

Signature Honors Project – Building Buddies

Group portion:

Honors Classes:

The Honors College courses we took were really what drove this project to where it is today. Each class pushed us in different ways and led us to think about our project from different perspectives and allowed us to hold a mirror to ourselves and our progress often. Honors 2000 was the first course we took as a group, which consisted of about 6 members at the time. Four of our group members started this project in Honors 2000 and have seen it through the entire Honors college process to its fruition. Honors 2000 had us focused on finding a problem in the community we wanted to solve, which we referred to as our “wicked problem”. We spent every week learning how to refine the solution to our wicked problem, and we did a lot of team building along the way. In Honors 2000 we learned more about each other by building mind maps, having many group discussions, and comparing our work with the processes of other groups. We also heard from Honors students in the higher-level courses that we would eventually take, and they showed us how to conduct our first interviews. At the end of our first course together, we presented a prototype of what our project would look like along with every other Honors 2000 group, and by a group voting process done by our fellow Honors 2000 colleagues, our project was chosen to move forward in Honors 3000.

The Honors 3000 course proved to be the most challenging semester for our group and our project. At the very beginning of the semester, our group size grew from six people to about twelve people. We had spent the entirety of Honors 2000 getting comfortable with communicating with one another, and now we had to learn how to make such a large group focused, responsible, and full of productive communication. We were also tasked with presenting a PowerPoint slideshow every Tuesday for the entire semester. Each member of the group took turns updating the class of Honors 3000 through these presentations, as well as our Honors professors and even some students in the higher-level Honors courses that we had met in the last semester. This presenting aspect of Honors 3000 ultimately proved to be beneficial. Not only were we forced out of comfort zones and into the realm of public speaking, but we were also generating new ideas every week in order to show progress in our presentations. The professors and older Honors students were charged with asking us relentlessly direct questions, and they were hard to hear some weeks. We were forced to combat questions on white savior complexes, lack of progress, moving in the wrong direction, sustainability, and more. These weekly presentations and interrogations slowly helped us to mold Building Buddies into what it is today. Another important aspect of Honors 3000 was learning how to conduct an interview. Each member of the group was required to conduct ten interviews, and there had to be variety among interviewees. We interviewed everyone we could think of, from college students to professors to nonprofit organizers. The most valuable aspect of the interview process was learning what it meant to be professional in any setting and that networking can make or break a project. Throughout the course of the semester, our interviews became more refined and began to offer real contributions to the project. By the end of Honors 3000, we were ready to launch Building Buddies.

In Honors 4500, our group started to become much more cohesive. There was still plenty of structure given by the Honors professors, but for the first time we were left to our own devices. In Honors 4500, our group shrunk from twelve to eight members, so it was much easier

to divide and conquer every task. Instead of focusing inward, as we had in Honors 3000, we were now asked to look outward and make our project a reality. We shifted from interviews to communication with the directors at Building Hope, which was the non-profit organization that we partnered with in Honors 3000. The focus of this semester was learning how to fulfill our assigned roles in the best way possible and also how these roles were beneficial to the project as a whole. The structure given in Honors 4500 required us to meet every week, and to continue to show weekly progress. We had to have a detailed plan for the semester, and our plan kept us on track and motivated to see the project grow. In this semester, we also became the guides for the younger Honors students who had just begun taking Honors 2000 and were able to look back and reflect on the beginning stages of this process.

In Honors 4550, which took place last semester, we were finally seeing Building Buddies take shape. Thanks to these classes, we were constantly moving forward. By Spring 2020, we had a club with numerous members, a core group of volunteers, and were partnered with a wonderful organization. For most of the semester, we watched the students at Building Hope build connections with us and our volunteers, and it began to feel like all of the work we put in with every Honors course finally paid off. Unfortunately, just beyond the halfway point of Honors 4550, the coronavirus forced a sudden quarantine and we all headed home. Once again, being in an Honors course pushed us into forward motion despite feeling like we had taken two steps back. We began researching different ways we could continue to make an impact through our project and were able to compose a contingency plan by the end of Honors 4550.

While we are no longer enrolled in any Honors courses, we are still continuing to follow down the path that we created in these courses. The contingency plan we created at the end of Honors 4550 was only a jumping off point, and during this semester we have held ourselves to the standard that we lived up to for the two years of Honors courses we endured.

Process:

The process of creating Building Buddies began with a wicked problem. In Honors 2000, we were instructed to identify a wicked problem and then come up with a “solution.” “Solution” is in quotes because a wicked problem in and of itself is a problem that is extremely difficult or impossible to solve. After pinpointing a problem, we began to brainstorm ideas on how to address this problem within the Greenville area and beyond. Our group began the process with the broad issue of poverty. Through brainstorming sessions and feedback from our professor and fellow students, we narrowed down our focus to the underprivileged youth of Greenville. Specifically, we decided to concentrate on the education aspect of this problem. With the process of narrowing down our ideas, we created a more attainable and concrete starting point for our project. Had we just continued trying to address the issue of poverty as a whole, we would not have been able to find a way to make an impact because we would have had no clear starting point.

Once we had agreed upon a specific problem to address, we began to generate ideas. Our first idea that we presented to the class was to create an after-school program for youth in Greenville where we would help them with homework, play with them, and give them a safe place to go after school. However, after receiving feedback from our professor and classmates, we realized that this likely was not an achievable goal. It would have been difficult to find a place to have this program, find the funding we needed, find people to participate, and there were already many of these type programs in Greenville. We needed to narrow down further.

This is when we came up with the idea of developing a program with an organization that was already well-established in the Greenville area. We wanted to work with an organization that already had an after-school program in place, so we knew we needed to think of an idea that would bring something new to the table at that organization. We needed to think of a way in which we could make an impact different than what that organization was already doing. We wanted to expand on the great things that were already happening there. Through an extensive amount of research, which was the crux of Honors 2000 and 3000, in the form of online searches and interviews, we honed in on the idea of mentorship. Through literature and interviews with people such as social workers and teachers, we learned the value of having mentors and having a role model to look up to as a child. Thus, our idea of creating a mentorship program with an organization in Greenville was born. The vision of our organization was largely based on that of Big Brothers Big Sisters which is an organization that pairs a child up with an adult mentor in order to provide that child with a role model and someone to whom they can look up.

Our next step in the process was to identify an organization with which to work. We did research to find organizations in Greenville that worked with children and whose goals and values matched our own. This is when we found Building Hope, a non-profit organization that works with families in the community to help them build brighter futures. Through looking at their website, we found that they had an after-school program for both elementary school aged and middle school aged youth. Their goals through their after-school program were to provide academic assistance, character building, and spiritual guidance to their students. This looked like the perfect match for us. We quickly reached out to Building Hope and informed them of our interest in potentially partnering with them. They responded positively, and we set up a time to meet to discuss more in detail.

Our first meeting with the director of Building Hope and the head teacher there was a great experience. We presented to them our idea of creating mentor relationships between ECU students and their students who attended the after-school program. We explained that we wanted each student at Building Hope to be paired up with one ECU student who would meet with them every week at the after-school program, help them with their homework, and just be a friend and role model to them. We discussed sustainability and how to accomplish this. After the meeting, Building Hope listed several things that we discussed during the meeting and some key takeaways. They were as follows:

1. Not Recreating the Wheel-Contact Big Brothers Big Sisters to see if they have a Mentoring Rules, Policies, and Procedures Training Manual
2. Commitment timeline for the Mentors (Semester Vs Year-Long, Hours per week)
3. Role of a Mentor & the Role of the Mentee
4. Culturally Competent & Culturally Aware Mentoring
5. Do's & Don'ts of A Mentee & Mentor Relationship
6. Establishment of ECU Mentoring Club rather than a Semester long Project
7. Project Timeline
8. Sustainability Plan
9. *Building Hopes' Executive Director willing to coach the group through this process
10. Contract Agreement with Club & Building Hope
11. 12-hour Commitment before pairing with a Student/6-month consistent volunteering before spending time outside of BH
12. Pairing Survey for Mentor and Mentee

13. Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values of the ECU Honors College Mentoring Club (Project)

These thirteen items are ultimately what guided us through the rest of the creation process of our club and what still guide us as an organization today. They are the most important things to focus on when creating an organization or program.

In Honors 3000, we presented our progress to the rest of the Honors college freshmen each week. We did interviews, researched, and refined our ideas based on the “relentlessly direct” feedback we received from the Honors professors. We were faced with tough questions and critiques which helped us make improvements to our club. One of the biggest issues that we were asked about in Honors 3000 was sustainability. We needed to make sure we were creating something that would not just be a one time thing because this would be defeating the entire purpose of our organization. After the sustainability of our organization was questioned, we implemented things such as officer positions and timeline requirements for club members.

In Honors 4500, we began our club member recruitment process. We reached out to Living Learning Communities such as education and the Honors College, put up fliers, and advertised through avenues like social media. We scheduled interest meetings and general meetings with ECU students to inform them of the goals of Building Buddies and the expectations of being a member. We then began to go into Building Hope on Fridays to lead what are called Fun Fridays. We led the Building Hope students in fun games and activities and club members were able to be introduced to the students. We also started volunteering once a week aside from Fridays. Club members would go into Building Hope to the after-school program once a week and were instructed to try to work with a specific student or a specific age group every time they came in order to begin to foster mentorship relationships. This continued through the first semester of last year and the beginning of the second semester before COVID-19 hit. Through both semesters of last year, we continued to learn and grow and make improvements to Building Buddies. We thought of better ways to recruit members and continued to think of ways in which we could be effective mentors.

This year, we have implemented a pen pal program between our club members and the students at Building Hope due to the ongoing pandemic. However, before beginning this program, we made efforts again to recruit new and dedicated members. We worked hard to advertise through social media and reach out to those we thought would be interested. We gained some new members and now each student at Building Hope has a pen pal who is a member of Building Buddies. Though a pen pal program was not exactly what we had hoped to have to do this semester, through creating this program through the Honors College, we have learned to pivot and adapt and to not stop the process when faced with challenges.

Challenges:

While working through the process of creating a club on campus, we were faced with many challenges. These challenges included difficulties with communication amongst ourselves and Building Hope as well as recruiting members and membership involvement. Throughout the honors classes we gained and lost multiple members. This was a challenge because we had to figure out how to work together and learn about each other while working towards our end goal. At times it became difficult to incorporate everyone’s ideas.

Throughout working with Building Hope, especially in the beginning, we struggled with a lack of communication between ourselves and our contacts at Building Hope. This lack of communication made planning events and keeping our members updated difficult. Eventually we

were able to figure out ways of communicating that worked best for both parties and figuring out a schedule with Building Hope created less of a need for communication. This past semester has proven difficult due to the pandemic and we found ourselves struggling to come up with ways of being involved with Building Hope without being able to physically volunteer. Through our communication with Building Hope and ourselves, we came up with a school supply drive that we held at the beginning of the fall semester. With the drive we applied to donate cleaning supplies, school supplies, and snacks that Building Hope greatly appreciated. We were able to show Building Hope and their students that although we may not be able to be there physically, we still supported them and were thinking about them during this time. We were also able to create a pen pal program with Building Hope's elementary students. This has created new challenges for our club, but we have been able to fix those issues rather quickly due to what we've learned from past challenges.

Another challenge we have faced, and are still working through, is recruiting dedicated members. We have been able to recruit quite a few members through our relationships with the Education LLC and the Honors College; however, we are still working towards finding more male members. This is a want of not only ourselves but also Building Hope. Building Hope has a few 5th grade boys and they have shared their want in us finding male figures that their students can relate to. This has proved to be a challenge for us, but we are working towards finding male ECU students with an interest in being members of our club. We hope with the spring semester possibly going back face-to-face that we will be able to recruit on campus and reach out to other organizations, LLC's, and programs with a higher male involvement.

Learning:

One of the main things that we learned during the process of creating this club was how important mentoring can be. With creating the club Building Buddies on campus, we had to do a lot of research as a team to truly discover what mentoring was along with what it meant to our club. We had to discuss what the role of a mentor should be and what our role was with the kids at building buddies. We decided that a mentor should be someone that the kids should look up to but also have a trusting relationship with. If you aren't able to build a meaningful and trusting relationship with the children then it becomes difficult to be their mentor, because they won't value the lessons that you were trying to teach them. A mentor is someone that is there to help the children in any area that they may potentially need guidance in.

Through taking the first few months to build natural connections with the children by not assigning mentors and mentees we were able to help build meaningful relationships with the children. This was helpful because when we later paired up with mentees the pairs were ones that we knew were going to work out. This was important because no child felt left out because they weren't getting along with, their mentor. We then helped the children do their homework and were able to have discussions with them during their lesson time at Building Hope. By having meaningful relationships, it allowed to children to open up and allow you to help in any way that they may need. We were also a friend for them, many times while at recess they would insist that you played whatever the game for the day was with them.

After participating in the club for the past few years we were able to learn that the mentors are impacted just as much as the mentees are. Many of the members have said that volunteering through building buddies was one of the things that they looked forward to during the week. It was something that allowed them to connect them to their community and build roots around the University. The members were also building meaningful relationships and were

valuable to them. By mentoring you are able to learn lessons from the children as well. There are perspectives that children have of the world that is often forgotten and can really be appreciated. By interacting with the children, it can allow you to grow in ways that you may have not expected. Mentoring is something that is beneficial for both of the parties involved and can be very impactful on the life of each individual. Through mentoring you are able to grow and learn in new ways, while building meaningful relationships.

During the creation of the organization on campus we were also able to learn all of the parts and necessities that are essential to creating a viable organization. We had to learn how to constantly be able to come up with new ideas and ways to improve our current plan. We had to learn the process of research and planning when it comes to making a sustainable club. We also had to discover the different ways of recruitment and advertising in order to get new members along with keep the current members active. Another thing that we learned was the importance of communication and how essential it is to work in a team. We discovered how important it was to designate roles within the group to ensure efficiency. The creation of Building Buddies has taught us valuable information that can be applied to many different aspects of our lives.

Our group learned from the very beginning of this class that we have to find ways to overcome challenges and find ways to improve the previous failure. This was especially essential when coronavirus happened because as a group, we had to find a new way we could be active with Building Hope and continue our organization Building Buddies. One of the takeaways that we had as a group was that no matter the obstacles that we were presented with there could be a solution found to overcome them.

Data:

When faced with questions from the Honors 4500 instructors, our group quickly realized there was research to be done on the foundation of our project: mentorship. In order to effectively carry out our mission, we needed to understand what mentorship looked like, what it means to be a good mentor, and how to avoid misunderstandings within the demographic we were planning on working with.

According to author Yetunde Oshinkale in an article written for World Education Services, “The mentor benefits because they are able to lead the future generation in an area they care about and ensure that best practices are passed along; meanwhile, the mentee benefits because they have proven that they are ready to take the next step in their career and can receive the extra help needed to make that advancement.” This statement truly embodied what our group was aiming to accomplish. While our intentions were pure, there were obstacles in our way brought to our attention by the Honors 4500 instructors. Our greatest obstacle was tackling the potential of our project exemplifying the “white savior complex.” This idea can be described as a majority cultural group providing materialistic or emotional support to a minority group as a way to boost their own ego and promote their good deeds rather than providing support out of genuine charity. To avoid this issue, Building Hope provided cultural training for all volunteers. This program was already a requirement for volunteers, which was beneficial for our group in an effort to avoid the white savior complex. The cultural training was emailed to each volunteer after the completion of a volunteer application (found on the Building Hope website) and the completion and passing of a background check.

Impact:

When you Google the definition for impact one of the options says to “have a strong effect on someone or something” and if you keep scrolling you see other sources mention “the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another' and 'a marked effect or influence'.” These definitions surrounding the word “impact” means our group had a great responsibility that could leave either negative or positive repercussions with our community partner Building Hope, children in the Greenville community, college students at ECU, and students and faculty in the Honors College. Our group can be proud of what he has done and the impact we have made relating to all of these areas. We believe our main areas of impact include Building Hope and the students there, as well as the college mentors that volunteer their time each week.

In 2018 when this project became a thought, our group only dreamed about having a club that involved both college students and children in the community being involved in a mutually beneficial relationship built around mentorship. Now, we can proudly say that is what our club has achieved. Currently we have almost 50 members on our Building Buddies engage page and almost 40 members in our GroupMe message. Out of these members, we have over 20 active members that volunteer each week by mentoring a child at Building Hope either face to face with homework, play, and other activities or through a pen pal mentorship program. This means that 21 students at Building Hope are currently having weekly conversations with college students who can provide an outside social outlet whether that child needs a friend, leader, mentor, or simply someone to listen to them. Kids have a lot to say and we want to hear them out. We have heard many of our ECU mentors say how excited they get to go every week to Building Hope and even in the face of COVID, our mentors still have intentional passion and enthusiasm for their mentees.

We have built a lasting relationship with the administration and staff at Building Hope that has fostered an environment where we help each other reach our goals and missions. This is something that makes our project sustainable and therefore “sticky.”

Pivots:

Throughout this process we had multiple failures and successes as a group. I believe that the successes helped to give our group confidence and that the failures were something that we could learn from and turn into successes. Due to the failures, there were multiple pivots that were taken while creating this organization on campus. Our first major pivot that we struggled with was changing our original idea of an afterschool program, into a mentorship program. This was done because it created an organization that was more sustainable. This sustainability is provided through partnering with an existing organization that allowed for us to focus on other aspects of the club. We were able to focus on recruitment and volunteering, instead of having to focus on creating an after-school program from the ground up. After deciding to pursue the mentoring ship program, we chose to model this after some successful and existing mentorship programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Another pivot that we were able to decide on as a group was that instead of everyone collaborating on everything together, we decided to assign roles within the club. This way we could ensure that each part of the club was working and that each officer was contributing equally. This helped to resolve some issues of people not being on the same page when trying to complete something. This is because it made everyone accountable for contributing to the club by doing their part and ensured that no one was cruising along without putting forth the same

effort. With assigning roles within the club, we were able to accomplish more as a team and come to the weekly meetings knowing that each member had completed their tasks for the week.

The next pivot that we had to face was how we were going to keep group members engaged while still paired with kids so that no one was left without a mentor. This was combated with first attending building hope as a group and getting to know the kids along with their personalities so that the matches between the mentor and the mentee were natural. This was not the original plan which was to pair up mentors with students from the start. This pivot ensured that the relationship between the pairs would be one that worked. This allowed us to pair our mentors with an age group the following semester that they had the most natural connection with. This pivot was beneficial because none of the kids felt left out because mentors were assigned to an age group of a few kids. This still allowed for close relationships between the children and the mentors because they were still able to focus on building meaningful relationships with a few children at Building hope.

Our most recent pivot as a group was navigating how to keep our club and members active within the organization during COVID-19. This was really challenging and took a lot of thought since the main focus was mentoring and we were no longer allowed to go and see the children. The solution that we came up with to stay involved was pairing the mentors and children up and creating a pen pal program. This allowed us to stay involved and continue to grow meaningful relationships with the children while we were not able to physically be present at Building Hope. We are currently continuing to meet virtually to ensure that we are bettering and constantly growing our club. The pen pal program is going well so far, and we are thinking of ways to ensure the club's success for when we are able to return to mentoring in person.

Individual portion:

Individual Contributions:

As an individual there was a lot of things that I had to do throughout each of the semesters. I am the treasurer, so I was in charge of researching different ways to get funding in case we needed it. I was in charge of keeping track of any of the money that we collected and using it on necessities for the club. Such as supplies for meetings or supplies that would be used by the volunteers at Building Buddies. I also created the PowerPoints that were shown at the interest meetings and got the snacks and drinks that we brought to the interest meetings. During meetings we each took turns giving ideas on things and addressing flaws that we may have seen. I would say that I was one of the mediators in the group, seeing both sides of an argument or conflict and trying to come up with ways to help resolve it. I was able to help take the ideas that people were having and come up with a compromise that was beneficial for both parties. Aeryn and I were the ones that ran the games that were played at Building Hope on fun Fridays during the first semester that we volunteered. I really enjoyed it because it helped each member bond with the children in a more fun setting and they could see you as a friend but also as someone who was in charge. It allowed individuals to build natural meaningful relationships with the children.

I helped to take initiative and contact people or plan something when we were interested in doing it. I was one of the people that was a main contact point with our partners at Building Buddies and helped discuss our plans to ensure that they would work. I helped to keep in contact with Molly at Building Hope to make sure that we were also on the same page and helped out in any way that we could. I also helped when setting up events or planning ideas that we had with them to see if it was something that would be possible. I created the volunteer log that is used by our volunteers to sign into and help keep track of hours. This was created because it was the solution to ensuring that the hours of our volunteers were correct, and we were able to sign off on them when they were needed.

Individually I was able to contribute to the group in many different ways. Throughout the semesters I was constantly giving ideas and feedback on recommendations about the club. I attended the meetings that we held with Building Hope where we discuss what we thought about the past few weeks and plans of what was going to happen next. Another way that I was able to help the group was by doing research about different topics that would help improve our project. One of the research topics that I focused on was ways that we were able to measure impact, so that we are able to show that mentoring the children is making a difference. Another research topic that was found was different ways that a mentor is able to impact a younger child and the main things that you should focus on.

During COVID-19 there were many challenges that we had to face and individually I was able to contribute to the group in many ways during this time. Throughout the time that we have been away I have helped to research information that will help our group with our project once we are able to get back to mentoring in person. I have ideas on things that we can do once we get back to get the children excited to see us again and help things run more smoothly. With being the treasurer, I have been looking for different ways to get money for things that we may need next semester. I was one of the people who went and met with Molly when we were discussing the logistics of creating pen pals while COVID-19 restrictions are still present. I was the one who was in charge of matching each of our members with one of the students to be a pen pal. I was able to give the members information that they needed in order to create their letters and help them connect with their mentee. Lastly, I have been one of the members that has been leading the current group meetings that we have been having. I have been making sure that we are still staying active in any way that we can and not stopping the club just because we aren't physically on campus. With being one of the members who is still in Greenville, I have been able to help out other members with things who have had to go home.

Success and Failures:

Throughout the semesters we have had multiple failures and successes as a group. I believe that the successes helped to give our group confidence and that the failures were something that we could learn from and turn into successes. A few of the successes that we had in the first semester as a group were getting a table at Building Hopes annual banquet, recruiting members into our club, and running the fun Fridays at Building Hope. Building Hopes banquet is where they make two thirds of their annual budget from donations because they are a Non-profit Organization. The research and advertising worked well, and we were able to have members join our club. The fun Fridays took a while to get used to, but we were able to get to know the kids

and successfully play everything that we had planned. One of the larger failures that we had as a group was communication. We got a lot better at it but towards the beginning of the semester we struggled. There would be meetings with people not showing up or choosing to do other things instead. There were instances where people were not on the same page about what we were trying to do. The way that we were able to help this was by creating roles that were assigned to everyone each week, therefore, everyone could look and see what they needed to do. This was also helpful because it made sure that everyone was contributing, and people weren't just cruising while others did all the work. A few of the smaller failures that we were able to learn from was organization of records and being able to learn from mistakes. At Building Hope some of the games the kids did not enjoy or follow the rules while playing so we weren't allowed to play those anymore and we had to come up with games on the fly based on the circumstances.

During the rest of the semester we experienced many more failures and successes throughout the year. Some of the failures were small and were able to be corrected easily, while some of the failures were larger and just had to be learned from. A few of the things that we struggled with as a group was having the children listen to us while we were volunteering. We were struggling to find the line between being their friends but also letting them know that we were in charge. It is a difficult balance but was able to be maintained towards the end of the semester. Another thing that we struggled with was the maturity level of a few of the volunteers, they were not acting properly while volunteering and not portraying the club well. We had to discuss as a group and decided to say something to them so that they could fix it and have a second chance before we would have to kick them out of the group. This was difficult because we wanted it to be a club that was fun, and people wanted to enjoy but we also wanted everyone to know that we were taking this very seriously. Another failure that we have had is finding clubs or people to partner with. We have tried reaching out to other clubs and fraternities to partner with and increase our members along with diversity. We had not gotten many responses and are still working to find ways to make the partnerships more appealing. Although there were failures, which was expected, there was also several successes through the remainder of the semester. We were able to get all the volunteers to get approved to volunteer at Building Hope by conducting culture training and having background checks. This was required by Building Hope but also helped to ensure that all the volunteers knew how to properly interact with the children. Another success was that we were able to stay organized as a group and get all of the information out to our members effectively. This was done by staying in contact with Building Hope and each other, so that we were always on the same page and could inform the volunteers of the plans. Even though it may seem small one of the most important successes was having volunteers show up to Building Hope weekly and interact with the children. This was a success because it meant that our club was serving the purpose that we intended.

Throughout the following semester we continued to have failures and successes as a group which was to be expected at this point. I believe that the successes helped to give our group confidence and we were able to learn what was starting to work. The failures were something that we could learn from and find ways to overcome them to turn them into successes. A few of the successes that we had as a group was having consistency in our volunteers. The members were showing up weekly and were able to build meaningful relationships with the students. A success that we were proud of was that we were able to pair the students with groups of the 2-3 children, so we were able to start mentoring in pairs. This was done so that no student

was made to feel left out of having a mentor if they were not able to show up or if we didn't have enough mentors. I was the mentor for a group of 3 second grade boys, that I was able to help with homework and play games with. This allowed for more time to really get to know each other and learn the interest of one another. A major failure that we had during this semester was that we were sent home due to COVID-19 and were no longer able to mentor in person. This was very challenging and upsetting because we were continuing to grow and didn't want all of our work to fall through. We tried multiple ideas to combat this but were struggling to find a way to keep engaged without being able to mentor the children directly anymore.

During the rest of the semester we experienced many failures and successes throughout the year. A few of the success that we have had was communicating with each other even though we are no longer able to meet in person. Another success that we had was being able to figure out a plan of action that was going to be put in place once we get back to campus and can volunteer with the children again. The latest success that we had was putting pen pal program into place, so that we were able to still interact with the children without physically being there. This allows us to still communicate and continue to grow the relationships with the children while we cannot volunteer in person. The largest failure was out of the control of anybody and would be that our project came to a stop and we are not able to work on it for a while. This was due to the pandemic that moved everyone to online learning and has people quarantining themselves. With all that was happening our project has been temporally stopped. This is concerning because we want to be on track and pick up where we left off and hope that we are still able to. We are focusing on keeping the children, volunteers, and members of building hope invested.

Personal Impact:

One of the things that impacted me the most was the importance of critical feedback and how to learn from your failures and turn them into success. This process personally impacted me and taught me that effectively utilizing constructive feedback is vital to success. I learned how to listen without formulating an immediate response, think about ways that I could improve or adapt to the concern, and make a plan to move forward. It taught me that there is always room for improvement even when you think that you may be at the finished product. I never realized how important critical feedback could be until my honors colloquium class. I was receptive and open to the concerns that the professors were expressing, and the club grew to be something bigger than I could have imagined. They were able to envision the potential that project held and steer me in the correct direction, if I was open to receiving the feedback. Through this experience I was able to view constructive feedback as a positive that allows for continuous growth.

This process has helped me learn and grow in many ways that I would have never imagined possible. It gave me the tools and knowledge of learning how to make an impact in the community and lives of others. I learned how to work in many different roles within a team and the organization that is necessary to get the teams goals accomplished. I have been able to apply tools that I have learned from creating an organization and being a mentor into other aspects of my life. Through mentoring I was able to learn things from the children even when I was the one who was supposed to be helping them. I was able to realize the importance of research and

constantly coming up with ideas to continue improvement. This project has given me an opportunity to learn valuable tools that I plan to utilize in my future.

References

Oshinkale, Y. (2020, January 10). Definition of Mentorship: What Is a Mentor and Do You Need One? Retrieved November 13, 2020, from <https://www.wes.org/advisor-blog/definition-of-mentorship/>