

Educating School Library Leaders for Radical Change through Community Service

Sue C. Kimmel

Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University. skimmel@odu.edu

Jody K. Howard

Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University. jhoward@odu.edu

Bree Ruzzi

Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University. blave001@odu.edu

Dresang's *Radical Change* (1999) has far-reaching implications for pre-service preparation programs for future library and information science leaders. The challenge is to create experiences that will assist with developing these leadership qualities. In this qualitative case study, the authors share findings related to leadership development from a community service project required of members of NextGen, a cohort of eleven classroom teachers from the western, rural regions of Virginia earning a Masters degree in education with endorsement to become school librarians. Their graduate coursework was funded through an IMLS grant RE-01-13-008-13 and participants were expected to give back to their communities through a service project of their own design. Using Kouzes and Posner's (2002) Five Practices of Leadership, a series of three semi-structured interviews were conducted to determine how community service projects developed leadership. The researchers found that the projects supported each of Kouzes and Posner's five practices along with a sixth practice unique to this study: *Aspire to Sustain*.

Keywords: radical change, leadership, community service, LIS education, service learning, school libraries

Introduction

Eliza Dresang's *Radical Change* (1999) envisioned a world that was more connected, promoted active participation, and allowed new possibilities for access to boundary-breaking ideas. Radical change is impacting upon libraries of all kinds as they engage with digital shifts in information and access. Dresang described changes in books that included new forms and formats, new perspectives, and breaking barriers (p. 17), and these changes have far-reaching implications for libraries and for the preparation of future library and information science leaders. While these sweeping changes have clear implications for all kinds of libraries, Dresang specifically exhorted librarians who work with

youth to take a leadership role in providing access to digital tools. She promoted an ideology of children as "competent and seeking connection with adult and peers, as well as information and opportunities" (p. 73). Dresang envisioned a new sense of community through the global reach of digital media but also through connections with caring adults "who know that children are neither helpless nor omnipotent, neither innocent nor wise, but real people who have the right to the same community, interaction and access that other community members have, as well as the right to the support they need to deal with these successfully" (p. 74).

The problem we sought to address in this study was how best to prepare future school librarians in order that they can

provide leadership in their communities and work with youth to navigate radical changes in information contexts. In particular, this study explored how engagement with a community service project as part of their pre-service education would develop leadership skills and dispositions in future school librarians.

Literature Review

Future Challenges for School Library Leaders

In order to think about this problem, we explored the literature about the kinds of leadership challenges that might be facing future librarians, about developing leadership, and about service learning related to leadership. Dresang (1999) framed our thinking about future challenges. Her discussion of the changes in books toward new forms, new perspectives, and breaking boundaries as well as the digital principals of connectivity, interactivity, and access suggests the need for leaders who are comfortable with uncertainty, connected to their communities, and willing to take risks and overcome boundaries. In *Forecasting the Future*, Wright and Davie (1999) echoed Dresang (1999) with a new vision for school libraries “based on a radically different paradigm of the goals of school library media services” (p. 70) that included a shift from “media specialist to integrating connector” and “from resource collections to access to resources” (p. 72–73). The first principal Wright and Davie (1999) describe involves people and relationships. “Many professional education programs are successful in teaching technical library skills; not so many are successful in helping students develop their people skills” (p. 84).

The future is always an interesting challenge for organizations but libraries today face particular challenges brought on by digital shifts in content and how patrons access information. O’Connor (2014) addresses the need for leadership within this

context. Among the key leadership traits O’Connor identified for the future were the ability to work with risk as well as a human touch and outreach beyond the institution. Library leaders need to collaborate, establish partnerships with other libraries, and exercise persuasion at all levels. DiScala and Subramaniam (2011) discuss the increasing emphasis in the school library profession on transformational leadership and a concurrent movement toward accountability and evidence-based practice viewing these two as complementary. As leaders, school librarians need to collect and share data about their impact on learning and on school culture. Stephens (2013) shares many challenges in today’s educational and technological contexts that are impacting school libraries. Among her suggestions is that school libraries work closely with the public libraries in their communities. She notes that librarians “tend toward altruism” (p. 4) and possess important organizational skills to draw on as they move toward the future. Employing focus groups, Kimmel, Dickinson & Doll (2012) identified the kinds of dispositions needed for future school librarians along seven continua including from library-based to community-based, from affable to open, from cooperative to collaborative, from facilitative to flexible and from ethical to modeling ethics. They conclude there is a need for faculty to create experiences that challenge and scaffold students as they practice the behaviors that are evidence of dispositions and to reflect on those behaviors (p. 117). These authors underscore the need for library education to develop the skills and dispositions in future librarians to become knowledgeable about their communities, take risks when confronted with challenges, and most importantly, be adept at human relationships. Service learning is a type of experiential learning that provides students with opportunities to develop relationships and provide services needed in the community as a part of their professional education.

Service Learning & Community Service

The foundation of the theory and practice of service learning can be seen in John Dewey's educational and social philosophies of the early 20th century, and have seen a rapid increase in the last 25 years (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Learning through service generally entails a very hands-on approach to immersing students in real-world, local, collaborative projects with members of the community, not in the immediate educational environment. "Student learning can be enhanced when abstract concepts discussed in the classroom connect with individuals' concrete experiences outside of the classroom" (Perrin, 2014, p. 1). Service learning builds on an individual's participation in a service need of society. Because of this, the personal ramifications of this type of experience on the participating students can be profound. "The opportunity to come to know and build relationships with families and children inside and outside school enabled the elementary education pre-service teachers to begin to develop a more complex understanding of culture and social class" (Glazier, Able, & Charpentier, 2014, p. 192).

Service learning has been promoted in Library and Information Science (LIS) education as a means for bridging theory and practice and engaging future leaders with the core values of the profession (Ball, 2008) as well as offering an opportunity to engage with diverse populations and issues of equity (Montiel-Overall, 2010). Community service is one particular type of service learning that directly engages students in the community and allows them the opportunity to meet an identified need in their community, engage in collaboration, and develop relationships with others in the community. The vast majority of educational research involving pre-service professionals working within the community is generally termed service learning. Many authors make a distinction between service learning and community service. For example, Witbooi (2004) de-

finer service learning as a tripartite effort involving the university, the students, and the community where the focus was equally on service to recipients and learning for the participating students. Furco (1996), however, maps out a continuum of service learning where community service leans toward the service to recipients. Furco identifies community service as:

the engagement of students in activities that primarily focus on the service being provided as well as the benefits the service activities have on the recipients (e.g., providing food to the homeless during the holidays). The students receive some benefit by learning more about how their service makes a difference in the lives of the service recipients (p. 4).

For the purposes of this study, we use the term community service to describe the projects developed and implemented by our participants but we recognize it as a type of service learning.

Learning through community service builds on an individual's participation in an area of need within society. Diamond (2014) concluded that a community service experience enabled pre-service early childhood educators to grow in confidence and leadership abilities. In case studies of female doctoral students, Davis, Major, Cook & Bell (2015) found that the beneficial effects of service learning were far reaching and transformational in the development of educational leaders. The meta-analysis conducted by Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, (2011), examined 62 service learning research studies, which were examined and compared against controls. The results showed significant gains in five outcome areas. One identified area was labeled *Social skills*, which included "skills generally directed toward other people, such as leadership skills, cultural competence, and social problem solving" (p. 170). In the meta-analysis of Yorio & Ye (2010), service learning was examined as a method to better prepare management and business students. Again, all identified

areas of analysis proved beneficial, with the category of *Personal Insight* including “categories such as identity (how one perceives him- or herself), an awareness of oneself, self-efficacy, self-esteem, perception of leadership ability, determination and persistence” (p. 12). This literature suggests the value of service learning in preparing professionals in the library and in preparing professionals who are leaders connected to their communities.

Leadership

The literature about leadership also addresses how best to educate and develop these leadership qualities including collaboration and caring. Educators who prepare future library leaders need a working definition of leadership. This term has been researched, defined, analyzed and evaluated in a variety of ways, with differing theories applicable across disciplines (Bennis, 2003; Bennis & Nanus, 2003; Collins, 2001; Senge, 1990; Scriber & Shannon 2001; Sheldon, 1991; Van Seters & Field, 1990). Burns (1978), considered the founder of modern leadership theory (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), defines leadership as, “. . . leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations . . . the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers” (Burns, 1978, p. 19). This general definition connects the leaders to the followers and provides an atmosphere of collaboration and respect. In the 1980s, Bennis & Nanus (2003) interviewed and observed over 90 established leaders in business, government positions, and university administration to help understand which leadership principles helped them achieve their positions. Bennis and Nanus found that these leaders supported the following four strategies as leaders of their organizations: Attention through vision (creating focus and direction for the organization); Managing through communication (commitment to a vision); Trust

through positioning; and deployment of self through continued learning. Collins (2001) identifies five levels of leadership: Level 1: Highly capable individual; Level 2: Contributing team member; Level 3: Competent manager; Level 4: Effective leader and Level 5: Executive. Bennis and Nanus (2003) and Collins (2001) support Burns (1978) definition of working together, and collaborating through mutual respect. These theories support the responsibility that librarians have with training future library leaders. Scriber & Shannon (2008) state, “Leading is organic” (p. 40), explaining that becoming a leader is a process of discovery and that each leadership experience one encounters, whether positive or negative, helps one grow and learn to handle the leadership problems that occur.

Dresang’s (1999) *Radical Change* is sweeping through libraries and the communities they serve. How can library educators best prepare students to collaborate with their communities, connect members of the community with new formats, perspectives, and challenges, and model the dispositions needed in this new paradigm? One framework developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002) for leadership seemed especially relevant for the concern of this study to prepare future librarians to develop the people skills needed to lead radical change in their school communities.

Theoretical Framework

Kouzes and Posner’s *Leadership Challenge* (2002) challenges individuals to think about leadership and radical change. “Change is the province of leaders. It is the work of leaders to inspire people to do things differently, to struggle against uncertain odds, and to persevere toward a misty image of a better future” (p. 1). These authors outline five research-based practices of leaders; they are: “Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart” (p. 13). They sug-

gest readers think of their framework as a “field guide to take along on your leadership journey” (p. 4). Their focus on leadership as “an affair of the heart” (p. 5) spoke particularly to engagement in community service. Their map of the leadership process provided a lens for studying the journey of participants through conceptualizing, implementing, and reflecting on their experiences, and for library educators to apply when working to develop leadership in future librarians.

Purpose/Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the ways pre-service school librarians see themselves as leaders throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation of a required community service project.

Research Question: What kinds of leadership behaviors, dispositions, and skills do participants report or discuss during the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of a required community service project?

Participants

Participants were members of Next-Gen, a cohort of eleven classroom teachers from the western, rural regions of Virginia earning a Masters degree in education with endorsement to become school librarians. Their graduate coursework was funded through an IMLS grant RE-01-13-008-13 and participants were expected to give back to their communities through a service project of their own design. Drawn from the western regions of Virginia, many of these participants live and teach in rural and under-resourced communities. Each participant in this cohort was expected to engage in her local community through a community service project. The only requirement was that the community service was related to 21st century literacies such as those described by Dresang’s (1999) radical change. Two of the partici-

pants worked together on the community service project for a total of ten projects. Projects included book drives, partnerships with the public library, and other community organizations. Table I shows the participants with a brief description of their projects. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant.

Methods

This study employed a case study approach (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2014) focused on eleven pre-service school librarians engaged in a community service project of their own design during the 2014–15 academic year. The data collected for this study drew from multiple interviews with each of the eleven participants conducted at three points during the year to capture the participants’ thoughts and feelings about the community service project and themselves as leaders at different stages of their projects. Semi-structured interview protocols were employed using a mix of structured questions about the service-learning project that included open-ended questions to allow participants an opportunity to talk about themselves as leaders. Explicit questions about leadership were not included until the final interview after the project was completed. The researchers were interested in whether and how participants described leadership behaviors without prompting. The three members of the research team cycled through the three interviews in order for every participant to be interviewed once by each member of the team. All interviews were transcribed for analysis. Participants submitted a final description of their project with artifacts and these also informed the data analysis.

Analysis

Through the series of three interviews, the research team asked participants about the goals they envisioned, the barriers and successes they encountered, the

Table 1. Descriptions of Participant Community Service Projects.

Participants	Community Service Project
Heather	Initiated a school book drive as well as pet food drive to support the local SPCA.
Danielle and Cristen	Worked with a local literacy organization to increase awareness of literacy programs offered to the community.
Kate	Introduced Hour of Code and initiated a computer coding club at her school, which previously offered no computer science classes or courses.
Stephanie	Held a book drive to collect books both for her middle school students to swap, and also for donation to the kindergarten classes of the feeder elementary school.
Erin	Worked with the school Student Council Association to organize a color run to collect money for a local student in need and to collect books for Title I students in a local school.
Tracy	Conducted multiple rounds of book drives to rebuild a local elementary school’s library collection, which was entirely lost to a burst pipe during a severe snowstorm.
Angela	Began with plans to collect and send home new books with preschool students in need. Her service project shifted focus to increase literacy within her own middle school by creating an annual reading week.
Marie	Partnered with the local public library to bus middle school students to the public library once a month to check out library books, and to increase awareness of service and materials offered by the public library.
Michelle	Partnered with other teachers to support at-risk preschool students and families by providing literacy tutoring and materials to help prepare families for entrance into kindergarten.
Cindy	Worked with the Young Adult public librarian to develop a summer reading program for summer school students with materials provided through a public library grant.

people they enlisted and the impact of their projects on various stakeholders. The framework of Kouzes and Posner (2002) was then applied to deductively code the interview transcripts line by line for the five practices of leadership: “Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart” (p. 13). The first round of eleven transcripts were coded together by the entire research team in order to reach consensus about the coding frame. The analysis was iterative as lines of the interview were compared to definitions of the five practices in order to operationalize the codes. Conversations about the data helped the research team to think through the meaning of the codes and how they were applied. The second and third

rounds of interviews were each independently coded by two members of the team and the entire team met to talk through any discrepancies. Data were then sorted into the five practices and the research team analyzed each practice for themes related to leadership and radical change.

We share our findings using the Kouzes & Posner (2003) framework to show the development of these community service projects from initial ideas through plans for sustaining the projects into the future. In order to tell the story of our participant’s progress through the community service we discuss the five practices in the order presented by Kouzes and Posner: “Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart” (p. 13) even

though they suggest that “there is no sacred order to proceeding” (p. 5). One of the principles, “Inspire a Shared Vision” was particularly strong at the beginning and at again at the end of projects. A new practice of “Aspire to sustain” allowed the researchers to distinguish the future-orientation of candidates at the end of their projects from their earlier work creating a shared vision at the beginning of the project.

Findings

Based on research and extensive work with leadership best practices, Kouzes and Posner (2002) identify five practices and ten commitments that leaders employ to engage, connect, overcome barriers, and achieve results. They also identify two commitments aligned with each of the five practices and are presented in Table 2 along with our sixth practice, “Aspire to Sustain.” For clarity, students in the school library program who were the participants in this study will be referred to as “participants” while the word “students” will be used when discussing K-12 students.

Model the Way

Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggest that

leaders model the way through two commitments: clarifying values and aligning actions with shared values (p. 16–17). Leaders examine their values and find a voice that expresses their beliefs. They “model the way” by putting their values into action and setting an example through their actions. This practice was particularly evident when participants talked about the projects they selected and why. Several participants looked to their own families for ideas. For example, Kate chose a project about computer coding because “My own children—that was a big thing for them wanting to make video games; that was their dream job. And in this area there was nothing for them to do, attempt or try that with.” Many spoke about a need that spoke to their hearts. In Tracy’s case it was hearing about a nearby school library destroyed by flooding and knowing “it was meant to be; now I had a purpose.” Heather said once she decided on the animal shelter for her project, “my whole heart was into it.” Several participants spoke about the influence of the project on their changing views of themselves. Cindy said “I think it just helped me find my voice more.” Having identified a need that concerned them, participants then looked for shared values to negotiate projects with others. Two participants found com-

Table 2. 5 Practices and 10 Commitments for Effective Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Practice	Commitments
Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify values • Set the example
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Envision the future • Enlist others
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for opportunities • Experiment and take risks
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster collaboration • Strengthen others
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize contributions • Celebrate the values and victories
Aspire to Sustain (Research finding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope for the future • Plan to sustain the vision and project

mon ground with the public library and engaged in projects to take students to the public library or bring the public librarian to the school. Others found their interests resonated with school administrators and other teachers concerned with student literacy. An important aspect of modeling the way clearly is serving as a model or setting the example. When they spoke of themselves as leaders, participants often talked about their enthusiasm and positive attitude as motivating to students and other adults. Stephanie, in particular, explicitly used her struggles with reading as a model for her students. She stated: "You've just not found your book yet. Because, once you do, it kind of clicks for you. Especially if you can find one that is a series or something. Something to build on. So yes I struggled as a kid. Again it was about fifth grade when it finally clicked for me. I just love to read." Stephanie's project involved middle school students reading for elementary students and so she also taught students to set the example for others. Once participants found a voice and a project to undertake, they were faced with developing that vision and enlisting others to "Inspire a shared vision."

Inspire a Shared Vision

Kouzes and Posner (2002) identify "Inspiring a Shared Vision" as the next of the *Five Practice of Leadership*. This practice is broken into two commitments: "envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities" (p. 18), and "enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations" (p. 18–19). This practice logically followed *Model the Way*, as participants developed their vision and inspired others to join them. This practice was strongly evident in the initial phases of the service project as participants imagined what their projects would look like, and identified ways they hoped to get others involved. Cristen discusses the process of working with her classmate to develop their plans and goals. She stated: ". . . get-

ting all these ideas. I guess creating some sort of vision of what we wanted to do has been the exciting thing so far." They recognized the challenge of creating a shared vision as Angela recounts, "I think if I can just get it going people will see it, and want it to continue." Michelle discussed her desire to involve families in supporting their English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) preschool population as they transitioned into kindergarten. "I'm really just thinking about those kids and their confidence and their comfort, and the families as they come into school. An improved sense of self in a way as they approach [their] long school career." Some participants chose to utilize already established programs to align with and to better advance their community service agenda such as Cristen and Danielle who worked with a regional literacy organization. Once their projects had been envisioned, participants naturally encountered challenges and barriers and were led to the next practice to "Challenge the process."

Challenge the Process

Kouzes and Posner (2002) describe this practice as taking the initiative, experimenting and taking risks. In analyzing the interview data, we found that the participants supported this leadership practice by overcoming specific barriers placed in their paths, showing initiative through the design and revision of their projects, persevering in accomplishing their projects, and initiating partnerships with other organizations to accomplish their goals. Once participants had clarified their values and envisioned a community service project, they were often required to take risks to overcome barriers. One barrier that Kate overcame was having no background in computer science coding but knowing she wanted to offer this process to the students, so she took the risk. "I guess my challenge was my lack of specific technical knowledge so I guess just being more aware and trying to study it more." Many participants

faced challenges gaining support for the project from other teachers in the school: obtaining the necessary permissions from the administration in the school divisions, implementing the projects school-wide even though they are classroom teachers; and gaining support from local organizations for implementing the projects. Part of Cristen and Danielle's final project was to develop a website for a regional literacy organization and the head of the organization did not know exactly how to provide access to the participants because of the parameters of the organization's website domain. "She told us she had a lot of difficulty; she was not very technologically savvy. So we sat down with her and showed her the Weebly we built and offered to contribute to it anytime which we would be perfectly willing to do."

Participants challenged the process through taking the initiative to develop projects that required careful organization and had many tasks that needed to be accomplished. Some of the participants expressed being overwhelmed by the extent of the projects. In planning a 5K run, Cristen and Danielle did not realize that they would need permits, timers, and insurance. Because so many of these facets of the 5K run were out of their control, they scaled back their project. Cindy planned on working with a group of ESOL students in the summer reading program but because of a change of schedule that would interrupt the school class schedule, she revised her project and established a partnership with the regional library. The participants showed initiative in planning their projects and then revising as necessary. Participants took the initiative to contact local organizations and explore possible partnerships. Although all of these partnerships did not come to fruition, the participants had visions that extended beyond the school walls into the community. In order to challenge the process, participants often needed to enlist others and that led to the next leadership practice, "Enable others to act."

Enable Others to Act

According to Kouzes and Posner (2002) the practice of enabling others to act involves commitments of fostering collaboration and strengthening others. Leaders don't operate alone; participants in this study enabled others in order to accomplish their community service projects. School principals and other educators in their schools were frequently mentioned as well as partnerships with other schools in the division and administrators including at least one school superintendent. Several projects fostered relationships with other community organizations. Participants drew on their own social capital to foster relationships; several mentioned family members, local churches, and other community connections. They used email, Facebook, flyers, and the telephone to reach out to others. They spoke in front of groups, talked to people they met at social functions, and served as a liaisons between administrators and teachers or parents. They got others to work on their behalf as Kate shares, "I had to approach my building principal. She then approached the central office staff and then we had to take it to the parents." The community service projects provided numerous opportunities for collaboration where they found ways to align their projects with the goals of others. For example, Heather met first with the director of the animal shelter to design a project that would both encourage reading and collecting pet food for the shelter. Two participants worked closely with the local public library recognizing that their efforts to connect K-12 students with the public library increased attendance figures, often significantly. Cindy reports that when she told the public librarian that an anticipated 150 students might participate, "Her eyeballs kinda popped out of her head so she had to ask for permission and that's why they've had to turn it into a pilot. They realize the potential to build a partnership with our schools." Located in rural parts of the state, many participants described

tight-knit communities but also areas of isolation and need. Most striking was Marie's telling her students that there's "a bigger world and you have to see it, even if it's through a book" because as she shared, "some of my kids don't even have running water, don't even have electricity." Once they enabled others to contribute to their community service projects, participants found ways to celebrate accomplishments through the practice of "Encourage the heart."

Encourage the Heart

Kouzes and Posner (2002) describe this practice as a commitment for showing appreciation for others and for celebrating values and victories. The interview data support this leadership concept through sharing excitement about their projects with their students, parents and community members; understanding the participants' and community values, and showing appreciation and caring for others. All of the participants expressed a feeling of accomplishment about their projects and a positive infectious atmosphere surrounding those accomplishments.

This excitement permeated the atmosphere as Erin tells about distributing books to students, "They were really excited . . . the kids kinda swarmed the table so some of them were like 'how many can we get?' and some were like, 'we don't have to pay anything for this?'" Heather experienced this same excitement and showed appreciation for others. At the conclusion of Heather's book/ animal food drive competition, she took the winning class for a visit to the animal shelter to read to the animals. Some of the students were apprehensive about entering the cat room. Heather said,

Okay, you can stand outside the door and watch outside the windows and then when we go to the dog room, you can interact with the dogs. After they saw us playing the cats and reading to them and how much

fun we were having, they (the students) came right in. They just quickly got over those fears so quickly and it was so much fun.

These projects also demonstrated the caring that the participants had for the students and for their surrounding communities. Kate offered the robotics club to families from other schools in the geographic area without a cost to the parents. "Lots of thank yous from the parents and the community. Lots and lots. They are thrilled with the opportunity." The participants' enthusiasm and excitement spilled over into the community. Erin stated, "(This project) made me love my community even more; just seeing the excitement and enthusiasm from everyone from start to finish in all different aspects. I cannot put it into words." Given the excitement surrounding their community service projects and the overwhelming response from their communities, it's not surprising that participants aspired to sustain their initiatives into the future.

Aspire to Sustain

The researchers found "Inspire a Shared Vision" upon which this last practice was based to be a unique practice of leadership, in that it was a practice of continual metamorphosis throughout the process. Aspiring to sustain their community service projects beyond the year where they were required to implement the project was a leadership practice evident across the participants. Hope for the future and plans to sustain the vision and the project were the commitments expressed in this practice. These were often articulated in the space of time where participants realized the impact of their involvement, and expressed their aspirations for future continuation and success of their community service project. Every participant conveyed concrete plans, or a desire to continue their community service projects into the following school year. In

some instances, there was a more passive expression of hope; this could be seen from Kristen “So I am hoping to see that there are more people involved in both of those ways; the people getting help and the people helping.” Kate spoke hopefully about incorporating the hour of code at her school as a part of the “core curriculum.” However, often there was an active vision of planned hope. Angela discussed the next year’s plans for her reading initiative, “We’re hoping to tie it into the school library month next year, and we’re hoping . . . to be able to talk a little bit throughout the year so when it happens, you know, the students have been expecting it.” Tracy, reflecting on her community service project to help rebuild a school library collection that was lost to a burst pipe, reports “I have already asked the Education Association if we can do another community project this year; if we can keep this as a focus every year.” In these examples of hoping for the future success of their initiatives, the participants exhibited personal investment in the value of their projects. They see the worth of their efforts and anticipate a changed future in their own schools and/or communities. Participants looked to the future, evaluated experiences, realigned their visions, and looked to the future again. These community service projects were personal with lasting impacts upon the participants. It was not an assignment to be completed and forgotten; it was something that altered their trajectory as leaders. Heather stated, “After it was done, I told my principal, ‘you know if I become a school librarian I want to do this kind of stuff all the time. I want to have different projects going on where our school is involved with different aspects with our community.’”

Discussion

Engaging with their communities through these service projects provided participants with an opportunity to tap into their potential as leaders, to take risks,

build connections with various stakeholders, and develop literacy initiatives in their local communities. They became agents of radical change in their communities and demonstrated best practices of leadership as they planned and implemented these projects. Each of the five practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2002) were clearly evident in the experiences and attitudes reported by the participants. They “modeled the way” through connecting to their own values and experiences. Without exception they reported on inspiring others to join in their vision. Participants encountered numerous challenges and found ways to re-group and persevere. They enabled others to work on their behalf. Participants often mentioned the “heart” in interviews and reported excitement and engagement in their communities. Finally and significantly, this research identified a sixth practice: they looked toward continuing and sustaining their projects in the future.

The community service project requirement was an authentic and powerful means to develop the leadership skills and dispositions of future librarians. Participants were required to view their communities with new eyes as they looked for literacy needs they might address. But they also were required to reflect upon their own values and interests and to find the “heart” needed to sustain their engagement with the project. They demonstrated the kind of caring for youth in their communities that Dresang (1999) envisioned for the adults who work with youth as they navigate through the digital world. Their actions exemplified the kinds of connectivity, interactivity and access Dresang saw as key principles for youth engagement in the context of radical change. They “modeled the way.”

This project was unique because it was not tied to any one course and candidates were required to assess needs in their communities and join or initiate a project that addressed those needs. This design required them to find their own voice, to work on a project that was not constrained

to an academic semester, and to take the initiative to develop relationships in their communities whether through other schools or other community organizations. They grew as leaders and exemplified the leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2003). Library education often includes practica or research that is outside of specific coursework as part of licensure or degree requirements and this study suggests that a community service project could become a similar requirement of graduate students. Such a project would prepare future library and information professionals to build community relationships and respond to community needs. This project allowed them to become agents of radical change. At the close of this project, Cindy was preparing to move from being a classroom teacher to become a school librarian.

I think it [the community service project] just helped me find my voice more. Because, entering a new school, I have to learn a new culture. And I'm lucky that I have a co-librarian to work with me and so I get on the job training as I'm going through this year. But now I'm like let's invite the [Regional Library] whereas before I would be like, 'I don't know if I want to do that.' Or let's see if we can get this author, or let's do this thing. And our division is so much into Twitter that starting with the summer, I started posting pictures of what we are doing. My role is putting me in a more public, transparent piece. And I feel more prepared for that.

Conclusion

This research is significant for the field of library education because it illuminates a unique and transformative approach to leadership development based on the leadership practices described by Kouzes and Posner (2003). The community service project was a requirement for participants who were recipients of IMLS sponsored scholarships to earn their Master's degrees

with endorsement to become school librarians but could become a template for other LIS education programs interested in authentic and meaningful leadership development experiences for their students. Many participants began thinking about the project with trepidation but, without exception, they all recommended a similar project for all pre-service librarians. One limitation of the study is that these participants were chosen competitively for the scholarship and were clearly high achievers who were self-motivated. Future research might apply this model to other kinds of service-learning and other groups of graduate students. The findings of this research suggest that community service is a promising vehicle for developing the kinds of leadership needed for radical change.

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