

Serve to Lead, Lead to Serve Proposal Paper

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Jackie Robinson once said “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.” Robinson is considered to be one of the greatest citizen leaders in history and much of what he did was centered around serving the community. Being the baseball fan that I am, this quote has really resonated with me since I was young and learning about Robinson’s everlasting impact in the community continues to inspire me in my own community work. Whatever work I am doing, it brings me joy to know that by helping others I am creating importance in my own life.

Much of my volunteer time at Asbury Elementary School has brought me to realize just how important it is to volunteer not only for the sake of others but also for my own development. By working with Asbury I am addressing two issues about which I am very passionate: education and youth. I have always enjoyed working with kids because watching them develop and knowing that each and every one of them has nearly endless potential is very exciting to me. Likewise, I believe teachers and the people that are in the classrooms with them almost every day have a very profound impact and by helping the teachers, I get to make my own little impact on the students.

I am from a very small community where nearly every community service activity I participated in involved at least one person I already knew and it was generally for the benefit of a community with which I was previously familiar. That being said, walking into a school in a new city that I was barely acquainted with was very eye opening for me, and honestly a little strange, but in a few short days of volunteering I have learned more about the community than I could have ever imagined. With each kid I work with I feel as if I am introduced to a new family and with each activity I participate in I feel like I am familiarized with the demographic of the area. For example, just by talking to kids I have learned about the diversity of the community

and the style of learning that best pertains to each kid. Some kids will tell me all about their love for video games while other students will not hesitate to tell me how much they have practiced their spelling and these subtle differences speak to the vast diversity of the community. Likewise, based on the conversations I have had with some kids I can infer about what the kids' home lives are like or what morals their parents might find valuable. However, a lot of this is conjecture and there is still a lot I would like to learn about the area and the community that creates Asbury Elementary School.

I think it is safe to assume that the community surrounding Asbury is occupied by middle class families with very different backgrounds but there is still a lot I would like to learn. I believe digging into the demographics would be pertinent to my specific role in the school because it would allow me to understand what methods of teaching might be most effective for each student. Similarly, by learning more about the school community I will be able to better understand the larger community that surrounds the University. By gaining a better understanding on this topic, I will be able to grasp the impact that the University has on the community and the role that I have in the community as a leader in the University society.

To a certain degree I was stepping outside of my comfort zone just by volunteering for an organization I was not already familiar with. As I mentioned earlier, most of my previous service activities took place in a familiar setting so that further encouraged me to participate in those events and to continue helping the people in need. So, stepping into Asbury elementary was different to me especially because I would be working in such close proximity with kids that I had never even seen previously. This has been a slight challenge because I have been working with kids individually so I must decide how to approach the activity in a manner that would be most interesting to each individual and then I deal with the students that do not seem to be even

the slightest bit interested regardless of how I approach the situation. Sometimes these particular students make valiant attempts to test my patience which has led me to realize that this is a great opportunity to work on my developing red color energies.

By working on leadership strategies consistent with the red leadership style, according to the Insights Discovery, I could potentially move throughout some quadrants to become more of a motivator or inspirer. I already sit firmly in the middle of the helper quadrant which directly relates to this type of community service, however, I have realized that being a helper usually requires some degree of cooperation on both sides which I could encourage if I focused on developing my red color energies. This would consist of potentially being a little more straightforward and authoritative to make sure I get my point across while also making sure I am not being overly commanding to a point where I lose touch with my already established skills. I intend to develop these energies by consciously focusing on them while I am working with kids and then after finishing each session I will reflect on who I worked with on that particular day, what strategies I employed to help them, and whether or not they were successful. In the long run my reflection on my effectiveness as a classroom volunteer will directly lead to my effectiveness as a leader in just about any situation.

It is very good practice to attempt to understand how a person will respond to different styles of leadership or teaching and knowing that not everyone will react in the same manner. Working in a first grade classroom has helped me to evaluate students before I work with them and while working with them to decide on what strategy I should employ to make their learning time as enjoyable as possible. I am confident that this is a skill I will utilize in the future when working with diverse groups of people. Although, it may be slightly easier to understand first graders than complex adults, the principles are the same and I believe my newly developed skills

will transition effortlessly. This skill development plays into my development goals for the year because I really wanted to learn about who I am as a leader and to do so while participating in something that I know I enjoy and I know is something that will allow me to succeed.