

Reflective essay

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Reflective Essay High school. Those two words can nostalgically bring out the best and the most tragic memories in anyone's life. For me, I can say that those years were anything but ordinary, at times they were terrifying, at times they were incredible, at times they were chaotic, but they were always beautiful. All my seven years at Alameda Community Learning Center have been both life altering and amazingly valuable. I never expected to learn from or take so much away from attending high school, but I soon discovered that I was going to be proven absolutely wrong. For a long time procrastination was my vice and I certainly was guilty of it. Starting in the 6th grade, I always did my homework at the last possible minute and never scheduled my time well or at all for that matter. Inevitably soon enough, my grades started slipping as proven by my first progress report. That was when I realized that I have to proactively do something, slacking was just not going to cut it. At ACLC, there were no teachers chastising you if you didn't do your work, you were your own responsibility, the message was something like... welcome to the real world. After much trial and error, I decided the next year to use my planner that I each learner received every year. That helped me immensely, and I always hated the idea of planning until I learned that sometimes it's completely necessary. From that small but significant epiphany, I learned one of the most difficult concepts: time management. I now use my planner everyday and have never missed an assignment. This has really prepared me for college because there isn't anyone who will make you do anything, you have to fight temptations and put your priorities in order, just as I did during my seven years at ACLC. I discovered that you ultimately are your own responsibility; you always have a choice whatever

one you choose in the end is entirely up to you. You can sit on your bum and do nothing or you can do what you feel needs to be done, and I chose the latter. Throughout my hectic high school years I have also grown a lot personally and socially. When I first came to ACLC in the 6th grade I was a timorous, quiet and lost adolescent. I was really reserved at first, but being thrown into the craziness, and altogether weirdness, that is ACLC it was impossible to be shy and just stand in the corner. Community was displayed consistently, and everyone knew each other, not like other schools that are so immense that people don't even know everyone in their graduating class. I mean, I'm graduation a year early but I still know everyone in the graduating class. ACLC is like a big family, facilitators are more like friends or big brothers and sisters. There isn't a generation gap between anyone; we're all just living in the chaotic peacefulness and enjoying every minute of it, well most of time anyways. And consequently I talk all the time, sometimes exceedingly so, and am not afraid to be who I am. I learned the beauty of individuality and owning who you are. This was tested when I attended my first college class when I was in 9th grade. It was English 1A and every ounce of my being was telling me to revert back to my timid ways, but being from ACLC I no longer could. Almost everyone in the class was twice my age, but it didn't matter. I didn't have any problems communicating or socializing with anyone. I even had group projects and even formed study groups, I wasn't afraid to be my eccentric, goofy but sweet self. The greatest part was seeing the mouths of the college student's drop when I said that I was only 14. One person in particular, although we were at least three decades apart in age, told me that I looked young but he thought I was at least 18 years old

because of the maturity I possessed and how I carried myself. That was one of the best complements I have ever received. Moreover, one of the most important lessons that I have really garnered over my lovely high school experience was the ability to think and make decisions for myself. I used to be so wrapped up in what others wanted or expected, but in high school I was given the chance to be independent and make choices that were right for me. I was even able to choose the classes I wanted to take and create my own schedule. An example of a personal decision presented itself since the 6th grade. I secretly wanted to graduate high school a year early but I was initially afraid that my plan wouldn't fall through. When I entered high school I realized that I can do what I felt was best for me, I wanted to have a chance to experience life outside of a classroom before I devoted myself to college fulltime. And now I am indescribably ecstatic to say not only am I graduating a year early, but that I visualized a future for myself and I am in the process of fulfilling it. ACLC presented me with unique opportunities that I pursued and I cannot imagine that I would have completed my goal at another high school. I went into a cultural shock when I attended ACLC. For example, group projects were a foreign concept to me because at a normal school group projects are usually avoided due to lack of time and togetherness. But there are many chances to work together with your peers and one of the most challenging times presented itself in my honors physics class. We were assigned rollercoaster projects and our groups were designed without our input, much like how it is in the real world. In the beginning my group was a mess because we clashed on almost every decision. But as time went on we started to negotiate corroboratively and somehow incorporate everyone's

diverse ideas to create our roller coaster. I was able to participate as a leader as well as a team member and as a result my team finished the project first, received an A and I learned, from a valuable experience, how to respect and appreciate others and their opinions. Another thing I discovered about ACLC is to survive in this school you need to know how to use technology, and use it well. There isn't a class for computer competency; it's a lesson you must learn for yourself without a specific structure or lesson plan. From experimenting with the plentiful accessible computers provided I was able to learn how to use different programs and engage in the community by asking my peers how to do things I didn't know. Before I came to ACLC I barely knew how to use a computer. I knew only the basics: how to type a paper on Word and print it out. Now I know and have competent computer skills such as using Microsoft PowerPoint, Excel, and Publisher. During my first year at ACLC, I figured out how to create a brochure on AIDS for a health class using Microsoft Publisher and have successfully made about 5 since, I actually think that making brochures are really fun now. I also know how to make a PowerPoint presentation, which came in handy when I created one for my college History class; the presentation was equipped with video, images, and animations. Thanks to the skills I acquired at ACLC, I got an "A" on that assignment and am a pro at creating PowerPoints and handling a computer. In conclusion, it is nearly impossible to sum up all the things that I learned from and while attending high school at ACLC. I have acquired many academic, as well as social skills and improvements. High school generally imposes educational growth and I didn't expect that I'd grow this much as a person. Of course I still have

plenty to learn, but I feel like I have accomplished something kind of fantastic. I don't know what other priceless lessons I will learn during the rest of my senior year, but what I know now is that the qualities I developed and the lessons I have learned thus far can best be described in this quote by Randolph Silliman Bourne: " no matter what we have come through, or how many perils we have safely passed, or how many imperfect and jagged - in some places perhaps irreparably - our life has been, we cannot in our heart of hearts imagine how it could have been different. As we look back on it, it slips in behind us in orderly array, and, with all its mistakes, acquires a sort of eternal fitness, and even, at times, of poetic glamour. "