Final Paper for Detroit Fellows Tutoring Project

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**What impact did you have on the children you tutored?**

Every day I showed up to Golightly I asked the students how they were feeling, as well as went through the basic run down of what was in store for that day. They read to me as I read to them and got better at it the more they tried. I was tutoring second graders, and at that age they’re still blissful about a lot of small things. The ability to read more and say certain words correctly, however, provided the mental stimulation that people much older experience and love as well, identical to the feeling of solving a puzzle. Reading is a critical part of any student’s life as well as his or her education; people remember often how they were taught to read or at least who taught them. That being so, it’s safe to say that the students I tutored are going to remember me for the rest of their lives. I had a lot to teach them in (in regards to the curriculum I was given) and had to get to know each and every one of them.

I was sure to leave an impression so that the students would want to spend more time with me, which would result in a better morale towards reading with me. This was an easy task, as I literally can’t help but smile and joke when I speak to most people. On the first day I brought my guitar to play for the children, and ever since I made it a priority to bring it every Friday. Kids already like to see their teachers, but sometimes it’s easy to forget the small things they teach. Letting those students into what I like to do as a hobby made me closer with them and allowed me to combine some life lessons with the actual lessons. As a result they remember Mr. Chrite, the guitar guy who came to my school and taught us different ways to read and memorize the words we sometimes got in our English classes.

**Successful and less successful strategies?**

Music is one of my things; I love it, and as far as I know other people do too. Like the show Schoolhouse Rock, I attempted to teach the kids through it. On Fridays it was the guitar, and on other days it was either beatboxing or stomping the floor in rhythm while the other student read. Sometimes Landen (one of my students) would try to rap the text he was reading while I made a beat with my hands on the desk, and it made the project more fun. He remembered a lot of what we went over and, because of that, I didn’t change my method. Another student I had, Jaden, had a lot of trouble with reading. He could barely remember his alphabet and almost every time I read with him he gave me a blank stare which was eerily involuntary (really, I wanted to find out what was going on). He liked math and was great at it, which suggested he was much more hands on than auditory or visual. There were a few different things I had the power to use in order to suit his kinesthetic needs, and his favorite was the flash cards. Every day he tried to read them properly but always failed at the same word. After about three weeks of drilling, dancing, pointing, sorting, comparing, and I believe singing, he managed to say all five of them on his first try. It was a great moment for the sake of his reading and the sake of my strategies, but that was only the first unit of red light words. We didn’t have time to finish the second set of cards, but that went to show there were very few effective strategies under my belt when dealing with a learner who is strictly kinesthetic. David was one of my best pupils, as he ripped through each lesson like that’s what he was born to do. It wasn’t hard to keep him interested in the work he had to do until the end, where he slowed down and was humbled by what was left to accomplish. He was different from the other students in small ways that would find him his own click later on in life. All he talked about were his favorite video game characters and franchises, which is how I was able to relate to him immediately. It was an example of the teacher learning from the student, despite it having little to nothing to do with school. Because he played so many videogames, it was easy to deduce that he was very analytical, which explained his prowess in school. Once he had to start learning, which was ironically at the end of this semester, I had to coach him for the first time ever. It was at that point where encouraging the student and rewarding him or her with stickers and compliments became important, for people are fragile and vulnerable when learning something new. My teaching style with him was extremely supportive in the end, for in the beginning he took off without needing anything.

Discipline became an invaluable tool when I was dealing with Ja’Niyah. She had a habit of calling herself stupid and claiming that she couldn’t read; I made sure to keep her from doing that around me. I’ve sent her back to class to show that I was serious, and from that point on she was more optimistic when she was with me. She liked to play a lot, which is basically an invitation for procrastination. When I was straightforward and strictly about the lesson she practically refused to pay attention. I also noticed that her friend Bianca, another student I tutored often, would be a frequent distraction.

“Can I got to the bathroom, Mr. Chrite?”

“Why do you always have to use the restroom whenever you see Bianca?”

“I’ve been holding it since I was in class!”

“Alright then, but hurry up, okay?”

It’s painfully obvious that I learned the hard way why I shouldn’t let either of them use the bathroom when the other one is already out of the classroom. To get her attention I used stickers, which every kid loved, and got what I was looking for, which was her focus. Those things are magical, as it worked for KeyJaun as well. He enjoyed making loud silly noises at times I would explain something to him. At first I grew frustrated and thought I would have to send him back to class, but then the supportive side of being a tutor had to come into play again. He only made jokes when he was confident about what I was teaching him; when he didn’t understand it he would be quiet and pay close attention to what was happening on the paper, or white board to be exact. I really didn’t have to alter my strategies with him because he was actually a great student. Obnoxious, yes, but only when there was nothing else for his mind to work on. To be honest, every day I worked with him I laughed because he was so silly. London, my last student, wasn’t big or small in any area; she learned what I taught her and took it with her. She did nothing but improve and I made sure that she never forgot it with, you guessed it, plenty of stickers and music.

**What impact did this experience have on you as a student and as a person?**

I’ll be honest, I’m incredibly sad I can’t see the students anymore until next semester. Sure I can go back to visit, but nothing will be like powering through the curriculum they had in store for them. This whole thing has made me a more understanding person, as people are different from each other in their own little ways, even as kids. I never imagined the experience would reach me on that deep of a level, as every day I spent with my friends I said, “I don’t feel like getting on my bike and leaving, but I gotta do it for the kids. They need me.” I stressed myself out thinking about finding a learning style for Jayden and wondered constantly how David knew the cheat codes to some of my favorite video games. Eventually the last day came and I was three times as intuitive about how being a student and being a respectable person worked, with the thought of the kids in my head. I cried in the office, I cried at my dorm, and I cringed on my bike when I had to go. The children said that they’ll see me on Monday; I never got to play them their last song. But they do know I was there for a reason, as do I. Inside, many of us are kids, just with edges all around to keep us safe. The real world toned us into greater-thinking beings, and to find out about what matters to oneself… That’s what students can help us to do.