

Anne Barker
Service Learning Journal

Date: 01/27/05 12:38

1. 1/27/05

Today was my first day as a "lunch buddy" volunteer at Pinckney Elementary School. I was there from 11:30 until 12:15. My duties are to eat lunch and go to recess with a fifth grade student named xxx. xxx is larger than life! I really enjoyed her outgoingness and humor. She told me that her previous lunch buddy didn't always show up. I promised her that I would be, if anything, reliable.

I really enjoyed talking to the girls...i.e. xxx and her friends. They talk a lot about boys! Ha! This is a definite gender stereotype! They seem to be much more knowledgeable about male/female relations and sex than I was at that age. I wonder if this would be different if they had comprehensive sex education. They are getting lots of information about sex from their peers...it would be better if they had accurate information from their teachers. Sex education in schools needs a major overhaul.

Date: 02/01/05 01:20

1. 1/31/05

Today I again volunteered as a lunch buddy for xxx at Pinkney Elementary. I was there from 11:30-12:30. Today lunch was a little more interesting because we sat with the boys! I had forgotten just what fifth grade boys were like. xxx's "boyfriend," I use the term loosely because they rarely acknowledge each other, sat with us today. I felt bad because he seemed to be more interested in me than her. Ha! He would probably die if he knew how old I was.

I did notice that xxx became really quiet when he was around. I don't know if this is because she was nervous, or if she was dropping into her socialized role as a female. I'll try to watch this more and then maybe I can make a judgment.

Date: 02/03/05 01:17

1. 2/3/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30-1:00. xxx has been begging me to get permission from the teacher to stay during study hall and today I finally caved.

On recess I noticed that all the boys were playing basketball and all the girls were standing along the side watching. I thought this was interesting because surely not all males like to play basketball and not all females would rather stand on the side. It made me wonder where exactly the children learned that the boys should play and the girls should cheer? Is it that socially ingrained in their brains? If a girl decided that she wanted to play would she be allowed to or would the boys make fun of her? I just can't believe how much society has molded who these children are!

Date: 02/08/05 12:58

1. 2/8/05

Today I went to do my lunch buddy duties at Pinkney Elementary but

I went to meet xxx at our designated spot and she never showed up! Finally, I went to the office and found out that the fifth grade was gone on a field trip. It would have helped if xxx had remembered to tell me that! Oh well, I am going back on Thursday.

2. 2/10/05

Today I went and volunteered as a lunch buddy for xxx at Pinkney Elementary from 11:30-1:00. I really enjoy spending time with xxx and her friends. Today we had lunch, went to recess, and then we went to be "buddies" with the kindergarteners. The young children were really interesting to observe. The little boys were very rowdy and running around the room and the little girls were very well behaved and dedicated to their tasks. This makes me wonder if males are just naturally more hyper or if this behavior is socialized from a young age? It would be an interesting subject to explore.

Date: 02/17/05 12:39

1. 2/17/05

Today I went to Pinkney to volunteer as a lunch buddy for xxx and no one was there! There was a sign that said they were out of school because of parent teacher conferences. Anyway, I guess I'll have more to report next time!

Date: 02/25/05 01:24

1. 2/25/05

I went and volunteered at Pinkney as a lunch buddy from 11:30 until 1 yesterday. I didn't have a chance to write my journal entry because I had to work.

Anyway, yesterday a fifth grade boy had the nerve to tell me that I have "nice booty." I was shocked...although I tried not to act like it. I simply told him that that was completely inappropriate and that most women do not appreciate when men, or little boys, comment on their rear ends. This got me to thinking about the second paper assignment. I already chose a topic reread the articles I am going to use. Anyway, I am going to write my paper about the constant objectification that women have to deal with. I really don't think that men have any idea just how often it happens. Once at the movie theatre a man told me that I had a "nice ass" and called me his "vanilla cupcake." My boyfriend was standing next to me and he was horrified. I was pleased that it upset him but also surprised that he was shocked. It happens a lot. Not just to me, to all women. This is what concerns me about the fifth grade boy. If he is willing to say something like this now...and to someone older who is a bit of an authority figure on the playground, just how vulgar will he be when he is 18. One can only imagine.

Date: 03/04/05 01:34

1. 3/4/05

Yesterday I again volunteered as a lunch buddy for xxx at Pinkney Elementary from 11:30-1. I went to lunch yesterday but did not make it to recess because xxx got into trouble for throwing paper on the bus and had to stay in and clean the lunch tables. All of xxx's little group of friends was in on it and they were all throwing paper. I of course reprimanded them out loud, but internally I was impressed.

For the last few weeks there has been some rifts in the group because of one of the girl's boyfriends has been flirting with some of her friends. Anyway, apparently this same boy said something really mean to one of the girls. The story goes that every single one of the girls stood up and pummeled poor xxx with balls of paper. I sensed a sort of solidarity between the girls as they were cleaning tables and I was impressed with their loyalty towards one another.

I have experienced similar bonds with my friends and I was wondering if it is an inherently female thing. Males are socialized to be afraid to show their feelings and this factor makes their relationships different from females.

Women's relationships are built on conversations; they sit and talk about what is going on in their lives. Males are much more likely to play basketball, or video games...they rarely just sit and talk. I wonder what it would be like if males were not socialized to think that feeling is bad.

Date: 03/10/05 01:00

1. 3/10/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30-12:30. I usually stay a little longer, but today they were doing "type to learn" instead of silent reading.

Anyway, today I asked xxx and her friends what kind of food they wanted to me to bring for their end of the year celebration lunch I promised. They said they wanted KFC. This made me laugh because of the stereotype that black people eat fried chicken a lot. I started thinking about stereotypes and how inaccurate they are for several reasons. Sometimes they are just flat out wrong, and other times they only represent one little part of a whole

person. They are generalizations applied to a whole group and this is never very accurate.

I think I am going to do my presentation on stereotypes. I am going to e-mail xxx's teacher and discuss with her some ideas I have. Maybe I can do my presentation in a few weeks. I think stereotypes are a very good lesson that is at the right level for fifth graders. I think that it will work out well.

Date: 03/17/05 02:03

1. 3/17/05

Today I volunteered as a lunch buddy at Pinkney from 11:30 until 1. Today I found out that xxx lied to me. The first day that I was there I told her that I was a senior at KU and that I was going to law school next year. xxx told me that her mom was a lawyer. Today we were talking and she accidentally told me her mom worked at Taco Bell. I was thinking about why she lied. I mean, she had only known me for maybe ten minutes when this happened. I wonder if she lied simply because she wanted to have something in common with me. Or maybe it was to impress me. What is interesting is that she thinks it is necessary to lie to impress me. I do not judge people based on their class, but xxx couldn't have known this then. I wonder what makes her feel like she always has to be on the defensive and lie before I even get a chance to know her.

I know that kids tell lies. What is interesting is that they are aware enough of the people and the world around them to know what to lie about. When I was young I don't think I could have made the class distinction between a lawyer and a Taco Bell employee. Maybe it is because I grew up in the middle class, the daughter of two very well educated people. Maybe if I was on the other end of the spectrum I would have had a better view of the situation.

Date: 03/29/05 01:40

1. 3/29/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney Elementary from 11:30-1. While I was on recess I was talking to one of xxx's friends and she made a comment that was very interesting. She has recently been moved from xxx's class to the "smart section" of the fifth grade. She said to me that it was kind of weird because there were only 3 black people in the "smart section," and a lot of white kids. It is important to note that Pinkney has a healthy mix of black and white children...so it is statistically odd that there are so many white kids in the "smart section." Well, I asked xxx if she thought that white people were smarter than black people and she said, "No, but historically they are better educated and have more money." I was very impressed that a fifth grader could make this kind of observation. I think that xxx definitely deserves to be in the "smart section."

Date: 03/31/05 02:24

1. 3/31/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30 until 1. Today I was observing one of xxx's friends, xxx. xxx hangs out with a group of six girls. They are all black except for xxx who is white. Today I was listening to xxx and xxx talk about boys and I thought to myself that xxx sounds like the stereotypical black woman. She is loud, aggressive, and talks very expressively. It really made me laugh. I guess that xxx is living proof that stereotypes don't always apply. If you look at her you assume she is a little middle-class white girl. If you talked to her on the phone you might think that she was black. I guess that kids are influenced by their friends, no matter what race they are.

I was really glad to see this because it is logical that kids would be influenced by their peers. I would much rather it be that way than to have every kid fall into some stereotype.

Date: 04/05/05 01:18

1. 4/5/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30-1. I brought lunch for xxx and five of her friends....they were really

excited. She asked me at the beginning of the semester if I would I I said yes. She kept bugging me about it everyday, I think that not very many people in her life have a lot of follow through so it is very important that I am more dependable. She needs a little stability. That is why I always go a couple of minutes early so that I am waiting when she gets out of class. She needs to know that I am reliable.

Today while we were having lunch we started talking about hair. I thought it was hilarious because I have obviously never had a weave or dread locks because my hair would never do that! What really cracked me up was when xxx said "Not to get racial but you would look really stupid with a weave!" I am glad that they can recognize differences in races without being demeaning towards either.

Date: 04/07/05 01:23

1. 4/7/05

I volunteered as a lunch buddy at Pinkney from 11:30-1 today. It was really interesting because I got to witness the major differences in the way that fifth grade boys and fifth grade girls solve a problem.

The first conflict was between xxx and xxx. They got into a fight over whether or not xxx had committed a foul on the basketball court. Anyway, they pushed each other, rolled around on the ground, hit each other. Then xxx was clearly winning so it was over. Poof! They were friends again. They went right back to their game without a second thought.

The girls are somewhat different. xxx and xxx got into a fight that started in the lunch room, went all the way through recess, into the classroom, and eventually into the counselors office. Whew. Obviously, their fight was not physical, but they were very cruel to each other. When I left they were still working it out!

The difference here is interesting. I am not sure what is the best approach... Quick, but physical or long and drawn out but only with words. I think that men and women continue to have different ideas about conflict resolution as they grow up. Men just want it to be over and women want to talk about it incessantly. I wonder why that is?

Date: 04/12/05 03:11

1. 4/12/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30 until 1. Today xxx and xxx were the best of friends. I had forgotten just how fifth grade girls are. They are so unbelievably cruel to one another and the poof they are friends again. It happens much quicker with males....but it still happened pretty quickly here. They said some of the meanest stuff. I would not be friends with someone if they said all of that stuff to me!

I took a few pictures for class...the girls loved it. They love a camera. The boys wanted nothing to do with it...not really surprising. I know it is wrong to stereotype, but there is a reason that a stereotype is invented...people reinforce them all the time.

Date: 04/21/05 12:49

1. 4/21/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney as a lunch buddy from 11:30-12:30. I didn't go last Thursday because xxx was sick.

Anyway, today I brought the camera so I could take pictures for my presentation. The girls loved having their picture taken, they would pose and laugh. The boys however, were not amused. They thought that having their picture take totally sucked.

This little encounter got me thinking about gender roles. I often wonder if there are natural things that guys like better than girls and vice-versa...or if everything we do is completely socialized? I know that we can never answer

this question because people do not exist in a vacuum...but it would be really interesting if they did.

Date: 04/26/05 01:43

1. 4/26/05

Today I volunteered as a lunch buddy at Pinkney from 11:30-1. xxx was mad at me today. She was upset because she thinks I come to see her friends, and not her. I told her that that was not true at all, I just was trying to be nice to her friends because they are her friends. Anyway, she was mad for a while so I told her if she was going to be upset the whole time I would leave. This changed her mind instantly!

I wonder if xxx is just a dramatic person or if this need for drama is something she will grow out of. I know that stereotypes are often wrong, but xxx does exhibit many qualities "stereotypical" of a black woman. She is loud, opinionated, and dramatic. I am glad I decided to do my presentation on stereotypes because they are very prevalent at Pinkney. This will be a good lesson for me as well as the kids.

Date: 04/28/05 01:29

1. 4/28/05

Today I volunteered at Pinkney as a lunch buddy from 11:30 until 1. I have been thinking a lot about stereotypes and how they apply in a fifth grade setting. Stereotypes are very prevalent at this age... the black girls I hang around with make fun of each other for liking fried chicken, they think one of their boys and girls club helpers is a good basketball player just because he's tall, and they think that I am rich because I am white. I am going to do my presentation on Monday at 12:30 to xxx 5th grade. I am going to talk about stereotypes, why they are bad, and what we can do to change our attitudes. I think that this is a really good lesson for these kids because they use stereotyping in their everyday lives. It is a concept that should be easy for them to understand. I hope so! I'll write and say how it goes!

Date: 05/03/05 10:22

1. 5/3/2005

Today I volunteered at Pinkney from 11:30-1. I did my presentation for xxx class. It went really well. After I explained what a stereotype is the kids caught on quickly and were able to give examples and tell me why stereotyping is bad. I also had them write a paragraph about a stereotype that someone might apply to them and why it is not true. There were some really interesting responses. I am excited to give my presentation in class. I think that it will be educational for everyone.