

An Elementary Teacher



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What do you enjoy most about your job?

The most enjoyable aspect of my job is the children. Interaction with primary aged children helps to keep you feeling young and energetic. Each child is unique and comes with their own set of needs. It is rewarding personally to realize I have an impact on their lives. Not only do I help to mold each academically, I also aid in their social and emotional development. I have faith that the skills my students acquire in the third grade will help them mature into productive citizens later in their lives. The support I receive from my students and parents make going to work each day a pleasure.

What do you enjoy least about your job?

The paperwork is my least favorite aspect of the job; grading papers, keeping needed documentation, developing lesson plans, and completing report cards are all very time consuming. When does a teacher have time to do all of this written work? Well, the majority of my written work is done at home in the evening. Sometimes I despise having to give up my personal time in order to meet all the demands placed upon a classroom teacher. I often neglect my own family to fulfill my job duties.

What are some of the interesting aspects of your job?

Everyday being different makes my job unique. You set out each morning with a game plan for your students, but it is subject to change at any time. I enjoy the challenge of educating students. It takes a great deal of planning, investigating, and flexibility to provide a quality education for all learners. Another interesting aspect of my job is the subject material that I teach. I truly enjoy teaching how to; write in cursive, multiply, divide, read a chapter in a book and name each state and capital. The children get so excited when you introduce them to something new. I love seeing the light bulbs turn on. I also enjoy working with parents. From day one, I communicate with them that they are part of a team in their child's education. TEAM stands for – “Together Everyone Achieves More”. I spend many hours communicating with parents each week about their child. From these discussions I develop lesson plans to help each child succeed.

What qualities would you look for if you were hiring someone for this position?

I would look for someone who is a good communicator, a team player and a lifelong learner. Also, I would look for an individual who is patient, understanding, flexible, personable, and an organizer.

What advice would you give someone entering this field?

Experience is the best teacher. Allow yourself time to develop your own style of teaching. You will make mistakes before you find out what works well with your students.

What are some of the ways you deal with stress in the job?

Every occupation has its share of stress; the teaching profession is no exception. The general public places stress on teachers. Also, the media often ridicules teachers for having the summers off and other small vacation dates. The amount of time I give freely to my job without any type of compensation accounts for some of this time off. Plus, that is one of the perks of this job. Another stressor is trying to meet the needs of the small individuals. The orchestration of a classroom is a bit overwhelming until you get the students trained to observe classroom rules and routines. To help alleviate some of this stress, you may rely on a mentor or partner teacher. The child that will not conform can be placed in other teacher's room for a period of time to give you and your students some relief when needed. Finally, if a lesson is going wrong and the students are all asking a million questions about something you covered well can be stressful. I would change the activities. Leave that particular lesson plan and revisit it later. You may need to present the lesson in another way in order to obtain success and less stress.

What persuaded you to become a teacher?

As long as I can remember I've always dreamed of being a teacher. As I reflect back on my childhood, I always would teach my stuffed animals my homework lessons. I would also read to my next door neighbor on my front porch steps from the time I was in first grade. I admire my teachers as they set a good example. In my opinion, teaching is a gift given to an individual and I believe it is a talent of mine. A teacher's love for the job shows each day. I try to be a positive example to my students and encourage some to pursue this occupation.

What is the average salary for someone entering this field?

The salary varies with the amount of education: with a bachelor's degree, \$132.62 (per day) \$26,526 (yearly); a master's degree, \$146.90 (per day) \$28,630 (yearly), a master's degree plus fifteen hours, \$151.32 (per day) \$30,264; a master's degree plus thirty hours, \$155.74 (per day) \$31,152; a master's degree plus forty-five hours, \$159.51 (per day) \$31,902 (yearly); a doctorate degree, \$165.28 (per day) \$33,056 (yearly).

What is a typical day like?

My day is nonstop both physically and mentally. Each morning, I greet each child at the door to make a general observation of each one. The morning hours are devoted to language arts and math instruction. Language arts include writing, reading and spelling. Each lesson begins with a

review and then a new skill is presented. A variety of methods are used to present the skills and to practice the skills taught. Due to the variety in ability levels I mingle around the room helping those in need and leading students who have mastered the concept toward accelerated type of activities. I make sure everyone is involved in learning; I rarely sit down. During the morning, we take a ten minute nutritional break and a half hour lunch. Also, the students have a thirty minute related art class; such as music, guidance, library or physical education. During this planning period I do things like make copies of papers, type parent communication letters, plan upcoming lessons, check on ill students in the office etc.

The afternoon begins with a read aloud by me. I choose a variety of genre and authors for the students to hear. I pick up books that will make us laugh together and sometimes cry together. This is the time of day where you bond with your class. After I read, the children get to read silently a book of their choice. During this time, I move about the room helping children decode words and aid with their comprehension. Science and Social Studies are also taught in the afternoon hours. The children enjoy hands-on activities and dialogue that takes place during these subjects. Then there is a ten minute recess period. They need this time to unwind and socialize with each other; they look forward to this part of the day.

As the day draws to a close, we discuss homework assignments and other general reminders. Once the children have left, I have lesson plans to finish, papers to grade, parents to contact, bulletin boards to decorate, internet sites to browse etc. The list is endless. As a teacher you must set priorities; you will always have a bag of things to do, but realistically some things have to wait.

What is the most memorable experience you have had as a teacher?

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint just one experience because there has been so many. I have had several students mostly boys, who have been labeled as a "major problems". In several instances I have been able to turn those children around and they have had a productive year. I work hard at trying to make this happen. This is achieved by observing, listening and trying to discover what techniques work with these children. After a year with these children, I find it difficult to say goodbye. It is times like these that give you satisfaction that you have made a difference in a child's life.

Did your education prepare you for this position?

Yes and no. I was prepared educationally. I know the subject matter well but I wasn't quite sure how to deliver this information in some cases, to the children especially in reading. There were too many classes on philosophy of education and not enough on the application process. There are so many trends in education; when I graduated the school system was teaching "Open Court" in reading and I had no experience in this area. I strongly advise the present day education majors to visit as many classrooms in a variety of settings in order to gain firsthand experience. Also seeing different techniques by veteran teachers helps. I'm still learning new things from by fellow teachers.

Interviewed by Joanna Parsons for a College 101 assignment on 12/01.