

Dear Mr. Buttner,

I do not know how to begin to express my gratitude to you for providing me with the amazing opportunity to work for Jumpstart this summer. How do you thank someone you've never met for enabling you to have an invaluable experience that you are certain will shape the trajectory of your career and life? I suppose I would like to try by describing the work I did this summer, what I learned, and what it means to me.

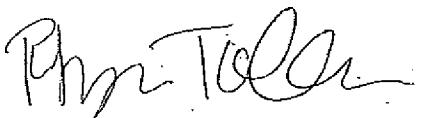
This summer I was placed in a preschool classroom comprised of two teachers and fifteen 3-year-olds in South Boston. As a Jumpstart Corps Member my role in the classroom was to serve as an additional adult to help with the class' daily routine while also implementing early childhood curriculum and promoting language and literacy skills through ongoing relationships with children. Once a week I attended Jumpstart training sessions/workshops for three hours, during which I learned about early childhood theory and practice, language and literacy development, communication with teachers and families, and classroom leadership skills. During this time I also collaborated with fellow Corps Members and Site Directors to plan weekly goals/activities for the classroom. I also prepped two books a week to read to my class during circle time or center time.

On my first day as a JumpStart Corps Member I remember thinking that 3-year-olds were so young. I was disappointed at first because I had wanted to be with the older kids about to enter kindergarten, and at the time I didn't think I was going to be doing any "real teaching" with 3-year-olds. But if my experience this past summer has taught me anything it's that teaching is so much more than reading and writing and counting. Teaching and early education are about relationships and communication. I tell everyone I talk to about Jumpstart that now when I look back and think about all of those children who I became so close with I am amazed that they are only 3-years-old. Over the summer I came to know them all as competent and unique little individuals, each with their own set of strengths and challenges. Each one of them is so filled with potential that it breaks my heart to think that they may not have the same opportunities and chances to succeed as their peers because of their socio-economic status.

I have been lucky enough to have parents who from a very early age have instilled in me the importance of education, and have never wavered in their selfless dedication and commitment to providing me with every opportunity possible to succeed. These are opportunities that I will never take for granted, and I am very proud to be a first generation college student. In addition, my experience at Jumpstart is another opportunity that I will be forever grateful for, because it has provided me with the experience and drive to dedicate my career and life to improving early education and insuring that children, like the ones I worked with this summer, have as many opportunities as possible to succeed. As a Jumpstart and AmeriCorps alumni I will have additional support, resources and opportunities to pursue a career in early education.

Once again I cannot thank you enough for helping me to help make a difference in the lives of others. It is something I will continue to dedicate myself and my career to for the rest of my life.

Sincerely,



Rhyan Toledo

Dear Mr. Buttner, September 26, 2011

Thank you so much for enabling me to intern at WBUR, Boston's NPR station, this past summer with the support of the summer experience grant. The grant allowed me to fully immerse myself in this intense daily news show environment, from which I learned so much. As an intern I was essentially given the responsibilities of a junior producer, which means I helped get the show on air in any which way. I completed tasks such as conducting research for segments, booking guests, doing interviews on the street, editing tape, retrieving archival tape, and completing my very own reported piece.

I have to say that I learned an incredible amount in the two months I spent at Radio Boston. I learned where to cut an audio clip so that there's just enough information, but not too much. I learned how to construct a radio segment--what are all the different elements that are necessary to create an in depth and well-balanced show. I improved my professional interpersonal communication skills in the process of booking guests and doing research for the show. I learned what makes for a more compelling radio story, how to pitch an idea for a segment, how to deal with rejection of that idea. In completing my own reported piece I learned all the stages that a reporter goes through in creating a five to seven minute segment that we listeners hear on the radio.

This was really a formative experience for me, and without the summer experience grant it would have been extremely difficult to do it. Since as students we are expected to develop some sort of idea of a potential career path while we are still in college, grants like this are immensely helpful in allowing us to actually do so without compromising our financial situations.

This experience has been hugely important in helping me focus my future career goals and better understand the world of public radio. I realized that I am perhaps not best suited for a daily news show environment where the stakes are high and everybody is working full-speed to put on that day's show. My experience at Radio Boston has however confirmed that I love sound, radio and storytelling and all these things, as manifested in the medium of audio, are perfectly suited to help teach about difference between people's culture, customs, lifestyle, values and beliefs. This experience has therefore made me cemented my interest in the intersection of audio and education as a means to teach differences and lessen hatred or fear as a product of unknowing about the other. Without your generosity I would not have been able to have come to these understandings.

Sincerely, Maddie Neufeld

Dear Mr. Buttner,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous contribution to the Wesleyan Summer Experience Grant. I am honored to have been a recipient of the award for this summer.

I am a senior, with a major in American Studies and a concentration in Ethnic Studies.

As an inter-disciplinary major, this volunteer experience allowed me to learn firsthand how the people of Lugoba perceive health education and how they think we can tackle the issues affecting the area in new and innovative ways. With your support, I was able to conduct bottom-up research for this social innovation project that will further the progress of malaria prevention efforts. Regardless of your socio-economic background I believe that everyone should have access to adequate health care. In order to contribute to this notion, my long term educational goal is to go to graduate school to obtain a PhD in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. After graduate school my plans are to contribute to the minority communities in the United States through policy making or working with underrepresented communities, specifically in Latin America or an African nation abroad through the diplomatic process.

This opportunity deeply impacted my life and my desire is to one day be able to do the same. Thank you again Mr. Buttner for your contribution to the Wesleyan Summer Experience Grant. I look forward to having the opportunity to meet you in person sometime soon.

Sincerely,

AhDream Smith

Dear Mr. Buttner,

It is hard to find words to describe just how much the EQV Grant has impacted not only my summer experience, but also my outlook on life and my future. Your generosity has allowed me to gain knowledge in the fields of psychology and law and has also opened my eyes to social injustices, especially in the legal system.

Unfortunately, I will not have the pleasure of thanking you in person as I am studying abroad this fall, but I would love to give you as much insight into my internship as I can through this letter. I spent my eight weeks at the Philadelphia Adult Probation and Parole Department assisting my sponsor with her all-female caseload of sex offenders and prostitutes. I met every woman, sat in on or conducted their probation interviews, participated in treatment team meetings or phone calls with their therapists, and attended all of their court hearings. Many of these hearings were part of a new treatment court initiative in Philadelphia known as Project Dawn Court. It is the first of its kind, and it was created specifically for reoffending prostitutes in order to integrate them back into society through intensive phases of drug and lifestyles therapy.

My experience at this internship has confirmed that I would like to pursue a career combining psychology and law. A few options I am currently interested in are Recovery House work, inmate rehabilitation and integration, and psychological consulting for law firms.

I will never forget my involvement in the struggles and achievements of these women, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity that you gave me to be able to work with them. Thank you for helping me to make the most of my summer; your kindness is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jenna Bluestein '13