

## **Wellness Senior Project**

### *Project Proposal*

**Name:** Jonathan Lam

**Partner:** N/A

**Project Idea:** I plan to use my Spanish Community Outreach Project as my Wellness Senior Project. My project idea is to interact with Spanish-speaking kids, to improve my Spanish-speaking fluency, help out by volunteering at the program in general, and learn some of the perspectives of Spanish-speaking children at the program. In particular, I hope to mostly tutor students in the STEM-based fields and gather their perspectives on it. While it does not heavily involve many components of wellness, it does heavily involve the community (in this case, the Fairfield County community, and more specifically lower-income communities such as Bridgeport) and communication skills.

I've appended my outline for the Spanish project below this form.

#### **Connection to Components of Wellness:**

- **Intellectual Wellness:** Half of the time at the Lighthouse Program is dedicated to homework time. This children have to either do homework or read quietly for this hour. I hope to make the best of their learning by making what they learn in their homework interesting. This will also help my intellectual wellness by actively engaging myself in Spanish learning through immersion.
- **Occupational Wellness:** By volunteering at the Lighthouse Program, I hope to improve my own occupational wellness by gaining some volunteer experience, and by learning some Spanish, which is likely to be useful in future career opportunities.
- **Physical Wellness:** Half of the time at the Lighthouse Program is dedicated to some form of activity. On some days, this will be physical activity, such as tennis. This should encourage the physical aspect of wellness.

#### **Connection to School Wide Expectations:**

- **Complexity:** This should appear in the level of communication with the students. Because one of my personal goal will be to learn Spanish, I will strive to use more complex forms in Spanish, improve my vocabulary, and improve general fluency in an attempt to be able to convey more complex ideas in the language.
- **Community:** This project involves reaching past the small Barlow community and out to children in Bridgeport, where there is a higher Hispanic population.
- **Communication:** This is the most relevant to this project. The project involves communication with the Wellness Department advisor (Mr. Santangeli), Spanish teacher (Mr. Poulos), and the Lighthouse Program coordinators (Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Dias) for logistical purposes and guidelines. The project also involves active communication with the students in the Lighthouse Program.

What do you need from us (i.e class time, materials, mentors)

Because this project will be completed as a part of Spanish class, I do not think I will need much from the advisors from the Wellness Department except general guidelines. Class time just to work on journal requirements (a requirement for the Spanish project) or compiling the final display (website, video, etc.) will be helpful to make meeting the deadlines easier but not absolutely necessary.

Action steps needed to complete the project (with date estimates):

1. Plan out project (completed, December)
2. Initiate contact with Lighthouse Program (completed, 2/3/18)
3. Begin volunteering/tutoring at Lighthouse Program (begun 2/6/18, continue through 4/18)
  - a. Keep a log of vocabulary learned and video documentation throughout
4. Compile all project evidence (videos, word journal, reflections) to website (4/18)

Comments from Teacher: Great project Jonathan. Please sure to document all the great work you are planning to do.

## Community Outreach Project (Wellness Senior Project) Proposal

### CONTACTS

- A) I will be volunteering as a STEM tutor for elementary-level students of Hispanic ethnicity at the Thomas Hooker School in Bridgeport for the Lighthouse Program. This is both to help me understand better the what academic interests students of a different demographic have, and to help kids out with general homework help. The school's general information is below:

Lighthouse Program: Thomas Hooker Elementary School

Website: <http://bridgeport.ct.schoolwebpages.com/education/school/school.php?sectionid=343>

Address: 138 Roger Williams Rd, Bridgeport, CT 06610

Main Office: (203) 576-7185

Kindergarten through 8th grade

- B) I have met with and conversed with Michele Dias, the Lighthouse Program representative, to set up the location and hours of the volunteering. I will meet in person with with the site administrators at Thomas Hooker Elementary School (the project coordinators) Sonya Reed and Kim Febriello on February 2nd, the first day of the volunteering. Their contact information is below:

Lighthouse Program representative: Michele Dias: (203) 576-7252.

Project coordinators: Sylvia Perez [sperez@bridgeportedu.net](mailto:sperez@bridgeportedu.net)

### PROPOSAL

- C) The targeted audience that I propose to work with are children of both genders (up through the 6th grade, or about 11 years of age) that are ethnically Hispanic (at least one close progenitor is from a Spanish-speaking country) attending the Lighthouse Program at Thomas Hooker Elementary School. These will be students seeking tutoring in mathematics and/or science coursework. It is part of the Bridgeport school system and has a large proportion of Hispanic students. I aim mostly to work at the older kids (grades 4-6) with fundamental mathematics skills.
- D) The schedule that I will volunteer are Mondays and Fridays through February and March for 2.5 hour sessions, beginning at 3:10p.m. Days on which the Lighthouse Program does not meet have been accounted for. The schedule may be subject to changes due to snow days and other unexpected cancellations. The schedule below consists of 14 weeks and consists of 35 hours, which fulfills the 30 hour minimum. If more than two days are cancelled, then I will extend this schedule into April, continuing the same general agenda. Here is an outline of the days I will volunteer and what I hope to accomplish on those days:

2/2: Meet site coordinators

2/5, 2/9, 2/12, 2/23, 2/26: Meet students, get acquainted with Lighthouse Program, begin

tutoring

3/2, 3/5, 3/9:

Continue tutoring, conduct staff interviews

3/12, 3/16, 3/19, 3/23:

Continue tutoring, conduct student interviews

3/26:

Continue tutoring, provide students further resources for help in STEM homework, say goodbye

E) Some of the questions I would like to address are:

- a) What are the differences in education between Spanish and English teaching at the primary and secondary school level?
- b) What is the attitude (in general) that children of hispanic backgrounds have about STEM education, and potential careers?
- c) How does familial life (life at home, with family) and family history affect how students learn (both for STEM fields and otherwise)?
- d) How do the teaching methods and attitudes differ between that of a Caucasian and Hispanic-majority school? How does this affect the students' learning?

I hope to answering these questions by directly interacting with students of Hispanic descent in the Lighthouse Program by tutoring them in math and science. This will involve me not only in purely mathematical or scientific discussion, but hopefully also be able to ask meaningful, relevant questions about their lives, so that I can make connections between familial life and STEM interest. I will also conduct interviews (described below) that can be used to more directly answer these questions.

F) My ultimate goal is understand the cultural perspectives about STEM education and research between that of a generally-Caucasian population (e.g., the population of one of the Easton and Redding middle schools) and that of a generally-Hispanic population. Hopefully I can gain some insight into how cultural values differ in terms of these fields of education. My vocational interest is in engineering, so I hope that I can gain some real-world, first-hand perspective on the field. A secondary goal of mine would be to improve my Spanish skills, especially the use of colloquial phrases, quickly and accurately conjugating verbs, and an authentic pronunciation. Having very little interaction with native Spanish speakers in all of these years of Spanish class, I think that it would be a good idea to take advantage of the children's Spanish speaking skills.

Specifically, I will participate in the tutoring of middle-school children in STEM-related homework. This includes any degree of helping review to teaching mathematical concepts. I will incorporate technology by bringing a tablet or laptop to look up information and record the log of help I have completed.

I will recreate my daily activities by keeping a log of the students I helped, the subjects I helped

them with, the Spanish vocabulary that I learned, and their overall attitude towards the problem. The latter will include any notes about the kids' personal or familial experiences with solving math problems, classroom attitudes, general demeanor towards the subject matter, or anything else that I think might be helpful to answering the questions for this project.

Lastly, I hope to conduct several interviews in Spanish, both of students and of science and math teachers. This will allow me to capture more vividly how exactly the members of the school feel about the subjects that I want to study, in a directed, simple manner. I will present clips of these in class to aid the conclusions I draw from this experience.

- G) I will demonstrate that I have used Spanish consistently by recording the number of times I interacted with students, other volunteers, and staff and how I interacted. I will also record new vocabulary and any new Spanish I learn, along with the context in which it was used. I will present this in an orderly fashion based on what was most crucial to learn in my experience. I will also present the aforementioned student and staff interviews with the class to demonstrate that I have conversed with others about a relevant matter in Spanish.

If the people at the school that I will go to do not speak Spanish to me, I will talk to Mrs. Dias about my school assignment. She has helped me choose which school to volunteer at, and she remains open to helping me change locations if the school does not have an adequately-high amount of Spanish immersion. However, I don't think this will be a problem. If a student speaks only English but wants tutoring help, I will not turn them away, but I will ask that students who speak Spanish speak to me in Spanish.

- H) My backup plan, given that I am somehow unable to tutor students in mathematics and science, is to tutor students in music (piano or trumpet), or perform more general volunteer work at the Lighthouse Program (e.g., watch over kids, clean up after kids, administer activities, etc.). I know that they are very open to volunteer help, therefore I believe I can reliably volunteer in their program in some form.

If the specific school (Thomas Hooker) has problems with scheduling or other technicalities, then I know that Mrs. Dias can help link me up with other schools in the program, such as John Winthrop Elementary School.

## **Reflection #1**

Because this project is primarily for my Spanish class, my goals are mixed between helping the community and improving my own knowledge of the Spanish language and culture. I hope to learn about the differences in education between Spanish and English teaching at the primary and secondary school level. Specifically, I was wondering about the attitudes of children of Hispanic descent toward the STEM fields. The last goal for Spanish is to improve my general Spanish fluency. I plan to learn more about the Spanish culture by casually conversing with and interviewing the children about their homework and their life at home, and I hope to improve my Spanish through conversation.

I hope to help out the community by volunteering at the Lighthouse Program at Thomas Hooker Elementary School. This means helping supervise the children and carry out basic tasks, such as supervising bathroom trips, moving equipment, keeping them quiet during study time, etc. I hope that I will be able to create a more positive experience for the children at the site, and to make the work a little easier for the other volunteers and workers there.

The Lighthouse Program is designed to encourage intellectual, physical, and environmental wellness. There is an hour every day in the program dedicated to doing homework and an hour dedicated to some activity (usually physical, such as dance or tennis), which would improve intellectual and physical wellness. The program is also supposed to be a safe, positive environment for children whose parents have to work late.

I have not met with my senior project advisor (Mr. Santangeli), but am planning to soon for a brief check-up, as well as discussing the timeframe of the project. This is because I have already set up my project in the last few months for my Spanish project and did not feel that I needed much guidance from the Wellness department.

I have met with or contacted the appropriate people necessary to run this project: Mr. Poulos for the initial project outline confirmation, Mrs. Dias of the Lighthouse Program to arrange the location of the project and contact with the site coordinator, and the Site Coordinator Mrs. Perez for the details of volunteering at the site. There were some initial

details setting up the project, and the start of the project was set back a few weeks. I have already begun my project in February, and it will run through March and the beginning of April.

## **Senior Project Final Reflection**

My Senior Project, which was also my Spanish Community Outreach Project, ended after eighteen two-hour sessions, for a total of 36 hours. In addition to my original goal of tutoring the fifth graders in math (in Spanish), I ended up doing many of the duties of a regular volunteer.

Biggest takeaway: I had never worked with kids before, so I guess the thing I learned the most was how to work with kids: talk to them, encourage them, keep them on task, etc. Because this was at an afterschool program where they were forced to do homework for an hour before play, I think it was really interesting to try to motivate them in different ways to stay on track and finish their homework as quickly as possible, even though they said they didn't like the Lighthouse Afterschool Program.

I had never really done an extended volunteer job (i.e., more than one or two sittings) either, so I learned a lot about what to do in an almost-job setting: you always need to stay attentive to what the children and other volunteers need, be willing to do all the small tasks (e.g., walk the children to the bathroom or get equipment from the cabinet) right away. I didn't realize how attentive I had to be, but now I know.

Communication: I had to communicate thoroughly with Mr. Poulos, my Spanish teacher, Mrs. Dias, the coordinator of the Lighthouse Program volunteers, and Mrs. Perez, the site coordinator for the school I worked in, in order to set up the project. This, along with the initial planning, took all of three months before I even began going to my site to begin volunteering. Once I was at the site, I was constantly talking to the other volunteers and Mrs. Perez to make sure that I was doing what had to be done.

As mentioned above, a critical learning point for me was how to communicate with children. I listened when they talked about their interests, such as videogaming or dancing, and I asked questions about the Hispanic lifestyle (for the Spanish project). It became more natural as we came to know each other better.

Project growth: The project grew from a mostly-focused Spanish tutoring group to a general volunteering opportunity. My original outline was focused heavily on the Spanish section, but a



majority of the students did not speak Spanish, so I ended up tutoring some in English and just hanging around as a friendly figure during the activity periods, joining in when they asked me to. I also slowly picked up the responsibilities of the other workers there, and that made me feel really beneficial to the group.

Community Connection: I think this project did help me connect to the (greater) community very strongly. Generally, I try to avoid social interactions like this and focus on my own intellectual activities (namely school and programming). I was forced by my Spanish class to take this opportunity, and it allowed me to bring my interest in STEM into a different community than I'm used to. I ended up helping with a lot more than just STEM with my general volunteering, and that really made me feel more connected with the community.