

One act of beneficence, one act of real usefulness, is worth all the abstract sentiment in the world.

- Ann Radcliffe

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Reflective essay

What exactly does service mean? What must one do to make a difference? These were the questions I was asking myself when I started off in the class at the beginning of the year. I wanted to do service because I wanted to; not because I had to in order to pass the class.

Over the course of the year I did a variety of service projects like visiting children at the cancer hospital, but the project that I decided to spend most of time was at the Sudanese Refugees School in Maadi. This was a refugee school for children who were forced to leave their country of origin because the instabilities that serves as a threat to their development.

The first time I went there, I remember being nervous as I didn’t know what to expect. I didn’t know how these kids would respond to an unfamiliar face. Over the course of the year, I used to go every Tuesday, and each week was a different experience. From making Christmas and Valentine cards to teaching them Maths, these kids were willing to learn. There were some kids that needed a little pushing, but there were some that were right at the top. These kids come to school every day, with a smile on their faces, without a care in the world. They make use of whatever resources they can afford.

Volunteering at the Sudanese Refugee School made me realize how fortunate I am to go to a school like CAC, and to have the resources that I have. The conditions of the school are pretty bad. The tables are made of wood, the chairs are broken and the standard of teaching is poor. While we were at the school, each one of us grew a close bond with a specific child, who then became our child to work with throughout the year. My student’s name was Diana. She was a cheerful girl, who was always willing to learn new things.

While at the school, I learnt new skills like leadership, and patience. I also learned that every child has a different way of thinking and learning. Some kids learn visually, while others learn by physically doing things. I also learned that service is not just helping others; it’s about helping me become a better person at heart. One small act of gratitude can mean the world to one child. There were also times where decisions had to be made. I learnt that next time when I make a decision, I have to make one that is not only best for me but for everyone else around me.

Throughout the 8 months that I spent working with the kids, I noticed a change in me. I became more grateful for the things I have in life. I became more of a leader than I was before. In addition, I also learned to appreciate the small things in life. It’s not always about the clothes you wear or your high social status. It’s more about what you do with what you have. I also developed a sense of community. I realized that not everyone is as fortunate as me. There are people in my community who are less fortunate than me, and do not complain as much as I do at times.

The FACLC is a school for refugee kids. The school can be improved in many ways. The kids need a proper environment with proper tables and chairs to learn. Each child should be given a pen and pencil to use when necessary. Furthermore, the school needs to change its physical environment. The walls need to be repainted. To improve my service at the Found Africa Children’s Learning Center, I would provide the necessary writing instruments, and a proper class room to study.

A child cannot learn in an environment of fear. For an example, it is not certain how long it will be before government officials shut the school down. Even though the school is not in the best condition, it is still a place for them to learn. The number of kids that are scared they are going to be forced to move again is pretty high. Another way to improve the quality of my service is to find different ways of doing something; whether it is by physically doing it or visually showing it. In addition we should also do more than one thing, because if a child is learning math every week after school, after some time they are going to become uninterested.

I really think I made a difference at the Sudanese Found Africa Children’s Learning Center. Even though I might not have made a difference to the entire school, I feel like I have made a change to one child. After all we can only change the world one step at time.

**SMART GOAL**

**To teach one 7th grader at the Found African Children’s Learning Center, Math specifically multiplication tables over a period of 8 months.**

Specific

It is specific because my goal was clear, simple and has a single focus. My goal was to teach **one** **7th grader the multiplication table for 8 months.**

Measurable

I know that I have achieved my goal, because my student can now say her multiplication factors forwards and backwards up to 100.

Achievable

It was something that I wanted to do. It was challenging for me because when I first learned my multiplication table, I was only able to say it forwards; not backwards. But now, as I was teaching someone else, I learned my multiplication table backwards as well.

Realistic

This goal was within my capability, and I had the resources that I need to teach my student her multiplicative table. The sacrifices that I had to make were 2 hours once a week to learn and teach the multiplicative tables to my student.

Timely

I had set a specific time limit as a deadline, as well as a specific number of hours I was willing to commit to achieve my goal. I had set my deadline to 8 months. I wanted my student to learn her multiplication tables in 8 months; which she did. In addition, I was willing to commit 2 hours every week to help her learn her multiplicative tables.



Updated action plan

Target problem: The 7th graders do not know their multiplication table.

Target Group: 7th graders, especially my student Diana

Volunteering at the Sudanese African Children Learning Center.

Goal: To teach my Student Diana, her multiplication table.

SMART GOAL: To teach Diana her multiplication tables backwards from 1 to 12 over a period of 4 months, specifically from February to May. My goal is specific, measurable (over four months), Achievable, Realistic and timely.

SMART GOAL: To teach Diana her multiplication tables forwards from 1 to 12 over a period of 4 months, specifically from October to January. My goal is specific, measurable (over four months), Achievable, Realistic and timely.

Obstacles: My student has a short concentration span and is easily distracted.

She is a visual learner and does not learn well any other way.

She is an easily distracted

I need to find a way for her to concentrate. Maybe take her away from her friends so that she will not be distracted.

I need to find a way to teach her visually, whether it is by finding counting cubes or by using my fingers to show her.

Journal entries 10/18/2011

Today I went to the Sudanese Refugee School for the first time. I went there with my friend Sahar. Neither one of us knew what to expect. I was a little nervous. When I entered the school, I was surprised to see the condition of the school. Even though it was a refugee school, I thought it would be in better condition. The tables and chairs were made of wood. Even though it was made of wood, some of the legs of tables and chairs were broken.

I was a little shy; and me being shy around young kids is not usual. I usually am really friendly, and enthusiastic, but I wasn’t. I think it was because I did not know what to do. I waited for Mrs Lantz to give me instructions. She told me that we were teaching them Math, but we had to do it in an interesting manner. She assigned me a student named Diana, and from that day she has been my student.

After leaving the school, I realized that these kids really need help. Next week I planned to teach them Maths in way that will keep them engaged. I decided that I am going to make teaching these kids Math my new goal. Working with these kids made me realize how fortunate I am to be going to a school like CAC. I plan to achieve my goal by the end of the year.



2/12/2012

So far, I have been working at the Sudanese Refugee School for about 3 months now. The place was extremely dirty and it needed thorough cleaning. I was so upset. I did not know how someone could learn in a dirty place. I felt upset for the kids I am not really OCD about many things, but one thing that does drive me crazy is when things aren’t in place and my surroundings is not clean. So it turned out my friends were just as annoyed with the conditions of the school like I was.

We suggested to Mrs Lantz, that we make a trip one Saturday just to clean up the place. We picked up trash, mopped the floors, cleaned the blackboard, wiped the tables and reorganized the shelves and books for the students. When we left the place looked and felt better. It was a better environment to learn in. I cannot wait for Tuesday to come so that I can teach the kids, in the newly cleaned classroom.

3/13/2012

Today when we went to the Found (Sudanese Refugee School), I noticed that the kids were extremely playful and hyper. I found my student Diana and I started working with her. We started out well, but after half an hour, she started to lose her concentration. It was frustrating for me to teach a child who was not 100 % focused. I then understood why my teachers get angry when I am not focused in class.

I needed a way to teach her in a way that would keep her concentration, and yet be interesting. I decided to use my fingers to show her the trick I use to remember my multiplicative table of 9, but I realized that this would only confuse her. I needed to fine to something that would engage her. I then spotted the counting cubes. I decided to use the different coloured cubes to teach her. She was in return more responsive than I thought she would be. One thing I learned today was that kids have a very short concentration span, and different kids learn differently. Next time I need to have a solid lesson plan on how to keep Diana engaged in learning. I learned that if you learn differently, it does not matter. Even though it might take you sometime to learn, its better you learn than not learn at all. 

5/15/2012

It has been a year since I started volunteering at the Sudanese Refugee School. Today is the last day that I get to spend with the kids. As a surprise, Mrs Lantz had the kids over at her house, and we decided to cook. We made brownies and a dish called nasi goring. Instead of doing Math, we did something fun that we all enjoyed. I watched the kids as they were eager to learn new things.

I being a kid, who lives a very nice life, was surprised to hear that the kids had never had brownies before. I was very surprised, but then I began to realize that not everyone is as fortunate as me.

As I was leaving, my student Diana came up to me and thanked me for teaching her Maths. She said that she really learned alot, and I made learning Math interesting. She said she could not wait to see me next year. It felt good that she appreciated the time and effort that I had put in for her. That made my day. As I was walking out of the building, I realized that I had made an impact on someone else, and it felt good inside. I wish to continue doing service next year.



Tourette Syndrome

**What is Tourette Syndrome?**

* Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder characterized by repetitive, stereotyped involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics.
* The disorder is named after Dr. Georges Gilles de la Tourette
* The early symptoms are noticed in childhood when the child is between the ages of 3 to 9.
* Males are affected 3 to 4 times more often than females.

**What are the symptoms?**

* Eye blinking and other eye movements, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, and head or shoulder jerking
* Simple vocalizations might include repetitive throat clearing, sniffing or grunting sounds.
* Motor movements that result in self-harm such as punching oneself in the face or vocal tics
* Uttering socially inappropriate words (swearing)
* Repeating words or phrases said by others.
* First symptoms occur in the head and neck area

**Can people with TS control it?**

* Although the symptoms of TS are involuntary, some people can sometimes suppress, camouflage or otherwise manage their tics in an effort to minimize their impact on functioning.

**What causes TS?**

* Cause is unknown

**What other disorders are associated with TS?**

* Inattention
* Hyperactivity
* ADHD
* Problems with reading, writing and arithmetic
* Paranoia
* Depression
* Anxiety

**How is TS treated?**

There is no one medication that is helpful to all people with TS, nor does any medication completely eliminate the symptoms.

**Is TS inherited?**

* Evidence from twins and family studies proved that TS is an inherited disorder.