

Hello!

September 12, 2010

This week, I began as a teacher at the Mt. Zion School. All of the kids from the orphanage attend the school, but about half of the students are kids from nearby villages. Three other volunteers and four Ghanaians are also teachers at the school, though I was somewhat surprised to find that I am the only teacher with a college education. I was able to choose what level I wanted to teach, and I chose Class Two, which contains five students, ages seven to nine — three of them are children I know from the orphanage.

The classes were somewhat informal and disorganized this week, because the non-volunteer school teachers have for some reason not yet devised a time table for the different classes. I taught a couple of Natural Science classes because I was miraculously able to find a Natural Science book for Class Two (we are extremely short on supplies and have very few books). I also taught several math

lessons, in which I wrote problems of various kinds on the chalk board, which I used to gauge each child's skill level. Though they are technically in the same class, the students seem to vary greatly in their capabilities.

I tried to make our English lessons fun this week by having the kids in the class come up with a story, which I wrote on the board and had them copy sentence by sentence. While the story they came up with made little sense (it involved a boy named Kofi finding a beautiful and magical blue balloon, which was tied to an even more magical soccer ball), I think the exercise gave the kids solid reading and writing practice.

I have also noticed that the kids from the orphanage seem to have superior English skills compared to the kids from surrounding villages. I would guess this is because the kids from the orphanage are constantly talking to English-speaking volunteers. This does pose a challenge,

however, because explaining instructions is much easier with some children than others. I imagine this will be only one of many challenges I will have to overcome over the next few weeks.

Back at the orphanage, I got another glimpse into how creative and resourceful the kids can be when some of the other volunteers brought balloons for the kids to play with. Though there were enough balloons for all of the kids, they fought viciously to have as many as they could, which resulted in several tearful fights and many, many popped balloons. The next day, one of the boys came up to me with one of the bounciest balls I have ever seen. I was confused because the kids have very few toys, and when I asked him where he had gotten the ball, he explained that he had made it by wrapping a popped balloon around several other popped balloons. I am always amazed by how incredibly inventive the kids can be, though it makes sense considering how little they have been given in life.

This weekend, far volunteers and I went to Kokrobite, a beach I had visited once before. The first night was a lot of fun — I ate at the only place I have been able to find in Ghana that serves veggie burgers and spent the rest of the night playing xylophone in an impromptu drum circle ~~with~~ with a group of locals. Unfortunately, I came down with a very high fever the next day and ended up at the local clinic. The nurses there were confident that I had malaria (despite not administering a blood test), and they gave me two shots, several pills for malaria and an extremely questionable "blood tonic." A few days later I decided to visit a real hospital in Mampong, and thankfully I did not actually have malaria. Hopefully I will start to feel better for my second week of teaching!

All the Best,

Abby