At Beacon House, there is a general feeling of appreciation and joy, particularly around the holidays.

As a Beacon House/DC Reads tutor, I have had the opportunity over the past couple months to experience this feeling first hand. I tutor two young girls ages 9 and 8 who have made this experience so much more worthwhile than I ever thought possible.

Being able to get to know the children and share something as valuable as knowledge is a priceless experience.

As Thanksgiving and Christmas came closer and closer, I chatted with my students about what they were thankful for and why they like the holiday season. Expecting their responses to be something like "I get lots of presents and eat good food", I was pleasantly surprised when they separately pointed out that the holidays are special because they get to spend time with their family and with their tutor! I wondered if they had conferred on this answer previously.

Overall, my students' general feelings about coming to Beacon House every Monday or Tuesday is positive. If I were asked what I am thankful for, I would have to say that just the opportunity to share time with two very special young ladies is more than enough for me. Happy Holidays!

Above: Matthew McCafferty; Bottom left: Jenn Bamberger; Bottom Right: Sara Gallager all with their tutors at Beacon House.

Your DC Reads Newsletter written by you... the tutors!
Calvary

Tutoring at Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center has been one of the best experiences I have had in my first semester here at CUA. I have learned so much from this job, and I’m not just saying that because it sounds good. One of the most important things I have learned is that, as tutors, we need to maintain a positive atmosphere with our students. We need to let them know that it is okay to not always get everything right. We can learn from our mistakes. It’s okay to mess up sometimes.

I tutor a second grader named Paola. Paola gets frustrated with her work sometimes, well, a lot of times. She throws her hands up in the air and shouts, “Man! I messed it up!” when she incorrectly answers a math problem. Or she says, “That’s ugly!” when she spells a word wrong. We then pick up the pieces and try again... and again... and again. Then, when she succeeds, she smiles and says, “I win.” (To Paola, everything is a game.) I shower her with praise with every little success. This makes the tutoring session a more positive experience for both of us. Paola is also more motivated to keep working and learning more.

The famous teacher, Anne Sullivan once said, "People seldom see the halting and painful steps by which the most insignificant success is achieved.” Let’s all keep this in mind when working with our students. A positive and understanding attitude can make a huge difference for both student and teacher. Remind students to look at moments when they perhaps were incorrect or didn’t understand as chances to improve and move forward. Instead of "No, that’s wrong,” try "Let’s do that again, but this time...” A patient and positive teacher makes for a happy and successful student.

Higher Achievement

In the Dark

As usual, the CUA supply of mentors arrived at Ward 7 of the Higher Achievement Program at 6:00P.M. Things were off to a normal start, we had our community meeting, reviewed vocabulary, the math problems for each grade, and discussed a quote before breaking into groups for our tutoring sessions. Once in our rooms, the scholars settled to the best degree after having gone to school for ten hours, we began our mentoring sessions and then, like a nightmare, the lights go off, the kids go nuts.

Ms. Yvette is slightly fit to be tied and by the glow of a single flash light, we evacuate to the cafeteria where we anxiously await with scared and excited middle school students for parents. It was a situation no one was ready for and no one will forget.

La Salle

I knocked on Ms. Clestine’s door mid Thursday afternoon gripping school supplies to my chest. Before I made it three feet into the classroom a young girl with tight cornrows, a wrinkled uniform, and a huge smile flung herself at me. I hugged her back wondering what I had done to deserve such eager affection.

We walked down the hall, settled into a plastic school table and opened up a simple book. Two weeks ago Aalyiah didn’t know half the letters of the alphabet. Two days ago she didn’t know the sounds. I could tell she was apprehensive as I opened the book and her seven-year-old voice asked, “Is this a hard one?” I assured her she had the skills to do it. Together we sounded out words like ‘sat’, ‘hat’, and ‘cat.’ Twenty minutes later we sounded out the words ‘the end.’

At that moment the look on her face told me exactly what I had done to deserve her hugs. Aalyiah was put in the DC Reads program because she was extremely behind in reading for her grade level. The triumph we both felt as she completed her first book assured me that being a DC Reads tutor is more than just a work-study job- it’s a meaningful
Heads-Up

Wow! What a time I've had here at Plummer Elementary! These past several weeks have flown by and have been much more enjoyable because of the plethora of experiences I witnessed with my first graders at my DC Reads site. I do have to admit, however, at times, that it has been a bit trying.

When I first came here, I had absolutely, positively NO idea of what to accept. I did not know the degree of knowledge which the kids were going to bring with them and I was, frankly, quite scared. However, that soon changed when I met the kids. One in particular stood out to me. Her name is Dominque. Ever since I first entered the classroom and laid eyes on her, I knew that she would be a special one. In all my interactions with the children, she has been a paragon of excellence.

Always obedient and never "out of line," literally and figuratively, she sets an example to all the other children with her exemplary behavior.

Dominque is also extremely intelligent but possesses modesty. I am sometimes so overwhelmed with the amount of cleverness she has that I am lost for words. And if any of you know me, this is a feat in itself! She has never given me a problem and is constantly a model of brilliance. I am thrilled to go to DC reads each and everyday to see her smiling face and her bright eyes.

St. Anthony's

Patience: The capacity, quality, or fact of being patient.
Patient: Bearing or enduring pain, difficulty, provocation, or annoyance with calmness.

"Patience is a virtue." We've all heard it before, but there's nothing like a life experience to really send a message home. We all have those days. You know the ones: those days when you sleep through your alarm, bomb a test, skip lunch, stub your toe, it's raining outside and to top it off, you have to go to DC Reads. You arrive at your site hardly close to being the chipper tutor that you always strive to be and drudgingly pull open the door. The sounds of your rambunctious little critters fill the halls as you muster up all your strength to stamp a smile on your face.

You enter your classroom, or hall, depending on which site you’re at, and are greeted by the sounds of shrieking and laughing and playing and pulling of hair. You can’t help but think "oh, what a day" as you slide on into "Tutoring Mode." You make your way to your students who are obviously not indulging in their studies quietly like you had hoped, but are also not bouncing off the walls and throwing spit balls at each other. The smiles and "Hello, Mr(s) <insert your name here>’s of your tutees slowly begin to crack your bad mood. The students start in on their "this is what i did today" spiels and they pull out tests that they did well on and pictures that they drew in art class and you just can’t help but feel delighted in the way they take on volunteering information about their days before you can even ask. Before you know it, you’ve been submerged in the land of addition and subtraction, borrowing and fractions, and phonics and pronouns that is far away from the land of your own quizzes and tests and stresses and worries. The children make you smile, as only children can and you begin to realize that there is more to life than a late alarm, a failed quiz, a stubbed toe and wet sneakers.

Is your schedule changing? Do you need to change sites?
Plan on meeting Jan. 8th for a Mandatory DC Reads Meeting!

Page 3
Have a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you for being influential people in the lives of the children.

Congratulations:

“Listen to the Mustn’ts”

Listen to the MUSTN’TS, child,
Listen to the DON’TS
Listen to the SHOULDN’TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON’TS
Listen to the NEVER HAVES

Then listen close to me-

Anything can happen, child,
ANYTHING can be.

These tutors were chosen by their site as Tutors of the Month! Thank you for all of your work and for being SPECTACULAR!

by: Shel Silverstein

Leah Groshek
Calvary
Mike Blackford
Higher Achievement
Christine Walsh
Beacon House
Lawrence Gill
La Salle
Todd O’Neill
Heads Up
Colleen Kelly
St. Anthony

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