

Turney School

When walking through the halls of Turney School you come across oddities like door handles placed high on the top of doors, sensory rooms and soft rooms. But you can also hear singing from the classrooms during circle time and laughter during playtime. My week as a classroom assistant at Turney School was the most unforgettable part of my summer holiday. On the first day I spent most of my time adjusting to the routine. The day is set out so differently and often, because there are 5 teachers to only 7 kids, you have to just use your initiative and help without having to be told. I was able to interact with the children during circle time and watch some of them sing along to 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' and dance to Madagascar. The most difficult for me was helping the children with their table work. Once I had to guide a boy's hand when tracing the letter 2 and keep trying to get him to focus his attention. The problem is they always want to know what is happening around them! I loved being able to join the children in the soft room where they jumped in the ball pit and rocked on cushioned see-saw, as well as interact with them during playtime. I remember one day a little boy from my class grabbed my hand, took me over to the scooter and insisted that I push him around and around the playground as he smiled. Other times two little boys from another class would come up to me saying 'Chase me! Chase me!' and I would run after them as they laughed and hid and squealed as they were tickled after being caught. The week taught me about Autism, which I knew nothing about, and more particularly how to interact and communicate with the children. It was also the first time I ever came across PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). I was amazed as the kids used this system during snack time when they used pictures to communicate what snack they wanted. I noticed as well that there are differences in the behaviour of the children; one girl would sing loudly when she was distressed and a boy would wave something like a piece of paper or leaf in front of his face to calm himself down. I found that as the week went on I noticed these behaviours and learned to react (or not react) to them. A great experience was the summer fair. The gym was filled with children from the primary and secondary school, teachers and parents, getting their face painted, eating cake, drinking punch, buying toys and books. All around you could see children jumping with excitement about a book they just got or roaring as they paraded their fierce tiger painted faces. Turney School is an amazing place filled with happy, enthusiastic children and friendly and dedicated teachers. I cannot wait to return as soon as possible and be part of that community again.