

Nicole Saldaña  
May 4, 2013  
BUS 300S/ Jill Hosmer

### Service Learning Reflection

I worked at Alisal High School, located in the east side of Salinas on Williams Road. This was the high school I graduated from and I wanted to give back to this community. This location is special just with the background this high school has. It was built in 1965, being successfully operational for 48 years up to date. [1] This high school, however, has grown to have a bad reputation with it, as a high school where all the “gang members” go to. [2] When I attended this school, I was able to see a different perspective of what was being said about it. I saw this school as a wonderful place of opportunity for anyone who wanted to try to achieve. I think Alisal High School has successfully achieved teaching students to go beyond what is expected of them. My supervisor’s name was Mio Nishimura, the Japanese teacher at Alisal High. She is also the head of the foreign language department. I know this since I took her class three out of the four years I attended this school. I was able to contact her by calling her phone number as I have kept in touch with her since I graduated there. If I couldn’t reach her cell, then I would call Alisal’s phone number 831-796-7600 and asked to be connected to her extension.

As I mentioned earlier, Alisal High has a mission statement that is dedicated to excellence and student achievement. [3] I believe this is true going through this school first hand and seeing how I managed to move into higher education successfully. After confirming with the community scans done, I noticed that when students finish high school, those same numbers tend to move on to higher education. Knowing the background of East Salinas, and having lived there myself, I know students face the challenge of not being able to receive a high school education to start working to support their families of low incomes. This again, was confirmed after the community scan project. So to see students in the classroom setting that I was able to be in was a great feeling. I felt that the students have the same wonderful privilege that I did to receive the education they deserve. And the class I was in was an extra class they could take for a challenge! These students, which filled up the entire classroom, five classes altogether, took Japanese language as an elective. So these students really just wanted that extra push and I was glad to be there to assist the students whenever they needed help.

Alisal High school is part of the Salinas Union High School District, or SUHSD for short. SUHSD is in charge of funding the schools in its district. Alisal, Salinas, and Everett Alvarez High School are all funded by the SUHSD. [4] Alisal is like these other schools in a way that it is overcrowded with students. It has its pros and cons when thought about. One pro is looking at so many students who want the chance to succeed in life with an education. A con, however, is having 24 students to 1 teacher ratio is not enough for a struggling student to receive the attention they need in order to succeed. Taking in this information, I realized a bigger reason for me to help these students out. I know many of the students do not realize it now, as when I didn’t when I was in high school, but I was very lucky to receive a high school education, especially with my certain background relating to all the students who are attending Alisal High School like I did.

The service site of this school contributes to the triple bottom line for all three categories. It contributes to people, obviously, for delivering an education for people who want it. It covers the financial aspect, being a public education yet receiving enough funds to pay their employees, all staff and teachers. It is also seeing an environmental aspect as I was

even part of the “Go Green!” initiative for Alisal High School in promoting ways for students to be greener than they already were. This was easy to incorporate into student’s everyday talk as Trojans, as the students of Alisal High are known for Tommy the Trojan our mascot, as the main school color was green. So in a sense, Alisal has the triple bottom line figured out. Even though it doesn’t have the right amount of funds that it would like to have in order to run the school at its full potential, Alisal still tries its best to make ends meet.

At this point, I am thinking all Alisal really needs is more funding. I have seen so much effort thrown into fundraising to help out various activities for the school. During my first week of doing community service, I had three students asking me to help in whatever they were trying to fundraise for. All of these fundraisers were just for activities for the after school programs Alisal has, including sports, clubs, and other programs. I have always asked for help when I did the same fundraisers but never saw it from the other persons point of view of who I asked. I was able to get that feeling how bad Alisal is doing funding wise for these programs. Even my site supervisor, who is also the coach of the men’s volleyball team and wrestling team of Alisal High, is doing a fundraiser to help pay for the teams to enter tournaments to compete against other players. This is just to help the students. Not for personal gain, but for students who do not want to be forced to go home but who want that extra activity to participate in, having fun in something they are good in or just hanging out with their peers.

Alisal does have one decent way of making income other than fundraisers. This method is by selling items through the student store that Alisal is lucky enough to have. It holds in stock ‘Trojan Gear’, in which people can buy clothing and accessories fit for any Trojan. This means people can show off their school spirit by buying merchandise such as t-shirts, hoodies, and sweatshirts branding the Alisal name and logo. However, in my business perspective, I find that Alisal can improve its schools online website a lot by keeping it updated. It doesn’t need to be daily but once a week at least. The student store website has not been updated since I attended the high school. The same items that are no longer in stock should be deleted and items that are now new in the store should be promoted online. Other than that, I think Alisal still promotes itself well, despite the negative feedback it gets from everyone. Alisal proudly presents itself as were students can be successful and prove it. Just recently, a student from Alisal was able to go from running on the track team to running in the Olympics. By promoting this and other success stories again and again, the positive feedback of Alisal will continue to go up. But this, again, can only happen if everything is kept up to date.

I just think that one main thing service learners should know about before attending any service site is go in confidently. Many people may shy away from even visiting at Alisal due to the bad rumors people say about it. I have gone to Alisal confidently knowing whatever happens to me here could happen anywhere else. When people turn down an opportunity due to fear, they can miss out on a chance of a lifetime. I ended up doing community service in a Japanese class because that is what I am studying. It has also helped me connect and relearn many language points that I had forgotten from high school. This in turn has also connected me to practice speaking the language I am currently studying to help me become more fluent. By taking this great opportunity, I also have more support from the community I served to travel to Japan this September to study abroad. I also reconnected with the staff at Alisal, who have always been very encouraging and respecting of the students who attend and visit Alisal again. I feel as though my part in giving back to this community that has done so much for me

is the least I can do. This is one of those good feeling experiences that has left me wanting to volunteer again, even though it is not required of me to do so anymore. I know efforts are done constantly to remove the negativity that this website has, but no hope is lost. After hearing what other communities go through and comparing them to Alisal, its hard to tell how one service needs more attention than the other. I think it's best to stay focused on what we feel passionately about. I feel better when I help out my high school so that it can return to its former glory of just being an awesome school, instead of one where people post pone events thinking something bad will happen. We Trojans know it is going to take us a while, but as our motto is, "Failure is not an option".

Sources

1. <http://www.salinas.k12.ca.us/sites/AHS/Index.htm>
2. <http://blogs.kqed.org/ourxperience/2010/11/26/alisal-high-school-students-fight-negative-perceptions/>
3. [http://webschoolpro.com/alisal-high-school\\_CA27661592730109/mission.html](http://webschoolpro.com/alisal-high-school_CA27661592730109/mission.html)
4. <http://districts.teachade.com/l/1818/Salinas-Union-High>