

Seen but not heard



That's how the saying goes, only it's talking about children while I'm talking about me. Welcome to my journey in a deaf and hard-of-hearing classroom. I always like to joke about how I am monolingual, speak only one language, but even with others from another country, when I talk to them they can usually understand me at least a little. The problem with subbing in this sort of classroom, I know extremely little sign language. At least in Spanish, I can tell them I don't speak Spanish in, er, Spanish ("No hablo español). Without a translator I am hopeless in a deaf classroom.

This wasn't the first time I've been in one of these rooms. In fact, I subbed for this same teacher once last year so I knew what to expect. I arrived there and first thing I noticed was there were no plans. Sub plans that is- she did have the plans she expected to teach herself. For the most part, these plans worked out fine. For two hours in the morning the kids worked on packets called "News-2-You." Another teacher in the room for the morning actually taught that. What did I do in the meantime? I cut out word cards and laminated book pages, and put together number cards. They would have had me make copies too, but the machine was taken over by the PTA for the morning. I did get to teach one lesson though, aided in part by an assistant who was none too happy about being sucked into a translator role. She was replaced by one much less cold to me about 10-minutes into the lesson (she had to be somewhere else). I taught the math lesson. It was an... interesting... experience. The students were at a lower level than I expected them to be, and I had to skip parts of the lesson and adjust. Yes, be a real teacher for the hour. 8)

The afternoon was far different from the morning, but I was

about as useful. For most of the afternoon I was in other classrooms acting as ~~the third wheel~~ a teaching assistant for the classes. I couldn't help the deaf students mainstreamed in the classes- that was left to an assistant who could sign. I just walked around, made sure students were working, and in rare instances helped a student or two. There was a small portion of the afternoon where I was scheduled to teach. However, when the time rolled around it was myself and the two 6th grade kids (there were two each of 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade kids in her room). No translator. Well, scratch teaching. The cold assistant came in and set them to read for the half hour and then left again. About 5-minutes later a translator came in, sent by one of the assistants or a teacher as she said she normally wasn't in the room. Lesson time? Nope. I didn't have the materials for the lesson, so they continued reading before going off to speech at 2:30, leaving me to act as an assistant again in the 4th grade room where the two 4th-graders were mainstreamed for the afternoon.

All-in-all it was an easy, unexciting day. Compared to my time in this room last year, it went great. I remember some dramatic moments, one where a student swore at me in sign language- not that effective since I didn't understand and he was seen by the teaching assistant, but strange just the same. I also saw one of my weekend kids in the hall. When I call him up this week- I'm calling all of my two small groups to remind them of rewards week- I'm sure he'll want to talk about it.