Dana Gialanella
Experiential Education Award Statement

My experience as a student teacher has and continues to greatly prepare me for my future career in the field of education. Rather than the typical 15 week student teaching experience, I chose to expand my teacher training to 30 weeks in order to obtain my certification as a school library media specialist, elementary, and social studies teacher. The total 30 week experience will provide me with comprehensive expectations of my future career. I am experiencing the school environment at multiple times of the school years as well as in multiple settings. My student teaching experience is divided into 4 7 ½ week experiences. Each experience provides me with a different learning experience about the field of education; each time I move to a new placement, I assume a new view of the school and its students and teachers.

At each placement that I move to I accept a new role and take on the responsibilities that are necessary. I take on a new leadership role and provide to each community as needed. In each placement I see the difference that I make in the schools as a servant leader. Each experience teaches me something new and I leave with a new set of skills.

My first experience was in a middle school library and this is where I acquired a multitude of skills. I learned the particulars of running the media center including the interaction with students and faculty, the demands of teaching and administering and how to provide to the entire school community. As a student teacher in the media center I saw the continual movement of the community and worked to meet their needs. I learned that it is the duty of the media specialist to work for the school’s students as they compose a great part of the community.

While working at the middle school I learned that the school community was taking part in the cultural phenomena of the Twilight Saga. Many of the students, both girls and boys, were unbelievably interested and preoccupied with the book and movie. I found it important to immerse myself into the community of the school, and joined the phenomena. I quickly read the
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book and took the role of organizing and directing a *Twilight* party for the students. The party was a huge hit with the students and showed me the importance of getting involved with the student community and taking action. The party was enjoyable for the students and allowed me to form a closer connection with the students which helped me to better meet their needs in the media center.

My second placement was at an elementary school library and this placement was where I was able to more thoroughly develop my servant leadership skills. A servant leader is someone who can contribute and help guide a group while gaining knowledge of the field. Throughout my experience I developed many aspects of servant leadership. I not only assisted the students with various tasks, but I also helped the teachers and administration. I showed my cooperating teacher and other teachers many new technology skills. After I assisted them once, they came back to me for help with other problems. I found that by giving to the teacher and faculty community my skills and knowledge we developed a better matched relationship – we were both able to help and learn from each other. My implementation in servant leadership helped me to keep my focus and allowed me to grow in terms of my teaching abilities.

My next 2 experiences will be in a 1st grade elementary school classroom and in a 6th grade social studies classroom. The skills and experiences I have acquired will follow over to my next placements where I will further develop and expand them. I will be able to continue to provide to each new community I become part of and learn from each experience.

My multiple experiences have shown me that I am truly destined to be a servant leader in the field of education. My skills in all areas have developed to a higher level because of my multiple experiences. Each experience pushed and will continue to push me every day to meet and exceed my goals of becoming a successful media specialist and teacher.