

I found researching the problem of childhood illiteracy in Detroit schools to be an enlightening experience. What surprised me most was the sheer percentage of school-aged children who are functionally illiterate in Detroit schools. As someone who attended a private school for elementary and high school, I had never been exposed to the effects of illiteracy firsthand until researching this problem and working to ameliorate illiteracy in schools. My group for this project volunteered in a variety of programs from Beyond Basics and InsideOut to local metro-Detroit schools and libraries. These provided us with the unique opportunities to work directly with students, either tutoring or teaching, and gave us greater insight into the problems that face students in Detroit public schools. From the wonderful experiences I've had working with students, I plan to continue volunteering at my mom's school in metro-Detroit to help them develop reading and writing skills. As many of her students speak English as a second language, it is incredibly important for them to gain the reading comprehension skills necessary to succeed in their future educational endeavors.

This group project has taught me the importance of cooperation and patience. My group worked really well together, and we were ultimately successful in our project, but it sometimes became difficult with specific demands and stressful issues that arose along the way. Group projects also take an uncanny amount of organizational skills as we are all full-time students with our own schedules and commitments yet we needed to collaborate on papers, volunteering events, and group presentations. Besides these smaller issues, there are so many positives from working with a group. We could work on a broader scale to combat the problem of illiteracy, bring different perspectives to the project, and work more efficiently by investigating and researching separate policies and factors that affect illiteracy as a whole.

The most applicable skills that I learned from this project were cooperation, collaboration, and research skills. I have always preferred working on projects alone, and, honestly, I used to dislike group projects. There was always the fear that one member would fail to complete their portion and leave the rest of the group to compensate for their incompetency. With my group, this wasn't a problem as we were all dedicated to contributing to the project equally in order to succeed and thoroughly investigate our problem. The skills learned from this project can apply to a wide variety of tasks and problems that may arise in life.

Cooperation and collaboration are particularly significant in school, the workplace, and relationships in general. In most areas of life, social intelligence is necessary to productively interact and work with other people, and I think that group projects develop such a skill. I found learning how to research well to be the most significant skill that I developed from this group project. This is the most applicable skill in college because it takes dedication and a strong work ethic to research effectively and analyze a problem on a more latent level. I enjoyed analyzing the problem of childhood illiteracy and broader concepts such as the increasing rate of poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and political inequality, that act as contributing factors. This project helped me gain a greater understand of the problem's scope, and I believe the skills I've developed by working on this issue will positively affect my future research and studies.