

PROPOSAL FOR 2001 ANNUAL MEETING
THE ASSOCIATION OF LEADERSHIP EDUCATORS
Conference Theme: *A Leadership Odyssey!*
July 19-21, 2001
Crowne Plaza Northstar Hotel, Minneapolis, Minnesota

TITLE

"Linking Leadership Theory and Practice: The Class Project"

AUTHOR AND AFFILIATION

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FORMAT PREFERENCE

Paper--alone or on panel is fine.

ABSTRACT

TITLE OF PROPOSED SESSION

"Linking Leadership Theory and Practice: The Class Project"

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this session is to provide theoretical and practical information on implementing an all-class project in a for-credit leadership course.

CONTEXT OF PROJECT

The class project is used in a 3-credit leadership course composed of 20 students from first year through senior year and from a wide range of majors and, often, ages. The course counts as one of the requirements for the minor in leadership studies.

The class project was initiated because of the difficulty of teaching leadership to students who have very limited leadership experiences. Most have had no experience beyond family and formal education.

DESCRIPTION

The class project involves students as a group in a project that integrates academic content about leadership with practical experience. The project has the following goals:

- (1) to enhance student ability to learn academic content and
- (2) to build experiences toward a leadership internship for students enrolled in the minor in leadership studies.

Students have control of the project from beginning to end. They select the project topic (for example, parking on campus), research the issue, determine who needed to be contacted, etc.

The session at the conference will provide theoretical and pedagogical information on the project. Specifically it will include the following elements:

- o The instructor goals for the project
- o The two conceptual frameworks used (one for leadership content and one for pedagogy; the latter was an expanded version of Kolb's experiential learning cycle)
- o Reflective learning strategies, including weekly "Project Reflection Reports"
- o Strategies for handling diverse views, styles, personalities, etc.
- o Examples of how project activities and classroom content were integrated
- o Pitfalls to avoid and recommendations for educators who might want to do similar projects

The class project has been an immense success. It has brought to life the material students were reading, provided information about themselves as leaders, and gave them experience in "doing" leadership. In addition, the project built an esprit-de-corps among class members.

Interest in experiential learning is making a resurgence, yet many faculty are skeptical that the quality of academic learning can be maintained. The experience with this project demonstrated that standards of academic quality can be not only maintained but enhanced. The goals of helping students learn the academic content and build their experience base were achieved beyond expectations, as reflected in students' written work and in their participation in class. In addition, on student evaluations, all students rated the class project highly and said it should be continued in future classes.

RELEVANCE FOR CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Will assist participants who wish to use experiential learning in a leadership class with a diverse group of students.