

Doing It Right

I'm not sure if I'm ever going to be any good at this! There's just so much to learn.

I'm a student teacher ... emphasis on the 'student' part ... and I'm more than half way through my first practicum in a real school! They call it an 'IPT' ... supposedly that stands for 'Introductory Professional Term', but I suspect it really means 'Incompetent Practice Teacher'. That's the way it feels sometimes, anyway. Although everybody keeps telling me I'm doing a good job.

Today I was supposed to teach for half a day, but my cooperating teacher was absent, so I volunteered to take all of his classes. I'm not sure why I did. That may have been my first mistake.

Take first period, for example. This was a lesson I had prepared for, and after I finished, I asked the students some questions to see if they'd understood what I'd been talking about. I discovered three kids who just didn't get it, and I had to sit with them at recess to go over the lesson again. I think they understood it when I was done, but I guess I didn't do a very good job teaching it the first time. If I were a good teacher, I probably shouldn't have had to do that, should I? I don't know.

In the second class, I was reviewing long division, a lesson I'd taught the day before. I had to stop several times during the lesson to bring a few of the kids back on task ...they weren't paying attention. I'm glad my supervisor wasn't here to see that.

My instructor in the Classroom Management course I've just finished told us many times that a student teacher should always appear confident when they're in charge of a class. I'm not confident at all ... I wish I was. But I smile a lot, I use my 'teacher voice' when I have to ...and I guess I'm good at faking it. I don't think the kids have noticed my knees shaking, at least.

At first break, I was outside the classroom and was appalled to see some of my kids running down the hall and horsing around. I had to pull them aside and speak firmly to them! What else could go wrong in one day?!

Just before lunch I taught a Social Studies lesson, and this was one I'd also prepared in advance. I knew that this particular class had trouble paying attention, especially when the teacher's back was turned, so I prepared a lesson for the Smart Board, including lots of questions that could be revealed one by one. I figured that this way, I wouldn't have to turn my back on them, and could move around the room more to make sure they were all engaged. It worked, I guess. But if I were a better teacher maybe I wouldn't have to do things like this. And it was a lot of work.

And then there was recess. After it was over, I realized that I probably hadn't done a very good job of supervision. I know that some of the teachers like to sit on the bench out there, so they can keep an eye on all the students. But I spent most of the time wandering around talking to kids. It was fun ... but I think I probably shouldn't have done that. I'm not sure.

I'm not very good at making lesson plans; they take so long! The teachers I've been observing make it seem so easy ... they teach their lessons day after day, ask lots of questions, and the

kids learn. But I take a long time to make lesson plans, and I've been spending a lot of hours on them, trying to incorporate as many different teaching methods as I can, to keep the kids interested and to help them all learn. Experienced teachers don't seem to do that. I wonder if I'll ever be able to do things the way they do!

In last period things just fell apart. The class was sitting there waiting for me to start, but I couldn't find the teacher's plans. So I had to go across the hall and ask the other grade four teacher if she had some ideas about what I could do. She was nice enough to give me some practice sheets, and the class and I spent the period reviewing the 'times tables'. I even had time to make up a game for them to play. But I was pretty embarrassed about not knowing what to do, and having to ask. Teachers should be able to figure things out for themselves. At least, I've always thought so.

So I guess things aren't going that well. There are so many problems I have to deal with. I'm glad my cooperating teacher wasn't here today!

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... and of course, if he had been, he would have told her that every single thing she did was what a good teacher should be doing.