



USING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO EXPLORE THE FIELD OF COUNSELING



Department: Psychological Science and Counseling
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Overview of the Project

Candidates from the Department of Psychological Science and Counseling participated in an immersive community experience with The Crossing, a not-for-profit alternative school program for struggling teens. The Crossing has locations at 16 different sites throughout the State of Indiana. Candidates participated with students at the Indianapolis school, located at Diversity Church at 101 East Raymond Street in downtown Indianapolis. As school counselors candidates involved in supporting the mission and vision of The Crossing, it was recognized that all adolescents can and want to learn.

Candidates were from two courses: one undergraduate candidate was participating in PSYC 201: Careers and Applications, while the entire group of Master's of Counseling candidates were enrolled in COU 545: Organization and Administration of Guidance Programs. Candidates were to "work with their faculty member at an alternative school in downtown Indianapolis to provide support and services for students working with the program. Students will gain experience as mentors and begin exploratory school counseling services by providing strategies that align with the content learned in the class.

Focus of the Community Engaged Experience for Candidates

Our goal in guiding and counseling these students was to help them develop their individuality, to improve their ability to function effectively with others, and manage their own destiny (Borders & Drury, 1992). Candidates worked along with faculty and staff to support students with their personal, social, educational, and career development. The cultural and community experiences of these students are affirmed and recognized, and all students will be provided equal access regardless of need.

Strong work ethics, flexibility and adaptability are taught as critical skills all students must learn. Students are expected to work hard and learn how important collaboration, cooperation, and communication are toward the success of any industry. The school curriculum also is guided by weekly Family Time meetings, which provides faculty, staff, and students the chance to reflect on life and daily struggles incurred. Family Nights occur every 9 weeks, where family and students celebrate their accomplishments. Candidates were involved in participating in weekly family time meetings and organizing the Fall 2021 Family Night in December 2021.



MARIAN UNIVERSITY
— Indianapolis —
Master of Science in Counseling Program

Learning Objectives For Course and Project

Core standards met included:

1. Understand the elements of a comprehensive school counseling program, including the instruction of students in academic and technical achievement; career and workplace development; and personal, social, and emotional development through individual, small-group, classroom, and school-wide initiatives.
2. Appreciate strategies and methods for developing, implementing, coordinating, assessing, and managing an effective school counseling and guidance program for college and career readiness that meets the needs of all students.
3. Master skills and strategies for reviewing, selecting, using, and evaluating technology to plan, organization, and deliver a school counseling and guidance program that meets the needs of all students.
4. Practice strategies and methods for continually evaluating school counseling services to assess their impact on students, identify program gaps, and target interventions.

Resources

- Borders, L. D., & Drury, S. M. (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70(4), 487-498.
- Cook, A. L., Shah, A., Brodsky, L., & Morizio, L. J. (2017). Strengthening School-Family-Community Engagement Through Community Dialogues. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, 9(1), 9-37.
- Millican, J. and Bourner, T. (2011), "Student-community engagement and the changing role and context of higher education", *Education + Training*, Vol. 53 No. 2/3, pp. 89-99.

Findings from the Experience

Why is reflection so important?

Reflection is at the heart of service-learning. Doing service without reflecting is "like eating without digesting." Reflection helps candidates to: (1) explore service and the meaning behind service experiences; (2) focus on learning from the community and environment; (3) connect coursework with "real life"; (4) clarify goals and values; (5) highlight strengths and areas needing improvement; and (6) evoke constructive evaluation of the effort, the school and the community.

Inclusive –

- Sydney shared, "When planning the activities for the event, we made sure that they followed social emotional learning (SEL) skills; most focused on teamwork or communication. We believed these skills to be perfect because not only are they important for the development of high schoolers but they are key parts of the most entertaining and engaging games."
- Frankie reflected, "The event really helps me understand the importance of building relationships with students and families and the people that I will be an encounter with in the future as a school counselor."

Impactful –

- Zai reflected, "Going to the Crossing brought our classroom discussions to life. Organizing a family/student focused Friendsgiving allowed myself and my cohort to apply our textbook knowledge to a real-life setting. We were able to plan a lesson/group activity which aligned with the ASCA standards to cover Social Emotional Learning topics."
- Blake challenged, "We were able to focus in on a population that we have a true interest in and will be working with in the near future. The students and their families were thankful for us putting on this event and made us feel very appreciated. This is a wonderful organization and changing the lives of many people, young and old."

Integrated –

- Melinda shared, "My world is very Black, and Brown and I am thankful to be apart of a space that looks like myself. I have considered it a privilege, and a calling to serve and work in my own community. My childhood was the complete opposite. I was always the minority, and I rarely saw Black or Brown women holding educational positions. The Crossing presented me the opportunity to students and families in similar economic statuses and struggles as my family."
- Lon asserted, "The Crossing presents lost or forgotten students the unique chance to graduate from high school as well as train for a career. I was able to see similar struggles, with different faces. The larger picture for me was ensuring each student, no matter the race receives my undivided attention, and all the resources afford to them."