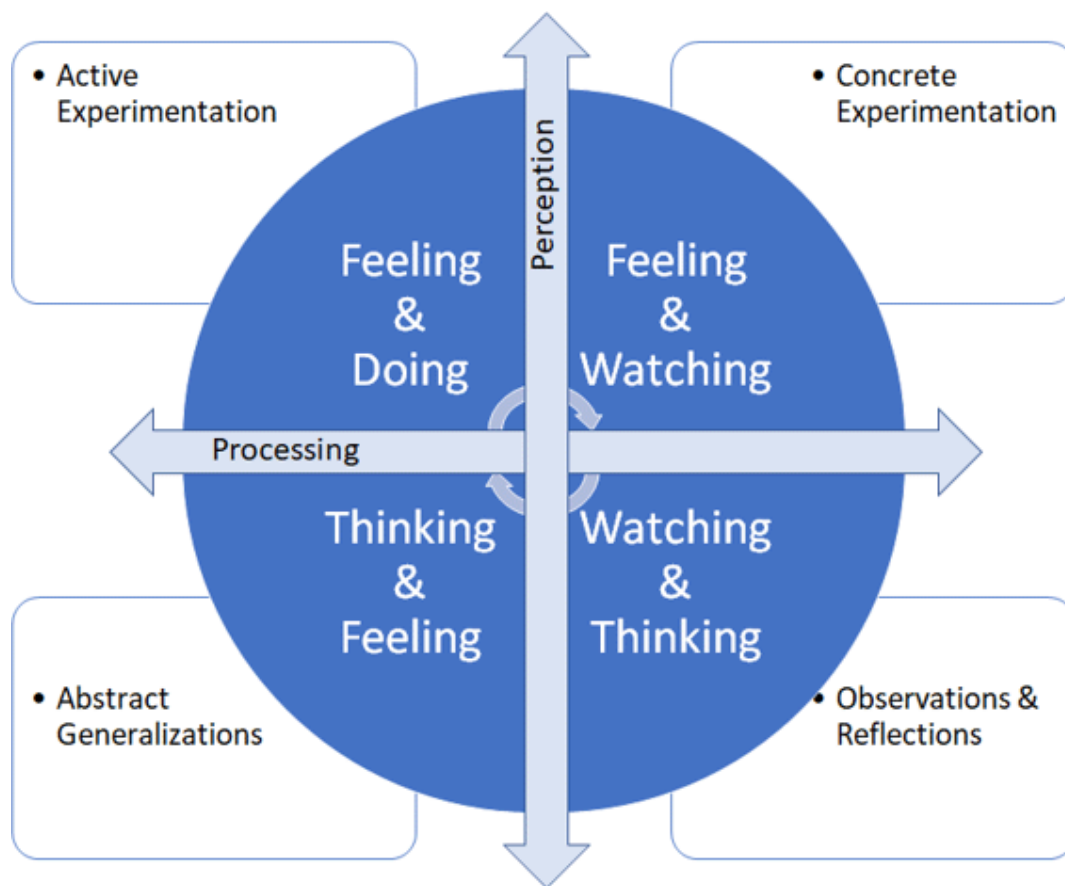
The term “experiential learning” is sometimes used interchangeably with “service-learning,” but although both incorporate the practice of researching and studying while also participating in action, they are vastly different. “Service-learning is a teaching method that combines academic knowledge and community service” (Hok-Ka, 2018, p. 3). Where the two differ most significantly is in the partnership built between the secondary school(s) and a university. Limited research is available on experiential learning, based on the findings that secondary schools utilize service-learning rather than experiential learning.

In experiential learning, “instructors promote learning by having students directly engage in, and reflect on, personal experiences that takes place in four stages (concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation) leading to increased knowledge, skill development, and values clarification” (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 573). This type of experiential learning can incorporate journaling, conducting interviews, experiments, and taking field trips, either virtually or in real time. The first prominent educator to address the need for students to gain experience through their education was John Dewey, whose “career-long use of the term *experience* to address issues in this context earned him a reputation as a proponent of experiential learning throughout the second half of the 20th century” (Seaman et al., 2017, p. 3).

David Kolb’s (1984) learning styles model led to the creation of his learning styles inventory incorporating the following steps: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (McLeod, 2017). Kolb’s experiential learning style theory addressed each of the key components of learning through experience. In his four learning styles, Kolb believed that there are two continuums: the processing continuum and the perception continuum. In the processing continuum, the action of learning is identified through observations of students doing and watching, whereas in the perception continuum, the action of learning is reported through descriptions of feeling and thinking (McLeod, 2017). Kolb’s learning cycle incorporated the elements of experiential learning; however, he separated the learning styles, arguing that each process must be completed individually. This viewpoint may differ from the accepted definition of experiential learning, which argues that learning is continuous through the experience.

There are important differences between Kolb’s representation of experiential learning and the more simplistic cycle, in that the whole inner dimension is omitted from the latter. In part it can be seen that Kolb does conceive of learning by experience in some sense as a progression through a cycle . . . This is evidenced by the progression from concrete experience through reflection to abstract conceptualization and further experimentation.

(Ord, 2012, p. 60)



**Figure 1.** Experiential learning representation adapted from Kolb’s Learning Theory (1974), Ord (2012), McLeod (2017), and Seaman et al. (2017).

Kolb credited Dewey for the basis of his learning theory, as Dewey referred to the process of gaining experience as a “transaction” (Ord, 2012). The transaction that takes place is one of “trying” and “undergoing;” “*trying* refers to the outward expression of intention or action,” whereas “*undergoing* refers to the consequences of the experience” (Ord, 2012, p. 60). The action that is taken during “trying” an experience is the attempt to make an impact on those around us and the world as a whole, whereas “undergoing” the experience allows for the experience to be impactful for us as individuals.

“Once experiential learning was transformed into a theory of psychological processes, it could be applied in other contexts, such as progressive educational reforms and organizational behavior” (Seaman et al., 2017, p. 6). The work of pioneers such as Dewey and Kolb has led to the practice of experiential learning becoming a focus in the field of education. With this focus comes a need for funding and acceptance through “evidence that outcomes could be reproduced in settings other than the cultural islands of experiential programs” (Seaman et al., 2017, p. 8). Experiential learning can best be explained as individual learning through direct experience, and for Kolb’s model to work, “students must be able to be actively involved in their learning experience, reflect on their experience, have the analytical and conceptual skills to understand what’s at stake in their learning experiences, and have decision-making and problem-solving skills” (DiYanni & Borst, 2020, p. 146).

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To offer students more opportunities for educational experiences, experiential learning is an option for secondary schools. Through partnerships with universities, secondary schools can provide experiences that students would not have access to otherwise.

To enrich student learning during the school day, schools are forming partnerships with businesses, universities, artists, health and social service agencies, and nonprofits to bring additional expertise and services into the school and offer off-campus opportunities for learning, work, service, and preventive supports.

(Irby et al., 2003, p. 16)

Partnering with universities is a critical component to experiential learning as “schools do not have the capacity to ensure that all young people are prepared for careers, citizenship, and family and community life” (Irby et al., 2003, p. 18), and schools have a requirement to meet state standards for academic learning that does not necessarily address the varying ways students can learn. Classroom instruction is limited in scale and scope of experiential learning opportunities, even with the vast number of digital learning tools that are available. “Learning experiences outside the school day and school building offer an important complement to school-based experiences” (Irby et al., 2003, p. 19).

Learning abroad opportunities have been available to university students for decades, though the opportunity has not translated to the secondary school structure because of various factors, including a lack of resources and connections. Travel abroad opportunities to experience other cultures are available through many programs, but these trips may be expensive for the student; they are often planned separately from the school curriculum and are not affiliated with a school district. In contrast,

the learning abroad programs for undergraduate and graduate students are closely linked to their disciplinary areas of interest and the application of working with people from the host country who share the wish to use knowledge to address real-world issues helps to internalize their experience.

(Gren et al., 2020, p. 37)

By partnering with a university travel abroad program, or a similar program, secondary school students may be able to reap the benefits that their college-age counterparts do, thus growing as 21st-century learners. “Building an educational partnership between a university and a local school district is a complex undertaking” (Valadez & Snyder, 2006, p. 30), but when done correctly, with both parties trusting in each other, students benefit. Most difficulties arise in the differences in the methods and structures each organization uses, specifically in which organization has the power in the relationship in that “prevailing attitudes exist between school and university personnel” and “a powerful agent such as the university has the capacity to have its will prevail” (Valadez & Snyder, 2006, pp. 31-32). Although partnering between a secondary school and university can be challenging, there are many successful instances of partnerships; partnering with a university allows for increased experiential learning opportunities.

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As experiential learning is learning by doing, we need to break down boundaries that separate and segregate learning in order to help students see the larger world as an extension of the classroom and come to understand that learning can take place anywhere and, indeed, that it should take place everywhere they find themselves or put themselves (DiYanni & Borst, 2020). The learning process in experiential learning is a cyclical process by which new experiences build on previous experiences, beginning with the experience itself and followed by reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. This process allows for more than cognitive processing, also addressing the social-emotional learning students can receive through social interactions. The attitudinal and behavioral changes students experience is an additional benefit as “the social contexts and interactions that occur enhance learning” (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 575).

Experiential learning focuses on transforming students’ disposition toward learning by increasing students’ academic self-efficacy, improving students’ self-regulatory capabilities, instilling in students self-directed learning skills, enhancing students’ learning-related attitudes and values, or promoting students’ beliefs about their capability to acquire, synthesize, analyze, and use knowledge in a way that is meaningful for their lives.

(Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, p. 575)

Lessons through experiential learning develop skills that students would not necessarily develop in the traditional classroom setting. Slavich and Zimbardo (2012, p. 574), grounded in the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, stated, “Students generate knowledge and meaning best when they have experiences that lead them to realize how new information conflicts with their prevailing understanding of a concept or idea.” When done correctly, experiential learning can be one of the most valuable learning tools in an educator’s toolkit, motivating students to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers who can live in a global society. “An international experience can serve as a motivation for continued learning, so educators should help learners identify strategies for advancing their knowledge” (Roberts et al., 2013, p. 34).

## **The Interrelationship Between School and Community**

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This interrelationship between the school and community entities has to begin with a firm belief that the school is an extension of the community, and in its actualized form, the school and community can both be beneficiaries of community growth and development. For this to take root, school leadership must be willing to relinquish and decentralize its power to, open its doors for, and communicate and collaborate with all stakeholders at every level. This dialectical exchange is decidedly a process that can be operationalized by school leadership, students, parents, and community leaders. Epstein and Salinas (2004), describe six types of community and school involvement, including parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

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## Community Partnerships

As schools have become more multifaceted in their offerings to the community, school leaders have become more cognizant of the need for school and community partnerships. Principals that are intentional about building relationships with the community stakeholders, through visibility and advocacy for the community's needs, can witness an increase in trust; rapport; and, ultimately, community engagement and buy-in (Khalifa, 2012). These leaders are not simply relegated to the confines of the school building. Miller (2008) describes these leaders as "boundary spanners" who go beyond the confines of the campus, building community-based partnerships to enrich the community as a whole. In this case, Miller illustrates how a school, university, and community partnership builds rapport and trust, creates and aligns concerted goals, and allows leaders to circumvent systematic bureaucracy by navigating the terrains as an "institutional infiltrator" with concerted commitment to the community and advocacy for the issues of the collective.

## Parenting

Schools play a critical role in the mediation of learning and values that can be reinforced at home. Epstein (2018) purported that schools can build a strong relationship with parents, which will in turn reinforce learning and academic success. Some practical measures school leaders can play to strengthen this dialectical relationship include home visits during transition grades, community meetings, parent classes (whether GED, parenting, or technological enhancement classes), and family support programs. At home, accentuating the importance of school can help students realize its significance for their lives. This process will help parents feel confident in assisting their child with homework, and effectively creates a partnership in which parents can directly contribute to the school, family, and community. This will in turn help the school strengthen its relationship with the parents, as teachers will become more conversant with the needs of students and their families.

## Communicating

Effective communication between schools and parents is critical to student success. School leaders must be intentional about creating the communicative mechanism to keep students and parents continuously informed and engaged. This dialogical communication can come in several forms such as written, verbal, or electronic. The nature of the communication can be, for example, regarding grades, standardized testing updates, community events, or programmatic or policy changes. Whether via an all-call, posted flyers, email or text distribution, newsletter, or social media blast, school leaders should be clear in their messaging, with no ambiguity. Additionally, faculty and staff need maintain consistent messaging to parents and the community. Students and parents benefit as they access information vital to student success. For example, a school that is intentional about providing information regarding student career and college readiness may have a parent night in which school personnel discuss career strands; create a print-rich school delineating varying college and career opportunities; provide guidance curricula or "counselor corners" during lunch; and ensure opportunities in which all students meet individually with school personnel to discuss their future goals.

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## Volunteering

Volunteering increases when schools become intentional about recruiting help from parents to support parental involvement and engagement. Schools can set up a parent room, enlist parent volunteer patrols during dismissal, or even enroll parents to help with keeping the score at athletic events. This will allow students to see their parents as contributors and participants in the management of the school. Parents may begin to understand the school's inner workings, the role of the teacher, and how they can increase their involvement in their student's learning experience.

## Learning at Home

Offering opportunities for students to learn at home allows parents to become active in the learning process. Traditionally, the modality employed by many schools is the flipped classroom pedagogical model, which allows students to learn via videos and online platforms, and reserves classroom time for practice and knowledge construction (Song & Kapur, 2017). Although this delivery can work, teachers and parents must have a command of the technology used, and students need to make meaningful associations and practically apply the instructional materials (Unruh et al., 2016; Zavattaro et al., 2018). During the COVID-19 global pandemic, many P-12 schools opted to employ virtual instruction for all students, which forced parents to become instant intermediaries between the home and the school. Many teachers provided parental support by offering synchronous and asynchronous instructional options for the students, as well as opportunities for clarification, when needed, through phone calls or online meetings. This instructional support helped parents become more adept in assisting their students as they navigated assignments at home.

## Decision Making

In a variety of ways, parents can be more involved in the decision-making mechanisms that drive policy and protocol at the campus and community levels. Schools can recruit parents to be a part of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), a site-based decision-making team, a campus leadership team, or a district-level decision-making team. When parents have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making landscape in the school, they may see more clearly the importance of school partnerships and how vital their own voice is in the development of the school's curriculum, procedures, climate, and culture. It is important to note that parent representation must be diverse and representative of the varied voices of the community. Maxwell (1998) noted that people take part in what they help create. Getting the community involved in the different activities of school decision making (creation of curriculum, policy, procedures, instructional initiatives) helps to build the rapport and climate that will benefit all those involved.

## Collaborating With the Community

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Schools can activate and collaborate with additional community groups and organizations to accomplish the concerted goals of the school. For schools to succeed, all stakeholders must actively engage in their assigned roles (Fiore, 2016). Collaborating and connecting families with community groups such as Communities in Schools, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brother



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and Big Sister, out-of-school organizations, and local chapters of fraternities and sororities can strengthen community-to-school ties while providing families with the necessary resources to succeed.

## Teachers as a Catalyst

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For teachers to support school and community engagement, they must be willing to adjust to the cultural ethos of their community's demographic. Teachers need to be well versed in their understanding of instructional strategies and multiple modalities that guarantee success in the classroom, as well as the cultural mores and folkways of the broader community in which they serve (Epstein, 2001, 2018). It is incumbent upon school leadership to make sure teachers are culturally competent, with an instructional repertoire that includes culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy. Intercultural communication and exchange must expand and represent the greater community beyond the race of the principal (Brown & Beckett, 2007). Ladson-Billings (2014) affirms how cultural identity and culturally sustaining pedagogy improves student achievement. In an effort to address deficit perspectives, Ford and Whiting (2008) discuss how teachers have to be intentional about dismantling systems that negatively affect the learning process of students of color, especially as it relates to advanced academics (i.e., gifted and talented [GT] and advance placement [AP] students). For instance, African Americans respond better to education that is culturally enriched (Ladson-Billings, 2014). When teachers understand and pedagogically adapt to the sociocultural differences of their students, as well as design, implement, and evaluate relevant instruction, student achievement is likely to increase.

## One Innovative Approach to Experiential Learning

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In June 2018, 30 students from central Texas, along with their chaperones and university research team members, boarded a plane to Madrid, Spain. Most of the students had never left their hometown, and for many it was their first time on a plane. The students had been preparing for their experiential learning trip for months, reading about Spain and participating in numerous service-learning projects to set the stage for their international educational journey. This same preparation had been replicated for over five years by the nonprofit coordinating organization, which provided to small groups of students summer experiential learning trips to the Dominican Republic, England, France, Germany, Japan, Peru, Australia and New Zealand, Italy, Belize, China, Costa Rica, and Greece.

The coordinating organization partnered with a local university to further explore the impact of experiential learning paired with service-learning on the participants' growth as global citizens and their belief in their own ability to make a positive difference in their communities and around the world. The university faculty and graduate students gathered research data after every trip, synthesized the data, and presented their findings at several related conferences in an attempt to add to the growing amount of research in this area. This research focused on how students from historically underrepresented populations interpret and process the immersive travel experience and how this can translate to a greater understanding of global citizenship.

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School leaders and policymakers may use this research to inspire university partnerships in order to create and sustain similarly structured programs at their respective schools. The outcomes and recommendations resulting from this study may inform secondary school and community leaders seeking to develop experiential learning opportunities that support global citizenship, and encourage the growth of similar partnerships that have been shown to benefit middle and high school students.

## The Study

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Embracing a mixed-methods approach, this research sought to examine the qualitative and quantitative data collected to examine how students, school leaders, and professors participating in a short-term, study-abroad experiential learning program describe their personal growth, appreciation, novel travel experiences, shared learning, and cultural self-efficacy throughout this initiative. The rationale behind this methodology relied on the need to describe in rich detail the written samples, journal submissions, surveys, and personal reflections of the students as they were situated and embedded in the local contexts (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Greene et al. (1989, p. 1) describe the complementarity of mixed-methods research as a study that “seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other method.”

The qualitative research resulted in the analysis of survey responses, student reflections, researchers’ notes, and interviews. The data were collected concurrently in a naturalistic field setting, and there were no treatments applied to the participants. The research population included 30 participants consisting of secondary school students, school leaders, parent chaperones, and a professor of education administration. Quantitative data sources included pre- and post-experience completion of the CSES-A: Cultural Self-Efficacy Scale for Adolescents (Briones et al., 2009) and post-participation survey responses.

## Journaling Themes

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The following is a brief selection of some significant participant remarks that were used to develop the research themes analyzed from the interviews and journals.

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### 1. *Study Abroad Provides an Impactful Series of Unique Experiences*

Toledo was a unique town much different from other cities we've seen so far. To be honest, this was one of my favorite locations, and I enjoyed walking through the tight streets and alleys. I loved the great views of the town, from the contrasting peak of the cathedral among the lower buildings to the beautiful landscapes around the town. Ziplining over the river that moved through the land and shaped the valleys was an amazing experience. (Participant 9)

### 2. *Travel to Multiple Cities Provided Insight Into Different Ways of Living*

Here, we saw the coexistence of two completely different cultures and religions. In the town of Sevilla, we got to see the burial site of Christopher Columbus, which is super huge. On the last day of Sevilla, we toured the Archive of the Indies, which housed several major documents and artifacts about the European expansion into the new world. (Participant 4)

### 3. *Increased Understanding Led to Respect for Others*

Toledo is a very unique city having a big cathedral and a small synagogue both made by Muslim architects so therefore have a splash of Muslim like structures and styles. Even though the city is built on a hill making it a pain to walk around, the small streets caught my eyes, thinking that they would be one way (which they were) but you are allowed to go in both directions down that street. The blacksmith shop was pretty cool where they handmade jewelry and swords that were beyond magnificent. The views from the top of the hills were breathtaking because you can see every building, the castle, and the worship places. (Participant 1)

### 4. *Significance of the Experience Service-Learning Activities*

Madrid was a wonderful experience for me. I have always wanted to visit this city and I'm so glad I am a part of this trip. Seeing the different culture and society here is totally awesome. The atmosphere of the city is amazing, and I love walking around and breathing the fresh Madrid air. Spanish society is much different than the one at home, and by experiencing this new part of the world I have developed a desire to explore other cultures around the world. (Participant 3)

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## Post-Participation Comments

Also notable in the post-participation surveys were the high percentage of positive responses in the students' self-reflection on the impact of the experience on present opportunities and their beliefs about future educational opportunities.

- 94% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities had a significant impact on their goals on and after graduation.
- 94% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities contributed to their acceptance into college.

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- 89% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that they were eager to share about their experiential service-learning activities in their college application essays.
  - 89% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities impacted positively their desire to pursue studies abroad.
  - 83% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities made them want to study more.
  - 94% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities made them want to take part in another trip if they have the funds to do so.
  - 100% of the respondents stated that they strongly agree or agree that their experiential service-learning activities helped them to understand what it means to be a global citizen.

## **The Impact of the Service-Learning Component**

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Schunk (2012) found that experiential learning has personal involvement and relies on self-initiation and participation, and that the importance of the experience is evaluated by the learner, which yields relevance to the individual. This study found that as a result of study abroad, the personal involvement and desire to serve by all participants resulted in new knowledge, feelings of belonging, and changes in attitude about other cultures. Ultimately, the results showed a short-term study-abroad program with a service-learning component can and does have a positive impact on cultural competence, knowledge, and experience (Krishnan et al., 2016).

## **Personal Growth**

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When asked what skills they gained or improved, the students responded as follows: 72% said there was an improvement in communication and/or speech; 61%, in leadership; 39%, in self-management, independence, and/or organizational skills; 33%, in etiquette and/or cultural awareness; 33%, in hard work and/or community service; and 28%, in teamwork. Student cultural self-efficacy showed significant growth, and students reported that this experience likely impacted their post-secondary plans for the future. Students self-reported over \$120,000 as the total average amount of scholarship dollars awarded as they applied to college after participating in the service-learning experiences and experiential learning trips.

## **School Leadership Implications**

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Although the opportunity for students to participate in an experiential learning program is enlightening, there are some challenges throughout the process. First, some principals may not tell their students and families about the opportunity because of risk aversion and the fear of liability issues regarding traveling abroad. Although this agency reported that parental

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resistance is low during the local service component, some parents may also raise considerable concerns about their teenagers traveling to foreign lands with a group of other students, parents, and teachers who are not a part of their local school or school district.

This organization required students to have at least 10 service-learning and experiential learning opportunities prior to their travel. Some local experiential learning events included working with the United Way or food banks and visiting museums, parks, public events, cultural festivals, and other related community events. Once abroad, students continue some of these events, but with a sociocultural educational component that includes learning about the visited country's social welfare, history, and culture. Service-learning projects included collecting and packaging hygiene and health items for orphans in Ghana; materials for the Center for Animal Research and Education (CARE); books for Book Buddies; toys for children in need for the Christian Assistance Ministries; care packages for overseas troops for Help for America's Heroes; and diapers and supplies for the Texas Diaper Bank. Students were able to develop their own projects or serve on others' projects through flexible service opportunities that ranged from after-school to weekend service-learning events.

## **Process to Implement and Sustain Experiential Learning Opportunities**

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Implementing experiential learning programs in a K-12 setting starts with the campus leadership. Therefore, it is critical for educational leaders to champion issues connected to global awareness and interdependence within their respective schools. As Kotter and Cohen (2012) illustrate, in order to introduce a change or, in this case, a new way of experiential learning, principals and campus leaders must create a sense of urgency, build a coalition, and communicate buy-in with stakeholders. For experiential learning programs to work, administrators and other school officials must become champions of espousing the value of this type of learning opportunity. In many organizations, students have to apply for the experiential learning program each year, and they must meet certain community-service criteria, so this process should involve campus leaders expanding the school-community relationship.

Principals that approve the implementation of an experiential learning program often start with recruiting from their own interested faculty and staff. Subsequently, teachers, counselors, and other staff become champions of the program and begin recruiting prospective students. Those principals, and the faculty and staff, often host community meetings to inform prospective students and parents of this initiative. In this study, counselors and supporting staff played a pivotal role because they were privy to service-learning opportunities in the community, which are mandated for many schools. These counselors were constantly in contact with community resources and were familiar with ways to serve the campus and surrounding community. One model some schools have implemented was to create a school club or organization that can work in partnership with the universities and community organizations. Another option reported by several magnet schools, innovative schools, or choice schools was to incorporate the community service hours as part of the school's service mandates.

Some schools pay their teachers an extra stipend for supplemental hours of community service, which can be used to assist with travel for professional development, master teacher training, or school organization events. These organizations have created several levels of

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teacher involvement. At the global educator (entry level), teachers commit to disseminating the information about the experiential learning opportunities. They affirm the belief in global citizenship through international travel and local community service. The next level for teachers is to become a volunteer site leader. These leaders work with the organization to assign the teacher to a local service-learning opportunity at which they will be responsible for student supervision. At this level, leaders oversee students from all over the city, not just from their local high school. Many times, this allows teachers to interact with students across socioeconomic groups, leadership capacities, and learning experiences. They are also the point of contact for parents from the other schools and communities seeking to support the project. The highest level of teacher involvement and affiliation is trip leader. These teachers are trained with the organization's staff and travel partners on information covering safety, security, and chaperoning students. To serve at this capacity, teachers must first become a chaperone on at least one trip before they can lead their own.

## Conclusion

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With a commitment to experiential learning, students will receive the opportunity to learn, serve, experience, and contribute far beyond the confines of their own country. These valuable experiences allow students to work in tandem with community stakeholders and global partners to develop the skills that will be required for 21st-century leadership. Students and parents together may become more engaged in their community as they participate in service activities locally and abroad. Students get to experience cultural folkways and mores that were once relegated to a book or website as they travel to foreign lands as cultural ambassadors on a mission to learn and serve. With experiential learning and service as the foundation, students can grow as global citizens, equipped with a mission to go beyond simply serving the world to in some respects saving it.

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