

## **Culminating Project Proposal**

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### **Homework Help Center: Giving Back to a School that Gave to Me**

#### **2. Culminating Project Overview:**

I hope to learn from a former teacher of mine, Mr. Milagro, about the skills involved in teaching. The former teacher runs a Homework Help Center, at AS #1. I will volunteer two afternoons per week, during the months of January through March. I will start work immediately after we return from the long Holiday Break. I will work with 7<sup>th</sup> Grade students who are identified by Mr. Milagro as those who are struggling in school. I would like to help these 7<sup>th</sup> Graders to feel better about themselves at school. Mr. Milagro will identify students especially needing help to prepare for the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade WASL. 7<sup>th</sup> Graders will be tested in April, so I will work intensively on reading and writing skills, through the late winter and early spring.

My primary goal, with this Homework Help Center internship is to help a small group of students to feel more connected to school and to do better with assignments. I know that not everyone loves school, and if I can share some of my own enthusiasm for learning, perhaps they will be more motivated. I also hope that on account of my work and those of others at the Homework Help Center, the students gain stronger confidence in their Language Arts skills. If the students' skills improve, perhaps their WASL scores will also—and they will have more confidence for going into 8<sup>th</sup> Grade. I hope that the students who work with me come to view me as a friend, so that they are comfortable working with me.

My project helps the community, because I will share what I have learned about homework, reading strategies, and writing skills. I will get to know a small group of 7<sup>th</sup> Graders and I will reach out to them in friendship and tutoring. Imagine if everyone in the world decided to help half a dozen others, with work of some kind. What sort of world might we have? I believe in Karma and that every kind action is felt by the universe. I help our community, when I act kindly and give some of myself. I directly

benefit the Seattle School System, because public schools are always face budget problems. There are not enough tutors available, on account of lack of money.

I expect that my work will help me to become an honorable, skillful, thinking and contributing citizen, because I will be learning how to better teach. I also will learn how to see where the students' skills are weak. I will need to be skillful about recognizing weaknesses in writing or reading, when working with students. I have learned, during my time at Hale, a lot about *Social Justice*. Some of my work will be to help students identify for themselves, where their skills are weak. If I help students to increase skills, so that they feel better about themselves at school, then I help my community to feel better about itself. We are all part of a large system. And my time at Hale has also taught me that I am a citizen of the world. I will meet the students twice a week, with honor of intention to get to know them, and to help them move from where they currently are in their skills, to the next level of skills. I want to help them to track their own progress, so that they are empowered to be citizens of the world— starting with being strong citizens of their school community.

### **3. Prior Knowledge:**

I already know a lot about my chosen area of study, Homework Help Center Internship. I have been in school for nearly thirteen years! I know what school is like, and I know what being a Middle School student at AS #1 is like. I know a fair amount about study skills and Language Arts is one of my favorite subjects. I learned a lot, when I was a student at AS #1, and I have learned a lot here, at Hale. When I was an 8<sup>th</sup> Grader, I helped in the Homework Help Center— as a Peer-Helper. I know how the center runs, and I know all of the teachers, because I was a student at the school not long ago.

I have been thinking about being a Homework Help Center Intern for a long time, and ever since my 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts experience, at Nathan Hale, I have considered becoming a Language Arts Teacher. I am interested in learning more about the life of teaching. Next year, I will begin college, and I may get involved in tutoring, at whichever school I attend.

Some relevant skills, or past experience that I bring to the project are: years of babysitting and three years of working as Junior Ski Instructor, at Snoqualmie Pass. I have worked with children from the ages of five months (babysitting) to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (ski-instructing). I really like working with kids and the kids seem to know this. I have learned a number of skills at Hale that will support me in this Culminating Project. I have learned to be ORGANIZED. Teachers need to be organized. I have learned Habits of Mind and critical thinking, so I will be able to share reading strategies and writing skills with my students at AS #1. When students answer questions, for homework or on the WASL, they need to provide Evidence and Commentary. My years at Hale have taught me that critical thinking is essential in all homework. Critical thinking should be the goal of all education, and maybe all work.

Despite my preparedness, I imagine that there will be obstacles, as I begin my time at AS#1. Not all of my students, in the Homework Center will be happy to be there. Some of the kids will have been sent by their parents, and they would rather be out playing with friends. I will have to try to convince them that homework can be fun. Also, I may not connect easily with some of the students. I hope to overcome challenges, by listening to the students and earnestly trying to help them. I will learn what their class assignments are, and maybe bring some old work of my own, to show them how I tackled some of the same work. I know that I will not be able to avoid all challenges.

#### **4. Expected Outcomes:**

I expect to learn more from my students than they do from me! I expect to learn from Mr. Milagro how to better reach struggling students. I expect to learn more of what Mr. Milagro's school life is like, and how he balances the various demands of teaching. I hope to learn if I really want to go into teaching. I know that I still have a lot of learning to do, before I make such a big decision. I plan to study lots of different things, in college. I do hope to get a sense now, however, of where I might focus my energies, next year.

I hope to learn specific strategies for working with small groups of students. I will learn from my students; they will help me to improve as a teacher, because they will tell me what works and what does not work. I hope to learn how to contribute to a school,

especially a school that nurtured my own learning, from Kindergarten through eighth grade.

Completion of my project will benefit my future, because (as I mentioned before) I am considering teaching as a career. If I successfully complete this project, and actually help the students with whom I work, then I may continue to consider teaching as a job for me. I will learn what aspects of teaching are comfortable for me, and what parts move me outside of my “comfort zone.” One of my teachers at Hale told me that sometimes the best learning is hard, because I am forced outside of my “comfort zone.” I may learn that there are aspects of *contributing* that are VERY HARD. I expect (at the very least) to offer myself in help to the Homework Help Center. I hope to seriously help some students to improve on skills and self-confidence.

Completion of my project will benefit others, because I will work to help students’ writing improve. Maybe students will use more examples to support ideas, or maybe they will use Habits of Mind more intentionally. I will know if I am successful, when students tell me that they understand what their teachers are asking of them! I really want for my students to feel good about school and about their work. I will know that I am successful if students look forward to Homework Help Center, instead of dreading it, or feeling like they have to come, because their teachers make them come.

## **5. Research Focus:**

I will work closely with Mr. Milagro (my former teacher at AS #1, and I will “debrief” with him, every day— at the end of Homework Help Center. My Expert Advisor is going to be a big resource, as he has done this job for over twenty-five years. He will help me to structure my time with students, and will help me to understand the work that they are doing in class, so that I can support them in Homework Help Center.

I will collect evidence of student growth, by taking samples of all of my students’ work at the beginning of our time together, in the middle, and at the end. If my students demonstrate stronger Habits of Mind, then our work together has been helpful to them. Evidence collected will be samples of student work. I also will interview my students, to hear their thoughts/ideas on our work time together. I will check to see if student grades

improve, from beginning of work to end. Grades are not everything, but they will be one way to get “evidence” of student achievement.

I will use three different books, to help me through my project:

- a. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Jonathan Kozol, 1991.
- b. *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning*, Nancie Atwell, 1987.
- c) *Other People's Children*, Lisa Delpit, 1996.

## **6. Presentation:**

My final Project Presentation will begin with a summary of the project. I will have a Power Point presentation, and a slide show of photographs that I take, during the months at the Homework Help Center. I will use one or two students as examples of all of the work that I do— and I will use bits of student work, to show what we did together. I will ask my panelists to listen to my presentation, with a focus on three distinct areas that I present: a) what I learned, b) what my students showed that they learned, c) what I think was my best contribution to my students' sense of well-being, success or happiness at school. Those will be the three aspects that I present. I hope that my panelists have a clear answer to those three questions, at the end of my presentation. I hope that my panelists walk away with an understanding of my contributions as a tutor in the Homework Help Center.