

Religious Studies Internship the Final Report

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My Internship took place at the Salvation Army Bellwood Boys and Girls Club located in Atlanta, Georgia on Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway. The old name was Bankhead Highway and it is in the inner city. The kids at this club were from eight surrounding schools in the area and their ages range from six to eighteen years of age. Six permanent positions were held by two coaches and four counselors and this included the manager. Mr. Johnson is the Club Manager and Head Coach, and he was also my Project Mentor. The Administrator, Miss Jazz was his assistant and he turned the job of my Project Mentor over to her. Mr. Johnson did not advise me of this change at all, but Miss Jazz stepped in and was very helpful. Also, there is Miss Wright who was the game room Coordinator, Ashanti who was the computer lab Tech, Miss Faith who was the Secretary and another coach who took care of the gym. Sometimes volunteers come and hold art classes with the kids, and during the month of February they held Black History classes for the kids. Occasionally, some of the parents come and help out with the kids as well. The kids would change activities on a schedule and according to age groups and the boys and girls were never together. This was a rule because they did not want any problems. The Bellwood Boys and Girls club was an interesting internship and the conditions were ok but needed improvement, the experience for me was extremely valuable and the skills inquired during this time will benefit my future endeavors.

There is a game room, a computer lab, a gym, class rooms and a swimming pool available to the kids. The kids participate in several activities throughout the club and it keeps them engaged and motivated. Many of them work on their homework, but they have the option of doing it or not. Some of the kids requested help with their homework, I would help them but it appeared that I was the only one to help. They are at the club Monday through Friday, during the hours of 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. and they are busy the entire time. Everything seemed to be in

descent order from the beginning, but as I was there more often, it seemed unorganized. This was sort of a hinderance for me, because it was difficult keeping up with things such as who went to the restrooms or to get water. Surely, it was a problem for the employees at the club often, because they had to keep up with all the kids at one time. After, I was there a few times, I realized they used a number system to keep track of every kid at the club.

Miss Jazz, the Assistant Project Mentor, I will call her, advised me of all the rules of the club and how the kids could be difficult to handle. She was honest with me and told me that some of the kids will try and get close to me, so they will not get in trouble. She said, that it would be several kids coming to the club and it is a lot of kids to deal with at once. She also said, “she had no children of her own, these kids were like her babies and she was very protective of them”. That was funny to me because I care deeply for children myself. However, I understood her completely and told her I understand. She said they really need some extra help so I was God sent. Miss Jazz and I got along well and she did not give me any problems. When I had questions, she was always available. I planned to ask more things regarding working with the kids, but time was limited. Time was often a challenge and I wanted a short meeting with her and Mr. Johnson. Also, Covid-19 cut the internship short and my plan to possibly do a class with some of the kids was abandoned. More time was needed to inquire about how things were done, and would have improved our work at the club and it would have been better for the kids.

My learning objectives were to learn how to work with large groups of children at once, what kind of attitudes and personalities would come about, and the administrative side of what might be required to manage such an organization. Most of the kids were accepting of my company and conversation, although it took a few times to be with them. However, there were two young ladies that did not want to have much to do with me at all and they made that an issue.

I was a little disappointed, because I thought the kids would be okay with me. They would even turn their noses up at me and roll their eyes. These same two young ladies wanted me to let them do their homework in the computer lab during the boy's time to be there. They would barely speak to me and were always doing things that they should not. So, learning that they were just trouble makers, and did not want another pair of eyes on them, helped me to better understand why they had the attitudes. There was one more young lady who did not respond to my questions but she did not have an abrasive attitude. I really wanted to learn more about the administrative portion of how they receive new kids and what kind of information and paperwork is required and exchanged when this happens. So, by just listening, I found that they charge \$35 dollars per week for one child and it goes down for each additional child. That is an excellent price for after school care. Although I asked questions, there was not enough time to have discussions about what other requirements they have. Learning more about these things would have been helpful because I plan to build and start a youth center as an extension of a church someday.

The opportunity to practice in the profession was a great one, it was meaningful, because I was giving my time, attention and effort to kids who will someday do great things. Living in the inner city, kids do not always get a chance to enjoy programs like the Bellwood Boys and Girls club. So, it was a pleasure to spend some time with the kids and talk about life, their experiences, and God while sharing a fun activity. It was everything and more and I wish Covid-19 had not caused us to socially distance from one another. This kind of work requires patience acceptance, an understanding heart and dedication. That is much more than skill, that is wisdom. It leads right into the spirit of discernment, a caring spirit and a calling to work in such a position, because kids can be difficult to deal with and handle. Also, organizational skills,

discipline and order are good have as well because these qualities are necessities when working with kids. It is sort of difficult to teach that in which one has had no experience, and the kids need to learn discipline, order and organization. Hopefully, their parents will teach them these things as well, but there is nothing wrong with reinforcement of good characteristics. One also has to be willing to help and truly enjoy working with kids. If there is no desire to encourage and inspire the youth, then this is not the position one should take. Kids are the future and deserve to have people around them that will motivate and inspire them to be and do their best.

My organizational skills are not where I would like them to be, so I really need to do better in this area. It would be nice to have the opportunity to start by working on organizing my home because it was said that clutter in your environment will cause clutter in the mind. After clearing some of the clutter in and around my home, I can begin to declutter the mind. Honestly, there will be much more time for me to do so when I am finished with school. My prayers are sometimes about being more discipline and this is a problem for me in certain areas as well. Sometimes procrastination is a difficult issue for me and I am working on my timing and putting off tasks. So, I speak to myself about every task at hand and continuously encourage myself about doing them, ahead of time. One day soon this will be life changing for me, because it has been a problem for almost all my life. Prioritizing the things in my life is another quality that needs further development because sometimes I get out of focus and waste valuable time on meaningless things. Sometimes it is a job that I am doing because of my own wishes, but it is not what God would have me to do. It has taken me a while to learn and recognize this and now I pray more often about what His will is for my life. Although, these are specific qualities I wish to develop further, I am aware that life is filled with lessons and we are always learning. The

enjoyment of learning something new that I can use in life is a big deal for me and I can pass it on to the next person. Kids need this and this is in my heart.

Miss Wright at the Boys and Girls club helps me when I have a problem disciplining a kid. There was one young man who was continuously trying to jump on my back, and I continuously told him to stop. He just kept right on and I was thinking, what is with this kid. I was becoming a little concerned and she saw him running towards me. She told him, “no means no” and I was wondering how was I going to get him to stop. When she said that, he settled down and I learned that you must be firm with the kids to discipline them. Then there must be discernment about when and the sincerity of discipline to use for each kid and situation. So, the opportunity for learning how to lead the kids in the correct way was there most of the days I worked at the Boys and Girls club. When kids know there is a new comer, they often try to get what they want by way of the new comer, that was me. They would ask to do things they knew were against the rules and I was not aware of all the rules. So, some of the counselors or coaches would intervene and tell me the rules of each of the activities. This caused me to ask more questions, because sometimes I thought I knew how things should go and I was wrong. At times it was something as simple as going to the restroom in numbers. They were only to go to the restroom two at one time and the kids definitely tried this often. Shortly before the Covid-19, social distancing started, I began to learn how to take the opportunity to talk with the kids about God sooner and time was always an issue. So, I had the chance to learn these skills in leadership and the lessons were cut short. I will take what I have learned and use it in the future.

Soon I plan to start a nonprofit organization and open a youth center within a church preferably, but if not, a stand-alone center will be fine. It will offer educational programs related to several careers, cooking, etiquette, health and life coaching classes, a computer lab with video

games and many other activities to help educate and build good social and life skills in the youth. Hopefully, there will be outside opportunities and contributors to this program. I already have a name in mind and sometimes I seek the location. This may mean that it will be self-sustaining instead of through a church. I enjoy working with kids and I know I have a connection with teens. As I get closer to getting my degree, I believe God is directing me into some type of learning environment. I am not clear about where exactly, but it is definitely related to education and school. The connection with a school will lead into the opportunity to start the youth center. Also, even after Covid-19, I wish to do missions abroad and many times, the kids are in dire need. So, I would love to minister to these families and spend time encouraging, teaching and helping these kids.

The Salvation Army Bellwood Boys and Girls Club was an excellent internship for me and a great opportunity to grow and learn how to work with kids. Inner city kids are some of the toughest to work with but I was once one of those kids. My actual Project Mentor did not work closely with me, but his Assistant did and I believe that was for the best. She was much more helpful than he was from the beginning. Maybe that was an opportunity to learn to confront a difficulty in a business setting, however I learned from this later. I wanted to learn a lot more about the administrative portion of the Boys and Girls club, but time did not permit. During the time I was there, the other employees were busy and the internship was cut short due to Covid-19. The lesson here is that, I should have moved a little faster to ask questions and learn more. One never knows what the future holds and timing is important. It was educational to work with the kids and the employees at the Boys and Girls club and it was an experience I will not forget. I learned more about myself and what I need to work on to become a better counselor for the youth. This increased my knowledge, so I will be able to better serve kids local and abroad.