



Wherever I Go, Whatever the Curriculum, God Is There

By Yolanda Soliz McHodgkins, Public School Representative

I was born in San Antonio, Texas. I started life as an army “brat,” so my life was filled with a variety of experiences. When my dad was sent to Fort Ord, California, my mom followed him with three little children. My mom did not speak English very well. My sister, Carmen, who was then about 6 years old, helped her. We traveled by bus and train from San Antonio to Fort Ord. My first language is Spanish. I attended kindergarten and first grade in Seaside and Monterey, California. When I was 7 years old, my dad received orders to go to Korea, so the rest of the family traveled back to San Antonio, Texas.

High School and College

We lived in San Antonio until my dad received orders to go to Germany. I went to high school in Germany in an American school for army children. The summer before my senior year in high school, my dad received orders to go to New Jersey. So I graduated from a high school in New Jersey. I went on to attend Pasadena College, which is now Point Loma Nazarene University. When I graduated from Pasadena College, I worked as a teacher’s aide.

My Teaching Career in Public School

After I received my teaching credentials, my first teaching assignment was at a preschool. I taught preschool for 7 years. After this, I taught a Kindergarten and first grade combination class. I had a lot of help from the resource teachers and had an excellent aide.

For 30 years, I taught at Jefferson Elementary School in Pasadena, California. While there, I taught bilingually. I taught Spanish reading and math to Kindergarten and first grade students. I also taught English reading and math to English-speaking students in Kindergarten and first grade in addition to teaching English as a Second Language to the Spanish-speaking students.

Sometimes I had aides to help in the classroom. Part of the time, I taught combination classes of Kindergarten and first grade. In some years, I taught only Kindergarten or only first grade. After so many changes in my early years of life, I settled down and taught preschool, Kindergarten, and first grade for 37 years. Sometimes I also taught summer school to students in second and third grades.

I enjoyed teaching music, art, reading, and math. I enjoyed reading to the students. Over the years, I saw changes to the curriculum. I noticed that what I had taught in first grade was introduced and taught in kindergarten.

A Unique Activity at School

One unique thing I did in my class was "Poem Parties." In the spring, I would assign short, fun poems to my students to memorize. Besides memorizing the poems, the students would easel paint a picture of their poems, make a crayon drawing of their poem on construction paper for the cover of the Poem Party Program Book, and make a small pencil drawing of the poem to be put next to the poem in the Poem Party Program Book.

The students also learned songs to be sung at a special party. I reserved the school auditorium. The children recited their poems and sang fun songs at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of their party. Each family received a Poem Party Program Book with the poems of all the children with their pencil drawings. The auditorium was decorated with the easel paint pictures of their poems. After the party, we served refreshments. It was fun for all.

Teaching Outside of School

Besides teaching children in a public school, I taught English as a Second Language to adults at the public schools and at our church. I also taught young people preparing for the ministry. I taught English Composition, Spanish Composition, and Children Ministries to Spanish-speaking young people. Some of these young people are now pastors or missionaries.

God was with me during my 37 years of teaching. God continues to be with me now that I am retired and settled in Alabama.

Yolanda McHodgkins lives in Harvest, Alabama. She taught in public school for 37 years. She also taught English as a Second Language to adults. You may contact Yolanda at yolimc@yahoo.com.