



Brooks, a freshman, After HS: Unsure



Meet Brooks. Brooks is a freshman who has lived in Cedar Rapids his whole life. His dad, Jeff, works as a truck driver and his mom, Cindy, works a couple of entry-level jobs to get by. Jeff has never been heavily involved in school or with Brooks. As a parent, Cindy stays on top of Brooks's grades and attendance regularly. Brooks has always struggled with behavior issues at school. Initially, they stemmed from being bullied in elementary school for his weight and the clothes he wore. As Brooks has gotten older, he has become more

heavily involved in sports and has enough talent to pursue a few of them after high school. Now Brooks sometimes bullies others. Brooks's behavior now seems to revolve around this "jock," or tough-guy persona he has worked to build. Brooks has gotten into a few fights each year at school, is in and out of the office due to his disrespectful behavior towards teachers, and seems to generally have a bad attitude. Brooks's mom doesn't know how to get him to behave well in school, as he was raised to be extremely respectful at home. Jeff and Cindy have never had to worry about Brooks talking back or acting out outside of school.

Brooks is very smart, but doesn't want to be viewed in this way. Teachers have constantly been puzzled as to why someone who seems to perform at a high level on both standardized tests and course assessments would have such a bad attitude while at school. Brooks will go to every class, put his hood up, mess around with friends, fail to complete the homework, but still do extremely well when the assessments are given. When asked about his attitude and lack of homework completion, his response is always, "Why would I waste time doing something I already know how to do? I pass all the stupid tests, don't I?"

Brooks's mom chose to have Brooks attend City View as a result of her feeling helpless to change his behavior towards, and at, school. Brooks doesn't care either way, so long as he can still participate in athletics, though if he had to admit he is looking forward to working on "real work."

Brooks “Week in the Life” Example

Day 1 at City View Community High School

Cindy pulls into a parking spot right outside a building that looks nothing like a school. She insists on taking Brooks up to make sure he gets there. This doesn't bother Brooks, as he knows it is just one day and he can bully anyone who gives him any trouble about it. He walks several feet behind his Mom with his hoodie up.

As they enter the space, Brooks and Cindy immediately notice the large open area and the lack of learner desks. They are greeted warmly at the door by Pat, who spends a few minutes visiting with Cindy and trying to engage Brooks. Brooks makes a few grunts and acts disinterested. As Cindy leaves, Brooks finds an area farthest away from any adult in the room, which is tough because adults are milling about the entire space. As Brooks heads there he hears someone yell over to him, “Hey man, what’s your name?” He looks over to see that one of the adults is talking to him. “Geez,” he thinks as he rolls his eyes.

“Brooks,” he replies, trying to keep the interaction brief.

“Brooks, it’s nice to meet you! I’m Charlie. Welcome to City View! What’s going on? What are you interested in?”

“I like sports, hanging with friends. . . I don’t know,” replies Brooks, hoping this dude leaves now as it's not cool being caught talking to a teacher.

“Nice What sports do you like? What do you do with your friends?”

Brooks shifts his weight, clearly bothered that he needs to stand here and talk about things this guy could care less about, in his mind. “I play football and wrestle, I like to lift, and just chill.”

“Well, it’s nice to meet you. I coach football for Kennedy. What school do you play for?”

“Jefferson.”

“Awesome. Let’s find some time to talk sports later.”

“Yeah, right,” thinks Brooks. He makes his way over to the area he identified earlier and waits to see if someone will join him. As learners trickle in, a few join and exchange pleasantries until all of the adults, or teachers, stand up in the middle. He sees a few kids he recognizes from Roosevelt and then sees Orion, a senior who plays for Wash and signed a letter of intent to play football at Michigan. Brooks is a little star struck. He feels better. He thought he may be the only athlete in a school of nerds and artsy-fartsy types. If Orion’s here it must be somewhat okay.

All of a sudden, the student body jumps to their feet and starts clapping and cheering loudly. “What the?!” thinks Brooks as it made him jump a bit.

“Hey everyone, welcome to City View Community High School! We are going to get started.” The teachers then proceed to introduce themselves, all using their first names. Brooks thinks back to 8th grade when he received a detention for calling a teacher by their first name.

The teachers then proceed to give a few instructions about the space and break learners out to talk in their groups, the prompt is to talk about whatever is on their mind. Brooks waits to go last and listens to others talk about being at the school, the teachers going by first names, and playing video games. When it gets to Brooks he simply says, “Lunch and football practice.”

A Monday in late November

The day starts as each day does, with the community circle, and today a teacher has joined each group. The day’s prompt is: “What is something you wish you could change?” Brooks’s mind immediately thinks about school and he attempts to speak first, though he is beaten out by his friend, Chris, who wrestles at Kennedy. When Chris finishes talking about poverty and the number of people who are homeless, as that’s what he is focused on for his projects, Brooks speaks up. “I would like to change school. I hate homework, being forced to learn things that don’t matter, and sitting at a desk all day. I am not saying that all school is bad, but since coming here I feel like the work I do is for a reason. I am given time to just work and if I understand something I can move on. Why can’t everyone do this? If I finish my math work, I can move forward; I am way ahead of pace in math. I don’t know, but I just feel like so much time was wasted before and more people need to be able to do this.”

After each learner shares, they transition to their Learning Discovery. Brooks has chosen the Discovery “Humanity and the Pursuit of Selflessness.” In this Discovery, the learners begin by learning about the psychology of human decision making. They discuss and look at articles arguing that choices are often tied to money; the economics of decision making and the rational thoughts behind it. They explore heuristics and biases, prospect theory, winning and losing. Brooks is hooked because, well, he got to choose this Discovery. He begins to ask questions about how this relates to human choices as they relate to global warming and climate change. Charlie, the teacher, uses this as an opportunity to explore Earth and Space Science standards relating to human activity and climate change. Other learners use this as an opportunity to discuss poverty and government taxes and how that money is or is not spent on social services. Soon, the teacher interrupts the learner-led discussion and informs the learners that it is time for their structured break. Brooks doesn’t want to stop talking about this, but knows they could pick up the conversation later. Orion is in this Discovery and seems to take an interest in Brooks. Orion was one of the best athletes to come through Cedar Rapids, yet he is humble, kind and never acts tough. Brooks is taking mental notes.

During Structured Break, Brooks uses the opportunity to plan his workouts and meals for the week. His love for sports has continued, though his knowledge of nutrition and what his body needs has grown. He has seen his wrestling teammates struggle with low energy and motivation due to needing to cut weight. At City View, Brooks has taken advantage of the opportunity to network with both Josh Kettler, strength coach at Coe College, and Darius Ward, a fitness coach at Ultimate Sports Academy. As part of his personal passion project, a freshman version of a Concentration, Brooks has built in time during the school day to meet with these guys. They have helped him plan his meals and workouts to continue to eat foods that fuel his body. Brooks has been able to track both his meals and weight during these structured breaks and has enjoyed having time in his day for this. He works with his PE teacher, Sam, to ensure that he is working towards the standards of Health and Fitness I and Foods and Nutrition class.

The science teacher, Charlie, did circle back to talk sports and Brooks tries to get to school early on Monday's to talk with Charlie about all the weekend games. Brooks sees Charlie walk by as he's working on his nutrition plan. Brooks has figured out that the more he learns on his own, doing things he likes, the less he has to sit in classes he doesn't really care about. "Charlie, you know I've been doing all this research on nutrition and weight. There's gotta be some science in here, dude! What can I do to get some of those standards checked off?"

Charlie smiles, "I wondered when you might get to asking me about this. Sure, we can talk some kinesiology and definitely get into some chemistry around this. How about Wednesday at 2? I've got some time then."

"Done," says Brooks. As Charlie walks away, Brooks wonders why his friends at other schools are struggling to pass these classes, even though they are active in sports.

As Structured Break ends, Brooks transitions to his online learning time, this one being all virtual. Earlier in the year, Brooks met with his teachers to determine what standards they thought he would meet through his "Humanity and the Pursuit of Selflessness" Learning Discovery and what he had learned in his first Discovery. Brooks and his mentor, Charlie (whom Brooks got to choose), went through the possible standards that he would hit, identified the courses they covered, and then identified the additional standards that they wouldn't be able to cover. Today, Brooks is focusing on modules in Geometry and Earth Science. Brooks has noticed that Geometry feels as though he is still learning similar to the way he has in the past, except that he has been able to move as soon as he demonstrates proficiency. Math has always come easy to Brooks, but he hated the busy work that came with it. At just over halfway through the school year, Brooks has nearly finished his modules and is hoping to start Algebra 2 modules before the end of this school year. For Earth Science, Brooks and Charlie have identified a standard about how geologic processes shape the Earth as one that he won't hit through his other Learning Discoveries. Brooks works with Charlie to set a goal to complete this module by the end of the week. Brooks reaches a stopping point and decides it is time for lunch.

After lunch, it's project time. Brooks has always been a person whose organization consists of knowing exactly where everything is . . . in the bottom of his backpack. At the beginning of the year, Brooks was exposed to the Kanban board. This showed him how to organize tasks he needs to complete into things that need to be done, things he is doing, and things he has done. Brooks has applied this to all of his school work, and even his chores at home.

Now, the freshmen have transitioned into projects and are applying the Kanban board to their projects. Brooks goes onto his online Kanban board and identifies the tasks that have been assigned to him. He has taken his newfound passion for environmental issues that he learned about in his Learning Discovery and decided to plan a community hydroponics site. He spends a part of this time on a Zoom meeting with people from Urban Greens in Solon to learn more about how to set up a hydroponics system. Brooks takes rigorous notes on the equipment that would be needed and creates more tasks for his group to work on. He identifies the need to learn how to set up a budget, the science of a reverse osmosis system (though he asks himself what osmosis is and decides his team may need a seminar on it), and how to fundraise or write grants.

Brooks determines that today he is going to spend his Individual Exploration continuing to work on organizing the Kanban board with these new tasks. He finishes the day in Community where learners are given the opportunity to discuss whatever is on their mind. Brooks is sitting with two learners whom he has met this year and has grown close to. As they were talking, they didn't think twice about a teacher who sat down on the couch by one of them and began to share their thoughts.

Tuesday

This morning's community time is spent as free social time. Brooks uses it to talk to his friends, discuss last night's wrestling meet with one of his teachers, and finish waking up. Near the end of community, Nikki, the teacher Brooks was talking to, gets everyone's attention. She pulls out the projector and begins to play the livestream of Brooks's match the night before. Brooks is a little embarrassed, but gets excited as he sees his peers rooting him on, celebrating when he got a takedown and clapping in celebration when the match ended. Brooks feels like he is a part of something special knowing that many of his peers play sports at other schools, but were still cheering for him. He thinks to himself, "So this is what our teachers were talking about when they talked about the community and family."

Following what he had observed Orion do, Brooks waves in the air and says, "thanks, everybody."

After everyone settles down, Brooks looks at his Google Calendar, something that every learner is taught and told to use at the beginning of the year during Project Time. He notices that he has a Google Meet set up with his math and language arts teachers today. Brooks set up the meeting with his math teacher during yesterday's online time; he realizes he is having a hard time understanding how to identify an angle on one of his assignments. For language arts, he is

meeting to discuss how to synthesize his hydroponics research into a paper. The language arts teacher has a group of 10 learners during this time, all going over the same research standard. These meetings are scheduled during his online learning times. During his Structured Break, Brooks is talked into doing Yoga with a group of learners. He thinks Yoga is for sissies, but was convinced that it might be good for him the day after a meet, plus he could get a workout credit for PE. He is shocked to see other kids who weren't "jocks" being better at Yoga than he. He wasn't sure he liked that so much and says something snarky to one of the girls. After, he spends the afternoon working on his hydroponics project and the research paper.

Wednesday

As Brooks walks in Charlie says, "Hey, Brooks. Let's talk." They enter a small conference room nearby.

"Hey. I hear through the grapevine that you hurt a girl's feelings yesterday. What's up?" says Charlie.

Brooks immediately knows what he was talking about but decides to play it cool. "What? No. Who said something? I didn't do 'nothin'."

"Seriously? That's how you're going to play this? C'mon. This isn't about you being in trouble. Remember what we talked about? We all make mistakes, say things we shouldn't, do things we shouldn't. Don't turn one mistake into two here, you're better than that."

Brooks feels a bit embarrassed and looks down at the floor. "Yeah. Okay. I told Nia she looked stupid trying to sit on her head. I might have said something about not being able to tell the difference between her head and her ass." Brooks can't believe he just admitted to that.

"Alright. That's better. So, I'm curious as to why you felt you had to say that?" Charlie asks.

"I dunno. Yoga seems dumb. I haven't really liked Nia since, like 5th grade. She irritates me," says Brooks.

"Do you get to explore things you enjoy here, Brooks?"

"Yeah, for school it's pretty tight."

"How did you feel about everyone cheering on your wrestling match," asks Charlie.

"It was pretty cool."

"Yeah. And Nia was right there watching and cheering and then, when she's doing something she enjoys you don't return the respect, right?"

“Yeah, I guess.” At this point in the past, Brooks would have been so uncomfortable that he would have done something to escalate the situation to just get out of here. Not this time. This was Charlie. Charlie was cool. He didn’t want to disappoint him.

“So, what’s your next steps?”

“I’ll go and tell her I’m sorry about what I said,” says Brooks.

“And. . .”

“That I should show more respect for the things she likes. . . ?” he says as a question.

“Great. Yes, I think that’s a good plan. When do you plan on doing it?”

“I’ll catch her between Community and Discovery time.”

“Cool. See you at 2 this afternoon.”

Brooks heads to Community where the learners begin the day talking to the entire group about their projects, what they’ve been working on, and receiving constructive feedback on next steps. As the Community session breaks up, Brooks takes a deep breath and walks over to Nia. “Nia, can I talk to you for a minute.” Nia rolls her eyes and shakes her head yes. “Man,” Brooks thinks, “me and this girl just don’t get along.”

“I want to say I’m sorry for what I said yesterday. I didn’t mean it. I just don’t see how people like yoga and I guess I was trying to make light of it. I know it’s something you enjoy and I do respect that you like it,” Brooks says.

Nia stares at him for a moment, wondering how much of this is Brook’s normal BS. She’s gotta admit, however, that Brooks has not been an ass this year up until yesterday. “Okay. Thanks, Brooks. I appreciate you saying sorry. I do like yoga and am pretty good at it. I don’t make fun of you for wrestling, which I hate.”

“Fair enough. Thanks, Nia.” Brooks heads to his Discovery.

During Learning Discovery, Becky steers the learners to discuss standards in Personal Finance. They discuss tracking money in and money out, creating and tracking a budget, and how a budget analysis is often used to determine decision making for an individual or family. Brooks uses the time to create his own Google sheet to track his money. He’s got a little money now since he started doing maintenance work at the publishing company his Mom works at when he is not participating in sports.

After a bit of a stressful morning, Brooks opts for the trail walk for Structured Break. He spends the time chatting up Lexi, a cute sophomore he's had his eyes on.

During his online learning time, Brooks uses his time to work on his math module now that he received help from his teacher. After lunch, he heads to work with his project team. During Project Time, Brooks meets with his hydroponics team for their weekly planning meeting. They discuss the call with Urban Greens, review tasks created, create new tasks, and assign tasks to group members. They make sure each of the tasks are actionable, time-boxed, and distributed equally in the group. They had a discussion about which tasks might hit standards in their courses and assigned them to the learners who needed them.

During Individual Exploration, Brooks uses the time to meet with Charlie as planned. Brooks is a bit worried that Charlie will treat him differently after this morning. Brooks walks into the conference room in silence.

"Hey, Brooks. How's it going?"

"Okay. I apologized to Nia."

"How'd that go?"

"Okay."

"Do you feel better now?"

"Actually, yeah. Not as stressed. It wasn't as hard apologizing as I thought," says Brooks.

"Great! Simple lesson here. The truth will set you free, man. You owned up to a mistake like a man, Brooks. Then you took steps to fix it. Can you imagine how crappy your day would have been had you tried to argue that you didn't do it?"

Brooks just smiles at Charlie and rolls his eyes.

"Alright, let's get rolling on figuring out how we can get at some science through your work in nutrition and weight." Charlie isn't treating him any different and he's not in trouble. Brooks relaxes and he and Charlie build out a great learning plan to get at some chemistry and kinesiology.

During Community, the entire group celebrates a major win that another team had. The team has been working with community members, including a city council member and former mayor, on a plan for locally subsidized child care. Brooks thought the project was pretty cool.

Thursday

Much of Thursday was similar to Tuesday for Brooks. He spent his time in and out of sessions with his teachers, learning about standards not hit in his projects.

Brooks takes time to prepare for his afternoon meeting with his mentor. Dang, he is getting a lot of Charlie time this week, he thought. He was cool with that. He organized the work he has completed over the past week. At his session with Charlie, they discuss standards that Brooks was proficient in, what Brooks has liked, what could be improved, and things Brooks might need help with; they also set goals for the next week. As they are wrapping up, Charlie says, “Tomorrow we are going to have discussions about how some people see you and what is true and not true about that. What are your thoughts for what you might talk about?”

“I don’t know,” replies Brooks.

“I remember a young man walking in on the first day of school this year, sat over in that corner, and acted like he was too cool for this place. The only thing that this individual wanted to talk about was sports. Do you remember that?”

“Yeah, why?”

“That person is not who we have come to know here. How would that Brooks have handled yesterday?”

“Not like I did. I sure as hell wouldn’t have apologized,” Brooks admits.

“As you said earlier, you are enjoying your time here, you haven’t gotten into trouble and you like your work and the project you are starting. I think you should maybe think about how people see you, versus who you really are. I am not saying that you need to change, but you are not the person you like to show people.”

“I guess. I can’t control how people see me though. How’s that my problem?” asks Brooks.

“No, but you can control what you show and how you carry yourself.”

“I hear ya. Thanks.” Brooks leaves pondering a question that one of his coaches once asked him. “How are you going to be remembered?”

Friday

Today is Brook’s all-day Discovery course, which he has every other Friday. He has selected “The History & Science of BBQ”. This one caught his eye because his Dad and Grandpa are big into barbeque and, since he doesn’t seem to have a good connection with his Dad, thought this might be one way he could do things with him. At first, it sounded silly. What school would offer a class

like this? But today is session 5 of 9 and this course has been a challenge! He’s meeting many history and science standards and the experiments and barbequing they do each time is both interesting, informative, and fun. Especially the eating part!

As the course ends, Brooks is picked up by his Mom.

“How was school, honey?” she asks.

“Well I didn’t get into any fights,” Brooks says with a smile.

“You’re really setting the bar high, but I want you to know that I received an email from your teacher today.”

“You did? Was it Charlie?” Brooks asks, thinking that Charlie ratted him out after all.

“Yeah, he told me you two had a great talk yesterday. He also said that you have been working incredibly hard and are currently ahead in where a typical first-year would be on their standards. He said you are accepting responsibility and are maturing into a nice young man. I emailed back and asked him how your attitude has been and he said the staff has loved having you there. I am proud of you. What has been the difference this year?”

Wow. Charlie didn’t rat me out! Huh. . . he thinks. “I like it at City View . . . I feel like what I am doing actually means something. I don’t have to just sit there and listen to someone talk forever. Thank you for making me do this.”

Brook’s Semester Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Community	Community	Community	Community	A Day: History of BBQ Discovery
Humanity & the Pursuit of Selflessness	Personal Finance	Humanity & the Pursuit of Helplessness	Personal Finance	

Online Coursework	Online Coursework	Online Coursework	Online Coursework	B Day: Virtual
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
Community Hydroponics Project Team	Online Coursework	Community Hydroponics Project Team	Online Coursework	
	Weight Training & Nutrition		Weight Training & Nutrition	