

Joe Rand

Field Study Proposal

Summer 2014

Camp Erin

Proposed Field Experience 1: Exploring Resident Camp Experiences that focus on youth coping with traumatic grief and loss of loved ones.

About Camp Erin:

It is a weekend-long experience filled with traditional, fun, camp activities combined with grief education and emotional support -- facilitated by grief professionals and trained volunteers.

At Camp Erin, children are comforted knowing that there are other children who have had similar grief and loss experiences and feelings. Campers have an opportunity to tell their story, express their feelings and memorialize their loved ones. They are provided with the tools and resources needed during and after camp, including memories and friendships that last long after camp is complete.

Purpose and Goals:

The purpose of this field work is to engage in a very unique camp setting that I haven't experienced before as well as to learn more about how youth cope with traumatic grief and loss. It will allow me the opportunity to walk alongside them in what will probably be the most challenging time in their lives, learn about their struggles, and be guided by trained professionals and mentors on how to aid them, and what coping strategies work best for young people.

- Gain new knowledge about grief counseling for young people.
- Gain a new perspective on the power of camping.
- Develop new skills and strategies that I will be able to use in future work with youth in crisis.
- Volunteer at summer residence camp (I have only ever been a camper or a staff person)

Rationale for Project Selection:

When exploring options for field work I came across a news report from KARE 11 on Camp Erin. I was deeply moved, and very curious. I knew immediately that it was something I had to be a part of, and that it would work beautifully for this project. I have always had a passion for any camp experience, and grew up attending YMCA Camp, Boy Scout Camps, Bible Camps, and Youth Leadership Camps, I also have an extensive background leading youth mission trips. This is a camp experience I have never had before. I am very excited for the opportunity to help and learn. The content and context of this new camp experience will no doubt be challenging emotionally, but professionally as well. I will no doubt develop new skills to walk alongside youth in their grief, as well as strategies to help youth in the future.

Pre-Camp Training Days:

- May 31: 6 hours – Camp volunteer staff meet and greet and orientation

- June 25: 6 hours – Camp volunteer staff grief counseling skills development, specific role orientation
- July 10: 6 hours – Campers meet and greet with counselors, parent orientation, general camp orientation
- July 24-27: 90 hours – Cabin Big Buddy at camp with 7, 7 year old boys. Five of whom had lost their dad and two who lost their brother. Big Buddies are in charge of cabin time supervision, escorting kids to activities and small groups, bed time, wake up and get ready time, mentoring, playing and just hanging out with kids. Additionally, I was in charge of canoeing and the waterfront, teaching youth and adults how to canoe, assisting them with launching etc.

Readings/Videos: 15 hours

Proposed Readings/Documentaries:

- One Last Hug – Camp Erin HBO Documentary
- Breaking the Silence: A Guide to Help Children with Complicated Grief – suicide, homicide, AIDS, violence and abuse. Linda Goldman
- Rivers Wash Over Me – Movie, John G. Young (2009)

Total: 123 hours

Becker High School Work Study Sculpture Garden

Proposed Field Experience 2: Work closely through partnership with Sherburne County work to school program for at risk high school youth on a 3 week work study program in June.

Purpose and Goals:

The purpose of this field work is to engage in the community in which I live in a new and unique way in a setting that I haven't experienced before as well as to learn more about how at risk youth can be successful if given the opportunity. It will allow me the opportunity to walk alongside them, learn about their struggles in the education system, and be guided by trained professionals and mentors on how to aid them.

- Gain new knowledge about working with at risk youth in a non-traditional setting.
- Develop new skills and strategies that I will be able to use in future work with youth in crisis.
- Develop relationships with youth in my community.

Rationale:

This sort of just fell into my lap. Michelle called up early last spring looking for someone to help with the project. I told her I was in since it was right up my alley, both landscaping and working with kids. I haven't had much experience with kids at risk of not graduating, or those with IEP's and behavior issues, so it seemed like a great opportunity to gain new experience.

Garden Design: 5 hours

Researching, measuring, designing and sketching the landscape plan.

Meetings:

- April 9: 2 hours – Logistics meeting with Michelle (grant writer/county worker)
- April 29: 2 Hours – Logistics meeting with Michelle and Becker High School staff.
- May 8: 2 hours – Logistics meeting with Michelle and Becker High school staff.
- June 6: 2 Hours – Logistics meeting with Michelle and Becker High school staff.

Work Days:

- June 16-19: 40 Hours – See description below
- June 23: 4 Hours – See description below

Total: 57 hours

About Becker project:

- After initial meetings with Michelle Kocak and Becker High School administrators, I designed a sculpture garden for a space at the school that was currently not utilized, with the intention that a group of at risk high school students would work to create it.
- Students participating were identified by school counselors as being high risk not to graduate, and many of them were on IEP's for behavior issues.
- Through grant dollars these students were able to work at minimum wage for 3 weeks at the beginning of summer while earning a half credit towards their total for graduation.
- Students also worked on job skills, interview skills, resume creation, and meal planning, prep and cooking.
- Mornings were spent working on the garden. Students then prepped and cooked their lunch. Afternoons were mostly dedicated to job skills development.

Grand total: 180 hours

Planned working and reporting methods new to me:

While I have extensive camp experience, I have no experience or formal training around youth bereavement. Volunteering as a cabin buddy at Camp Erin will stretch my skills as a youth professional as well as a human being.

Working with at risk youth in an educational setting in a non-traditional way will help me identify strategies that don't work in the classroom, but that can help youth excel while engaging in experiential learning.

Contributions to the community's moral compact with youth:

- The U.S. Census estimates that 1 in 20 children will experience the death of a parent by the time they graduate from high school
- 1.5 million children under the age of 18 have lost an immediate family member
- Research indicates these children are at a much greater risk for depression, suicide, poverty and substance abuse

- Children often feel isolated in their grief but rarely receive formal grief counseling
- While the graduation rate in Becker, MN is 91.4%, my work was primarily with the other 8.2% in jeopardy of not graduating with the goal of graduation and life long career skills.