

I came to the Brown Environmental leadership lab with a passion for the environment. This passion was not fostered from the environmental campaigns at my school, or from the science classes I participated in, but from my passion for nature. I had always had a passion for nature, when I was little I would go adventuring in my backyard. As I grew older I started hiking in the mountains close to my house in Colorado and then I started Scuba diving a few years ago. It was because of this SCUBA diving interest that the summer before I went to BELL I went to a SCUBA diving camp. Before I went to camp, while I loved nature, and animals, I had never had any real interest in environmental issues. My primary interest at the time, or my long-term ambition was to become a successful banker. This left me too little time to care about the environment, and in truth focusing on how much money I could make little reason to. But, one rainy at camp, after spending my time diving and exploring in the Caribbean for two weeks, I was sitting with a friend on the front of our sailboat, and looking out at the water, and the trees and bushes on the hills of the bay I had a realization. I decided that nature was more important to me than money that the trees on the island were more beautiful than any marble columns, and the sea shined more radiantly than any crystal chandelier. So when I came back home I started learning as much about the environment as I could, and then decided next summer to go to the Brown Environmental Leadership Lab.

At the end of the program I had not come up with a plan that I liked yet, but began to understand that factors including increased use of electronic media, around 3 hours a day, protective adults limiting access to the outside, and growing urbanization are limiting student's experiences with nature. Advertisements and school programs promote the practices of recycling and conservation of resources, but students do not know enough about why they should do these things, limiting the programs' effectiveness. Although students learn about ecology and environmental science in school, they get little hands-on experience and thus are not inspired or impassioned to protect the environment. Additionally, despite the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs, many teachers lack the time, resources and supplies to teach effectively about ecology. The students therefore have a limited appreciation for their natural surroundings, and do not feel empowered or inspired to help protect the environment. If the students

appreciated nature and understood the impact of global warming, deforestation, and other environmental issues they would be more receptive to environmental solutions and projects. Additionally, increased experiences with nature have been linked to improved academic performance as well as reduced attention deficit symptoms, stress and obesity rates which currently for children are 17% in the US. So working with the organization Learn Serve international I decided to start a venture to address this problem.

So I started working on the venture, deciding on the name, Project ELiPS and then started to recruit a team. I recruited a core team from my school of 6 students, and then another branch at a nearby school. The Project ELiPS (Environmental Leadership in Primary School) core team members develop a set of 6 lesson plans for 4th and 5th grade students, consisting of a 20 minute nature activity, a 15 minute lesson, and a 25 minute experiment. The 20 minute nature activity will develop the student's passion for nature and adventure, while the students unwind from the school day. The 15 minute lesson will teach the students about environmental issues, and solutions, stimulating their desire to make a difference. The 25 minute experiment will enhance the students understanding of the connection between nature and science, while teaching them science skills. Each of these free sessions will be available afterschool at the 4th and 5th grade student's elementary schools, and led by a team of students from a local high school. Each high school will use 6 reusable materials kits corresponding with each lesson plan, and the teams will receive training and support from the core team. The involvement of high school students will enhance the success of the program because by being closer to the age of the 4th and 5th graders than adults they will be better equipped to inspire passion for the environment in the children. Additionally, the high school students participating will gain leadership skills from leading the sessions, improve their public speaking abilities and develop mentoring skills.

The concrete progress of the venture started this February when I assembled a team of students at my local high school, and a branch at another high school, Walter Johnson. At my high school we have a total of 8 students involved. One of these students Nick Greco, will be in charge of the day to day running of the programs at the schools in our county once the program begins next year, and is currently working as my partner for presentations and strategizing. Another student Agustin Aguerre is the core team

manager, and in charge of assisting the core team in day-to-day operations. Ines Aguerre and Carolina Laguna, two freshmen in my school are in charge of fundraising, and have started working on our clean currents fundraising campaign, working with a local wind power provider who will donate \$25 for every customer we refer to them. Camden Ostrander is in charge of contacting local elementary, and coordinating the program. Roy Liu is in charge of training and recruiting the high school students participating. Myra Deng is in charge of art and design, and Eddy Mao is in charge of our website www.projectelips.com. While we plan to start the program in September we have been taking steps to get ready for the program to run next year. We have as previously mentioned made a website for the venture, which we've used to give panel members information before our venture presentation, and will continue to use to give people more information about the program, and facilitate donations from people who we would not be able to contact directly. We have also developed a logo for the venture. Additionally we have had our first school program, Kid Power DC, an after school center for disadvantaged students agree to host trial sessions this year to prepare for the full program next year. We have also started the process of working with youth venture a branch of Ashoka on the venture, and have prepared and presented a 10 minute pitch for them, at a venture fair. We received very positive feedback from the panel, and talked to possible donors. We have started the process of developing the curriculum and have almost finished the first lesson plan on biodiversity and invasive species, drawing off my experience at BELL. We have also for youth venture created a detailed action plan and budget, for them to use to assess the venture. We also found a teacher advisor at our school, my current US history teacher and IB anthropology teacher, Mr. Stillman, he will help advise the venture and give us access to his room for team meetings.

The Project has helped me develop my leadership roles, leading a team of over 8 people, and planning the direction of the venture, and organizing for various tasks. I also started the Project with a partner who I later found out was not dedicated to the venture, and this has taught me to think things through more thoroughly and that I often make decisions too quickly. In the future I will make sure that I do not make big decisions without thinking about the possible negative aspects of it, and try to have more scrutiny for people that I work with, and tasks that I decide to do. The project has also taught me

that I am capable of getting things done, regardless of how difficult they seem, whether it was trying to assemble the team, or emailing Bill McKibben who made me decide to change the structure of the program from indoor science labs to the outdoor activities that we are developing today. The project has also had a positive affect on the students at my school who are involved in the project, giving them an easy way to help the environment, and developing their comfort working on projects, and taking responsibility for tasks. The project has also affected my family who after seeing my commitment to it I was able to convince to switch to using wind power in the house, and reducing meat consumption and buying a hybrid car, Prius, after our old car failed it's emissions inspection. While working on the project, I was always motivated by the idea that if my project was successful it could have a big impact on my community and in the future the environment. This was also coupled with a drive to make it as successful as possible. While these two factors combined to motivate me they also showed me that when working on something I care about I can become overly intense, and have been working on appearing less intense. The overall experience has taught me a lot about myself, however I have only just begun, and am ready to make a big impact.