

INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Matti Tyskewicz

Graduation Year: 2019

Semester & Year of Internship: Spring 2019

Major: [1] Secondary Education: English Writing and [2] Communication

Minor: Psychology

Hometown: North Huntingdon, PA

Hobbies: Writing, Reading, Running, Volunteering at an animal shelter

Campus Activities: SPSEA, Lambda Pi Eta

Future Plans/Career Goals: Substituting until I hopefully find a job as an English/Communication teacher.



- **Internship (company/your title):** Student Teacher, 8th Grade English Language Arts at Southmoreland Middle School
- **How did you find your internship?** It was provided for me through the Education Department. I chose to teach middle school over high school, with Southmoreland being one of my top choices. I wanted to go somewhere different, as I have had many field experiences near campus.
- **What were your duties?** I spent time observing and then had an entire 9-week grading period dedicated to my instruction. I taught World War II (Propaganda and *The Diary of Anne Frank*), poetry, and the memoir (*The Last Lecture*).
- **How many hours per week were you at your internship site?** I attended as a regular teacher would - 5 days a week, the entire school day. I am required to complete 70 total days between January-April.
- **What did you enjoy most about your internship?** I loved working with my cooperating teacher and getting to know the students. During *The Last Lecture* unit I taught, I started to see different sides to the same kids I had already been teaching for weeks. Randy Pausch's memoir is uplifting and also upsetting, because we know the fate of his life due to his cancer diagnosis. During one chapter, he talks about seeing *Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium* with his son, who had yet to know about that diagnosis. His son sat in the theater and cried since Dustin Hoffman's character was going to die, leaving the shop to his apprentice. I showed this scene to my students, who were watching the movie as it was, but also making connections to the text and imagining Randy sitting in the theater with his son. Towards the end of the scene, Dustin Hoffman says, "Life is an occasion. Rise to it." As I turned the lights on, I saw many students crying! Not to get excited about making students cry, but there were students I never expected to cry with tears streaming down their faces. I looked forward to each class that day, as the weight of the memoir and its lessons became heavy upon all the students.
- **What was the most difficult aspect of the internship?** I used to think, "Oh student teaching isn't as bad as everyone says." It's not bad, but it certainly isn't easy. You don't leave your work in the classroom. You spend nights grading papers from that day and creating lessons to prepare for the next. Any remaining time you have is spent sleeping. Also, many student teachers can agree that nobody else really "gets it." Teaching is physically and mentally draining, especially when you're being observed every day by your cooperating teacher. If you aren't prepared, it shows. So, you don't have the same schedule you did every other semester. You're still staying up late, but you are getting a lot less sleep than your 10:30 AM class offers you. No matter how challenging it gets, remind yourself that it's only one semester, a 16-week marathon with an exciting finish line.

- **How did your experience at UPG and in the Education Department prepare you for your internship?** The UPG Education Department is by far one of the best. I have only ever attended UPG, but I have met people through my field experiences that attended other universities. I had over 160 hours in the field prior to student teaching. I taught lessons in districts such as Jeannette, Hempfield, Greensburg-Salem, and Mt. Pleasant. By the time I student-taught, standing in front of students was no longer as scary (8th graders are terrifying). I knew I was prepared through my experiences and methods courses because Dr. Marks and Dr. Burth dedicate so much of their time and expertise to secondary education students. Student teaching wasn't an obstacle I had to face, but another exercise that helped me strengthen my skills as an English teacher.
- **How has your internship prepared you for a career?** Once I found myself in a field experience that occurred day-after-day, I realized how much of an impact teachers can make on students. "As a teacher, you are ON all day," as Dr. Burth would say. You must be prepared with materials, but mentally, as well. You can't let one bad part of your day affect the rest of it, because you still have three more classes of students relying on you. The positive experiences in a classroom, whether through interactive lessons, diverse instruction, classroom environment, or student-teacher communication all affect how a student enters and leaves that specific room. Every single day matters.
- **What recommendations do you have for other students about doing an internship?** If you're about to student teach, understand that it's okay to make mistakes. You will not be perfect on your first day, your second day, or even your last day. You are a lifelong learner. Don't be afraid to try something new with the students, whether a different assignment or type of instruction. Also, you will hide your personal life, but don't hide your personality. You are who you are and your students will feel more comfortable around you if you're honest with them. If you like to tell jokes, do it. If you enjoy what you're teaching (a specific book, piece of history, etc.), show it.

Oh, and if someone offers you advice or help, take it. Your cooperating teacher has been there for years. To take from one of Randy Pausch's *Last Lecture* lessons that I taught... if someone is trying to help you fix what you're doing wrong, they care about you. If you keep doing things wrong and they stop telling you, it means they've given up. Take their advice. Don't let people give up on you.

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