

## **Executive Summary**

### **Spring Internship – Jaclyn Cobosco**

#### **Introduction**

During my final semester at Messiah College, I interned with New Hope Ministries at the Mechanicsburg After School Program. New Hope Ministries is a non-profit organization that offers after school programs to “at risk” children in the community with the hope of providing a positive Christ-centered environment that encourages each child’s success. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, the “Teens in Transition” (TNT) program is offered for middle and high school students. On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons the “Seeds of Success” (SOS) program is offered for elementary school students. The supervisor with whom I worked directly every day was Kari Skamanich, the coordinator of the Mechanicsburg after school program. I was also in contact with Youth Programs Coordinator for New Hope Ministries, Joel Giovannetti. I developed four learning objectives for this internship, they are as follows:

1. To learn how to interact, understand, and develop connections with children/people from different backgrounds than my own.
2. Observe and learn how to present homework and other skills in a variety of ways to best reach the learning style of the student to ensure that each child has the best chance to succeed.
3. To learn how to appropriately develop lesson plans for bible study, life skills, and tutoring that are catered to the needs of the population and to learning disabilities.
4. To create an environment that centers on Christ and builds character in children who do not hear about Christ on a regular basis.

I sought to fulfill these objectives through daily observation and interaction with the students, researching methods for working with this population, and assistance and guidance from Kari, my supervisor who is also a teacher and is excellent at creating lesson plans and coming up with activities.

#### **Work/Projects**

The biggest project at my internship was building Christ-centered relationships. Once I began to develop relationships with the students, I found it was much easier to help them with homework and they tended to listen more willingly when I taught a lesson. I enjoyed being able to talk openly to public school students about their beliefs, struggles, and doubts about God. I felt a deeper connection with the students after a short amount of time because we were able to discuss a big aspect of their lives from the very beginning in a safe environment. All my other projects stemmed from the successful development of relationships. In developing these relationships is learned about each student’s family life, social life, educational experiences, relationship with Christ, and personal interests. Once I knew more about each student, I was able to better plan lessons that would help the students to learn the most.

I spent a portion of my internship planning a variety of lessons and activities for all age groups in the area of Bible study, life skills, tutoring, gym, and team building. My supervisor had some resources available for me to use, but I also researched ideas on the internet and asked for suggestions from family and friends who have experience teaching children. We also provide homework help for the students, so I had to refresh my memory in order to help some of the students with homework.

### **Learning**

The most valuable thing I learned was the importance of making connections and developing relationships in encouraging “at risk” children to be their best. I worked with a fifth-grade girl who was struggling in math. For the first two quarters, she had F’s on her report card. I began working with her during the third quarter, and she brought her grade up to a C. But she did not really listen to my suggestions until after we developed a relationship. Now she gives me hugs most days and is extremely excited to show me her improved test scores. When she needs help with her homework, I have her explain to me what she learned before we attempt the homework. Then I have her explain to me step by step what she should do. If she does not have difficulty with the first few problems, I tell her to call me over if she needs help and I help other students. Then she gives me her paper once she has finished and I review it for correctness. If she got any wrong, I have her look at them again, but I never give her, or any student, the answers.

I also learned that it can be challenging to teach children with a completely different background about life skills and even the Bible lessons because we have completely different experiences. I learned to reframe my mindset in order to better understand each student’s perspective. I learned how to apply techniques for discipline, classroom management, and conflict resolution. The boys in the SOS program tend to get rough with each other so there were times when I had to separate the boys and talk to them about being kind to their friends and the golden rule. Many of the boys I have worked with in the past would behave better just with me asking them to stop. Therefore, I was forced to adapt my approach to discipline during my internship. Another situation required me to act in a calm manner in order to protect the students. My supervisor had to take a child home because she was sick, so I was left with ten elementary school students and a high school volunteer in the gym. There was also another teacher with the younger children downstairs. The fire alarm went off in the building and I had to quickly account for all the children and get them out of the building. However, it was winter and a cold day, and I did not feel comfortable taking all the children downstairs to get coats in case there really was a fire. So I went to get my car keys and make sure the younger students got out. I then let anyone who was cold sit in my car while we waited. The fire department came and found out that it was false alarm; someone doing maintenance accidentally tripped the alarm.

## **Future Plans**

My experiences at this internship have reiterated that I want to work with children in the future. It was a new experience to work so closely with a group of “at risk” children. Many of them come from broken homes or have not been in America for very long. It took several weeks to build a relationship based on trust and showing God’s love, but that made the relationship even more meaningful for both of us. Many of the children also struggle in school, so it can be challenging for them to complete homework correctly. It was certainly a new learning experience to have to explain things in multiple ways so that they actually understand and learn something. When they got their report cards and their grades went up, it was an awesome experience to see them smiling and being proud of what they accomplished.

Some of the children do not get much positive attention at home, so being with these children on a regular basis helped show them that there are people who care about them and want to help them succeed. This was reiterated when students came to me with problems with friends, school, or at home. Sometimes they just wanted someone to want to listen to what they did at school, and other times there was an opportunity for my supervisor to talk to the parents about the situation.

## **Preparation/Recommendations**

There were a variety of classes that were useful during my internship including Introduction to Psychology, Child Development, Life Span Development, Adolescent Development, Abnormal Psychology, and Personality. I was able to use transferable skills that I learned in many classes to help in leading discussions, presenting material in a manner that the students understand, and my ability to efficiently research lesson plans and activities using all available resources. Every group of children has a different dynamic, so it can be difficult to teach in a college classroom how to connect with a student or how to manage the group. I think my classes provided me with a good base of techniques that have been proven to be effective, however there were times when I needed to try a few different ways before I found one that worked to motivate them to do homework or to get them to sit quietly during a Bible study. I would advise my department to continue to teach what they have been, and to continue to include examples from their own experiences because that helped my understand how to apply the information. I have taken several courses in the Human Development and Family Science department which have also been beneficial during this internship. I took information and techniques learned in Interpersonal Relationships to help build relationships and manage conflict. Also, my practicum experience last summer at Dreamwrights Youth and Family Theatre taught me some more creative ways to teach lessons and also some concentration and team building activities to play with the students.