

# Bethany House Ministry – Final Consulting Report

Student Consultant: Tom Broughan

Community Partner: Keith Murphy

## I. Consulting Situation

### A. Organization

Bethany House Ministry is a non-profit community center that serves St. Clair Village and Northview Heights. It is a program of the United Methodist Church Union and has been servicing the community since 1962. Bethany House is dedicated to providing educational and prevention programs to the residents of St. Clair Village and Northview Heights. They have many programs including: youth mentoring, a preschool program, after school programs, cultural activities, and computer training. Bethany House is funded by United Methodist via Mission Support and through interest from some endowments.

**Mission:** The mission of Bethany House Ministry is to prepare the children, youth, and adults of Northview Heights and St. Clair Village academically, socially, and economically for lifelong learning and achievement.

Keith Murphy is in his 11<sup>th</sup> year as Executive Director of Bethany House. He works under a board of directors. Mr. Murphy handles the day-to-day operations of Bethany House and is continually looking to improve the quality of services offered. Nine staff members at two sites work under Mr. Murphy. Bethany House has a \$135,000 yearly budget. It has a budget of approximately \$20,000 per year for computers and technology through a grant from Alcoa.

### B. Programs

Bethany House offers a variety of programs to the children and adults in the community.

#### Programs for Children

Its most prominent program is the after school program for children.

- The staff works with the children to help them complete their homework. They never give the children answers; they work with them to help the kids find the answer.
- They also teach the children other activities. They have many drums that they teach the children how to play.
- The computer room allows the kids to play games like Math Munchers and Reading Rabbit.
- Bethany House focuses on making sure every child learns how to read and write and that every child learns how to do math.

They make sure the kids receive a well rounded education and that no child gets left behind in any area. The organization spends most of its time working with kids. This program is very successful; over 50% of their students achieve honor roll status in the local school system\

## Northview Heights

Bethany House's after school and mentoring programs serve 20-30 children each day. The children range in age from 3 to 17 years old.

- Bethany House helps teach the children reading, writing, and arithmetic.
- Bethany House wants to expand and teach the kids about computers and technology.
- Bethany House sees that all the children do their homework and teaches them the concepts if they missed them in school (like how fractions work). By aiding the children in homework completion, they build confidence, competence, and courage.
- Mr. Murphy desires to expand their computer literacy program to teach the children how to use office applications, digital photo and video editing, and computer literacy and competence.

## Summer Programs

In the summer, they offer daytime programs for children. Many activities are run for the children.

- They have both indoor and outdoor activities.
- They have a garden where Mr. Murphy teaches them about growing plants.
- Outside they play games, sports or on the playground nearby.
- Inside they do arts and crafts, work on reading and math skills, they use the computers, have bible study, and various other activities.

## **C. Staff**

The staff of Bethany House plays an important role in furthering the organization's mission. Almost everyday, the staff has hands on contact with the children of the community. Their choice of employees is important. Bethany House employs 5 part time workers at the St. Clair Village site. Some are college students and some are members of the community. Almost all staff members work with the children. They play a vital role in the children's educational experience.

Mr. Murphy has been the Executive Director of Bethany House for almost 11 years now. He has greatly improved the quality of training offered to children and the community since he arrived in 1992. His decision to implement a computer literacy program demonstrates the continual increase in quality. Many children are still learning to read, but Bethany House wants the children to learn about computers early. The more familiarity children have with computers, the more likely they are to learn from them later.

## **D. Technology**

Bethany House has 9 PCs, which range from 650 MHz to over 1 GHz and have either 128 MB or 256 MB of RAM. It has a variety of devices for use with the PCs. It has some digital video cameras that attach to the computers. It has a scanner and a printer. It has multiple CD-R drives, which they use to burn some CDs. Each computer has a set of Sennheiser headphones so each child can have audio when he/she uses the computer.

Each PC runs Windows ME. They have a variety of different learning software packages, which include games like Math Munchers (MECC) and Reader Rabbit (The Learning Company). Most software focuses on reading or arithmetic. Some focus on learning typing (like Mavis Beacon). Each computer has Norton Antivirus installed. They also have GoBack installed, which allows them to return to the computer's previous configuration whenever a child makes some sort of configuration change. Bethany House also has 3 700 MHz iMacs. The computers are not on a network. They do not have any Internet access either.

## **E. Analysis**

Keith Murphy, the ED of Bethany House desired to build a computer literacy component for the after school program. The organization had the computers available, but no curriculum for the kids. After observing and working with Mr. Murphy and the children, an analysis of this experience and of the organization led to the identification of some opportunities.

### Opportunity #1 – Computer Literacy Curriculum

In order to teach the kids, a computer literacy curriculum was to be developed. The literacy program was to include some important components. The kids would be required to keep a journal that details how their computer time is spent. If they learn anything, they are to record it in the journal. In addition to teaching the kids about word processing, the journal concept reinforces basic reading and writing skills. The kids will receive rewards in the form of game playing time for above average performance. The program was to include modules about different commonly used applications, including MS Office and Pinnacle, a digital editing program.

The ED will work with the consultant in creating several modules for the curriculum. By creating these modules together, the consultant will be able to show the ED the important facets about computers that should always be included in a lesson plan. The ED will be able to recognize these facets for when he creates new modules or updates old ones.

The kids are very interested in computers. When they arrive, all the children ask to use the computers. Bethany House has more than just computers though. They have a digital video camera, CD-RW drives, web-cams, headphones, a scanner, printers, and digital editing software. This provides them with many options for teaching the children. These peripherals will eventually be incorporated into the literacy program. The enthusiasm helps Bethany House fulfill their mission of preparing the kids for lifelong learning.

### Opportunity #2 – Reading and Writing Skills

The centerpiece of the proposed computer literacy program is the journal. The journal strengthens all the concepts that Bethany House teaches the children. Bethany House stresses reading and writing skills above anything else. The journal will show the children how reading and writing can help them. They will be creating a journal that outlines everything they have learned on the computer. They can familiarize themselves with their progress by reading their journals from the past. The journal would strengthen word processor skills. For these children, where Bethany House is their only exposure to computers, learning word processing will be a vital part of this curriculum. Most jobs require some word processing knowledge and the children's experience learning about this software from a young age will make it easy for them

when they do get a job. The journal will provide them a valuable opportunity to use and develop their reading and writing skills.

### Opportunity #3 – Educational Games

Many games can be very educational for kids. The goal of Bethany House is to teach the children computer literacy so that they can achieve lifelong learning. Games could be a vital component of this. Games can provide children with an introduction into many facets of a computer's functions. For instance, they can be more familiarized with menus systems and pointing and clicking on objects. They can learn about loading times, lag, and program crashes and why they happen. They also reinforce other concepts the kids may learn in school; many require reading, math, and problem solving techniques. Games could also serve as a reward system for completing other academic tasks. Games are also fun, increasing the kids desire to use computers. Games are an excellent option to teach the kids and to sustain their enthusiasm about computers.

To test the created lesson plans, the consultant was to work with the staff and Mr. Murphy in teaching the kids the initial lesson modules. From here, revisions were to be made to fit the needs of the children. Mr. Murphy was to work with the consultant in making these changes.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- CP has an initial lesson plan for a computer literacy program
- The CP has started teaching computer literacy
- CP has the necessary understanding to further develop the lesson plan

### **Improved Infrastructure**

As a result of achieving these outcomes:

- The CP has the foundations of a computer literacy program in place.
- He also has the knowledge to develop this program and tailor it to his students' needs.
- He is able to add sections about new applications or update the plan to reflect changes in technology.

These foundations will give the organization the necessary infrastructure to implement and maintain a computer literacy program.

## **II. Outcomes and Recommendations**

### **A. Results of Consulting Work**

The consultant has been working with the community partner to create a curriculum that fits the organization's unique needs. The program created combines aspects of computer literacy, reading and writing skills, motivation, and the encouragement of learning. The program is specifically designed to further Bethany House's mission of encouraging lifelong learning in its youth. The consultant has provided insight to the community partner on how to further develop this program.

## **B. Outcome:**

Bethany House has some basic building blocks upon which it can start its literacy program. The organization now has some lesson plan modules and review tests for Microsoft Word. The lesson plans incorporate a journal that the Community Partner will use to monitor and track the children's school performance and home life. Each child keeps his journal on a floppy disk that only he and the Executive Director have access to. The journal is used to reinforce reading and writing skills and improve the literacy of the kids. The lesson modules can easily be adapted for other applications or expanded to incorporate other educational topics like spelling, math, and history.

## **C. Expanded Capacity:**

Mr. Murphy understands the process of creating computer modules for the kids. He understands how to use the format of the Word modules to create modules for other applications. Now that Mr. Murphy has the modules, he can further fine-tune them to meet the unique needs of his students. Mr. Murphy has aided in the creation of some modules, as well as used them with his students. He understands some of the limits that his students face (a limited reading vocabulary and a short attention span since they are 8-11 years old) and knows how to adapt the lessons to fit these limitations. He also knows how to incorporate material from other subjects into the lesson plan so that the kids learn about more than just computers. Consequently, Mr. Murphy can continue to develop the computer literacy program on his own.

## **D. Sustainability:**

It is clear that the community partner now has the capacity to create and develop a computer literacy program. The program stresses basic computer concepts (like typing and basic Word skills). Mr. Murphy has a very firm grasp on these concepts and has worked with the consultant to incorporate them into the existing lesson plans. He has demonstrated the ability to recognize important skills and can easily create a lesson module around them. However, it remains to be seen whether the program will continue to be developed. The community partner is very busy and may not have the time to dedicate to further development. What is most likely is that development will continue only as Mr. Murphy finds time to dedicate to the program or as development of new material is necessary to further engage the children. Another obstacle in sustaining the program is that the staff has not adapted the same enthusiasm and drive as the community partner. As a result, it will require extra effort on behalf of the community partner to implement the program.

## **E. Recommendation:**

The consultant recommends a few adjustments to the structure of the children's computer time. Currently, playing games is the primary activity of the children on computers. Consequently, if Mr. Murphy is not present, they do not want to do "work" on the computers, they just want to play the games. By using the games as a reward for doing work, the kids can be motivated to learn on the computer. The community partner should establish a concrete structure for work time and playtime on the computers (e.g., if the child works for 30 minutes then he could receive up to 10 minutes of playtime). Since he is a motivating force for the children, he should work with them for the first few weeks to help them adjust to the new program.

Additionally, the games can be used educationally. By selecting games that utilize a variety of computer skills, the kids could learn from the games. Basic mouse and typing ability can be learned from the games. The children also like to repeatedly play the same game. If the available game selection were rotated, the kids would be forced to adapt to the different skills necessary for each game. By introducing variety into the game cycle, the children's ability to adapt to different situations on the computer increases.

#### **F. Resources:**

Website URL	Description
<a href="http://www.funbrain.com">http://www.funbrain.com</a>	This site contains a wide variety of educational games for kids to play. Games can be downloaded or purchased on a CD-ROM.
<a href="http://www.gamehippo.com">http://www.gamehippo.com</a>	This site contains reviews of computer games. It has a section specifically dedicated to educational games. The games are reviewed by users and contain good information.
<a href="http://www.nothingbutsoftware.com">http://www.nothingbutsoftware.com</a>	This site sells a variety of different types of software, including educational software and games for kids. Their product offering includes some software the organization already has and many programs it does not have as well. It is a good site to compare different games or learning games.

#### **G. Recommendations**

##### Recommendation 1: Network

The consultant recommends that Bethany House install a Local Area Network (LAN) for its computers. The organization is not ready for the network currently, but will be once its literacy program matures. A network will give the children more to learn about and explore on the computers, which will encourage learning. It would also make it easy to share resources and files among computers.

##### Source:

When identifying problems and opportunities, it was clear that a local area network could benefit the organization. The installation of such a network was originally included in the scope of work. However, it was decided that it did not fit the organization's most pressing needs.

##### Rationale:

Bethany House has 8 PCs in the same room. The kids frequently use different computers. Also, the PCs have a variety of Windows versions (XP, Me, and 2000). Since all versions are in common use, the Community Partner likes for the children to experience the differences between the versions so they are prepared no matter which one they may come across. With the journals that were implemented in the computer literacy program, the children need to move their journal

file to the computer on which they are working. Currently, they must use disks to transfer the data. With a LAN, they could simply transfer the files between computers, or put it on a server computer that they could access from anywhere. By using the network to transfer files the children would learn about networks and their basic uses. It would also expand the potential uses of a computer in their own minds. Currently, the children see computers that can only provide content that is loaded onto them. By exposing them to a network, they would see the computer more than just a stand-alone box.

Steps to Take:

- Allow the children’s literacy level to increase
- Investigate hubs and routers to find out which is best for the organization
- Develop a maintenance plan for the network
- Purchase equipment and install

Resources:

Website URL	Description
<a href="http://www.cnet.com">http://www.cnet.com</a>	The peripherals section of the page contains reviews and information about networking hardware. This would be a great page to learn about available technology and its capabilities.
<a href="http://www.zdnet.com">http://www.zdnet.com</a>	This page contains hardware reviews and also some technical documents on networks. The hardware reviews would be most useful for Bethany House.

Recommendation 2: Additional Staff

The consultant recommends that Bethany House hire an additional staff member who has worked extensively with computers. A staff that has an intimate understanding of computers will be better equipped to teach the children. The new staff member could also aid in the development of new lesson modules and help the literacy program evolve. In order to hire new staff it is likely that Bethany House will need funding from Foundations or other external source.

Source:

When identifying problems and opportunities, it was clear that additional staff members could benefit the organization. The consultant and community partner discussed the potential of recruiting volunteers from local colleges or universities. It seemed infeasible that adequate volunteers could be found. Hiring additional staff members seemed like the best solution, but the organization did not have the available resources at the time.

Rationale:

Bethany House wants to provide the children with the best resources possible. In order to facilitate life long learning, it needs a trained staff to teach the kids. Technically literate staff members would be able to inspire the children to learn about computers better than non-technical staff. The best way to excite the kids into becoming computer literate is by giving them an

example of great it can be. A staff member with the ability to clearly impart technical information to the children would be an invaluable resource to the kids.

Steps to Take:

- Decide staffing needs
- Solicit additional funding
- Hire staff members