

The “Fun” in Fundraisers: Fundraisers that Stick

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Innovative Idea Poster

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Introduction

Agricultural education is organized through the relationship of classroom instruction, supervised agricultural education (SAE), and agricultural youth organization participation (Phipps & Osborne, 1988). Much of the leadership development within career and technical education (CTE) occurs through participation in youth organizations (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). Pre-service agricultural education students at the University of Kentucky learn techniques to successfully advise youth organizations in the future. One of the many responsibilities a youth organization has to do in order to be successful is to coordinate and implement fundraisers. Fundraising is about selling your idea to others (Eastwood & Norton, 2010). Experiential learning can be used to foster creative and interesting fundraising ideas for pre-service teachers. According to Kolb (1984), “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p.38). Kolb’s theory is summarized into four stages: experience, reflect, generalize, and test (Cowan, 1998). In order for students to maximize the value of an experience, the experience must be followed by reflection (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Experiential learning shifts the responsibility for learning from the instructor to the student and encourages lifelong learning habits within students (Hawtrey, 2007).

An example of an experiential learning activity at a southern university is a “pancake cookoff” between pre-service educators enrolled in an Advising a Non-Profit Youth Organization course. Pre-service teachers utilize their knowledge of managing a youth organization and techniques for an interesting fundraiser to plan and execute their idea for judges, through a pancake cookoff fundraiser. This experience provides a unique learning environment and reflection following the cook-off fosters discussion for future fundraising activities. This research aligns with the National Research Agenda (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016), “Priority 5: Efficient and Effective Agricultural Education Programs” (p.43).

How it Works

Since its inception, a professor within the Agricultural Education program has included an assignment within the Advising a Non-Profit Youth Organization course allowing pre-service teachers to learn the fundamental and essential details of fundraising for a non-profit youth organization in an enjoyable way. The purpose of this lesson is for pre-service teachers to learn fundraising in a fun manner by engaging in a pancake cook-off while discussing the necessities for a fundraiser which could benefit a youth organization. This lesson helps pre-service teachers to learn business skills, build camaraderie, network, increase engagement within the community, and teamwork. The objective of this lesson is for pre-service teachers to utilize these skills with their future youth organization.

Traditional pancakes were cooked and provided for the pre-service teachers during the discussion of the fundamentals of fundraising. The pre-service teachers were split into pairs and tasked with making three pancakes that were most eye-appealing, best tasting, and appealing to the crowd with additional ingredients of their choosing. Upon the completion of the lesson, the

pre-service teachers were tasked with cooking their groups pancakes for the judges on the provided griddles. Judges tasted the pancakes and selected the winner of the most eye-appealing set of pancakes and the best tasting pancakes. Once the judges reached a verdict, a trophy presentation and celebration commenced in conclusion of the class.

Results to Date

The pancake extravaganza has just successfully completed its first semester at a large southern university. After the completion of the lesson, students were asked to reflect upon 1) what they liked, 2) what they disliked, 3) what they would change, and 4) what were their key takeaways about fundraising from the lesson. One student spoke to the applicability of the lesson by saying, “I took away a few really creative ideas for fundraising I will use in my own chapter some day we discussed as a class”. Additionally, students valued the experiential component of the lesson indicating “the lesson was very hands on and served as a time of reflection”. Lastly, students suggested “having students that are benefiting from the proceeds around to represent the chapter/organization to the community” as a recommendation for future practice. The lesson was successful in having students reflect on fundraising and to brainstorm ideas for future practice.

Future Plans and Advise to Others

The implications of this lesson suggest students want to learn techniques to successfully advise their future youth organization; however, it is often difficult for instructors to deliver classroom content to unmotivated students. This lesson allowed for students to have fun will becoming acquainted with fundraising fundamentals. While the students were enjoying their pancakes, the agricultural educator discussed ideas for future fundraisers, what is needed for a successful fundraiser, and the importance of having fun while fundraising with sophomore-level pre-service educators. Instructors should continue to look for additional ways to incorporate engaging hands-on activities into the classroom if they wish to provide students with exciting and memorable learning experiences (Sun & Hsieh, 2018). It is important to provide students with a reflection period after the activity to help students make connections to the purpose of the pancake cook-off and their future youth organization. To further develop this activity, having different fundraisers and planning periods could be necessary. Toward the end of the pre-service educator’s academic term, the students could be tasked with planning, implementing, and facilitating a similar fundraiser for a local non-profit youth organization. This could provide the pre-service educators the opportunity for a hands-on experience from the initial planning period to the execution of the fundraiser. Additionally, this would provide pre-service educators the opportunity to network, build social capital, and experience a community engagement project.

Costs/Resources Needed

Currently, the cost of the pancake supplies at Walmart is approximately \$18. The materials included in this cost are syrup, pancake mix, butter, and paper goods (i.e. forks, napkins, and plates). Additionally, the cost of the three customizable trophies online is approximately \$15. Resources needed to carry out this lesson include classroom space, griddle, and cookware for the students to cook their pancakes.

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