

I was a Trainer in the training camp at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We conducted workshops at the Area IV community center.

This summer I expected to reconnect with YPP and the work I use to do within YPP through the math literacy worker training. I expected the participants to see there are different ways to learn besides teaching. Also that learning can be fun and exciting. I expected the training participants to learn how to facilitate different math concepts and relate them to different events and individuals. My expectations were met in a way. The participants learned different techniques of learning math. Some of them were able to apply them to everyday events in order to show and guide others to learning different math concepts.

I learned that you shouldn't assume anything. Every person is different. I went in thinking oh these kids are in high school, so our workshops will be a breeze and just a review. Then one day I was facilitating Flagway and had to stop to try and teach one trainee multiplication. After first I thought she was just playing and being lazy. Then I realized this kid really didn't know. I was in the middle of showing nine other people the concepts and rules that flay way involved so I had to take her aside and divide them up into groups. After explaining each group their different task she and I sat down and tried to get a better understanding of multiplication. We only had an hour and forty five minutes to really learn the concept. We worked and worked and finally she was like I get it. Only she really didn't understand and I knew this. I think she was embarrassed because the rest of her peers were moving on and covering different objectives and she wanted to join them.

My experiences this summer I believe have changed me and have me wanting to change different things about myself. After seeing the level of some the participants are on I decided that I really need to go back to school. The training camp really made me come to that final conclusion. I know I have a so much potential and applied I can do great things. The main thing I would like to do is a help child. After being with these kids I realized that Cambridge Public School system needs a lot of work and changed need to be made. There is no way a child should be passed along all the way through high school and still not know and have a full understanding of the BASIC math concepts. Anyone can say $2+2=4$. The thing is not many can explain or know why 4 are the outcome in that problem. I also noticed a lot the participants can barely read, write, or even speak correct English. I believe the "language barrier" is a big copout. I've heard them come up with different raps and songs off the top of their head but when I ask them to read words off a paper or explain the simplest thing it's a struggle. These examples have changed the way I view a lot of things. After I truly thought h these kids are just plain lazy and don't want to learn so why bother. Then I realized they just need help seriously.

I would like to develop more in my facilitation skills and taking the imitative. I haven't been involved in YPP for years and I forgot how important both are. Several times during the summer it was so convenient to just be there and follow the crowd, so I took that chance. I admit I did this until we were broken up into two groups for the facilitation

workshops. I was one of the facilitators that stayed at MIT with the group that didn't go to the Area IV workshop on Mondays. The trainers that stayed their task were to facilitate a math concept to the participants there so they could in return facilitate it back the group that wasn't there. This process was disastrous. There were two of us but I was the only one actually facilitating while my co-worker chilled, danced, even sung. This was so frustrating. After being on my own for an entire day with ten participants I realized I really needed to step up my game and help out more. It was so hard trying to watch ten different people, keep them involved, and give them each individual attention while also trying to facilitate a workshop to them.

The summer was filled with low points. Every time we gave the trainees a facilitation assignment they were never fulfilled. It always felt like a waste of time. They would sit down for 30 minutes at the most and that's pushing it and come up with an outline:

Introduction

Icebreaker

Game

Debrief

This is what their outline looked like and exactly how their workshop would go. All in all the workshops would take a maximum 15 minutes and no one would have a clue what they just did. They were always boring and not fully thought through. When they had prep time it was never used wisely. Most of the time they spent visiting other groups, listening to music, playing around, the oh so favorite singing and dancing. I do admit it wasn't their entire fault a lot to the time some of the facilitators engaged in these activities with them so they felt if my supposed leader is doing it, it must be ok for me to follow suit.

Honestly I think the training only impacted three students. Hilde, Jamal, and Whallem. They are the only three I can say I think may benefit from our training this year. They seemed to grasp the concept of YPP and why we do what we do.

I think the training can be improved if everyone is on the same page. I think that would be the most effective thing. If all the facilitators contributed equally things would go a lot smoother. Math literacy workers shouldn't be made facilitators until they are truly ready. One person was a trainer only because she went through training last year. This is an ineffective process. She wasn't ready mentally or on a mature enough level to handle the job. She became a problem rather than an asset. Next year I believe trainer positions should be applied for. After applying for the position an interview process should happen that way only the people who will be effective could train the participants. Also a similar process should happen with the way the participants are chosen for the program. Having people in the program that don't really want to be there and are not on an educational level aren't helping the process.

The most effective aspects of training are structure and being organized. Even though schedules are always followed, knowing what needs to be done is effective, and you don't always have to go in the order planned just as long as everything you needed to cover is done.

Its not always easy working with others, sometimes you just want to work alone because you know what you need to get done and how you want to do about getting it done. You always have to look at the group and ask yourself "Am I stepping on anyone's toes or overshadowing them?" Also you have to worry about if you are helping enough and when to help others out. For instance when we were facilitating workshops to the participants at first Gina did all the talking. Every time we had to facilitate or talk to the group Gina was the one talking. Eventually she grew tired of talking and let it be known. Soon others realized how frustrating that must be and decided to help her out. Even though she was getting help she still did most of the talking. I don't think she minded so much then because people were actually putting forth effort to help her out. Don't get me wrong I could be complete oblivious to the situation and she just hid her frustration well. Also when working with others a lot of obstacles are thrown in and you have to know how to over come them. When you have no help and you're out there on that cliff by yourself and you have to find your own way down. You can't always depend on others.

This summer I learned I have more patience than I thought I had. Many days I wanted to just blow up but I kept my cool and put others feeling before mine. The people who know me know I can have a major temper and be a total bitch at times.

I need to work on stepping out of my comfort zone. When I first got here I was more than happy to let the veteran YPP members run the show. I just wasn't comfortable with the people yet. Don't get me wrong they didn't have nasty attitudes or anything. My thing was that I'm new and haven't been in YPP for about four years. That is such an excuse. YPP hasn't changed a bit. I've also done training before and held enough workshops to just jump right in.

The future has great things in stored for YPP. Everywhere YPP is introduced I've noticed many people are drawn to it. One day we were outside of Area IV at the beginning of training and this lady walks by speaking to one of the kids she knew from her block. As soon as she saw what we were doing she was like you guys are that math group aren't you. She go really excited and wondered if we were going to have workshops at her daughters summer camp. She was disappointed to learn we weren't but wondered how about during the school year. I was really amazed. As long as I have been in YPP I have never witnessed something like that. In September I hope to have more of a leadership role. I feel if given the opportunity I could really shine and be a great asset to YPP.