

After 12 weeks of working with over 1,000 kids, anyone is guaranteed to learn some lessons. My internship with Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia provided an opportunity for me to apply many concepts I learned in class. I learned about the important role of fun in learning, about the delicate balance of classroom management, about how to create meaningful educational interactions with kids, about writing, publishing and using curriculum, and many other ways to apply classroom material. I realized what a wide variety of applications a major in Education provides, even outside of traditional classrooms!

In terms of students, Johnson Ferry is comparable to, if not larger than, many public schools, with about 4-5 classrooms of 15-20 kids for each age group or grade. It was a great place to learn how to motivate kids to learn. Unlike a school, kids have the decision as to whether or not they'll keep coming. If they're not engaged or if they get bored, they can opt to stay home. So, Johnson Ferry has the responsibility to create engaging, exciting learning environments, which is a goal that every teacher should have. They understand that long-term learning must include an element of fun so the kids stay engaged. One of my supervisors said she saw Disney as our biggest competition--except that churches have the additional responsibility of teaching life-changing lessons. In fact, part of our duties as interns was to read Disney's book, *Be Our Guest* and try to apply those principles to our summer work.

This principle shone through many of their programs. For example, we did a jungle-themed vacation Bible school. Every hall the kids would walk through was fully, cheaply, and creatively decorated. One hall had waterfalls made of blue sheer fabric and cardboard rocks. Another had vines made of twisted brown butcher paper and construction paper leaves. The memory verses were made into games: searching for the words written on treasures in a sandbox or rearranging leaves on a vine. The Biblical concepts they wanted them to learn were made into

skits, relay races, crafts, and treasure maps. By talking to the kids throughout the week, I could tell they were really understanding most of the lessons, and everyone I asked knew the memory verse.

That week, I was in charge of a second-grade classroom, and I definitely had to apply what I learned in class about classroom management. My class was majority hilarious little boys who didn't want to sit still and kept finding reasons to fight. Using tips from my K-State classes and from other VBS teachers, I ignored it at first, praising the ones who were paying attention and doing as told. That worked for a bit, but eventually, the boys started acting up again. I separated them, then told them about the consequences (having to sit with a teacher, losing free time, or telling their parents), then, if they continued to act up, they would get a consequence.

I used similar principles at children's camp when I, along with 4 other staff, was in charge of making sure 30 drama-prone girls got to their activities on time. Almost every week in Sunday school, I'd have to put someone in time-out for various reasons: refusing to clean up or being mean to another child. Using other teachers' examples, I'd warn them, then do what I warned, then after give them a hug and offer to play with them. In Foundations of Education, we learned to not mentally label kids as "good" and "bad" and that establishing a gentle authority was the best way to interact with your students. To me, that seemed the best way to apply that principle.

Thankfully, most of my interactions with kids didn't have to be disciplinary. I got to spend a lot of time, about 9-10 hours a week, hanging out with kids who were in daycare, Sunday school, or in another of the many church programs. I taught lessons to kids from an age range of 3-years-old to 5th graders and learned how to tweak my lessons for the wide range of attention spans. I applied many lessons from class, like using question-based lessons to get more

interaction from the kids, or using lots of visual aids. When one kid would answer, I'd ask another kid to repeat what they said so everyone would pay attention and they'd learn their classmates' opinions are important, too. I used the concept of scaffolding: when a child couldn't do something, I'd help them do it instead of doing it myself. Mostly, I tried to get them to talk, play, or create and enjoyed the cuteness and creativity that ensued.

I also learned a lot about what goes behind-the-scenes when working with kids. I spent a lot of time balancing budgets, looking for the cheapest materials for crafts, organizing materials, fighting with the copier machine, coming up with age-appropriate games, collaborating on project designs. I even helped write a published curriculum for a program for preschoolers and their grandparents called GrandCamp.

There were so many little tips and tricks I learned. Rolling tape horizontally instead of vertically makes gravity work for you, not against you. There are 2 ages of kids: those who put everything in their mouth and those who climb on everything. Timeouts should be as many minutes long as the children are old. When kids tattle, it's best for them to resolve it themselves. Costumes get automatic engagement. Die Cut machines are magical. Asking little kids to give me their eyeballs is a great, funny way to get everyone's attention.

Overall, this summer reinforced what I've been learning in class by providing real-life opportunities to apply it. In class, we learn how to articulate good teaching concepts in discussions and on tests. Being able to apply those concepts requires a different kind of learning, one that I experienced daily throughout my internship. I experienced how to create an engaging learning atmosphere that can compete with Disney's, how to manage a classroom while maintaining the most amount of fun and acceptance, how to promote long-term learning and

engagement, and how a lot of administrative work is done. I loved seeing how my classroom knowledge of teaching translates into real life, and how much of an impact it can have on kids!