

## I. Summary

Building Skills Partnership is a non-profit organization whose mission statement is to improve the quality of life for low-wage property service workers and their families by increasing their skills, access to education, and opportunities for career and community advancement and participation. During the 8-week course at Building Skills Partnership (BSP), I was able to engage and provide lessons in computer literacy to students of various backgrounds. I committed to a total of 30 hours to helping and mentoring students in practical concepts of intermediate computer literacy. I successfully created and deployed lesson plans covering intermediate computer applications varying from PowerPoint, Excel, Word, and other many other basic professional tools. Even though there was no set curriculum in this particular class I was teaching, I was able to design and implement a structured curriculum that the class was able to follow through with until the end of the course.

## II. Services Provided

Building Skills Partnership (BSP) is a unique non-profit collaboration between the janitors' union, commercial building owners, janitorial employees, client companies and community leaders. Founded in 2007, BSP is a statewide organization that works towards its mission to improve the quality of life for low-wage property service workers and their families by increasing their skills, access to education and opportunities for career and community advancement.

Building Skills Partnership needs volunteers who are knowledgeable about technology and is willing to teach and mentor students on computer literacy in the intermediate class for 2 hours every Saturday. In order to achieve this, I took on the task of leading a group of students through the course and help them obtain critical skills in computer literacy. The task required a lesson plan and curriculum for the full 8 weeks and also committing to that lesson plan. The service was provided for 2 hours every Saturday in addition to the 2 hours creating lesson plans during the week. This totals to roughly 32 hours by the end of the course. The resources and budget for this project was minimal since computers and software was provided by the organization.

As a service learner, I provided mentorship and guidance to the students in my computer literacy classroom. Every week, I was to create a lesson plan complete with detailed outlines and activities for everyone to engage in. Once my lesson plan was completed, I sent it off to my service partner supervisor to have her sign off on it. The

class itself runs only for 2 hours a week every Saturday from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm. I usually try to structure my class with an hour long lecture followed by an hour long of activities applying the concepts they have learned. I also try to do 1-on-1 mentoring with some of the students if they are stuck on a particular topic or assignment.

### III. Impact

The students in the community that I serve are of mostly Hispanic/Latino background. Many are low-wage property service workers such as janitors, security officers, maintenance and custodial workers, stadium, arena and airport workers, and other workers who provide important services to buildings or facilities. The vast majority of property service workers are immigrants, many of which have been working in the industry for over 15 years. The average salary of a janitor is \$24,000, and as a result, many service workers hold multiple jobs. In addition to limited time, many building service workers have limited English skills, low literacy in their first language, and limited to no computer skills.

During the course of my service learning program, I would occasionally ask my students what they would like to learn. Upon surveying the entire class, I came to the conclusion that many of my students wanted to know how to use professional office tools such as Word and Excel to advance in their current jobs. Some even expressed interest in computer programming. Others just wanted to be technologically literate. Toward the end of my service learning period, I can see that the students felt a lot more confident using the office tools and they were a lot more engaged in the activities. Even though there was a slight communication barrier, that did not discourage them from learning the things they wanted to.

### IV. Service Learning Outcome

Before entering the service learning agreement, I did not fully know what to expect; I had never taught a class nor did I feel confident enough to be effective at it. However, I did manage to gain valuable experiences during those few weeks at Building Skills Partnership. I learned valuable aspects on teaching and mentoring and it has enabled me to gain a much deeper understanding of the things that I am teaching. I learned how to give clear instructions and techniques to improve the students learning retention. I learned how to be fair and open minded when it comes to teaching a diverse group of people. I learned that everyone deserves a fair shot at learning. I learned that people tend to grasp concepts better when they are given a real problem to solve. Similar to programming and computer science: solving a particular problem makes the topic and assignments more engaging.

## V. Prospective Recommendations

I would recommend anyone who is interested in taking on the task of serving and mentoring students of underserved communities to first evaluate what is deemed important to the students. A lot of times, many instructors teach simply for the sake of teaching and does not fully examine or even understand their students' needs. I find that in order to keep a class engaged, one must investigate the common interests of their students.

## VI. Service Partner Evaluation

Teaching at Building Skills Partnership was a great experience and it was tremendously fulfilling to have been part of such a great organization. The coordinator, Ariana, was very accommodating and provided me with lots of various tools and resources to be effective at what I do.

BSP has many branches scattered throughout the Bay Area -- one of which is located in one of Google's buildings at 2061 Landings Dr., Mountain View, CA 94043. Ariana Hoyt is the coordinator and organizer for the Mountain View location. Interested parties who would like to volunteer at BSP in Mountain View should contact Ariana at (650)-690-2552 or email her at [ariana@buildingskills.org](mailto:ariana@buildingskills.org).