



Happi Homie Internship Program Recap

Over the past year, HAPPI's programmatic offerings have significantly grown and in October we finished piloting our Happi Homie Internship Program. This document seeks to give readers more texture as to what this program was, what we were able to accomplish, some of the challenges we faced, and how we plan to move forward.

Looking out at the world, we feel it is imperative to be responsive to the realities of our time and to create offerings that meet people where they're at. In regards to the age group we designed this program for, young adults ages 18-25, we're seeing a loneliness epidemic and a crisis of meaning making, while simultaneously a palpable desire to effect positive change in the world around them. This age group is positioned to make choices around college, career, and livelihood, often without the space or time to really understand what they're passionate about. Essentially, we wanted to craft a program that helps young people cultivate a sense of belonging that orients their pursuits, informing who they are and who they are becoming.

This inspired the creation of our Home-Schooling curriculum, a 13 week journey with the express intention of building a sense of home, with yourself, your relationships, your bioregion, and your worldview, while creating friendships and peer support with the other participants throughout. Most weeks featured a guest teacher who would go into detail about that week's layer of home; this ranged from nervous system regulation techniques in the "home with self" module, to ecosystem dynamics and indigenous storytelling in the "home with place" portion, to pattern recognition and value system exploration in the "home in our worldview" section. Each week's classroom was paired with a "kitchen" (see [Test Kitchen Toolkit](#)) to give participants space to process, cook with, and digest the week's learnings. Simultaneously, we offered interns opportunities to work on projects within HAPPI and our partner organizations. We also offered retreats at two local land projects focused on regeneration to inspire thoughts around what type of work is possible. And lastly, we compiled a list of mentors from our network who are established in their alternative life paths and willing to offer their hard earned wisdom. These core ingredients melded together to make the "Happi Homie Internship Program".

The interns, or "homies", were paid for their participation, with their weekly commitment looking like three, two-hour calls (workspace, classroom, & kitchen) and a variable outside workload. This consisted of intern work for HAPPI and our fiscally sponsored projects, homework from the curriculum, reaching out to mentors, and assorted self reflection prompts and exercises. Also critical to their workload was giving weekly reflections on the program for us to use in our iteration process. Ultimately, providing paid values aligned work felt crucial, as we understand that resourcing individuals and giving them exposure to inspiring work are key components to empowering young people to craft purposeful life paths.

Naturally, we learned a ton from this pilot. We were validated to see and hear from the homies that our core intention of centering relationship and belonging was one of the most valuable pieces of the program. The ability for folks to arrive to the container authentically and have the space to process how the themes applied to their lives was keystone to the entire program. In turn, this allowed for the facilitators to better attune to what kind of work the interns might enjoy and how to place them into working groups with good synergy. Additionally, we felt and received that the component around building habits within a community of practice was impactful. Beyond connection with each other and our associated projects, the homies expressed sincere gratitude for the ability to initiate relationships with mentors that will extend long after the program.

Amidst these successes, we naturally faced many challenges. We found it difficult to tow the line between giving grace and accountability, especially in light of there being an emphasis on horizontal leadership and co-creation. In the same thread, our approach of being co-students, as well as facilitators and program leaders was both occasionally confusing for the homies and overwhelming for us in terms of workload. Given that this was a pilot, we ran a lot of experiments, which led to incorporating many different components, not all of which felt cohesive or necessary. In short, the content and culture of our containers were generally nourishing, but structurally could benefit from more organization, less elements, and more in person time.

Going forward, there's a slew of considerations and curriculum tweaks that we'll include in future iterations. It took a considerable amount of time to orient the homies to HAPPI's foundational language and frameworks, leading us to return to an ongoing intention to create materials for that purpose. These will serve as an onboarding to the program as well as a starting point for folks who want to weave our language into their own programs and communities. Another key takeaway was to decouple the Home-Schooling Curriculum from the HAPPI Internship Program. We plan to continue offering both independently so that we can provide a simplified structure and thus a more clear invitation. And finally, as mentioned before, a good deal of restructuring, refining, and refreshing of the curriculum itself is in order. Creating a sense of home and belonging has many facets and dimensions and we expect that we'll always be in some level of development with the Home-Schooling Curriculum.

From the start, our intention was to pair the Home-Schooling program with a follow-up fellowship program, where freshly oriented young people could explore what they're interested in and self direct their learning in service of the multi-faceted home to which they belong. We're thankful to be moving forward with this portion of the program with one of our homies through the end of 2024. This is another program that we plan to continue with and will be the subject of a different debrief letter.

Over the next year, in regards to this program, we plan to return to conceptualization. Using the reflections and data gathered from the pilot we'll develop the next iteration of Happi Home-Schooling. Our intention is to open source the curriculum for students who want to move through the course in a self-directed manner and for educators to adapt the model to apply to their own programs. We also plan to host Happi Home workshops with guest teachers, including

some that participated in the pilot. These workshops will be recorded and included in a resource library that will be attached to the Home-Schooling program, for both self-directed learners and future program participants.

It's been a wild year, on several levels, and we feel immensely grateful to have been able to put many years of theory and practice to use. Happi Home Schooling was/is a microcosm of a much larger vision we hold around education in these times of transition. We loved that this pilot enabled us to both provide holistic learning opportunities *and* nourish the web of people and projects that we belong to. This program has been a huge initiation for us at HAPPI into walking our talk and we feel excited to share what we've been learning. As Karen Jensen says, "you can count the seeds in an apple, but you can't count the apples in a seed. When you teach, you never know how many lives you will influence...you are teaching for eternity". May we continue to create fertile ground and plant seeds that feed all life.

Testimonials:

"I feel like I've really come into a lot of clarity about what makes me me and what is of value to me. I think speaking my worldview, values, etc explicitly has helped me really see myself and I feel like my identity has become clearer." – Happi Homie, 22

"At the beginning of this journey, my first instinct would have been to describe my feeling of home as being around my family. While that still firmly stands true, I now feel as though my sense of home starts from within. I feel a strong sense of calm and connectedness and I learn a lot about myself in my moments of solitude." – Happi Homie, 20

"Happi's approach really encouraged me to bring my full self and experience into the classroom and co-learning space, in a way that traditional school models have not. I felt encouraged to build relationship and connection outside of receiving grades or criticism/praise for work done although that did have some role in the space. The approach also felt emergent and left room for messiness and making mistakes which I was grateful for all around." – Happi Homie, 22

"I feel like I have become more well spoken and comfortable sharing my views and emotions which has been a struggle for me in the past. I now have the skill of being able to articulate my thoughts and being able to share them easily." – Happi Homie, 24

"I feel like I've grown significantly in my understanding of myself and the world around me. I've become more aware of my strengths, like my ability to connect with others and my passion for community building and music, while also recognizing areas where I need more growth. I've developed a deeper sense of empathy and patience, especially in how I interact with people and handle tough situations. At the same time, many of my shortcomings and areas for improvement have become more apparent, which motivates me to work more intentionally on building my self-discipline, setting clearer goals, and following through on the personal growth I want to achieve." – Happi Homie, 20