

A Proposal for a Community Organization HIGH LEVEL 3

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a high school student, currently working with a school-age child with cerebral palsy. I am also a camp counsellor who works with children with various physical and developmental special needs.

Through my experiences, I have noticed that having a child with special needs in the family can have a large impact on the child's siblings. This is why I am proposing that your foundation fund a group of students to start up a social group for the siblings of children with special needs. Having a support group for these children and young adults would be very beneficial for them and their families.

Society puts a lot of pressure on people to be the same, to conform to norms and established stereotypes. Anthropology deals with two main branches – cultural and physical (evolution). Because our culture is so fixated on conforming, it can be very challenging for children in families where someone has a special need, to fit in with society. It is really frustrating for these young people to fit in on their own when their lives are so dramatically and obviously different than those of their peers.

A social group for the siblings from a family with a child who has a special need would benefit them by giving them a place to fit in. All people want to belong and feel included and this group would allow them to socialize with others in similar situations. This group could help ease any insecurities felt by these kids by giving them a place to converse and get to know other kids who sympathize with them.

Sociology deals with the affect of an issue on society as a whole. As part of the group, members could raise awareness about special needs within the community. By informing others, the siblings would be able to share the challenges, stresses, joys and rewards of living with a child who has a physical or developmental disability. This would allow society to gain a better understanding of special needs while giving the siblings a chance to tell others what makes their lives so special.

Psychology deals with the individual and the effect something can have on them. A special needs child in a family places a huge responsibility on the parents and, as a result, other children within the family may feel alone, neglected, or at fault.

A social group for these siblings could help them to understand, accept, and deal with these feelings. Children and teens can overcome their feelings of being alone in the situation by spending time with other young people who are experiencing similar feelings. As members of this group, participants can talk about the responsibilities and rewards they face because of their brother or sister. By gaining an understanding of the situation, hopefully they will realize why they might be feeling left out at home and, consequently, they can find a way to become more involved in their sibling's life. Understanding the facts about their brother or sister's special needs is the best way to relieve their feelings of guilt. As a part of the group, sessions/workshops on common special needs such as cerebral palsy, autism, Downs Syndrome, as well as others, can be offered. Through these discussions, participants can learn the causes, effects, and treatments for their sibling and help them see that they are not at fault or being punished by the challenges of a special needs child.

This group for siblings of children with special needs would benefit the individuals greatly. Young people would have a place to share stories, ideas, and experiences regarding their brother or sister in a supportive environment. The group

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would also provide them with a time to socialize with peers who understand how they're feeling and what they're going through. Furthermore, the group can help find solutions to any negative feelings and find better ways for them to fit in to their brother or sister's life.

This group will benefit the family by bringing them closer and hopefully help them avoid jealousy, anger, frustration, and guilty feelings. When the siblings of the child with special needs understands and is educated about their brother or sister, these negative feelings can be controlled and eventually overcome, thus reducing family conflict concerning the child.

Society as a whole will also benefit from this group. By raising awareness of special needs, employers, neighbours, public services and friends can gain a better idea of how to support people with special needs and how to adapt their surroundings to make them accessible to everyone.

I hope you'll consider my proposal for "Young People's Special Needs Support" taking into account the high number of special needs children in our community.

Sincerely,

Bibliography

Class Notes

Personal Experiences

HIGH LEVEL 3

Teacher’s Notes**Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student identifies the need for siblings of children with special needs to have a support network and describes it with a high degree of accuracy. For example, the student notes the difficulty such siblings have in fitting in with society “when their lives are so dramatically and obviously different than those of their peers” and the frustration they feel as a result. The student also recognizes the need for these young people to “socialize with others in similar situations”.
- The student describes the proposed organization with considerable clarity. The purpose of the group is well defined, and its functions are described in some detail – it will provide “a place to converse and get to know other kids” in the same situation, “raise awareness about special needs”, and hold “sessions/workshops on common special needs such as cerebral palsy, autism, ...”. It is not clear, however, who will run the workshops (the students themselves, or invited experts?) or where these and other group activities will be held.

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student assesses the influence of the social forces contributing to the development of this need with considerable accuracy. For example, in discussing the subject from a psychologist’s point of view, the student comments that “A special needs child in a family places a huge responsibility on the parents and, as a result, other children within the family may feel alone, neglected, or at fault”. However, the student does not always differentiate between the anthropological and the sociological perspectives (e.g., there is some confusion between “society” and “culture”), and when referring to the latter, the student focuses more on the social impact the support group could have than on the way in which sociological factors contributed to the development of the need for such a group.

Communication

- The student justifies the formation of the new organization with a high degree of effectiveness, relating each of the main functions described to its perceived benefits (e.g., “Through these discussions, participants can ...

see that they are not at fault or being punished by the challenges of a special needs child.”) and showing how families and society as a whole can benefit as well as individual siblings. In addition, the proposal gains credibility through the student’s reference to his or her personal experience of working with children with special needs.

- The student uses social science terminology with a high degree of accuracy and appropriateness (e.g., “special needs”, “support group”, “negative feelings”, “family conflict”).

Application

- The student makes predictions about the impact of the support group with considerable appropriateness, pointing out the long-term effects on the families of children with special needs (e.g., reduced family conflict) and the positive consequences of increased social awareness of special needs (e.g., more effective support).

Comments

This work is representative of a high level-3 performance. The student demonstrates a considerable degree of achievement of the expectations in the Thinking/Inquiry and Application categories of knowledge and skills. The student also demonstrates a considerable degree of achievement in one criterion in the Knowledge/Understanding category. However, in the Communication category and in the other criterion in the Knowledge/Understanding category, the student demonstrates a high degree of achievement – i.e., achievement that is more characteristic of level 4.

The result is an effective and sensitive proposal.

Next Steps

In order to improve his or her performance, the student needs to:

- gain a deeper understanding of the anthropological and sociological perspectives on the forces that have affected the siblings of children with special needs;
- edit and proofread carefully to avoid repetition of facts and to eliminate minor errors.