

The Delta House Tutoring Project

by Molly McMillan, Bonner Scholars Coordinator

Purpose

- Provides an after-school tutoring program for African-American, at-risk middle school students, increasing their chances of graduating from high school and attending a college.
- Creates a mentoring relationship with a middle school student that will last the Bonner's four years in college.
- Provides an opportunity for freshman and sophomore Bonners to work together on a common project and familiarizes themselves with serving in an area of great need.

Background

When Warren Wilson became a Bonner school in the fall of 2000, a service-learning component already existed at the College, requiring students to complete a certain number of service hours before they graduated. Ten to fifteen students worked on the service-learning work crew to create projects for students all over campus.

When Warren Wilson became a Bonner school, the number of students on the work crew was increased, and the service-learning office began to build a student development model that took younger Bonners from large-group teamwork to more individual leadership on campus. The service-learning office made it a priority to have students work together on one project that focused on a major social justice issue in the community.

Warren Wilson joined forces with the local Education Coalition, which came up with the idea of providing tutors and mentors for kids at risk. In 2000, the first year of the program, the College paired up with a school that needed tutors. The school provided the space, and since the Warren Wilson students were the only tutors, they were able to devise the education plan, activities, and awards banquet. In the second year, the College found another site to replace the first. Again, students were able to create their own plan with the help of the Bonner coordinator.

How It Works

Scheduling

All freshman and sophomore Bonners schedule their classes so that they can run the tutoring program on Mondays, Wednesdays, and alternate Fridays. They travel together in a campus vehicle to the site and have weekly meetings on campus concerning tutoring and mentoring issues and activity planning.

Service-learning Work Crew

All Warren Wilson students serve fifteen hours a week. In return the college pays the cost of their room and board. The students therefore run the College: they are the cleaners, the receptionists, carpenters, gardeners, electricians, and plumbers, working under the supervision of a crew manager. Bonners are all on the same work crew, called the service-learning crew. Instead of working fifteen hours a week on a work crew, and then spending an additional ten hours a week on service, the students get service-hour credit for their work hours, making it easier on students taking a full academic course load.

Freshman and sophomore Bonners spend nine of their fifteen hours a week on the Delta House Tutoring Project. The goal is for Bonners to continue to meet with the students they were matched with as freshmen and sophomores twice a week as juniors and seniors.

Training and Reflection

Freshmen and sophomore Bonners participate in tutor trainings offered by the Education Coalition as

well as trainings offered by the service-learning center on conflict management, using the consensus model and building facilitation skills. Reflections are required on a weekly basis in the form of journal writings and weekly team meetings.

Children Served

The Education Coalition targeted 450 kids in the county during the 2002-2003 academic year. Many different programs work with the Education Coalition to tutor, and Warren Wilson is in charge of tutoring and mentoring 30 of those children. The tutors have the opportunity to forge a strong relationship with the children they work with. They often meet their parents, and the children visit them on campus. All Warren Wilson students, staff, and faculty can tutor, but Bonners and other service-learning crew members now provide the bulk of services.

What Makes The Project Unique

The Bonner Students

Bonners work as a team to develop the project and share their main service site. This provides ample opportunity for issue-specific training and reflection. The structure also allows for group bonding, encouraging Bonners to support and learn from one another. They also practice facilitation skills and conflict management. Bonners take on more and more leadership responsibilities in the service-learning office. During their junior and senior years they lead trips for students from all over campus in addition to continuing their tutoring match and doing other service of their interest.

The Bonner Coordinator

The coordinator has daily contact with the freshman and sophomore Bonners every day and is therefore able to oversee their training and service and help support the basic needs of first- and second-year college students. It is easier for the coordinator to keep track of students because their classes are blocked allowing them to do service together.

Benefits

To the Community

Because the tutoring program is offered after school, children do not miss regular classes. They are excited about coming to a program in which many other students are involved. It creates opportunities for academic growth, contact with parents when they pick up their kids, contact with teachers when the school day ends, mentoring between the Warren Wilson College tutors and the sixth-grade boys, and a chance for the young men who are tutored to visit the college. The college's provision of a strong tutoring program is a great gift to the community.

To the Bonners

The involvement of the Bonners in the tutoring and mentoring initiative enhances their overall experience and education, especially in areas of study such as education, outdoor leadership, psychology, and social work.

Timeline

Bonners spend their first two weeks on campus completing the necessary training and preparing for tutoring, which begins by mid-September.

Resources And Partners

The Asheville-Buncombe Education Coalition

- This organization has made a community-wide effort to provide a mentor and/or tutor to students who are achieving below their grade level in school. They have a long-range goal of significantly reducing the dropout rate in the community through this one-on-one outreach. The Education Coalition pays Delta House a certain amount of money per child to help cover educational and enrichment materials. They also fund three trainings for all those who tutor or mentor through their program.

The Asheville Alumnae Delta House, Inc.

- This program site for the Education Coalition is committed to providing wholesome activities, programs, and projects that foster educational, healthy, economical, cultural and social development of students and adults. They focus on serving economically disadvantaged and minority communities. The Delta House provides space for tutoring, as well as computers, reading materials, and snacks for the students.

The Janirve Foundation

- A grant from this foundation funds transportation for tutors, scholarships for Warren Wilson Bonners, and scholarships for children being tutored to attend Warren Wilson College.

Warren Wilson College

- The College provides the crew space for team meetings.

Overcoming Challenges

It has been a challenge working with the Education Coalition, since it is a new agency that has their own set of paperwork, requirements, and training. The Delta House program also has its own requirements. So far, these challenges are not disadvantages because the extra work is very worthwhile.

Because all freshman and sophomore Bonners serve the bulk of their hours at the same service site, a few uncommitted students can bring the whole group down. A thorough admissions process can reduce the chances of encountering this problem.

Evidence of Success

During the 2001-2002 academic year, the tutoring program took fifteen at-risk fifth-graders and helped them pass all of their courses and end-of-grade tests. Each of the fifteen students made it to the sixth grade.

How to Make it Grow

The long-term goal of the program is to get the original group of fifteen tutees through the next three grades with the continuous support of their Warren Wilson Bonner Scholar tutors, and for them to attend college. It is hoped that some will attend Warren Wilson.