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MY JOB AS A TEACHER AIDE



*Mrs Phoebe Nicholson

This is my first year as a teacher aide and I have only been working for about three months. I enjoy my work very much and like to get involved with the students and their work, which covers from grade preps (kindergarten) to primary school to year 10 students in high school. The work is varied from day to day and I get to see all different aspects in the teaching and running of the schools.

In preps, I help groups of children with pictures that they have to put their own sentences to; they tell me what they want to say and I write it for them or they write it themselves and I tell them how to spell the words. Sometimes I help them with picture games where they have to arrange the pictures in the right order to tell a story. Other times I take small groups of children outside to the sandpit with containers, bowls and tumblers of different shapes and sizes, and some the same shape and size. I write down my assessment of what each child is able to understand, how well they estimate differences in sizes, and how confident they are in themselves and also their vocabulary. At other times I cut out and make up games for the lower grades.

I go on excursions with different grades, hear children of all grades reading, individually and in groups, and read to groups of children at other times. I've been taking children from higher grades for some remedial reading and helping with sounds, such as ER, AR, OU, UR, ARE. They have trouble with these sounds and I think this will be a real help to them as these are the last years before going to high school. I also help small groups with maths.

At high school I help students with English and maths; the students don't mind me being in their classrooms and do not hesitate to ask me for help or advice. Some of the students often ask me to come into their classes so that I know what they are doing and can help them with the different subjects. A lot of the time students come and tell me their problems with school or personal things;

* Aboriginal teacher aide, Kerang, Victoria.

other times they just like to let off a little steam to someone and they know these discussions are just between us.

When I work at the high school I nearly always buy my lunch at the canteen and have it with the students. We just sit and talk, not always about school. I am also contact person between them and the teachers, which I think is one of the most important parts of my job. The teachers really need this kind of help when dealing with individual students, because I know all the students so well, and can give each one's personal and family backgrounds. This, too, is very important.

Then there are the family visits where I go and talk to parents about their students. They are glad to talk to someone of their own kind who they know understands their personal needs and problems; they can relate to me more easily than to someone else from the school.

At the moment I am doing a display on an author for the central school. For this I have painted copies of the dustjackets. The librarian, Mrs Hall, has been a great help to me since I first started work, by helping me with little things and advice.

Last year I did a course in photography with some parents, teachers and children at Kerang South, which was really good; so now I develop films and print photos for the South school as well as my other work. My two younger children attend school there and are happy that their mum is working there too.

Two half days a week I go to the swimming pool with Central School. I have my own groups to instruct and get on well with the children. I work at Kerang South one day, Central two days, the Tech. High School one day, and on Fridays I attend the teacher aide training program.

Overall this has been a terrific experience for me in such a short time. The principals of each school have been really good in helping me to get things together, and have given me a very flexible timetable which I know a lot of teacher aides don't have. As for the other teachers, they've also made everything a lot easier for me too; I get on well with them and have made some new friends as well.

Kerang is a nice little place, and school for the Aboriginal children is taking a step forward for them.

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