My fieldwork assignment was at Pat Neff Elementary School. I observed Mrs. Jaquinde's kindergarten class. I learned something new everyday working with the students and observing the teacher. It was an all around learning experience for me. I not only learned about children, I also learned about how students learn, teaching, discipline, and schools.

ACTIVITIES

Working directly with the students was a learning experience for me. Throughout my fieldwork experience I observed the students engage in their daily activities. Each time I visited the classroom I observed the students on the carpet in whole group. I also helped the students in the Language Arts workstations. The teacher assigns two students to each workstation for 20 minutes. The different workstations included writing, ABC, smart board, popcorn word hunt, kitchen, computer, creation, blocks, listening, science, and read the room.

One of the activities that I did involved helping the students create noise makers in the creation workstation. Mrs. Jaquinde asked me to help the students in this workstation because it was a new activity that required the students to fill a water bottle half way up with beans. I suggested to the students that they try to put only a few beans in the bottle at a time so that they would not waste them all over the table or on the floor. I also helped the students decorate their noise makers with construction paper.

Another activity that I took part in during fieldwork was helping the students paint pictures of the four seasons. I asked the students questions about how the trees look outside during certain seasons of the year. I asked them did the trees have leaves on them or not and what color would the leaves be during the different seasons. I helped the students choose the correct colors to paint the leaves on their trees so that it represented the seasons correctly.

I helped students complete worksheets in the writing workstation. I helped students search through books to find words that began with a certain letter of the alphabet. The students had to
complete worksheets that required them to find two words that started with two different letters from the alphabet. They had to write the word and draw a picture of the word they found. I had to help some of the students find words because they were getting the letters b and d confused. I had to correct some of the students because they were writing some of the letters backwards.

LEARNINGS

Throughout fieldwork I had many learning experiences. I learned about children, teaching, learning, classroom management, discipline, and myself.

Learnings about Children

The main thing I expected to gain from this experience was to learn about children. I learned a lot of things about five and six year olds that I did not know prior to fieldwork. They are capable of learning way more than I thought they were. The students in Mrs. Jaquinde's class could name many words that started with each letter of the alphabet. Mrs. Jaquinde wrote a morning message on the easel everyday and would ask the students to tell her what punctuation marks she needed to use and they were able to tell her.

I learned that children like to talk a lot around this age. Snowman, McCown and Biehler (2012) state that kindergartners are quite skillful with language. During many instances when I was helping students with an activity they would stop and ask me questions such as "What school do you go to?", "Why don't you come to our class everyday?" and "I have a dog and a cat at home, do you have any pets?" They were very comfortable talking to me.

One day when I went to fieldwork Mrs. Jaquinde had to go to a meeting so there were two substitute teachers in the classroom. The students were acting completely different with the substitutes. The students were not listening. They were running around the classroom,
talking while the teacher was talking, pushing each other to get to the front of the line when it was time to go to the restroom, and they all took off running out of the classroom to go to the restroom. It took the children about 10 minutes to go to the restroom because they were playing the whole time. I was surprised to see the students acting this way. They were always on their best behavior when Mrs. Jaquinde was in the classroom. I learned that children act differently when they have a different teacher in the classroom because they assume that they do not know the rules of the classroom and they test them to see how far they can go.

Learnings about Teaching and Learning

My experience in the classroom with Mrs. Jaquinde and her teacher assistant Mrs. Howe taught me a lot about what it takes to be a teacher. Some people think that teaching is a simple job but it is not at all. During the hour and a half that I visited the classroom on each of my visits both of the teachers were working with students the entire time. Mrs. Howe would take two or three students aside and work with them on the subjects that they were weak in while Mrs. Jaquinde continued to teach the rest of the class. During workstation time Mrs. Jaquinde would pull a group of five students aside to a table and give them a reading or math quiz. I always thought that kindergarten was simple to teach but nowadays it is just as complicated as the upper grade levels.

I learned that all students learn differently. Snowman et al. (2012) state that teachers should use various instructional methods to engage all styles of learning at one time or another. Mrs. Jaquinde and Mrs. Howe does this on a daily basis. There was one special needs student in the class that I observed. He needed one on one attention from a teacher. Mrs. Howe would pull him aside and work with him on different things individually. When he was in a group with other children he could not focus that well. This year was his first year in school because he did not attend preschool so he had difficulties adjusting to being in a classroom and following
rules. I saw how he was capable of learning the same material that the other students learn.

The main thing that I was surprised about when I observed the kindergarten class was how well behaved they were. Mrs. Jaquinde told me that she has to be very strict with her students because if she is not they will take advantage of her. She also told me that she has to be very strict in the mornings so that she can ease up later on in the day. The classroom rules are posted on the wall and all of the children know what is expected of them. Snowman et al. state that teachers should establish class rules, call attention to them, and explain why they are necessary. Mrs. Jaquinde does this and I think this is why her students are so well behaved. The children are not allowed to speak while they are on the carpet unless they raise their hands. If they do so they get a warning and then they are sent to refocus if they continue to not follow directions.

When the students go to their assigned workstation they are required to stay in that workstation until the timer goes off. When the timer goes off they know that they have to clean up and put everything back where it does. This relates to what we talked about in lecture. We talked about how it is okay to have students clean up after themselves and how it is unnecessary for teachers to have to stay after school cleaning up after their students.

When Mrs. Jaquinde wants to get the student's attention she says, "One, two, eyes on me!" and the students reply "One, two eyes on you!" This automatically catches the student's attention. She does not have to yell or scream across the classroom just to get her students to pay attention.

Learnings about Myself

Going into this experience I expected to learn some new things about myself. This experience allowed me to be able to be in a classroom setting and observe what it would be like to be a teacher. I learned that kindergarten may not be the grade that I want to teach.
Before going into this experience I wanted to be a kindergarten or 1st grade teacher but now I want to be a 2nd or 3rd grade teacher. I feel that the older the children are the easier it may be for me to get them to focus and pay attention. Sometimes Mrs. Jaquinde had to continuously stop while reading a story and tell a student to be quiet and pay attention. Other times she had to remind students that if they continued to misbehave they would lose their recess time.

I learned that I enjoy working in a classroom where the students get opportunities to go to centers. Being in the classroom and seeing the students enjoy going to centers was a great experience for me. All the students looked forward to workstation time. They get to have fun and learn at the same time. One day when I went to observe the students were taking a test and when they finished Mrs. Jaquinde let them go to their workstations instead of going to the carpet for whole group. They were so excited to be able to go to their workstations after taking a test.

CONCLUSION: MY DECISION ABOUT WORKING WITH CHILDREN

I love working directly with children and there is no better job that will allow me to do so other than teaching. I want to work in a school setting because I feel that school is the best environment for students to learn. I want to be a 2nd or 3rd grade teacher at a public elementary school.