

## Community Service Activity Reflective Writings

**October 4, 2024**

Today was the first time I had a session with a class at Bob Murphy Community School. My team and I arrived early, and had a conversation with the principal about what we do, how long we've done these sessions, and what we need from him. He then gave us a tour of the school and walked us over to the class. The school has a lot of cool things for the kids, a car for them to learn on, a gym, and in depth biology classroom. We weren't asked to do anything, instead we bring in our own lesson and plans. As this was our first session we were all pretty nervous. We each introduced ourselves and what our program, The Beat Within, is. We then played a name game with the class, throwing around a stress toy- sharing their names and dream vacation.

After introductions, we then asked one person from the class to read a prompt. As expected, most everyone didn't want to participate but when we mentioned that we had candy, a few hands popped up. After getting every prompt read aloud we then asked for a raise of hands to decide which one we would read. As we waited for everyone to figure out what they wanted, I took a look at the classroom around us. The vibe of it was really nice, there was motivational posters on the walls along with a schedule written on the board. After a few minutes, we started the voting on the prompt. I, along with my partners, were extremely surprised that they had chosen one of the deepest ones, the prompt that discussed whether or not the death penalty should still exist in prisons.

We had all left the session in a great mood. The principal had visited us near the end of it and told us that we was very happy that we were there. We had a pretty good amount of students waiting even if it was only a dew sentences. All of the students were treated the same, the Principal and teacher were both very nice and understanding. I had really liked the vibes of all of the staff we had met, they all seemed to really are about the success of their students.

**October 11, 2024**

This time, the principal asked us if we could do two sessions, adding another class to our list. I remember the week before him mentioning that this teacher is vey strict and old-fashioned, and that he has had to leave the room before because of it. So to say the least, I was very nervous. There is only one difference between the two classes aside from their teachers- this one is a class with students who have IEPs. Like we did last week, we again introduced ourselves to the class. This time, we only had one person really interact with us.

I think we all felt really nervous because of what we heard from the principal and because of how disinterested this class was already being. We had tried to get them to read prompts around but we only had success with one of them reading. We didn't want to pressure hem to much and make them uncomfortable so we were trying to find the balance. The session had gone alright, they would rather talk about the prompts instead of write which wasn't really a problem to us but they weren't that interested in taking either. Their teach would jump in and press them to do stuff, so it was nice to have support but it kinda affected the vibe of our sessions because we didn't want them to be forced into participating and writing.

The second class went by great again. We are still getting to know each of the students and learning the comfortability of them all but it was nice to be able to talk to them. Their

teacher Mr. C is involved himself. He is always asking us questions about ourselves or deeper ones about the topic. One student in particular is someone one of my colleges knows from past sessions she used to do- he has been removed from both of the past schools she worked with. He pretty much remained silent throughout the lesson but another one of my colleges connected with him a bit and was able to get him to write. All of these students seem to have a good support system, all of the staff really care about them in their own ways. Ms. A runs her classroom on a tight ship and that might not work for everyone and may conflict students more but she does care.

### **October 18, 2024**

It took me this week to realize the difference between the two classes. Because of the difference between the two teachers the feelings of the rooms are way different. Mrs. A's room feels a bit suffocating and honestly a bit stressful. I don't think she tries to do that but because of her strictness and high expectations there's a sense of pressure in her room. Mr. C's room is a lot different- its relaxed and brighter. I'm not sure if im explaining it in a way thats understandable but the difference in the feel makes me more comfortable in Mr. C's room. And I wonder if that happens to the students too.

This week we try a different starter for the class. This first class seems to be super withdrawn so we want to try and bring the energy up. This class we try playing four corners for the first time. It takes a bit for the students to all get together but once we start, they seem to really be enjoying it. They are all joking with each other and are chatting amongst themselves. After we have them move around we again ask everyone to read the prompts and decide which they want tot write about this week. We vote using each corner as a prompt number. Then, we all split into different groups based on what prompt they want to work on. I had some good conversations with some students and actually spent most of the class talking to one student in particular. We discussed what her home like is like, her pets, and what she enjoys. It seems that because the teacher is gone in a meeting certain students are more likely to talk but others are not. Theres a weird dynamic in this class. One I cant describe.

We go to the next class and its clear to me the difference in the atmosphere of the classes. I know that this class knows us a bit better so I don't take it to hear that the other class hasn't warmed up to us as much. We all are giving the students helps, hi fives and fist bumps as we walk in. Once again, we decide to play games at the start of our session. This week they are pretty engaged. We split into our groups and this week they write about the way that relationships affect us. Who they look up to and why- along with their planned Halloween costumes.

### **October 25, 2024**

Because last week we had a lot of success with starting with a physical game first, we decide to play four corners again along with heads up seven up. As its Halloween weekend, we had prompts based on that. We walked into the first class and they seemed to be a bit more interested, giving us fist bumps and saying hello. Heads up seven up seemed to be a favorite, this class became super energized because of it. We didn't ask them to read aloud the prompts and instead let them read them on their own again. The teacher made each of them speak about the

prompt they wanted to do the most- there was also an argument over a computer. She made him log off of it and put it away. The discussion went alright, I think a lot of them had just wanted to get the day over with because they had big plans for Halloween.

We walked over to the second class after our hour went up and started with a game once again. This time I also challenged them to the number game- they would have to count up to 20 by yelling out a number randomly. If another person spoke the same number at the same time they would have to start again from number one. They were more interested this class than the last. I think they are overall more comfortable with us and the vibe of the room is just a lot different. There's another University of Redlands student who comes in before us for observations and she started to become more involved too.

### **November 1, 2024**

Everyone is tired. I think because of the Halloween weekend, everyone needs a bit of a break. Today we decided that instead of making everyone write we would have a giant group discussion. Mrs. A gave us permission to move around the desks and chairs and we moved them into one giant circle. We didn't go with the prompts and instead talked about various different topics such as sports, movies, tv shows, shoes, driving and more. It was nice that the teacher got involved in the conversation a bit too, she talked about her retirement plans and her favorite kind of chocolate. Some people surprised me with the amount of talking they did- usually they seem to be more quiet and tend to just write to avoid speaking. I think they liked the bigger discussion, most of them have a hard time figuring out what to write- they don't know what sentences to formulate and I wonder if there's a bit too much pressure.

The second class was too quiet today. The Halloween parties must've been amazing. The class size was also smaller, a lot of kids seemed to be absent. Instead of a group conversation the four corners turned into a mini game of baseball and then a mini game of football. There wasn't any girls in the class today so the boys got their fill of activities. I was a bit worried at first that Mr. C would insist on work but I think he wanted the class to be able to bond with us more which was nice. Even if we didn't get anything done in the learning realm I really liked that we were able to connect more with them.

### **November 8, 2024**

This was a really great session this week. We started again with a physical activity because it seems to get the class to be the most engaged and ready. Our prompts this week were about love and hate and the way pride can affect the way we interact with others. We got a different person to read out each prompt for the week aloud and then we voted for what they wanted to work on. We split into two different groups again to discuss it and write too. One of the things we had learned when preparing our lessons was that we would be able to write for the students if they wanted to talk. I had tried mentioning it before in other classes but they still went ready yet. I pushed for it this class and I literally wrote for three students. I was so excited- they were so surprised about the amount I had wrote but I had told them that it was purely what they had been speaking to me. It honestly made me really happy. One of the students usually writes a single sentence- I think it's because he's always lost at where to start but this week I was able to

help him write a whole paragraph and he even wanted it published. I was really so proud of that class this week.

The second class was successful as well. They are more independent and have a lot more students willing to write but I wrote for one student again. He was also surprised and a bit shocked that he had spoken that much. Even if they find writing difficult I want to give them a way to write and express and share their feelings. I really feel like this is the start of them beginning to realize the potential of what they can write. While there is a difference between the teachers, I don't think its done in a way that is meant to treat the students unequally. I just think its two different teachers teaching styles- one I feel is more beneficial but I think Mrs. A really cares too. I'm excited to keep learning with them and I know they have so much potential to change the world.

### **November 15, 2024**

This went overall pretty well. This week, the first class actually seemed pretty upbeat for the most part and did enjoy parts of our discussions. Their teacher wasn't there- so we had a different sub to just stayed out of the way. They seemed to be tired, the burnout hitting hard. This week we had a discussion about their future plans and how the present can affect the future. We tried not to push them too hard because we are leaving so soon. Instead we had some little conversations with each of the students getting to know them all more. It was very interesting to learn more about their home lives and their future goals. They are all very driven people, and I know they will end up going far.

The second class went similarly. We passed out some notecards to write future prompts on for our last week. There was a lot of kids missing from this class today which was surprising as we usually have really good attendance. It makes me wonder all of the different possibilities of students not showing up. Even if they are driven to continue their education I am aware of the different things that prevents them from continuing to go to school. Some of these kids take care of siblings, grandparents, and even themselves. They have so many different things pulling at them, I'm sure it gets overwhelming.

### **November 22, 2024**

This was a really nice second to last class of the semester. For the first class, one of the students I have recently been writing for wrote his own paragraph all on his own. He was very proud of himself and his writing really came out great. Their regular teacher wasn't there but the substitute was very nice. We went around the room saying what we each were grateful for- most of the kids had said that they were grateful for their families and for their friends and they all wanted to share. After writing, we ended up having a bit of a more relaxed day and played the numbers game until we got up to number twenty and we played a few rounds of four corners. It was really nice to see them all relaxed and having fun.

By the time we got to the second class they all had a bunch of energy. To help motivate them and keep them all on track we ended up discussing that we could go outside to play basketball. This made them all very excited and they quickly got to work on their writings for this week. While they were working, we discussed our favorite thanksgiving foods, I had explained that I loved shortbread but none of them had ever heard of it before. So, Im bringing

some to the next class. They loved playing basketball with the boys of our group and it really made me sad to realize that this was one of the last meetings I would have with them.