

## Summary

This paper is about the journey of a college student's experience between two places of a common goal. This trip explores many aspects of the places, people, and issues that face the members of their communities. In these differences arise the foundation of a common goal between the two in educating and enriching the lives of children in their communities.

During this, many topics will be discovered. During the background, you will discover my personal history and the reason for my selection of the experiences I have been placed. In the history section, I will discuss the developments of the TEEP program from its bringing to the modern establishment of the New Orleans and Boston programs and how my experience fits into this history.

With this unique experience, I wanted to find a way to share with the greater community of the Episcopal Church about these two programs. I wanted to examine how they have developed on different paths over the past ten years and what they see as a focus of their organizations. With this in mind, the hope was that a middle ground between the two programs or aspects of both could be incorporated together. With this, a national plan for TEEP programs could be adopted by parishes across the country and expand to new places. In this section, it touches on many issues that separate the programs from one another and how they have created different communities from it. Finally, the last section is about steps to take in order to really create a national program. Then all of this information is drawn to a conclusion about where I see my place in this movement for the future.

## Bonds of Mission:

### The Experience of Two Church Educational Outreach Programs

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#### Intro

This paper is about the journey of a college student's experience between two places of a common goal. This trip explores many aspects of the places, people, and issues that face the members of their communities. In these differences arise the foundation of a common goal between the two in educating and enriching the lives of children in their communities.

#### Background

My experience of life has been in the aspect of being between the life of the city and of small town America. I grew up at an early age in a single parent household on the outskirts of town. A simple existence among the rows of trailers with children playing in the gravel streets. Being humble was a key to life at this time as my mother raised my brother and I alone. This was no easy feat for I was not the most regular of children. I was born with Cerebral Palsy, and bound to a leg cast to help me walk. Even in this, the hope and will my mom instilled in me drove my brother and I both to do the best we could. With this hard work, we got to experience the American dream of being able to live in the middle class suburban lifestyle. Therefore, when one looks at my family with eyes of the present, it might seem like we are just an average family, but indeed we did have struggles to overcome.

Being someone less fortunate always gave me the drive to give back to those around me. Most of the time, this just involved those in my community. Whether working at a soup kitchen, helping the elderly, or just being a mentor to a kid that was rough around the edges, I was always active around the town. One event would change my perspective about my hands of help: Hurricane Katrina swept over the Gulf Coast and devastated many lives. Seeing the destruction on the television seemed unreal to anything that could happen in our country. This tragedy pulled people from all over the country, including myself, to help out those in the region.

The church I attended began to organize a trip to New Orleans as soon as possible to help build temporary housing for those that had nothing. This would be my first foot into waters I had never trod before. There I was energized by the spirit of the people and faith that the days would get better. Their strong sense of community struck me like no other. This would not be my last experience in this place.

The university I attend has strong ties to the region and as a freshman I went on an outreach trip with them. This was the first time I was able to work with children in the heart of the city. While there, I was invited to come back and work for a summer program at Trinity Episcopal Church. This program was called TEEP (Trinity Educational Enrichment Program). In the next year, I was informed about the Lilly and really wanted to do something unique. With that, I heard that there was another TEEP program in Boston and with that I was given the opportunity to work for them for the summer.

### History of TEEP

TEEP is a history of two organizations tied with a historical bond in mission. The first program was that of Trinity Educational Enrichment Program that was founded in New Orleans. The second program is Trinity Excellence for Education Program that has its home in Boston, MA. Both programs focus on providing students from lower economic areas educational experiences and opportunities that are not provided to them in everyday life. This spans from summer programs, to academic tutors, placement and college counseling, and test prep for exams such as the SAT and ACT.

The New Orleans program was the first of the TEEP programs. It was founded by a man named Alvin Edenburg. Working in the Orleans Parish Schools, Mr. Edenburg saw a drastic gap between students in his school and others. One of the first areas he looked into was the educational development of students over the summer. He noticed that students that were provided an education experience over the summer did better academically at the start of the new school year than those that had none. This happened to overlap the economic spectrum as those in high economic classes could afford to send their children to summer programs. Therefore, this need for a summer program for lower economic students was the foundation of the TEEP program.

The Trinity Episcopal Church in New Orleans has had a history of being a progressive church in social issues within the community. One of the aspects of town that became a focus of parishioner was the state of an area called the St. Thomas Projects. This area was one of the poorest and most crime infected area of the city. Due to the church's close existence with this neighborhood, it was decided to found

programs that addressed many of the most pressing issues of these people. The top priorities became jobs, medical, and education.

It was fate that while Trinity was in this moment of outreach that Mr. Edenburg had created the TEEP program. This became a key part of this plan from the church to improve lives of those in the St. Thomas Projects. From this humble start, the program would expand to include many areas of New Orleans and became a year around support program for these children.

Then in 1999, Mr. Edenburg had received a call from an old friend that was now working at Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston and asked if he wouldn't mind helping a program start up there. Mr. Edenburg agreed to the challenge and with a small staff ventured up to Boston. Once everything was in place and a staff was trained, the Boston program became the second TEEP program. Under Paul Bowen, this program has flourished into its own. From this point, independence of the programs came about over the years. New Orleans with a focus on elementary aged children, and Boston with a program centered on middle and high school ages. A couple of years after this a program would be started at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. This program did not have the support it needed and soon folded with increasing cost. This has left the New Orleans and Boston programs as the two TEEP programs in existence.

You might ask after this, where is my place in this history story? I became involved in TEEP in the summer of 2009. While there, I was a counselor for one of the groups of children. Also a part of that role was working as a teacher's aide and helping them with projects on hand. Then for my Lilly Internship, I was given the opportunity to work for the

Boston program in the summer of 2010. There I worked for the Program Staff of the organization. This entitled planning and leading field trips to various places around Boston, helping incorporate team building activities with the average day, and organizing days in which the students stayed at home. The unique aspect of my experience was that I am the first person to be a staff member of both programs. So for the past ten years that the programs have been independent from one another, there has not been someone to cross paths.

### Purpose

With this unique experience, I wanted to find a way to share with the greater community of the Episcopal Church about these two programs. I wanted to examine how they have developed on different paths over the past ten years and what they see as a focus of their organizations. With this in mind, the hope was that a middle ground between the two programs or aspects of both could be incorporated together. With this, a national plan for TEEP programs could be adopted by parishes across the country and expand to new places.

### At What Age is Right? Where Shall We Begin?

This is the first question as to what makes the two TEEP programs unique from each other. The consideration of age ranges can affect the supports and style of programs developed for the children in the community. Elementary school children are not going to have the same priorities as those in High School.

TEEP New Orleans saw that the moment that they could most improve the lives of students was from elementary school into middle school. The idea is based in the idea that if one influences a child at an

early age that those values and principles will continue with the student throughout their lives. Also, the idea is rooted out of some basics of the education system in New Orleans. In middle school, placement exams are taken to determine what schools those students will be attending in high school. Therefore, those students that place well receive places in schools with higher academic standing. With this, students from those high schools have a higher chance of graduating high school and attending college. Therefore, the middle school age is very important to those in New Orleans. So the development of the TEEP New Orleans to focus on this age was not only an educational idea but was based in the social economic standing of the people of the city.

TEEP Boston developed over time to become primarily focused on the life of young teens in the years of middle and high school. The idea behind this was that as growing young adults, they would need encouragement and support to make smart decisions about their future. This scope would range from mentoring in education, to healthy minds and bodies, and all the common conflicts that arise in a young adult's life. In this focus on young adults, the program was transformed into one more adaptable to those in this age range. Therefore, a strong high school leadership program (Leadership Development Program) was created to foster and support students throughout the year. Workshops in financial aid, exams such as ACT and SAT, and counseling was created to support this cause. With this, the success of their program has been evident in the fact that 100% of their senior high school students are attending college this coming fall. The newest focus for the program is "A Road to College." This is a comprehensive program incorporating all the talents and supports into a unified theme. This new program will follow students from their

freshman year of high school into their college years. The hope is that through the steps in this program, they can provide for their students a clear path for acceptance into the college of their choice.

### Where Shall We Be? How Community is Created?

With each program, there is the question of how to form community in a group of students that attend different schools and live in parts of town that might be uncommon to others. Also, the size of groups and how they come together have a large influence in the atmosphere of a program. Even the physical place and locations of programs can have an influence on how community is formed. Two of the key differences in the programs are the student groups and the physical locations that create very different communities.

The New Orleans program works on mentorship as a key in student group formations. The counselors are mostly upperclassmen in high school or freshman in college. A good portion of them are graduates of the program and know what is expected of them. This sense of responsibility to be a caring adult figure to these children drives the program. The students develop this idea of family from these leaders and often come to these counselors for help or advice on many things.

The Boston program is invested in peers leading peers in creating student groups. The Leadership Development Program students are counselors to the middle school. In the LDP, these high school students are given training on how to be a good role model for those they are responsible for. Another key to this is that most of the students in the LDP were members of the middle school program and have a good grasp on the ebb and flow of the program. The positive aspect of this is

that the counselors are really engaged in the lives of the students for it was not that far back that they were in the same position. At the same time, this closeness can be a weak point as the line between being a leader and a friend is broken.

The next issue to consider is the actual physical space that each program has to work in. TEEP New Orleans is blessed by their partnership with Trinity Episcopal Church because the church also runs a private school on their campus. This provides all the amenities of a regular school to the program. Therefore, you have standard classrooms, cafeteria, gym, computer labs, and outdoor play space. This allows the program to function as one united body throughout the day. The students all begin the day together and end it together. We all eat lunch and play at recess with each other. These bonds break down the class distinctions that most students, especially middle school students, have about those in grades other than theirs. It also allows for the church community to be more active in the lives of the children. It would not be uncommon for the organist of the church to drop into the music class or one of the priest come and chat with one of the students during recess. All of these factors helped create a singular community within the program.

The Boston program has a different approach and challenge to their space. The rectory building is not large enough for all of the students in their program. Therefore, the program had to be divided into many sites in order to accommodate the students. This led to the creation of five unique groups based around their location and grade. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders called two locations home. One was the Parish House Downtown and the other in Roxbury at Roxbury Presbyterian Church. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade resided in the Parish House alongside the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Then

the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was placed at First Lutheran Church in Downtown. Finally, the Leadership Development Program was their own small community in the Parish House. One can see how easily it could be confusing to realize all of these as one united program. The life of the students reflected this in their social behavior. Many would just be with members of their own groups. Therefore, inter-group and inter-grade relations did not expand very far.

### Where is Our Common Ground?

Common ground can be found in many aspects of one's life. One of the largest formations of this is in those with that have the same religious beliefs as us. Therefore, the question to present is what is religion's place in the formation of children and how can this be used effectively to positively influence their life.

TEEP New Orleans saw the Christian experience as a building block to the formation of its program and the values it promoted. One of the greatest influences is the fact that in the music class, basic hymns and gospels are taught for a final show at the end of the summer. This does not mean that this is the only interaction. There was tours of the church, interaction with the priests, and attendance of services during parts of the summer.

The Boston program emerged with the fact that they would be reaching out to those that are of all faiths in their community. Therefore, they were founded on an approach of promoting universal values. The program is largely secular in most aspects as all faiths are treated equally. This is also a reflection of the board of the foundation of the program. Many come from various faith communities and retain diversity in the staff.

## Future of TEEP

The greatest future for the program lies in expansion to more cities and parishes. With this, the New Orleans and Boston program will have to work more in harmony with each other than they currently are. Another aspect is that each program will truly have to be formed around the pressing needs of their communities. Just as Boston developed separately from New Orleans, so must new TEEP programs across the nation. This has been a problem in the past as the two programs have presented to new parishes as a either “us or them” mentality of choosing the program right for their parish from the two current ones.

This program could be turning into a national program for the Episcopal Church in my eyes. There would need to be some changes and flexibility, but there could be a unified program for parishes to adopt and transform for themselves an outreach that is similar. One of the first simple changes would be to change the name to “The Episcopal Educational Program.” This name allows all programs to show their united mission with each other and would allow them to constrict or expand the focus of their ministry. Instead of having parishes choose to have certain grades, the parish should use resources that they have that are best suited for whatever grade they can prove for. This might mean having a single grade program to expanding from Pre K to High School. One of the key factors is a close number of staff and students. Large classes should be avoided as most of these students live in that environment already. What they truly need is the individual attention that they receive in a program such as this. The idea of having the programs in central location is recommended. The comradery of the students when they are united in a community is so

valuable to the positive influence that they can experience from each other. The next major focus would be the expansion of services to the students. This does not mean that the program would have to provide these themselves but would be a source to guide their students to them. This would include food services, mobile doctor and dentist clinics, mental and special needs specialist, and a focus on healthy lifestyles in exercise and diet.

### My Future in this Movement

Currently, I am just as confused as I was before I began this journey as to where my place is in this picture. I could see myself as the education leader and venturing out to help parishes work on the creation of these programs. On the other hand, I could be a priest working within the church to help create places for these programs to flourish. So, as one can see, the decision of mine is not clear as to what route my life will one day take. One thing I am sure about is that I will remain passionate about the issue of education for children. They are the future of our nation and the hope of the communities they live in.