

# SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

HPRB 3020S

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For my service learning project, I helped tutor 1<sup>st</sup> grade children at the Oasis Catolico Santa Rafaela. The purpose of this after school program is to allow children aging from Pre-K to 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the Pinewood community to get help with their homework and maintain academic skills. The mission of the Oasis Catolico Santa Rafaela is to be a place where English and Spanish speaking cultures can connect and enrich one another. The Pinewood community, located in northern Athens, Georgia, is populated with lower income Latino families. Many of the adults in this community cannot speak English and therefore cannot help their children maintain the proper skills necessary to keep up in school. Due to these circumstances, the Oasis Catolico Santa Rafaela reaches out to college students, such as myself, to work with their program and help these students learn.

A typical day at the Oasis Catolico Santa Rafaela was pretty structured and simple. It would begin with conversing with the pupils, asking them how their day was and how they were feeling. I worked with them on Mondays, so they were usually pretty wild. We would then begin to read. The students at my table would take turns reading each page of the book aloud. I would correct them or assist them if they got stuck. After reading we worked on their writing skills. I would ask my students to copy sentences from the book we just read or create sentences of their own. 1<sup>st</sup> graders can get a little restless, especially after a long day of school, so to make it fun I would allow them to draw a picture and then write sentences about it. That way they had a good time drawing but still practiced their writing skills. After they finished practicing writing we would play bingo or review some of the flash cards. The flash cards consisted of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems as well as go fish. Go fish was always the biggest hit with my students. The deck was labeled with letters from the alphabet, both lower and upper case, with a picture of an animal that went along with that letter. For example, the upper

case S card had a picture of a snake and the lower case S card had a picture of a baby snake. The kids loved lining the cards up in alphabetical order when the game was finished. When I first started tutoring them they had difficulty remembering the order of the alphabet, but by the end they knew it perfectly. This made me extremely proud. I had never realized that such a simple activity would teach them so much in such a short amount of time. After playing cards for a while I would help them with their homework and then we would go outside for recess. Recess always made me feel special because the kids always wanted me to play with them even though they had plenty of friends to play with. During recess their parents would come pick them up and I would have to wait until the next week to do it all again. Although I was the one that was teaching these kids and helping them learn, I truly believe that they taught me more.

I learned a lot from working with these children in this community. I learned to never take anything for granted. I am very blessed to have parents who can afford to send me to such a wonderful school like the University of Georgia and to never have the fear that my home or family could be taken away from me at any moment. It is devastating to know that these children's families do not have those things. Majority of the parents living in this community are illegal immigrants terrified that the government will discover and deport them, especially after President Trump was elected. On a more positive note, these children also taught me that even when times are tough and scary, there is always something that can make you smile. Although they may not know the full extent of the issues their families are dealing with, they are definitely aware of them, but that never stopped them from enjoying life.

This experience also taught me many things that I will be able to use in my career as a health professional. One thing I learned was to be patient. My students were hyperactive 7 year olds that would use my frustration as fuel. I quickly learned that if I wanted them to accomplish

something than I would need to talk to them in a calm manner and make the objective enticing to them. For example, allowing them to draw while working on writing skills. My intended career is to become a nurse. Patients will not respond well to me if I get frustrated with them. For instance, if I am working with a patient who is extremely overweight, yelling at him or her will not produce the desired result, but would, in fact, produce the exact opposite. I would need to explain the situation calmly and then provide facts as to why it is beneficial to lose weight and get healthy. This way the patient makes the decision to lose weight by his or herself rather than feeling forced to. The most useful thing I am able to take away from working at the Oasis Catolico Santa Rafaela is how to assess a situation. If a child was acting inappropriately I would talk to them and try to figure out if there was an underlying issue causing the behavior, such as problems at home or school. Then I would need to figure out the most appropriate way to deal with the issue. If there was a serious issue or the child was in danger I would report it to one of the Sisters in charge. If the child was just having a wild day I would come up with the best punishment and move on to continue working with my other students. In my professional future as a nurse, assessing the situation is a key skill. If a woman comes into the emergency room one night with a broken arm I would like to be able to find out if she actually fell down the stairs or if her husband pushed her before I released her back into a potentially dangerous situation. Overall, working with these students and faculty taught me an abundance of things, both personal and professional, that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Going into this semester, I was dreading being a tutor with this program. All I imagined was spending two and a half hours each week with uncooperative children who did not listen or care about learning. I am extremely grateful and pleased to be able to admit how wrong I was. Sister Margarita, Sister Marietta, and Sister Angela are outstanding and have done an incredible

job. In just the eight short weeks I worked with these children I watched them exceed my expectations and accomplish so much. Fortunately, I can also say that not only did this program help these children grow and learn, but it also changed me to be a better person as well as taught me unforgettable lessons.