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EDU 390

Paper

For my practicum, I worked with the program called Totus Tuus. Totus Tuus is a program in which a team of four young adults put on a week-long catechesis program for the children of 6 different parishes. There is normally two programs: day and night. During the day, my teammates and I would each teach 3 classes out of 4 to 1st through 6th graders. So there were three groups going to four classes each: grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6. We had these children typically from 9am-2:30pm. During the night program, my teammates and I gave two talks for the 7th through 12th graders. These teenage students would be with us from 7-9pm. Depending upon the parish, we encountered students of different ethnicities: Asian, Latino, Caucasian, and African American. We also encountered students who were part of a different socio-economic status than the rest of the students. I will write about some environmental adaptations, instructional adaptations, successful interventions, and some of my observations.

Environmental adaptations

For each of the parishes, we use different environmental adaptations that enhanced the chance of

rooms that were already classrooms, we would take into consideration which rooms would be best for the different grade levels. For example, the 1st and 2nd grade room had to have a place for the students to be able to sit down on the floor. In order to accommodate for the whole group activities, we would use a gym or a large room.

In regards to the teen program, we used a multiple locations throughout the night depending upon the parish. It was beneficial for us to have a gathering place. It also helped to have specific places for small groups to meet.

Instructional adaptations

The instructional adaptations varied from week to week. When I was on break for the first class period, I would visit the different classrooms. In this capacity, I was supervising and observing. My teammates would do the same thing when they were on break. My teammates definitely had different teaching styles. My team leader used juggling and a rock-paper-scissors battle. He also took his students outside to use his car as a demonstration of a concept. My other male teammate used acting in one of his lessons. He also used a treasure hunt and a two team competition. My female teammate would use imagination when we had forgotten to cut out the craft for her class. I used instructional adaptations in my class periods as well. All of these came about because each of us were able to think on our feet. We all had the willingness to change the lesson plan. It was beneficial to have the mentality of having main points to cover and make sure that they are covered. Our lesson plans did not have to be set in stone. One of our go-to activities in the classroom was “tear down the church” which is a variation of the game of “hang man.”

For the teen program, we changed the schedule to make the night more fun for them. We also adapted our talks to what we learned about the students. In addition, we used group discussions and private discussion journals.

Successful interventions

Each week there were different successful interventions that were used. One of the main interventions that we used for students who were disruptive was advice and tips from the volunteers who knew the students better. During the first week, we only had a few adult volunteers. The second and third weeks, we were able to have enough volunteers for each classroom and for the large group activities. During the fourth week, we did not have any volunteers in the classrooms. For the fifth week, mainly teens from the night program were aides in the classrooms. During the last week, we had about 1-4 teens to a classroom. Despite having the help, we really had to use discipline (strike system) for this last week. This strategy I might use in my future classroom. Other interventions were recess, lunch, and snacks. We also had funny skits, music, and pump-up (which was a way to get the students excited for the day). Since Totus Tuus is a Catholic program, we had Mass, confessions, and prayer integrated into the schedule.

For the teens, we used icebreaker game to help them get acquainted with each other and with us. Snacks were sometimes used as a break from before the next talk. They were also used as a way to interact other than teaching. We had a night of just fun and games. Lastly, we had confessions and Eucharistic adoration.

Observations

There are many observations that I will take into my future classroom from this experience. It taught me much about myself and my teaching style. A main thing that I will take away is to treat my colleagues as a team. Each of us will be able to teach the students better if we are willing to share strategies with each other. Teachers in a school should work together because they ultimately have the same goal of forming and teaching the students. Another thing that I will take away is to be less of a perfectionist. It is important to differentiate instruction if the students are not able to learn it the way I had planned to teach it.

From my observation of the teen program, I will take the importance of relating to them on a personal level. For those students in teenage years, they especially need someone to trust and look up to. The private discussion journals was a way to get to know the students on a very personal level. Another thing that I observed is not to take comments that they make personally.

This experience was a learning experience for me personally. I was able to work with the different age levels and realize how each age group interacts. Also, prayer and/or personal time is important for teachers to have to reflect on the day. Since I am going into Secondary History Education, I will be able to take both the strategies of the classroom portion of the day program and knowledge from the teen program. Putting these two together, I will be able to take my practicum experience into my future classroom and it will help me to be a better teacher.