

Camp 2009: Day 1

Days -2, -1, and 0 were getting ready days of course. Day one however is where it begins. Past years have had a check-in time of 10:00AM. Not so this year. With a brand new 8:00AM check-in time I dragged myself out of bed early and got a ride over to the bank lot across from the church. While I didn't really care much for the early call time, it did give us a couple extra hours once we got to camp. The chaos of checking in seemed less this year for whatever reason. I know numbers were down due to the you-know-what, but even considering it seemed pretty tame. Parents checked in the kids, picked up tags, saw the nurse, carried the bags to the appropriate bus, waited for departure. During this time I had the chance to say hi to three of the kids in my cabin and their parents. Another one I found out would meet us at camp while the fifth I didn't know at all, leaving it a total surprise when I finally did. Around the final prayer and departure time, I finally met him as he was pointing to some bags that hadn't yet been loaded on. I looked at the tag and saw the bags were for someone in my cabin. I turned to him and saw he was the fifth boy- Diego. I later found out that the bags were for his stepfather who was coming with him. This was no ordinary boy either- he was in two leg casts (to straighten his legs- they weren't broken) and was... small. Ever watch [Little People, Big World](#)? Yes, he has that condition. After a prayer with the parents and campers we hopped onto the buses and we were off. We gave them about a half-hour of chat time and then the first movie went in. All the movies were Disney of course- rated G animated features. Ratatouille was first and it engaged at least 95% of the kids. Wall-E followed. Too bad the bus DVD player had no remote as Wall-E had a couple of nice shorts in the extras. Halfway through the bus ride we stopped at a rest-stop so the drivers could take a quick pit-stop. Yeah, leaders too. ☐ () Kids were stuck on the bus, but the movie was kept playing so most didn't mind I'm

sure. Having forgotten my lunch (it's always something, right?) I scrambled here to get overprice vending machine offerings while still trying to pick up something extra for the kids in the same boat as me. Other leaders chipped in too.

So $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours later, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ when you take the time change from CDT to EDT into consideration, we arrived- about ten minutes after Wall-E ended. We got to the usual drop off point- and kept going. Yes! No walking a half-mile to the camp, partly down a 40° incline (or back up that same incline at the end of the week for that matter!). We were greeted with large welcome signs from the staff, waiting for us on the game field. While the bus was unloaded and the luggage carried to the cabins we were given an introduction speech. The week at camp was officially underway! We split for the cabins so the kids could get ready for their swim tests, then headed for the swim front. For one of only two times during the week the gate was swung open so we could enter without checking in. At all other times the kids were required to check in to the swim front to keep track of who was there in case something happened. I had told Diego's stepdad that we would start out with a sandcastle/fort competition when others were doing their swim tests, two cabins at a time. Wrong! Just because we had the previous four years didn't mean this would be year five- oops. Instead, we played a friendly game of nuke 'em, a volleyball variation where instead of hitting the ball it is thrown up in the air. If it isn't caught by the other team, the person on that team who last touched the ball trying to catch it, or the one who it fell closest to otherwise is out. The game is over when one team is out. At the end of our swim test during this time, three of my kids had red bracelets for non-swimmers. Diego was one of course as he did not even take the test because of his casts. This was definitely different for me with more than half my cabin wearing red bands; in the past I have always had only one or two.

So with that done, we changed out of the swimming gear, went to the court on top of the hill by the girls' cabins for more instructions for the week, then hit the lodge for dinner. It looked like this year they turned the tables 90 degrees from previous years, but other than that it was the same as previous years. Following dinner was the first lesson. This week's theme was Code Blue: Having a Heart for God, so all the lessons were based on this theme. The main passage of scripture was the parable of the seeds and the soils they landed on or in. We broke out for small group, and what was another first we never broke into smaller groups. In the past I have had 7-10 kids in my cabin so the kids could be split into two groups since every cabin had at least two leaders, but with only five kids we just stayed together with all three of us leaders taking turns leading discussion. My five kids this year all had been raised in strong Christian homes, and they all had stories to tell of accepting Jesus. I have had others in the past that had not and have even been able to lead such kids to Christ, but this year it was all about living the Christian life with all these kids which I will be the first to say is a struggle.

As the last part of the night the kids had some "free time" which for this age group is staying in one area free to play whatever games they wished in that area. This was their first opportunity to visit the canteen, a short bus painted like a bee where they could buy candy and pop (Gatorade and water as well). This first night was also where I received my first scars which still populate my arms to an extent of mosquito bites as I was eaten alive. After this I would remember to put on bug spray...

The students were given a choice on whether or not to take a shower- the only night I gave that option since they didn't do much activity that day- and then we prayed, turned out the lights, and this post finally ended. □

Week in review

This week was mostly unremarkable. Monday I was in second grade, Tuesday and Friday PE, Wednesday sixth grade science, and Thursday I was in third grade. The highlights, or in one case “low”light, were probably the PE classes and the third grade class. Science was a “students work on projects while sub circulates” day- not that it was a bad day, just a relatively uninteresting one. Second grade just wasn’t memorable this week.

Tuesday’s PE class included some 4th and 5th graders who played a game called “homerun derby” where they used a fat bat and tried to hit a small gatorskin dodgeball across the room to a predefined homerun zone. The 4th grade class didn’t get a single homerun leading me to switch to actual game mode toward the end. 5th grade did better. The big part of this job though was the work with mentally and physically impaired students- three classes to be precise. These classes started with some running, though some were pushed in wheelchairs or otherwise helped along by assistants meaning those assistants got a bigger workout than many of the kids. Then with varying degrees of success the students practiced hitting the ball when pitched to them. Again, the assitants played a big role here, not only swinging with them, but in some cases just getting them to the plate to take a turn. The third class had more severely impaired students, so they didn’t even have the ball pitched to them. Instead, there were T-ball setups, one of which I brought out to them. The classes ended with free-time as these kids can’t go for a full 30 minutes of structured gym time. They got to choose balls or oversized scooters (2 feet x 3 feet (!) I think) and spent the rest of the time with them.

The third grade class was truly a low point. I was worried from the moment I read the note saying to get the help of one of the teachers next door if the class gives trouble instead of calling the principal over, which apparently one sub did three times last year. I actually did not have to call him over, but the one time he did come was in the middle of a crisis so of course I ended up looking bad. I'd better cross this school off for any sort of permanent job should my life go in that direction. There was one student who actually got so mad at one point he stormed out of the room slamming the door behind him. This was shortly after the principal's visit when some students were set on finding some money that was thought to be lost or stolen instead of working in their reading groups. Another student got frazzled and needed some calming time, saying he had a bad day yesterday and was trying to avoid one today. Well, depending on what that bad day entailed, he may have failed as it was certainly a bad morning for him (and me) from that point on. By the afternoon things got better though the math group tended to be every bit as chatty as the regular class (they switched for math). There was also an assembly at the end. The student who had stormed out during the morning was supposed to sit next to me, but instead the principal had him help with the awards presentation, rewarding students for positive behavior/work over the last few months.

The other PE class was my reward for Thursday's third grade. Over the entire day I only had five classes. This had part to do with the fact this teacher worked in three different schools and so had two travelling times, and part to do with Friday being a light day with only one class at one of the schools instead of the usual four, so I was able to go home for lunch (this was in hometown district). All classes went very well. The first school had a volleyball unit going and her classes had their first day playing a real game so I had to go over the rules, though we really didn't keep score. The other three classes played some tag games. It was a nice way

to end the week.

Assembly may be required

What a snooze... No, not me last night which was anything but- I think I may have gotten about five hours of sleep if I'm lucky. I'm referring of course to the assemblies that happen sometimes at schools. Especially those that totally mess up the schedule. For me, it was pretty much irrelevant too. Not to the kids or staff, just to me and any other sub that might have been there. You see, it was an awards ceremony. For the entire school. All, or at least many, sports and academic clubs. As a sub I knew pretty much zero of the names, hence why it was kind of a snooze to me. It was a snooze to probably nearly all the students as well because it lasted for more. Than. Two. Hours... For nearly all of the awards, they handed out certificates to every student involved, name by name, and then gave awards to high achievers. I would guess well over 300 names were read over those 2 hours 20 minutes. There was one sport I couldn't believe they had, let alone the number of students involved. Bocce-Ball. I kid you not. Nearly a hundred kids involved too by my estimate. Wow. Only track compared to that with four teams, 7th and 8th grades, boys and girls. There were probably 60-80 students involved there. The only other sport I remember was girls volleyball- I'm guessing there was no boys volleyball team because one of the students was a boy. The teacher was careful to not refer to that particular team (7th or 8th, I don't remember) as "the girls."

The academic teams and clubs consisted of a math team, geography team, and science olympiad. Probably more- I don't remember. Interesting to note the math team was entirely

Indian (or similar) or East Asian. Hmm. Perhaps our schools really are failing the children in the math field. Band, orchestra, and drama were part of the other extracurricular activities. And finally, there were also service clubs. One club helped the mentally-challenged kids, and another- well club doesn't really apply here (you'll see why in a sec)- recognized students who did some sort of community work. Thankfully they did not recognize these students individually as a good 90% of the students raised their hands when the principal asked who has done some community work or project! Was this part of a class assignment or were they really this outward-thinking?

Well, after some 25 teams, clubs, and organizations they wrapped up, had a drawing for some Pepsi T-shirts, and then were dismissed. The scheduled ending time was 9:45. The actual ending time was 10:35. Oops. Reminds me of television networks and sports for some reason...

So, we skipped two of the periods and I went on break. Finally I could get off my feet. Oh, did I mention that I had to stand for the entire assembly because there were no chairs provided for the teachers? Some plopped down with the students, other stood right along beside me. Now, I have an injured foot so I did a lot of leaning, walking, and a little bit of sitting on the floor in addition to the standing. So, all good and well now. Unfortunately I had about twenty minutes and I had to start eating my lunch as the teacher I was in for had no scheduled lunch. Instead, she had a study hall period. So, I had a panini during 4th period, an orange and a Mountain Dew 6th during study hall, and the rest of my lunch last period. Well, an interesting day for sure.

They will not be missed...

I was in conversation with another teacher and he happened to say this about the current eighth grade class. After today I would agree on this for a few students with a wish that they would grow up soon. These students are the ones teachers have in mind when they say they will never teach middle school. One of the eighth grade PE classes had a several students that could fit this category. They would *not* settle down and listen to the rules of the game they were to play. By the time they finally got started, there was less than 15 minutes left until I had to bring them back up to get changed. Yes, we were inside even though it was a fairly nice day outside- the other two classes were outside and apparently there are only two fields to play softball. I can't say, unfortunately, that eighth grade was the only issue. One of the sixth grade classes also drove me nuts. It took awhile to start with them as well, and it took a lot of time to rotate teams between games as well. Fortunately the other four classes went well (6th, 8th, and two 7th).

What we played was scooter volleyball. Two nets were set up in the room downstairs (they call it the fitness room- apt because they do that there as well, like aerobics they had to do when I was there a couple of times last year). The teams sat on scooters (those squares on four wheels/castors you plant your butt on) and played volleyball that way, using a gator-skin ball probably because the court was so shallow and the ceiling low. Most volleyball rules applied, but some were a little different like you could catch and throw the ball, not just bump or set it. It was also played in two-minute games so the one team who was rotated out wouldn't have to wait long.

Well, that's about it. I should say I am fortunate there was still another guy teacher there with me today to take over most of the duties in the locker room. When you think of a

gym locker room you might think of a place that reeks of B0. You'd be half-right. It reeks all right- of Axe and other spray deodorant. Either way, something to stay out of. At least it's not like when I was in junior high when we had to take showers. Nude of course. I think I would have to just say no to subbing for PE if that were the case. I guarantee I would not bother with making sure they all took showers. It's interesting to note that many of these schools still have the showers, even if they are no longer used. Well, used for their intended purpose. Some schools use them as storage.