

**Joselyn Salazar**

**Service Portfolio**

Table of Contents

Smart Goal Sheet 3

Action Plan 4

Journal entries 5

Photo Gallery 9

Reflective essay 12

Disability Research 15

Smart Goal

**Specific**

My goal is to help teach a group of children about religion in order to prepare them for their First Communion.

**Measurable**

I will know that my goal has been achieved when they pass an examination (done by the priest) that determines whether they know all the necessary material and are eligible to take their communion.

**Achievable**

This is a project that I want to do because I feel like many children are forced to go to church by their parents, and I want to help them to learn and be proud about their faith. I know it will be challenging to work with children, especially at the beginning as they do not know me, but I am determined to work with them and take it one step at time.

**Realistic**

This goal is realistic because I will have the guidance of a mentor. I have access to all resources (particularly stationery) as the church provides this. Some sacrifices that I will have to make is giving up my Friday morning every week to go to church and a few hours beforehand to plan out lessons with my mentor.

**Timely**

We have set specific deadlines, such as their First Confession (which took place March 23) and ultimately their First Communion (which will take place May 26).

Action Plan

**Target Problem:** Need for a trained Catechism (“Sunday School”) teacher who can give lessons in Spanish.

**Target Group:** Children (age 7-10) that speak Spanish.

**Project Title:** Maadi Holy Family Church

**Goals**

Smart Goal 1: Teach them basic prayers so they pass their test

Smart Goal 2: Teach them the steps for their First Confession

Smart Goal 3: Teach them hymns to sing in Church

**Obstacles:**

* The children are impatient and they do not focus for long periods of time; they want to be playing outside in the garden the whole time.
* Teaching about God and religion requires grasping complex subjects, which are hard to simplify for young children.
* The children do not come to school consistently so it is hard to move forward with teaching. Often, we have to re-teach the same material several times.

**Tasks:**

* We will motivate the children by planning interactive activities where they can be moving around, but still learning important information. Also, we will give them a 20 minute recess where they can eat and play in the garden.
* We will ask for help from the older teachers on ways to explain these topics to young children.
* We will ask parents to cover the information that their children missed at home with them so they can catch up.

Journal Entry #1

Having only just started, I have a very positive outlook for this project. First, I found out that I will not have to work on my own, but I will be assisting an adult teacher. This is very encouraging because it reduces the pressure on me to teach a whole year’s-worth of material to students on my own. Also, because the First Communion is an important ceremony, there are many ideas that must be taught, so it will be helpful to have adult guidance.

Secondly, I found out that my group of students are aged 7 – 10; a perfect age to teach to. They are not too young (where they can’t understand anything or retain information) or too old (where they don’t want to be taught by someone younger than them).

Lastly, I feel like I will be able to relate to the children because I am still a child myself and I can remember what I felt like when I had to take my First Communion. At first, I was very irritated, I felt like I was wasting my weekend being forced to go to Church and listen to long sermons about things I didn’t understand. But later, I made friends at “Sunday School” and I realized that I was taking an important step in my life. So I think I will be able to share my experiences and connect with them in a way that adults can’t.

Overall, I am excited to work with them and teach them everything they have to know to prepare them for their First Communion. I hope that by the end of the year, they will all pass their examination!

Journal Entry #2

~ First Meeting with Parents + & Students

Today, we had a meeting with all the adult teachers, student teachers and the priest to discuss the overall progress of our classes. Unfortunately, one adult teacher and a student teacher are leaving, leaving one class of small children (age 3- 5) with only one supervisor (Pablo). Teaching such young children all by yourself is not an easy task, so we have made a decision to finish the classes by March. That way, we can focus more on the older children who will be taking their First Communion in May.

We also decided to make this decision because we felt that the children in this class were too young to understand anything and it was not beneficial to anyone. It seemed like a waste of time for the teachers (who were sacrificing their weekends) and for the children (who were not retaining any information). In addition, some of the children did not speak Spanish or English, and communication was a barrier. Plus, some parents were using the classes as a day-care center, where they could leave their children for a few hours in the morning. If the parents aren’t taking the classes seriously, they cannot expect their children too either. All in all, the best solution was to end the classes.

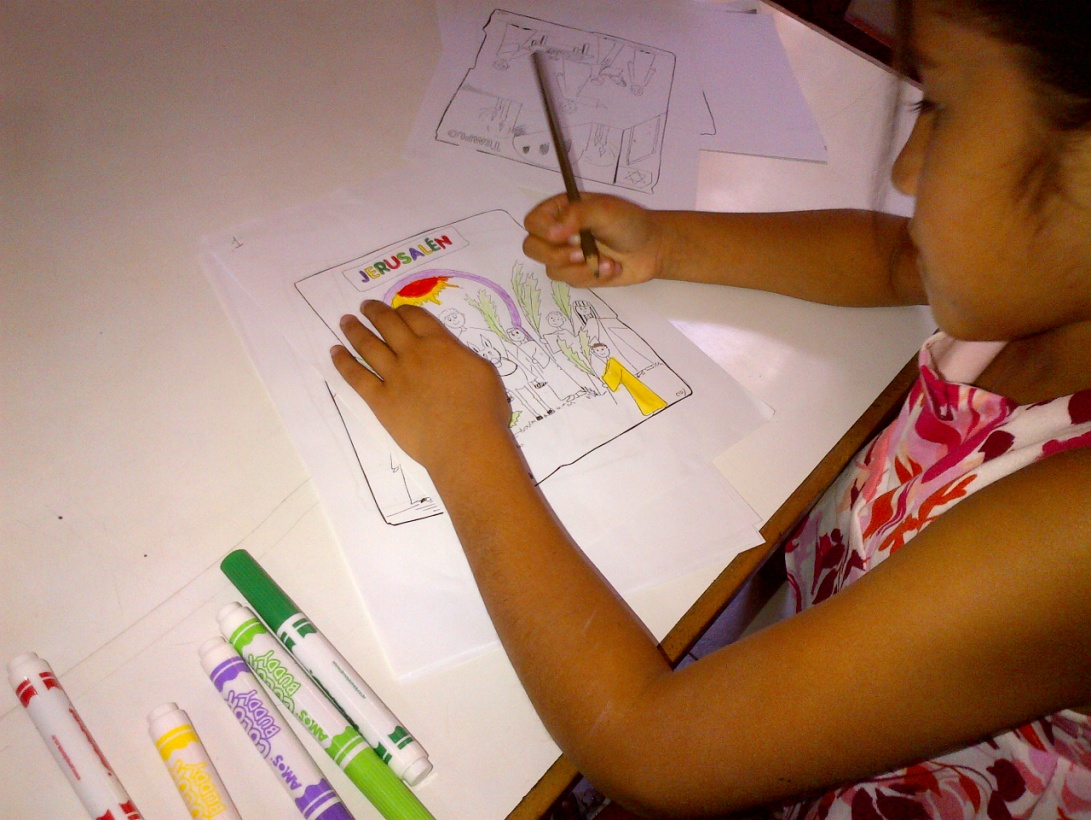
Journal Entry #3

~ Sara and her colorful picture

It is exactly one week before the First Communion, and in all honesty, I am quite worried. Only three kids showed up to class today because there was a football tournament at school and out of the three, only one knew all information. Another one knew the majority of the prayers and only had one more to learn while the third one knew absolutely nothing. As a result, we are having an extra rehearsal on Tuesday (the day before elections) and a final rehearsal on Friday. At the last rehearsal, they will have their second confession and be quizzed by the priest.

The teacher and I discussed the logistics of the First Communion and how we needed to send one final e-mail to the parents to urgently go over all the necessary material with their children. It is crucial for them to at least know the majority of the content, or else they won’t be able to take their Communion. That would be disappointing for the kids because they have been looking forward to this for a year and also to us because it would show that we did not succeed in teaching them well.

We had a serious talk with the kids today telling them that now they really need to step up their game. I hope that they will take it into their own hands and be pro-active at memorizing their prayers. At this point, there isn’t much that we can do but pray that they will know everything for next week,

Journal Entry #4

~ Hard at Work

After an entire year, I can say that all our hard work has paid off. All the children passed their examination and the ceremony was beautiful.

Each child got a chance to read a small passage in the mass and light a candle with their parents, a symbol of God’s guidance in their lives. They all actively participated in singing, leading their parents who were not familiar with all the songs. I think that the most beautiful part of the ceremony was when they were asked, “What does Communion mean to you?” Hearing their answers was really touching because it showed that they did in fact learn something from this year-long experience.

This day was joyous occasion, although it was a little sad thinking that not all the kids who began the classes with us continued. Some had to leave the country while others were pulled out by their parents. Yet in the end, I think that those who stayed committed and stuck through until the end were rewarded.

Now that this project is over, I feel very relieved and satisfied. I have accomplished all my goals and I look forward to a new project next year.

Photo Gallery

~ Walking into the Church



Reflective Essay

~ Service Site

~ Praying

~ Out in the Garden

~ Thoroughly amused with a sheep

~ First Communion

~ Group Picture

For my Service Learning project, I decided to work at the Maadi Holy Family Church and teach a small group of children. I worked with an adult teacher at a form of “Sunday School” (except that it was on Friday) and our main objective was to prepare these children for their First Communion. This ceremony symbolizes children being old enough to understand about God and become active members of the Catholic community.

Academically, I learned many new skills. First of all, I improved my ability to communicate with younger children. I had to accommodate my vocabulary and tone to be interesting to the children. This was quite a challenge because I had to speak in Spanish. Although it is the language I speak at home, but I did not know all the religious terminology in Spanish, and I ended up learning new things. As Joseph Joubert said, “To teach is to learn twice over.” By going over readings and prayers, I expanded my own knowledge in religious studies. Secondly I further developed my persuasion skills. This came in very useful when I had to plead with my class so that they would work for 10 more minutes before taking a quick break. Each time, I had to come up with a better reason because they were extremely smart and did not fall for the same story twice. Lastly, I also worked on my decision-making skills as sometimes, the adult teacher would have to go out and leave me with the class by myself. It was up to me to decide how and what to teach at these points, and I believe that I managed to carry on with the lessons quite well.

Throughout the whole experience, I noticed a couple changes in myself. The most significant change, which I already mentioned, was my increase in knowledge on religion. Every time we went over topics with the kids, I learned something new too. It was not always new knowledge, but more of a refresher of things that I had learned several years ago and forgotten. I have also become more patient with this experience; I did not let little things make me lose my temper. I learned this because as a teacher, I had to be a good role-model and show exemplary behavior at all times because the kids look up to me. I believe that this is one of the most valuable things I picked up from my service project.

Overall, I believe that I improved the quality of the service at the church. I think that by having a young teacher, children were more motivated to come to school. They were able to see that I was making the same sacrifices as they were (waking up early, coming to school, etc.) Plus, they were less intimidated to come and talk to me because I was only a couple of years older than them. Moreover, I believe that I improved the quality of teaching because I came in with new ideas on how to make classes more interesting from my past experience. I was able to help the teacher plan classes and make learning more interactive for the kids by showing animated movies, playing games outside and having them read aloud.

Looking at this project with a bigger picture, I can truly say that I have a bigger appreciation for my teachers. Planning lessons and having the patience to go over topics (often several times so that everyone understands) made me realize that teacher do not get the credit they deserve. Teachers come day after day, never giving up and always encouraging you to learn more. Alexander the Great once said, “I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well,” and this could not be closer to the truth. Teachers spend countless hours with us students and essentially give us the tools that we will need to live successful lives. We, the students, are indebted to them for life, because without them we wouldn’t know how to live in the real world. I can honestly say that there were days that I didn’t want to go and spend my weekend teaching kids. I wanted to give up because the kids wouldn’t pay attention, or had not completed their homework. But somehow, at the end of the day, I found the determination to continue and help these kids with their path towards enlightenment. I realized that we cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own, and that by helping others, I was helping myself too. Service is defined as helping, or doing work for someone, and I think that I did make a difference in these kids’ lives.

Alzheimer’s Research

**What:** A fatal, degenerative (worsens with time) brain disease that causes a slow decline in memory, thinking and reasoning skills. It is the most common form of dementia (serious loss of global cognitive ability in a previously unimpaired person, beyond what might be expected from normal aging). It was first described by German psychiatrist and neuropathologist Alois Alzheimer in 1906.

**Causes:** The causes of Alzheimer’s are unknown though Early AD has been linked with genetic predisposition. Can also result from traumatic head injuries.

**Symptoms:**

* Memory loss (especially recently learned information)
* Challenges with problem solving (math)
* Confusion with time and date
* Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships (mirrors)
* Speech difficulty
* Irritability + aggression
* Mood swings

**Parental Concerns:** Alzheimer’s usually affects people aged 65 and above. In 2006, 26.6 million people suffered from AD. A rare type of AD affects people at a younger age, known as Early-Onset Alzheimer’s. It affects 5-10% of all Alzheimer’s sufferers. Early AD results from genetic predisposition to the disease (family).

**Treatment:** This disease is incurable and the sufferers require full time care as they are slowly unable to perform simple tasks i.e. brushing hair, driving etc. and w/o supervision they can end up in dangerous situations. High doses of Vitamin E slow down the effects.