

The Being

The Being is a student-centered document whose purpose is to serve as a guide for how the group would like to function or be together throughout the course of our school program. The Being, whose roots stem from Project Adventure's Full Value Contract Model, is designed to outline the norms and expectations for participant behavior. In short the Full Value Contract or the Being as we choose to call it, states that everyone deserves to work be treated with full and equal value, physical and emotional safety is the number one priority, and feedback can be given and received. Over the years, the Being has taken on many forms.

However, among the various versions for how to create the document, there are some essential components that should remain consistent. Beginning with the central question (what will we strive to do to create a safe, fun, and educational experience for everyone?), students are should be encouraged to think beyond the "buzz" words or catch phrases, and instead give real thought to what they want to create within the team. The words that the team ultimately will come up with, will then serve as expectations and guidelines for how the students will be ask to participate or be.

When presenting the central question, be sure to do so in the same way each time, beginning with the word safe. Creating an emotionally and physically safe environment should be every facilitator's priority. Without establishing a set of behaviors that will ensure people's safety, then creating an enjoyable and educational experience cannot happen. Once the safety of others has been addressed, then it is time to explore how the team will work towards creating an experience that is exciting, challenging, interesting, and ultimately fun. Safety lends itself to having fun or in other words, students who feel safe, comfortable, and relaxed, will stand a better chance at having fun because protecting themselves in a potentially unsafe environment is not an issue. Finally, if a student is having fun because they feel safe, then they are more inclined to participate. By getting involved students can take advantage of opportunities to take safe risks, challenge themselves, interact with others. Through this type of participation, students will learn and have fun in the process.

The central question has three distinct components, therefore when framing the Being to the group, break the question down. For example, what can we do to create a safe place? What can we do to create an experience that is

enjoyable and fun? Finally, what can we do so that we are learning about ourselves and others?

Often times, schools design the color groups based upon homerooms or advisory groups. When this is the case, we are clearly not starting with a group from the same place as a group that has never been formed together before. In this case, we should frame the Being in such a way that students within that homeroom group are being asked to reflect back upon their experience together thus far. When reflecting, ask students what behaviors they have witnessed going on within the context of the homeroom that have been positive or they would consider to be strengths. Bring these strengths forward and have them build upon them during their experience as a color group. On the other hand, have the students think back as to how the homeroom has been functioning and ask them to think of behaviors they have witnessed within the group that they would not like to see them repeat within our program. In other words, use the experience and history that certain groups are coming in with to build upon while they are with us.

Another component of the Being that should remain consistent is the process of giving voice to the negative behaviors students either have witnessed or can think of that would work to create an unsafe experience where students are not having fun or learning anything of value. Once the lists of desired and undesirable behaviors have been created, it is time to address the third component.

In this final phase, students should initial their name on the Being. This step signifies that they support what the team is saying. Their initials also mean that they will strive to model the positive behaviors which have been outlined. Their initials also mean they will take a stand against behavior they do not want to see go on within their group. To personalize this final step even further, students can initial their name next to a word (positive or negative) that does not come easy for them. This same word can also become one that they will try and work on throughout the week.

The Being is a contract, a road map, a guide, or a tool that can help the group to achieve new heights and can help them to grow. The Being is a dynamic process, a document that is ongoing and fluid, which can be added to, referred to, and changed as the group grows and evolves in its ability to function at higher levels. The Being sets the tone for the week, the color group, and the relationships between teacher and student.