

The little ones



Last week when looking for jobs, an assignment for this week came up and I jumped on it even though it's an age group I normally don't work with outside of specials like gym or music, or potluck (floater) assignments. However, it was a two-day assignment so I figured why not after all the middle school assignments I've had lately. It was first grade. It actually turned out not so bad. One of the reasons I tend to stay with older kids is the type of management younger ones require. It's not just teaching with them, but mediator, parent, shoe-tyer, and other roles. Well, I didn't have to tie any shoes this time around in any event. The first day had a slow start. After taking attendance, bilingual kids (some Hispanic, many Indian) would leave ordinarily, a good third of the class, but this time only a few left while a teaching assistant came in to help with the rest. Teaching assistants- always good to have. They are a familiar face to the kids when there is an unfamiliar face like mine there- young kids love consistency. The slow part was when we did calendar. The lesson plans, generally well-detailed, was not so with the calendar time. They pretty much just said the kids would help me. The thing about that is younger kids always want to help, so as expected I had at least half a dozen little ones all trying to show me what to do. Once the chaos was sorted out, I flipped through the cards they gave me and let each child do one of the dozen calendar activities until we made it all the way through. We started the next activity, reading, about 15 minutes late. I had to skip independent reading, but we eventually got back on track.

So the morning went- reading, stations (centers), some writing, and then the Spanish teacher came in for his lesson before lunch. During centers, there were a couple of students who were at the computer center. Unfortunately in this

district there is no general log-in, and the teacher didn't log in for me beforehand or leave me the password, so- no computer center. They got to read instead. Once the Spanish teacher came, it was a little break for me, but I stayed in the room anyway.

Following lunch the kids always spend five minutes quietly listening to music to settle down from recess. Then the "star student" talked about her family, showing some photos. I presume all the children get to do this throughout the year. Once she was done, it was gym time, then music. Another break- yes! As asked in the plans, I graded homework while they were away. The final part of the day was math. I had two teaching assistants this time helping out, so it went well. They learned about [fact families](#) for addition and subtraction. Well, most of them learned. I found out on day two, a rarity since most assignments are one day, when grading their homework that five or so did not in fact understand. Well, I tried. Finally, at 2:30 they were dismissed, I straightened up, and left a note.

The next day was mostly the same, except no Spanish, art instead of PE and music, and dismissal was 3:00 (Wednesdays are early days in this district for teacher meetings- why they don't just have the teachers stay a half-hour later one day I don't know; I guess it works for them [and for me ☐]). The math lesson was more fun though- candy heart math in the spirit of upcoming Valentine's Day. They of course got to keep the candy hearts to take home afterward.

I should probably note that the biggest issue was one boy in particular. He was one of the ELL kids, and he was all over the place- so much so that one of the counselors came in and marked off an area for him that he had to stay in. I wonder what the teacher thought of it when she came in today? Fortunately, her class uses a behavior plan where the kids have to change cards if their behavior is unacceptable. They start on green and get two warnings, yellow and orange, before

landing on red which means trouble. For the one student, it meant a note home to his parents. I'm not sure if it's the same for the rest of the class, but whether it is or not as I said it means trouble for the student. Only that one ended up on red one of the days, but several more wound up on yellow or orange. The Spanish teacher was most unhappy about the class today- something about "worst day in five months..."

Well, in any event I survived the two days in first grade. Next up: Friday's ELL. No silent h before that this time, but I do have things to say next post.