

Day in the Life of an Early Childhood Education Corps Member, Part I

By Jennie Z. Carr (Houston Corps '08)

- 7:15 a.m.:** Arrive at school to prepare materials for the day and complete a classroom safety inspection. I set up the learning centers for the day, write my morning message, and put out the morning activity before students arrive.
- 7:45 a.m.:** Students begin to enter the classroom with their parent or guardians. Some students are dropped off by daycares. I perform a morning health inspection of the students to ensure that they are not sick or injured. Next, I guide them through the morning puzzles or drawing activities while breakfast is served.
- 8:45 a.m.:** Morning circles begin and I lead students through a variety of math and literacy activities. These activities include a classroom newsletter, calendar, rhyming words, a counting game, and letter skills.
- 9:15 a.m.:** Students are released to free-choice centers. They choose from a variety of centers, including dramatic play, blocks, library, science, art, math, writing, and literacy. Each center is aligned to a learning objective and students perform the learning tasks independently. During this time I facilitate centers, perform small group activities, and/or conduct assessment depending on the day of the week.
- 10:15 a.m.:** After centers have been cleaned up by the students I am joined by my Head Start Teacher to co-teach the literacy/read aloud circle time
- 10:30 a.m.:** I model the writing for the students and help students complete a writing task. The tasks range from writing their name to drawing and labeling pictures of their families. The main goal is to reinforce the idea that words have meaning. Perfecting spelling and handwriting skills will come in time — some students do not have the fine motor skills to even hold a pencil correctly.
- 10:50 a.m.:** Music and movement activities in which the students dance, move, and sing to literacy- and math-related songs.
- 11:00 a.m.:** Student serve themselves lunch in the room and I go to my lunch and continue planning. My Head Start teacher and teacher's assistant take over in my morning class. During my two hour lunch/planning I collaborate with other teachers, complete paperwork, prepare for my afternoon class, and eat lunch in the planning room.
- 1:00 p.m.:** I begin instruction in my afternoon class and co-teach with my second Head Start teacher for one hour. The components of the morning class (two circle times, writing time, and centers) are repeated in the afternoon, but are conducted in a different order to fit time constraints.

- 2:00 p.m.:** Snacks are served in the room and I read a book of the students' choice to the class or introduce center activities.
- 2:30 p.m.:** I lead circle time and centers. These activities are similar to my morning class in structure and procedure but are differentiated to fit the needs of the class.
- 3:30 p.m.:** Students participate in "sharing circle" where they share the favorite thing that they learned during the day.
- 3:45 p.m.:** Guardians and daycares begin to pick up students. I give behavior reports to parents and pass out any necessary paperwork.
- 4:15 p.m.:** Drive home and call parents, fellow Teach For America corps members, and husband to discuss my day and plan for the evening.
- 5:00 p.m.:** Plan for the following day and prepare necessary materials. This usually takes 30 minutes to an hour depending on the day. I do the majority of my planning on Sunday.
- 6:00 p.m.:** Cook dinner and eat dinner.
- 7:00 p.m.:** Go on a walk with my husband and dogs or go to the gym.
- 9:00 p.m.:** Respond to e-mails and catch-up on other leadership commitments while I watch television.
- 10:00 p.m.:** Go to bed!