September 19, 2010

Hello!

I have now finished up my second week of teaching at the Mt. Zion School. It was definitely a stressful week, but I am learning a lot about what it takes to organize lessons and keep the kids' attention. I am now teaching my class with one other volunteer, an Australian girl named Ayla, which makes the class much easier to manage. She and I alternate teaching classes, and we both help each other while the other is teaching.

We have divided our teaching duties based on a timetable created by the teachers. So far, I have been teaching Natural Science and Information and Communication Technology—essentially a computer course—which is especially difficult because we don't have any computers to work with (or electricity, for that matter). We have, however, fashioned a keyboard out of paper, and I use a cell phone and book to demonstrate using a mouse and mousepad. Ayla has been teaching Mathematics and Religious
and Moral Education. Language and
Literacy has so far been taught by
one of the Ghanaian teachers because
that class incorporates both Twi and
English.

On Friday, Ayla and I decided it
would be worthwhile to establish some
class rules, such as "Always follow
your teachers' instructions" and "When
you finish your work, sit quietly and
do not distract your classmates" (an especially important rule, as the
kids have a habit of talking to each
other in Twi when they have finished
a task in class). The lessons sometimes
proceed very slowly, mostly because the
lack of English skills makes it difficult
for many of the kids to understand
instructions when they are first given.
I am adjusting to the slow pace of
learning, however, and trying to organize
lessons accordingly.

This weekend, I went with a group
of volunteers on a six-hour ferry ride
on Lake Volta, an almost unimaginably
huge man-made lake. That night, three
of the volunteers and I made our way
to the Shai Hills, a beautiful area a couple of hours away from Kumasi that is home to the Shai Hills Resource Reserve, a wildlife sanctuary. We stayed overnight at the Shai Hills Resort Hotel (which, like many "resorts" in which I have stayed in Ghana, had barely functioning plumbing and a very cold shower). One highlight of our stay was a baboon casually strolling by as we ate breakfast on Sunday morning. After breakfast, we went to the wildlife reserve, where a guide took us on a three-hour walk. Because it was not early in the morning (which is apparently the peak time for seeing many of the animals), we did not see much wildlife (this particular reserve is home to antelope, several kinds of monkeys and nearly 200 species of birds). We did, however, visit a bat cave and saw several baboons near the reserve's entrance gate. I am hoping I'll have a chance to visit another wildlife reserve before leaving Ghana.

All the Best,

Abby