

Learning and Living Leadership: A Tool Kit

Examples of Student Assignments

Introduction

The **Learning and Living Leadership Tool Kit** includes more than a hundred resources that can be used by social work educators. The tool kit may be used to support transfer of learning from social work courses to social work practice. Classroom leaders may use the activities as frameworks for small group and individual discussion. Instructors may present activities as assignments that allow students to apply their learning and leadership development to their unique child welfare contexts. Schools of social work might also use the tool kit to generate ideas for field education. Field instructors might find useful learning activities for field placement learning agreements/contracts to reinforce a full range of social work competencies. Schools may also use the tool kit to develop agency-specific projects to support leadership development. As appropriate, ensure all projects are reviewed and approved by agency supervisors and management before development or implementation.

Examples

Below just a few activities from the toolkit are identified to illustrate how they might be used for student learning.

Agency Eco Map

Many social work students learn about eco-mapping as it relates to individual and family systems. In this tool kit activity, students are asked to assess the status of the current network of community partners and make a plan for building strategic relationships to achieve common goals. This activity is useful in both classroom and field education. As a classroom activity, students are each asked to complete an Eco Map of their agency. Eco Maps are then posted on the wall and students then review one another's maps and ask themselves: (1) Did the other student identify stakeholders that I left out? (2) Do I have suggestions for additional stakeholders for them? Students who have suggestions for other students can post their comments using a post-it note. In a field placement, the student could review the Eco Map with their supervisor or at a team or unit meeting. Together they can review/identify hot spots, bright spots, and missing relationships and brainstorm ways to address the hot spots, continue the bright spots, and develop the missing relationships.



Child Welfare in the News

This tool kit activity could be adapted for application in the classroom or field education. Students could sign up for the Child Welfare Information Gateway’s daily news alert by going to Free Subscriptions and clicking on the box next to Subscribe to “Child Welfare in the News.” Through this subscription they can collect emails for a few days and then read them all to understand the issues making news across the country and internationally. After this review they can use the provided worksheet to identify themes and explore how these are observed in their agency. This learning could be expanded on through an assignment that asks the student to look at peer reviewed literature related to the issues identified.

Funding Stream Investigation

This tool kit activity can be adapted for use as a field assignment. Students will come away from this exercise with a better understanding of the fiscal supports for their program area and the requirements regarding drawing down funding. It requires the student to interview a budget or finance director or manager and to map their program area’s primary funding streams to understand how staff and services are funded. The student would need support from a field instructor to access a manager or administrator who could answer questions such as: How is your program area supported? What financial support comes from the federal government? State government? County/local government? Tribal council? Foundations? Others?

Listening to Family Voice

This toolkit activity will provide students an opportunity to assess the degree to which family voice is represented in various components or an agency’s programs while also exploring ways to enhance or increase the family voice within programs. It will assist students in becoming familiar with how family centered principles and practices might be present in an agency setting. The worksheet might be used as a field assignment where students would review agency websites, strategic plans and policies and procedures to assess what is in place and identify areas for improvement. This learning activity would be most successful if a field instructor or other agency leader is available for the student to interview and to provide support and coaching on where and how to find the information in the assessment.

What’s My Decision-Making Style?

This tool kit activity asks students to reflect on their approach to making decisions and how their approach may be informed by cultural norms as well as their personality. The worksheet, along with reflective questions, could be used in a seminar in conjunction with group discussion about how understanding one’s own decision-making style will help students to make more informed, effective, and timely decisions.