

2019-2018 National Federation of the Blind in Illinois Internship Report

This past summer in 2018, I worked in the District 205 summer band program as a band director's assistant. My typical schedule for the week included working at Sandburg Middle School in the morning from 8:30-11:30 everyday for Monday through Friday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I would travel to York Community High School to work from about 5:30-8:30.

The morning schedule included working with the elementary school summer bands. One band would play for a little over an hour, and the next one would arrive, set up, and play for another hour or so. The first group was comprised of students from the fifth grade, and the second group was made up of students going into sixth grade. The two different rehearsals were not very differentiated in structure due to the similar ages in the groups. Obviously, the sixth graders were slightly more advanced than the fifth graders because they had played music for a year longer than the younger group. The rehearsals included a warm up which lasted for about fifteen to twenty minutes. These were led by the directors, Mr. Berg and Mr. Pavlik. I would act as a floater around the band room in order to correct certain issues with any students playing or behavior (which I will discuss in more detail). The directors would then progress the rehearsal begin working on different sheet music that the students were preparing for their final concert in July. I would continue to act as a floater most often, and sometimes I would be able to offer my musical advice to the entire group when warranted by the directors. I was able to describe certain concepts in a way that younger students could grasp more easily because I understood their thinking process a little bit better than the adults did. An example of this would include when I compared the idea of steady temp to a freight train which cannot speed up or slow down very fast but must change speed gradually in order to make sense. On a rare occasion, the directors asked me to conduct so that they could monitor the classroom in a different way whether it be sitting with the students or making sure they were behaving.

My other duties included making sure the band room was kept well maintained and keeping everything in its place so that it was easily accessible the next day. I would distribute name tags to the appropriate students each morning. This was difficult at first due to my sight, but, as I became more familiar with them over the weeks, I found it easier to identify individuals. At the beginning of camp, I often mistook some kids for others, but because I had communicated that I have a visual impairment with the whole group, this did not seem completely out of the ordinary. I felt very welcome and accepting of the students, and the fact that I have a visual impairment did not seem to affect the way they acted towards me; any behavioral issues that I had to deal with were due to the fact that some elementary schoolers are restless and have a short attention span after an hour of rehearsal. I was required to ask them to calm down and please listen to the directors when they are talking. Because I had played in the Sandburg band room for three years prior, I knew where everything was meant to go, so my vision did not hinder me from my organizational duties. I had to ensure that all percussion equipment was in its proper place after rehearsal, and the students did not always want to put it back before they left. Whenever a student lost his/her music, which happened quite often, I would file through the music folders and find them a new copy.

I mentioned before that I also worked at the high school during evenings. These were dedicated to the middle school students. My duties and any behavioral issues reflected those of

the elementary school rehearsals. The only difference is that I did not get to conduct the middle school rehearsals ever. I helped out at the concerts of each group setting up and taking down all the necessary pieces of the performances. These included percussion instruments, chairs, stands and any kind of audio equipment. They all had to be carried back and forth between areas of performance.

I did not fulfill the 240 hour limit by the end of the summer, so I continued the internship into the school year. I attended rehearsals for the elementary students after school every Tuesday and Thursday. I met with individual kids to help improve their musicality and playing quality. For the marching band at York Community High School, I led master classes in subjects such as *wedging* which is a technique for playing the trumpet that helps you play high and louder. These helped develop essential skills for the marching band season. I did this several times. I assisted in the maintenance of the band room at York and making sure everything remained in an orderly fashion. Lastly, I involved myself in the York musical outreach program. We created small ensembles which played in the community to spread the music that we were producing at the high school. Concerts to display this music were put on once a month, and I played at several of them which took place at the public library in Elmhurst, Illinois. These performances were very demanding and took hours and hours of rehearsal to prepare for. We continued to spread the message of music with this platform.

I had originally gone into the internship believing my path would be to become a band director and teach at a school somewhere, but these experiences, while good, have shown me that I would not be content working full time as a band director as it is a career incredibly demanding of your constant attention to detail. I am not ready to accept the challenges facing a visually impaired teacher who is responsible for many students in the classroom. My current plan has switched to follow Actuarial Science at the University of Illinois. I am incredibly grateful to the Board for giving me this opportunity to work over the summer.