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ENGL102H-002

Dr. Borah

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### Service-Learning Reflection Journals

#### Journal Entry 1

Considering I participated in Bearcat Buddies during fall quarter and that it went smoothly and easily, I'm not particularly concerned about any part of this service experience. I'm really relieved that I was able to count my hours for Bearcat Buddies as my Honors service hours since I have limited time to try to complete multiple volunteer commitments. Since I have experience tutoring at Hays-Porter Elementary, I know vaguely what to expect when I continue this quarter. The students come from a very different culture than I do and are familiar with hardships I could only imagine. I'm sure at some point this quarter I will have to listen to heart wrenching stories from students who have bad home lives. In addition, the environment at Hays-Porter can get very hostile when teachers need to discipline students and the students fail to respond to authority. This quarter, the coordinators of Bearcat Buddies and the administrators at Hays-Porter reorganized the program to be more organized and effective. I'll spend 30 minutes individually with an eighth grader followed by a half hour in a first grade class. I think this rearrangement will have a positive impact on the program and allow me to experience a wider variety of situation and participate in more activities with the students. This quarter, I plan to meet more faculty and students at Hays-Porter and build strong, meaningful relationships with the people with whom I come into contact. I also hope to improve my tutoring and teaching skills and to help the students I tutor improve their reading and math skills to the desired level. By the

end of my time this quarter at Bearcat Buddies, I hope to not only know the students and teachers with whom I interact, but to establish friendly, open relationships with them.

### Journal Entry 2

Upon my first visit this quarter, I was impressed with the new arrangement of the program and I was pleased to find out that I had a couple friends that had unknowingly volunteered to tutor at the same time as me. I met my individual student, Jamya (pronounced Jam-aye-ah), also. I had worked with her on one occasion last quarter, but we only read English practice paragraphs and then I was reassigned to another student. This quarter, I will be working with her on Math, particularly with interpreting written problems. When we began working together, she seemed very shy and barely spoke to me unless absolutely necessary. She seems very sweet and innocent, but she hasn't opened up to me very much at all. On the other hand, the first graders were very talkative and responsive. Their teacher wants me to read one-on-one with students each week to help review with them reading techniques and to improve their fluidity. I can definitely use some of the games that the representative from Cincinnati Reads taught us in class to help keep the first graders interested and excited when reading with me. I really enjoy both aspects of the new program arrangement and I'm glad that I get to work with students from both the older and the younger grades. I'm glad to get the opportunity to meet and work with more students than last quarter and that I'll get to build stronger and deeper relationships with these students. I look forward to getting to know more about Jamya and to get to work with more of the students in the first grade class.

## Journal Entry 3

This week was surprising because I got to know the van driver who transports the tutors to Hays-Porter, Andrea, a lot better. It was probably a mixture of her overly talkative nature and my excitement to return to Hays-Porter, but I talked to her about my major and co-oping for the entire drive to the school. I worked with Jamya on more math concepts and it was very rewarding. At first, she struggled with understanding the things I was saying and it seemed like she was lost when I had her try a few problems on her own. However, at some point I must have said something that clicked with her brain because she suddenly understood everything I was explaining. She was still very quiet, and I did the majority of the talking during our study session, but she smiled a couple times when I would make a joke or she would say an incorrect answer. The first graders were also even friendlier than they had been last week. The students weren't as timid about volunteering to read with me and many were begging their teacher to select them to read. Most were adept in their ability to read for their age, but a few students really struggled with reading the short stories fluidly and with correct pronunciation of each word. One girl was reading a story about a kitten and paused to tell me that she used to have a kitten but her younger brother killed it. I wasn't sure how to react to her telling me this, but I'm sure incidents like this aren't exactly out of the ordinary for the children that attend Hays-Porter. Overall, however, I got along well with all of the first graders with whom I worked and I look forward to becoming more familiar with their class throughout this quarter and possibly next.

## Journal Entry 4

This week was fairly typical in that I've established a routine in the order I work with the students. I began by working with Jamya on exponent addition and subtraction. She was timid as usual, but became more talkative as the session continued. By the end of our half hour together, she spoke to me without being asked a question and even laughed at one point when I got an answer incorrect and made a joke about it. She is a really sweet girl and is truly smart when she has the proper care and attention to help her understand a concept. We discussed high school this week as we were packing up our supplies and she seemed excited to be with the older students. I asked if she had thought at all about college and she said she wasn't sure if she would go to college because she doesn't like school that much. My day was made when I was walking to the first grade classroom and I saw one of the first graders from my class working with another volunteer from Bearcat Buddies. The little girl saw me turn the corner and her face lit up, she reached her arms out for a double high five and she bounced in her seat with excitement. Her delight to see me really made me feel like what I'm doing with these children is impacting them and that they look forward to seeing and working with me each week. The first grade teacher had me work with some of the struggling students that need much more reading practice to develop their skills. The approach I decided to take with these students was to allow them to read a bit on their own at first to see how well they could get through the short story on their own. Most were able to handle the first few sentences alright, but then most froze and were too overwhelmed to continue. So I decided to play a game with them where I sounded out the sounds that composed each word and have them tell me the word. The students liked this game and a few were surprised when they sounded out the word this way and then realized the word made sense

visually and phonetically. I feel like I made great progress this week with breaking down the barriers both with Jamya and the first graders to become even closer with both.

### Journal Entry 5

A critical incident that occurred this week at Bearcat Buddies was very emotional and eye opening. When I arrived at the school with the other tutors, Jamya and the other eighth grade students weren't waiting for us in our usual classroom. So the principal directed us to seek out our students upstairs in the eighth grade classrooms. However, when we got to the third floor, we heard a teacher loudly and emotionally disciplining the students out in the hall. By the sound of things, the students had misbehaved during lunch and weren't allowed outside for recess. I suppose the students were unhappy with losing privileges because the teachers were very angry that students were questioning their authority. I heard the teacher mention that only four percent of the class had reached proficient on a recent standardized test and that they needed to focus this coming week for another upcoming test. During the time that we stood there listening to this lecture, a couple of the other tutors felt uncomfortable and decided to head back downstairs to wait for the van to return to campus in peace. But while I was standing there listening to what the teachers were saying, I realized how fortunate I was to attend a school with well-behaved students, high test scores, and gentle teachers. I see now all of the things that I took for granted in my school and community growing up and I've finally realized what everybody always told me growing up: I live in a bubble of happiness and well-being that doesn't exist in most of the rest of the world. It's extremely difficult for me to imagine what it must be like to be one of the

students that attend Hays-Porter and have to face hostile, terrifying, and underprivileged situations daily. This experience with Bearcat Buddies has definitely opened my eyes to other cultures, communities, and lifestyles.

### Journal Entry 6

If I were a student at Hays-Porter, I would probably think the Bearcat Buddies are just another attempt by the administration to help me learn. The students parade into the school each week and sit and talk with me for a half hour at the end of the day. Most of the time they act like I'm dumb because I need help with math, but they don't understand that I mostly understand what's happening, I just need a little extra explanation to make things click. When they first began to come, I was nervous and shy. I was unsure exactly how tutoring with Bearcat Buddies would help me improve my math skills, but my teacher and parents were making me get tutoring so I was willing to try it. Once I began to get familiar with my Bearcat Buddy though I opened up a little bit and learning got easier since I was talking more and discussing the problems. Although I act like I couldn't care less if they try to help me or not, it really does help me understand things better when the Bearcat Buddies come to tutor. I like spending time one-on-one with my Bearcat Buddy, but most of the time in front of the other kids in my grade I brush my Bearcat Buddy off to look cool. When I'm not putting up a front for my peers, I really do like spending time with my Bearcat Buddy.

## Journal Entry 7

On an average day at Bearcat Buddies, I work with a few different supervisors at different parts of my time at Hays-Porter. The van driver, Andrea and I have a good relationship. We joke around with each other and discuss various things that had happened earlier in the week. She's very nice and seems to have a positive impression of me. At the school, the supervisor for the tutors is the vice principal named Ryan. She only comes around every now and then to coordinate the students and the tutors. When she does interact with the tutors, she seems flustered and hurried, but glad that we're there to work with the students. Ryan is nice and warm, and is always very helpful if I ask her a question or for assistance. Another supervisor at the school is the teacher of my first grade class, Ms. Armstrong. My first impression of her was very poor because I was sent to the class while she was disciplining her students with loud verbal punishment. When she saw me at the door, however, her demeanor changed instantly and she greeted me warmly and welcomed me into her classroom. She was thrilled to have the extra help and eagerly set me up with a student with whom to read. Each week, she's always glad to see me show up at her door and seems to utilize the extra help for her students in the best way by assigning me to read with the students who need the most practice. At the end of my time at Hays-Porter, Ms. Armstrong always thanks me for coming and spending time with the kids. She's stopped me in the hallway a couple of times to tell me really how much she appreciates me reading with the children and that they talk about how nice I am when I'm not there. All of the supervisors throughout my experience with Bearcat Buddies are very kind, gracious, and welcoming to my volunteering to help tutor young children needing additional educational attention.

## Journal Entry 8

In the past nine weeks, I've been able to accomplish all of the learning objectives that I outlined before I began tutoring with Bearcat Buddies and I've experienced and learned much more than I had expected. Even though I tutored with Bearcat Buddies last quarter, this quarter seemed much more organized, planned, and professional which improved the program's effectiveness. I felt like my time spent tutoring this quarter held much more value than my visits to Hays-Porter last quarter because I spend more time with the students. In addition, I tutored the same students each week, enabling me to build strong and personal relationships with them. If I could do this service project over, I would probably do most things the same. I would try to be more warm and talkative with Jamya and the first graders to open them up more quickly and to begin to build strong friendships with them earlier. I would put more effort into researching and finding effective and creative ways to help young children learn to read. Overall though I would pretty much keep my experience with Bearcat Buddies as it was because I feel like I've learned a lot about the culture of an urban community and I've improved the reading skills of many young students. I've come away from my volunteer experience at Bearcat Buddies with a positive and influential feeling. I feel like I've played a supportive role in the program since I've been involved with it in the beginning stages of its establishment. I was flexible and understanding when the coordinators of the program decided to rearrange the organization of each week's tutoring session. The clients and supervisors of Bearcat Buddies were satisfied with my performance as a tutor. I can tell that they're happy with my teaching because everybody seems thankful to have my help and nobody really criticizes my approach or attitude when I tutor.