

Well, that's all she wrote...

...for the 5th graders in children's ministry that is. What? Did you think I meant I was done with this blog? Today the 5th graders made their exit from children's ministry. In a couple of weeks they will officially enter student ministries as junior high students. Being Memorial Day weekend didn't help though as there were a few who didn't make it due to traveling, though fortunately not too many. The Junior high pastor (I think? I don't remember the other one leaving) came in with a couple other leaders and spoke with them about the welcome night, things to expect in junior high, etc. The kids were prayed over and given certificates- a sort of graduation I guess. Of course, some won't really be in junior high/middle school if they go to a public school in the area where 6th grade is still elementary, but at the church 6th grade is junior high even for them.

So, kids I have been working with for the last two years are now gone and in two weeks the third grade moves up to take their place. They should recognize me though, at least Saturday night kids, as I have been in the kid's drama. This is supposed to be the time then to heavily advertise camp, but the early bird discount will be over by then as camp is one short month away, and unless things change significantly, yours truly will be joining them for the week. I have said before that that one week last year was very powerful for me spiritually, and I hope it will be the same for me this year- and for whoever will be in my cabin this time around.

Going back to drama, the headline applies here as well. It is done for the season, not to start again until next fall with a new theme. My usual exit line, to tell the audience to be sure to tune in next week, reflected this as well, instead telling them to be sure to trust Jesus since He's the only one who can make us super human. I also added a line for the third graders- that they would see me ("someone who looks like

me") in two weeks. Heh, heh... So at the end, we added cast bows, and on reflection, I should have walked over to the puppet as well, since the puppeteer couldn't very well step out and take a bow too. Oh, well.

Small classes and early starts

7:15. That's what time a sub has to be at the junior high schools (still called that even though they are on a middle-school system- I guess they didn't want to change the letterheads ☐) in the district I was in today. That means being up before six. At least I had a solid night's sleep instead of constantly waking up like I often do. Once I got there, it turned out this teacher had a class that started ten minutes before the regular classes. Say what? Fortunately the plans said another teacher was asked to run this class so no problem not being able to completely go over the plans. The one I was subbing for was also a traveling teacher, which in this case could be called class-on-a-cart. This teacher had a class in a different room every period. One class even had two different rooms- more on that below.

So I got to the room with my cart and the teacher who was supposed to take over (surprise to him!) just said that I could handle this and just ask if I had any questions since he would be in and out of the room. Well then, I had to look at the plans again after all. It really wasn't hard like he said. All I had to do was pass out quizzes they had to complete, inform them of their class/homework assignment once finished, and then monitor them. Fortunately I had second period off to look at the rest of the day.

The next period was communications, basically a speech class. Well, they were good at speaking all right- to each other in conversation that is. They were completing an assignment as well, so again no teaching- just monitoring. The next two classes actually lasted for a period plus another half-period. Being math classes this was a bit odd. This is actually why one of the classes was in two different rooms. They spent one period in one room, then had to move for the next period. I would gather the regular teacher in that room doesn't have two periods off in a row to allow us to be there for the full time. To get the half-period the students actually sacrificed their study hall half of lunch to have the longer math period.

Where does the small classes part come into play? Well, you three who actually read this blog (□) already know special education classes can be smaller. Well, two of the math classes were such classes- the first had about eight students in it. Most of them worked well, but there were two girls who thought they were in that communications class and chatted pretty much the entire time, sometimes with others across the room. At least they did *some* work so I was able to put up with it without sending anyone to the office. I left a note about this of course. This was the first of the two special-ed math classes. The second, get this, had **two students**. That's right, just two. They pay for a teacher to teach a class of two students?? I would really like to know more about this but as a sub for just the day I really only know what's in the notes- nothing about it there!- and from what I might pick up from other teachers, but I didn't want to be nosy. Oh well, some things just remain mysteries.

Until tomorrow then. Time for me to sleep...

Not so bad after all / Quiz show

When one thinks of 8th grade, it is often associated with hormonally-challenged, impossible to control young adolescents, and indeed I have found this to be the case in several classrooms. Add learning, or especially behavioral disabilities to the mix and... well, I'll leave it to the imagination. There is one school where I just refused to take any more positions last year for the older kids (7th and 8th in fact, this year just 8th so far at that school). The school district I was in today I consider to be the best of the local districts I work in. Besides the money spent on education from a funds-not-so-challenged village, the kids tend to be far better behaved than in other districts. I would place the reasons at better family life. In many areas there are low-income families which causes family struggles due to not enough money and parents who are always working and have no time for their kids and so pretty much leave the raising of the kids to the schools. This town really doesn't have any low-income families (it costs too much to live here!). Of course there are other factors influencing family life and behavior, but this I think is number one. In any event, these 8th graders were not so bad to deal with at all. Well, the fact that I always had an assistant helped more than a little as well. As with other special ed teacher situations in a middle school, I had many of the same students all day. I taught two language arts classes (4-6 students in each!) and watched over two tutorial (study hall) periods. Additionally I had two science "co-teaching" classes. Like one time last week, one of these "co-teach" classes had two subs! Fortunately the main teacher left the other sub clear plans.

Interestingly enough, the regular teachers for myself and the other teacher I mentioned were actually in the building, just

in meetings all day. Something that it somewhat common with special education actually. The teachers have many meetings throughout the year, so it is only logical that some of those meetings would be in the school rather than an administration building.

One of the neat things to see was one of the science classes created electric quiz machines- the type where you use a wire to complete a circuit with a correct answer (multiple choice or true/false) and light up a bulb. The quality and size of these quiz games greatly varied, and some were even quite creative. One student took a shortcut and used an Operation game as a starting point, but most did theirs from scratch. Some used one wire (true/false and multiple guess) and some used two (matching). One boy used a motor instead of a light bulb that would shoot up a spinning helicopter-disc. They were very interesting to try out. Actually, the class didn't get to try them out as other classes apparently did due to poor treatment of a substitute teacher yesterday. Yes, I got to watch the aftermath of a bad substitute report. Apparently they lost out on playing a review game yesterday as well as not getting to try each other's quiz games. Hey, just because it's a good town doesn't mean the kids are *always* good. I guess maybe I just lucked out today, but what I said about this district generally holds true.

Special Ed

One of the most common roles I fill in for is special education. Sometimes it's quite challenging, sometimes quite easy. Well, it is only truly easy when there are teaching assistants who pretty much take over while I take the role of assistant. This is commonly the case in mentally impaired

classrooms (autism, Down syndrome, etc.). Yesterday was mostly on the easy side. I was subbing for a junior high teacher who actually only had one class of her own- the rest were "team teaching," which generally means the sub plays the part of assistant while the other teacher teaches. But what does one do when both teachers are out and both left plans saying the other teacher will take over? That appeared to be the case when I walked into second period and compared notes with the other sub. Fortunately, this turned out to be a non-crisis as the teacher he was subbing for left plans on the board in addition to saying that my teacher would take over. I can only guess his teacher found out about my teacher's absence only after writing the plans. Whew. The rest of the day was quite uneventful, just following the same group of students around through social studies, math, science and language arts. I also had to help look over a group of homework lunchers (detention really). It's just as it sounds- students who didn't turn in homework in one or more classes worked on it during lunch. I was told when they first started this program there were over 60 kids in the room at one time! Now that has to be against fire codes. I was quite happy there were only about 15. In any event this was definitely a position I would do again.