

This summer I had the honor of working for Duke TIP as a teaching assistant. My particular position was with TIP's CRISIS program located at Washington University in St. Louis. The CRISIS (Creative Resolutions of Impending Situations with Intelligent Solutions) program is a one-week program (running for three sessions) for rising 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The program is centered on problem-based learning, as students are a part of one of seven research teams. The 2016 "crisis" was "Hurricane TIP." I was the TA to the research team entitled Emergency Management and Government. Our team was rigorously engaged in learning how the government efficiently operates and responds to a disaster. Throughout our five days together, the instructor and I facilitated various scenarios, projects, and debates, with little to none of the "traditional" classroom lectures. We led students through an inquiry-based curriculum designed to challenge and excite students. The concepts covered in the curriculum included public goods and services, states of emergency, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, government coordination, checks and balances, the National Flood Insurance Plan, price gouging, and the political effects of natural disasters.

My role as a TA involved rigorous preparation, enthusiasm, and energy. During staff training my instructor and I set the expectation that we would try to teach equal amounts during the day. Though this caught me off guard and sounded terrifying to me, I tried each day to step up to facilitate part of the class. I had some teaching experience from my education courses at Sewanee but I was nervous to jump into such a big role! I acted as a supporting role the first week and gained more confidence to teach by the second week. The curriculum was repeated each week so by the third week I was very comfortable with each day's material.

Overall my experience with TIP was amazing. As an aspiring teacher, it was overwhelmingly encouraging to be surrounded by inspired and talented teachers who devote their summers to TIP. My

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experience with my instructor was especially rewarding. It was obvious that he is a highly respected teacher, as he was chosen to write the curriculum for our class that was used across the country. The other instructors and TAs were equally as passionate about TIP's mission of challenging gifted students. I particularly enjoyed talking with the instructors, TAs, and other academic staff about their academic and professional journeys. All summer I contemplated my options for post-graduate plans. I changed my mind almost daily on whether I wanted to pursue a master's degree in education, apply for a teaching job, or take a year off to teach abroad. My options and ideas about the next year of my life caused me anxiety. My job at TIP didn't eliminate those anxieties, I still change my mind nearly every day, but the experience did confirm my desire to teach. My summer with Duke TIP taught me that I want to be one of the top teachers in my field. It also taught me that I have a passion for gifted education and I have another goal of getting my gifted education certification one day.