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Fostering Interconnected Perspectives: An Experiential Inquiry into Humane Education through Three Field Experiences

Ashlyn Lafleur

Abstract: This experiential learning study explores the integration of humane education into a graduate program through a series of three immersive field experiences: volunteering at an animal shelter, attending a school board meeting, and participating in a community cleanup. The study adopts Kolb’s experiential learning theory to guide the research process, emphasizing hands-on engagement, reflective observation, and application of knowledge. The findings underscore the interconnectedness of animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship within humane education. Through advocacy, collaboration, and raising awareness, the study highlights the challenges and opportunities of incorporating humane education into crowded teacher-preparation curricula. The research also reveals the personal growth of the participant, especially in developing empathy and understanding the role of community engagement. The study concludes by advocating for humane education as a vital component in preparing future educators to foster compassion, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability among students.

I am a graduate student at a regional public university. In my connection to humane education, I strongly align with the principles of social justice. Growing up in a church, I actively volunteered to assist members of the community by donating my time and resources. I was able to experience and see the struggles that others face such as homelessness, lack of food, and abandonment. This experience inspired me to continue giving back, from donating to shelters to crafting

blankets for hospitalized children. I am committed to advocating for empathy and support for all individuals. While I have long been passionate about environmental stewardship and have advocated for it by recycling and cleaning up areas I visit, until recently I had yet to participate in community clean-up efforts or delve deeply into understanding its interconnectedness. Similarly, despite my love for animals and childhood dreams of becoming a veterinarian, my experience in

Ashlyn Lafleur is a graduate student at Stephen F. Austin State University.

animal protection and awareness was limited to caring for my own pets. In the beginning of this experience I viewed it as something to check off a list for my humane education class. I also believe I have an intermediate comprehensive understanding of my interconnectedness with the planet and my capacity for empathy for everything on it.

Additionally, experiential learning is a pedagogical approach characterized by hands-on, immersive experiences coupled with reflective practices to deepen understanding and foster personal growth. Through my research, I embraced this methodology, allowing myself to engage with the subject matter of humane education fully. By immersing myself in experiential activities such as volunteering at an animal shelter, attending a school board event, and participating in an environmental cleanup initiative, I gained firsthand insights into the interconnectedness of animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship.

In this experiential learning paper, I will commence with a comprehensive literature review elucidating the principles of experiential learning, alongside an exploration of the historical context and significance of humane education for future pathways. Next, I will outline the methodology, providing intricate details of the experiential procedures undertaken. Subsequently, I will present and analyze the gathered data. Finally, I will synthesize my findings to draw conclusions that stem from the insights gained through experiential learning and

the impact of field experiences on teacher preparedness in humane education.

Humane education aligns well with the objectives of social justice and ethical education, but many teacher-preparation curricula lack an explicit focus on humane education. This paper explores the challenges of incorporating humane education into teacher-preparation programs, specifically focusing on how experiential learning can enhance teacher preparedness. Through the lens of field experiences, this research investigates the potential of hands-on activities in addressing these challenges, providing future educators with the skills to integrate humane education into their classrooms.

Experiential Learning

Features of Experiential Learning

Kolb's experiential learning style theory is a four-stage learning cycle in which a learner follows the steps of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Mcleod, 2024). The steps support and connect throughout the process to gain a further perspective. During the cycle, the initial step involves actively engaging in the experience. Following this, individuals are prompted to reflect on what they observed by posing essential questions to themselves or being asked by others. Subsequently, they conceptualize by stating what was learned from the experience. Finally, they implement the insights gained and strategize how to apply them in future

endeavors (Nurunnabi et al., 2022).

Fully engaging in experiential learning, students gain a hands-on understanding of their surroundings. In addition, reflection is essential to gain a fuller understanding of the concept (Kolb et al., 2017). Dewey, Jarvis, Lewin, and Piaget are among some of the theorists who acknowledged the connection between reflection after experiencing the learning process (Kuk et al., 2018). Intertwining experiential learning with reflective practice, students not only acquire practical skills but also develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Experiential learning has been implemented in various educational settings with impactful outcomes achieved. For instance, Stephen Ritz's innovative approach involved introducing students to urban gardening within their school community. By immersing in hands-on activities to cultivate a garden, students developed a newfound passion for nature and ecological conservation. This experiential learning opportunity allowed them to move beyond traditional textbooks and immerse themselves in practical, real-world experiences. Through reflection, they not only learned about plants and gardening but also gained valuable skills in teamwork, problem-solving, and sustainability. Moreover, the produce they cultivated provided nutritious food for their school, highlighting the tangible impact of experiential learning on both individual growth and community well-being (Ritz, 2012). This approach cultivates active engagement within real-world contexts, equipping learners with the tools necessary for success in both academic

and real-world domains.

Humane Education

History of Humane Education

The term "humane education" has been used since the early Renaissance, encompassing a broad philosophy centered on fostering empathy and kindness towards all beings (Horsthemke, 2009). Throughout history, whenever people have observed injustices or encountered problems, there have consistently emerged individuals who have shown empathy and worked to raise awareness about these issues. This has been evident in various contexts such as slavery, the Holocaust, and the struggle for women's rights (Cieslack, 2019).

The role of humane education is to equip individuals with the necessary tools to take control of their own awareness and understanding. Reflecting on and actively seeking solutions to the issues present in their surroundings can contribute to making the world a better place. Humane education fosters a desire to live with compassion, integrity, and wisdom, equipping individuals with knowledge about how their actions impact the environment, humans, and animals (Tate, 2021). By actively participating in the community, people can recognize their ability to make a difference by creating awareness. It is essential that we invest in and support the education profession, thereby attracting and welcoming bright, creative people to bring their knowledge and skills to classrooms where they will be coached and mentored by the finest

teachers until they are masterful educators themselves (Weil, 2021). Teachers need to be supported in humane education efforts through high-quality professional development and having support to effectively incorporate it into their teaching practices. Without support from the school and community, implementing educational initiatives can be challenging and may not reach their full potential.

Future Pathways for Humane Education

Our planet needs humane education to ensure a sustainable future. Teaching humane education and implementing solutions can inform individuals on how to make meaningful contributions. To support this idea, solutionaries need to be initiated in this generation. In fostering change four key elements need to be a part of the thinking process: critical, systemic, strategic, and creative (Rumford, 2018). Students represent the future of humane education. As children learn empathy and kindness, engage in critical thinking about their choices, and reflect to make wise decisions, they play a pivotal role in preventing suffering and disaster.

Incorporating humane education research into everyday curriculum is essential. This could build a foundation for students to develop strategies and recognition (Unti et al., 2003). Every teacher, regardless of the subject they teach, has the opportunity to lead by integrating lessons about their personal connection to humane education and seeking powerful impactful information to educate students on this crucial topic (Weil, 2004). Ultimately, by incorporating humane education into their

teaching practices, educators can empower students to become compassionate and responsible global citizens.

Challenges for Implementing Humane Education

Integrating humane education into teacher-preparation programs is difficult due to an already crowded curriculum that prioritizes subjects like math, science, and literacy. Teacher-preparation programs often focus on meeting national standards, leaving little room for topics like empathy and social responsibility, which are harder to assess through standardized testing (Tate, 2021; Weil, 2021). As humane education is often seen as peripheral, it may only be offered in short workshops or elective courses, limiting future teachers' ability to fully grasp its principles (Unti et al., 2003; Kuk et al., 2018).

Many educators and administrators are unfamiliar with humane education's principles, leading to a lack of institutional support. While humane education fosters empathy and social responsibility, it is often overshadowed by concerns like budget cuts and academic performance (Horsthemke, 2009). Without structured professional development or institutional backing, teachers are often left feeling ill-equipped to incorporate humane education into their classrooms (Weil, 2004). This lack of support limits its widespread implementation despite its recognized importance (Cieslack, 2019).

There is often resistance to incorporating humane education due to misconceptions about its relevance. Many educators see it

as limited to animal welfare or environmentalism, missing its broader application in fostering critical thinking, empathy, and ethical decision-making (Horsthemke, 2009). This perception is compounded by a narrow focus on standardized testing, where humane education is viewed as non-essential (Ritz, 2012). However, experiential learning activities, such as volunteering or community service, can provide critical hands-on experiences that cultivate empathy and social engagement, which are key to holistic student development (Kolb et al., 2017).

Successful implementation of humane education requires collaboration between teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. However, this is often lacking, as seen in school board meetings where humane education is rarely prioritized over other pressing concerns (Weil, 2021). Without institutional and community support, teachers interested in humane education face challenges in advocating for its inclusion, limiting its broader adoption (Rumford, 2018). Collaboration between stakeholders is necessary to raise awareness about humane education's long-term benefits, such as fostering empathy, social responsibility, and community resilience (Tate, 2021).

Methodology

During my research, I documented my humane education journey using a methodology similar to Kolb's theory of experiential learning (McCarthy, 2010). Following Kolb's four-stage framework, I

strategically planned my involvement in activities focused on humane education, aiming to uncover the interconnectedness between animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship. The field experiences I scheduled included visits to an animal shelter, attendance at a school board meeting, and participation in a community park cleanup project. To initiate stage one, I fully immersed myself in each experience, diligently documenting field observations. Additionally, I conducted an interview with a volunteer using Otter AI, a voice recording application, to gain further insights into their experiences. To ensure retention and reflection on my journey, I captured at least three significant moments through photos.

After my participation, I engaged in the reflective analysis stage to assess the impact of each experience and extract valuable insights. This process enabled me to conceptualize a fresh perspective and enhance my understanding. Throughout my visits to various locations, I adhered to a standardized protocol, ensuring consistency in data collection through field notes, interviews, and reflection questions. Subsequently, in the culmination of my journey, having absorbed insights from humane education, I transitioned to the active experimentation stage. Here, I endeavored to integrate newfound knowledge into my daily practices and thoughts, thereby seeking to cultivate further learning through firsthand application. My research furthered this process by exploring how humane education can be implemented in teacher-preparation programs while

addressing these challenges through experiential learning.

Participant

In this qualitative study, I actively participated, employing reflective practices in order to understand the concepts of humane education. I recently received my bachelor's degree in elementary education and will soon receive my master's in teaching and learning with an online learning concentration. Regarding humane education, I have an intermediate understanding. Nonetheless, throughout this semester in my humane and environmental education course, I have learned its importance and understand more about its value to society.

Study Design

This research project is an experiential learning study. Kolb's experiential learning theory posits that learning is a cognitive process involving constant adaptation to and engagement with, one's environment. Individuals create knowledge from experience rather than just from received instruction. Conflicts, disagreements, and differences drive the learning process as learners move between modes of action, reflection, feeling, and thinking. Different learning styles reflect learning preferences that can change with the situation. Learning is a holistic process and results from synergetic interactions with the environment, with people making choices about which parts of the environment to engage with (Bergsteiner et al., 2010). Kolb's learning cycle can

be incorporated by active experimentation, reflection, and conceptualization. I went to my local animal shelter, school board meeting, and community cleanup to be involved in my environment and reflect on the situation. Interacting in these three field experiences gave me hands-on learning and allowed me to reflect on the interconnectedness of humane education. My reflection on this further helped me to see how advocacy for humane education can benefit students in experiential learning and the challenges associated with incorporating it into teacher preparation.

Procedure

I was required to attend three field experiences in different areas of humane education. I visited an animal shelter, a school board meeting, and a community cleanup. During this, I wrote down field notes, recorded an interview with a volunteer, and took at least three pictures to reflect on my experience.

In my first experience, I accompanied a classmate to an animal shelter. Upon arrival, I was immediately struck by the chaotic atmosphere: lost dogs being brought in, cramped crates housing animals due to limited space in the backroom kennels, and neglected cats in need of attention. As the employees prepared for an upcoming adoption event, I took the opportunity to answer field observation questions and document my findings through photography. Subsequently, I engaged with the dogs and observed their distressing living conditions. With the adoption event

imminent, my interaction was cut short. Nonetheless, I swiftly conducted my interview. To gather further data and firsthand experience, I returned to volunteer and walk the dogs every Saturday throughout the month.

In my second experience, I visited a school board meeting. In the beginning, they handed out awards to students and teachers. After they welcomed people who were scheduled to speak to the board members to come up to the microphone stand one at a time by calling their names. While each member came to the stand I answered my field observation questions. I took pictures during and afterward. Due to the event being busy, I asked an HR director if I could have their email to ask them protocol interview questions which they later answered.

Lastly, in my third field experience, I followed the same process during a community park clean-up. I paused while picking up trash to write down my observations and took pictures of me and my family. Luckily, I came across another volunteer to interview to use in my analysis. We attended an after-party clean-up for those who contributed. After each experience, I came home and collected my overall reflection. Each field experience provided the opportunity to reflect on the importance of experiential learning in humane education in prepping teachers for the classroom.

Data Instruments

The following specific instruments were needed to complete this process successfully. Throughout my experiences,

I needed to take pictures on my phone to help me remember and reflect for future reference. I also answered six field observation questions about my interactions with others, my emotional response, notable events or challenges, setting description, connections I found to my humane education course or humane education, and self-reflection on my contribution. This allowed me to have details for my analysis. Additionally, I used the Otter AI app to generate a transcript of my conversation with a volunteer regarding their experience. I used an interview protocol that asked the volunteer to share their role and responsibilities and how they became involved. Including if they have noticed any “AH-HA” moments and if they see what they are doing as connected to humane education. Conducting an interview provided me with an additional perspective, allowing for deeper insights into the experience.

Immediately after leaving, I filled out the field reflection form, addressing questions about how my experience contributed to my understanding of humane education, impactful moments, connections I found in themes, its relevance to education, and my overall reflections. Completing the protocol promptly afterward aided in keeping the experience vivid and allowed for swift connections to class discussions.

Data Analysis

This project implemented a constant comparative analysis approach. Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify four main stages in their version of the constant comparative method and include different

steps in each stage. The stages apply to each emerging category as a separate entity; one category could be in the first stage of development, while another could be in a second stage, and yet another could be in the third stage (Grove 1988). Stage one compares incidents applicable to each category or theme. In this stage, data is broken down and examined. Stage two you will begin to integrate categories and their properties. This is when connections begin to be made between the themes or categories. More understanding and a more structured framework are made. Stage three of the theory begins to emerge from the data assessed. Delving deeper into the themes and finding patterns in their relationship. Lastly, stage four includes the finalization of the theory or full comprehension (Stewart, 2024).

In completing field experience one I deepened my understanding of animal protection. Next in adding field experience two, I began to compare data and narrow down my connections to humane education. When I fully experienced all three field experiences encompassing animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship I could fully begin to find patterns in their relationship and come to an overall result from the collective findings in my data using observations, interviews, and reflections. Using a constant comparative analysis approach helps the data to emerge itself to allow me to focus primarily on experience and data collection. It offers flexibility and adaptability, allowing me to recognize new patterns as I progress. Furthermore, this approach enhances the validity of my research by consistently comparing and cross-checking through reflection. After

undergoing this analysis I was able to find three emergent themes which will be discussed in the results section. I also discovered that humane education could be integrated into teacher preparation to spread positive engagement among students.

Results

Overall, I attended three experiences. I believe that engaging in experiential learning through three distinct field experiences focused on animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship helped to enhance my understanding of the interconnectedness of these concepts within the framework of humane education. This was affirmed and will be explained in greater detail through the emergent themes.

The Importance of Advocacy and Collaboration in the Community

After engaging in all the different experiences, I gained insights into my community and the significance of advocacy and collaboration within it. For instance, at a school board meeting, community members expressed outrage over various issues, including the cancellation of a school play, staff cuts in librarian and art positions, unauthorized filming at a high school, and the construction of a motel near an elementary school. They united in advocating for the common goal of supporting teachers and students. I observed a lack of collaboration between the school board and teachers. During an interview with a district human resources member, she highlighted, “ Much advocacy comes from

seeing teachers becoming exhausted and not feeling supported in the community. In addition to wanting the best for the students not missing out on a good education. AH-HA moments arise when they realize how much easier it is than they thought- especially when other people are already doing it and can help train or acclimate them.” Additionally, I witnessed parents' empathy and compassion towards teachers, as illustrated in Figure 1, where teachers emphasized the need for support and understanding. Reflecting on these experiences, I noted, “I made connections with humane education and everyone getting a chance to speak up for themselves and others. Parents collaborated and came to support their children to make schools a safe place. It influenced my perspective by creating empathy with everyone who had passion in their message.” This deepened my understanding of the interconnectedness between advocacy, empathy, and collaborative efforts in fostering positive change within the community.

In my experience with the animal shelter and community clean-up, I recognized the need for more advocacy and collaboration in the community for the future. In my field notes, I wrote during my visit to the animal shelter I mentioned my lack of awareness of how grateful the staff would be with me coming to help out. They could not express enough their hope for me to return and the need for assistance. This made me want to spread further awareness to others to provide more care to the animals. During my community clean-up experience, it made me disappointed in the community for leaving

trash behind and soon recognized the need for more advocacy. After this experience and after-party, I wrote, “ It made me more ethically aware and wanted to take as many pamphlets of information as I could that volunteers were offering. I wanted to learn how I could expand my backyard garden, ways to get my son more involved in kids learning activities, and more ways I could impact the community.” This experience allowed me to see others who are advocating and collaborating to make others knowledgeable about creating sustainable solutions to keep the earth safe.

Figure 1

Teacher Advocating for Collaboration



Impact of Bringing Awareness and Education to Others

Throughout my experiences, I consistently encountered the pressing need to educate and raise awareness within the community from each interview. Entering each of my experiences with no preconceived expectations, I was struck by the stark realities I encountered . Upon stepping into the animal shelter, I was immediately confronted with the chaotic environment

and the challenges faced by the animals and volunteers daily. One volunteer poignantly expressed their concern, stating, "My biggest concern is that people do not the public has no idea what's involved in taking care, cleaning, medicating and showing the animals to possible adopters." Many people don't have the money to spend on their dogs and they end up and an animal shelter. The dogs are cooped up in cages all day and people do not want to train their dogs. " This highlighted the importance of educating the public about responsible pet ownership and the consequences of uninformed decisions.

In my second field experience, I began to draw connections between humane education, specifically in the realms of animal protection and social justice. Continuing my interview with the member from human resources shed further light on this intersection. She emphasized, " Humane education is connected in a lot of ways but primarily because the work I'm doing with others is literally working toward a more humane education approach. We have a school opposed to a humane education approach. And we're fighting hard to bring it back. Every person who comes to these meetings learns so much. About the district. About state laws. About the personalities of our school board. They learn how things really work. How decisions are made. " As an elementary education major, I had some understanding of decision-making processes, but witnessing them firsthand was eye-opening. It underscored the importance of educating oneself about

systemic issues and advocating for meaningful reform. This experience reaffirmed my belief in the power of collective action and the potential for transformative change when individuals unite in pursuit of a common goal.

Entering my third experience, I underestimated the extent of litter we would encounter in such a short time frame. I decided to involve my husband and son in cleaning up our community park, hoping to instill a sense of responsibility and environmental stewardship in my son as seen in Figure 2. In my observation notes on the day, I recalled explaining to my three-year-old the importance of cleaning up the environment for the sake of the animals who inhabit it.

I told him how happy we were making the animals and the birds were chirping and saying thank you. In my reflection, "It is our job to nurture our environment for animals to thrive and make ourselves aware and others of social justice acts to support positive movements. I aspire to raise a child who can follow my example of empathy towards all individuals." He has embraced and finds enjoyment in finding trash on the floor to dispose of properly in a trash can. He has also wanted to take on more responsibilities at home by taking care of and feeding our pets. This experience reinforced my belief in the need for education and awareness, particularly among younger generations, to promote positive change and social justice.

Figure 2

Teacher Advocating for Collaboration



Growth in Empathy and Personal Satisfaction

We often perceive empathy as merely caring for those around us, but it encompasses a deeper understanding and awareness of others' emotions. Initially, I anticipated feeling saddened upon entering the animal adoption center, but I discovered a sense of purpose in assisting the animals there. The moment I stepped inside, I empathized with the animals confined to their cages. Challenges arise with the business of animals coming in and out. The staff highlighted the lack of volunteers and community understanding. In addition, with so many dogs being caged up they were super energetic coming out of their cages for walks.

Rather than viewing this experience as a mere checkbox in my research, I felt a profound empathy that drove me to return and visit the animals again. In my reflection, I expressed, “Animal protection opens your heart to helping living things that cannot speak for themselves. By being involved I was able to form bonds by seeing their excitement just to be pet. It is transformative to make an animal's day by just seeing the kindness in their eyes to be out of their cage. It made me want to take all of them home by being surrounded by all their unconditional love. I think if everyone volunteered it would create a world that was ethically aware and compassionate to others' needs.” This experience left me deeply satisfied, prompting me to encourage my mom and friend to join me on future trips to the animal shelter. Including, this hands-on experience fostered empathy and practical understanding, which can be transferred to classroom discussions about compassion and care for all living beings. “Smiles”, shown in Figure 3, is a dog I've grown attached to and frequently visit, hoping to persuade my husband to bring her home.

Figure 3

Walking Smiles



In my second experience, I found it rewarding to be a part of something that was impacting the community. During the school board meeting, I found personal growth observing the empathy parents had for the children and the interconnectedness of people in the school district. In reflecting I wrote, “ I made connections with humane education and everyone getting a chance to speak up for themselves and others. Parents came to support their children to make it a safe place. It influenced my perspective by having empathy with everyone who had a passion for their message.” Attending fueled my desire to deepen my understanding of the issues not only for my own personal growth as a teacher but also for my son as he prepares to attend school in the future. Teachers often struggle to advocate for humane education in their schools due to competing priorities. However, this experience emphasized the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators to promote humane education as part of the broader curriculum.

Before participating in the community clean-up, I wasn't keen on waking up early on a Saturday morning for trash collection duty. However, once we arrived and started picking up trash, the amount of litter became a concern. It was rewarding to see the trash bag fill up in just a short amount of time. Many people seemed to lack empathy for the environment and for the animals inhabiting it. I enjoyed interacting with others who wanted to help the community and showing their compassion for the earth. In my interview

with a volunteer who was also cleaning up the park, he said, “The realization of how much trash was left behind was disappointing. I feel a lot more accomplished. And I don't regret saying yes to taking action. I would recommend that everyone should go out every weekend or so to pick up some trash. At least have a good limit of how much you want to pick up.” Becoming aware of the need for change helps me to form empathy for the earth and take recognition in my daily activities. In my reflection, I wrote, “ This can be applied in my personal life for my family to learn and join me in seeing the importance of compassionately serving the planet and others to gain empathy. I loved having my family join me and tell me how happy they felt in their heart afterward. It was rewarding to see the dedication and happiness from beginning to end. Even small acts we make each day by seeing something that needs to be picked up.” I appreciate how the experience not only contributed to my personal growth and empathy but also impacted my family and others who contributed I look forward to continuing our efforts in the future of humane education. Lastly, this experience provided a model for how future teachers can involve their students in community-based environmental initiatives to promote humane values.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the common themes that I found throughout each experience are the importance of advocacy and collaboration in the community, the impact on bringing awareness and education to others, and

growth in empathy and personal satisfaction.

I no longer view these experiences as a check off my list for completion in my humane education course. My journey through experiential learning in humane education has been transformative, illuminating the interconnectedness of animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship. As a graduate student at a regional public university, I entered this exploration not feeling advanced on this topic. Drawing upon my background in community service and education, I embarked on three distinct field experiences: volunteering at an animal shelter, attending a school board meeting, and participating in a community park cleanup project. After gathering my data I was able to analyze the connection between each area of humane education. Noticing it starts with each one of us. It is our job to nurture our environment for animals to thrive and the future of the planet to be prosperous. Additionally, to make ourselves aware and educated about social justice acts to support positive movements that impact the world.

In connection to teacher-preparation programs, humane education is an important component of fostering empathy, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship, it remains underrepresented in teacher-preparation programs. Limited curriculum space, lack of awareness, resistance to change, and insufficient collaboration between stakeholders all pose significant challenges to its integration. However, experiential learning offers a powerful

solution to these challenges.

The field experiences in this study demonstrate how engaging future teachers in real-world activities allows them to internalize the core values of humane education and develop practical strategies for incorporating these principles into their classrooms. By participating in hands-on learning, teachers can make meaningful connections between theory and practice, building essential skills like critical thinking and empathy.

The role of experiential learning is crucial in preparing educators to navigate the challenges of implementing humane education. It fosters deeper reflection and engagement, enabling teachers to better understand how humane education can be woven into existing curricula. Participants in this study showed growth in their understanding of humane education, indicating that experiential learning not only equips teachers with the knowledge but also with the confidence and tools to promote empathy, advocacy, and community engagement in their teaching practices. Ultimately, integrating humane education into teacher-preparation programs through experiential learning can create a generation of educators who are not only academically prepared but also ethically and socially responsible, helping to cultivate compassionate and socially aware students.

Through these immersive experiences, I gained valuable insights into the importance of advocacy and collaboration within the community. Witnessing the passion of parents, teachers, and

community members advocating for positive change highlighted the critical role of collaboration in fostering empathy and support for all stakeholders. Moreover, I recognized the pressing need for education and awareness-raising initiatives to address systemic issues and promote meaningful reform. I feel more comfortable advocating for animals and the need to adopt from overpopulated shelters, including collaborating with the community to advocate for students' futures in education. Everyone can have an influence in creating a sustainable future for animals, people, and the planet. Modeling and setting an example can be a great start to advocating. Overall, I found having a common mission and effective collaboration in a community can help strengthen efforts of positive impact.

Additionally, my journey fostered personal growth in empathy and satisfaction. Connecting with animals at the shelter, witnessing the empathy of parents at the school board meeting, and participating in the cleanup effort all deepened my understanding of empathy and its transformative power. These experiences not only enriched my own perspective but also inspired me to advocate for change and involve my family and friends in these efforts. The impact of bringing awareness and education to others can help me not be alone in my efforts for others to find their value. I have formed a connection with the animals and the environment around me and recognize I am the compassionate voice they do not have in social justice. As a result of my experience, I understand how teaching humane education can

broaden teachers' perspectives and beliefs, just as it widened mine. Teachers are the leaders of the future and bringing this into the classroom with support can create a brighter future as students follow.

Moving forward, I am committed to integrating the insights gained from my experiential learning journey into my teaching practices and personal life. I want students to be aware of their actions, create empathy, and have them grow to be solutionary adults. By continuing to advocate for animal protection, social justice, and environmental stewardship, I hope to inspire positive change within my community and beyond. Additionally, I will advocate for incorporating this process of learning into teacher preparation and meetings, as experiential learning provides teachers with the skills they need to implement humane education. Through ongoing reflection, action, and education, I believe we can create a more compassionate and sustainable world for all beings. From my experiences in humane education, I am prepared and dedicated to being a leader solutionary to help solve issues.

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