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Internship Paper

I spent my time working with Sister Qovu in the Math and Reading Recovery program at LDS Primary School in Samabula, Suva, Fiji. LDS Primary was an awesome school! It is located just down the street from the Suva Fiji Temple and set in the middle of a neighborhood. Their academic calendar is set on four terms throughout the entire year. The terms last about ten weeks and then they go on a two week break. LDS Primary was the only school currently using that timetable. The other schools were on a three term schedule. The teachers explained to us that the reason for the difference was that all the schools in Fiji had switched the previous year to four terms to accommodate for the South Pacific Games. However, the teachers and parents of LDS Primary preferred the four terms to three, and so they kept it. The school itself was fairly small, but accommodated their needs well. They also had a chapel on campus used for devotionals and assemblies, and the community used the school on Sundays for services. LDS Primary serves Kindergarten through Class 6. The teachers included Fijians, Indo-Fijians, Rotumans and the ratio of male to female was nearly one to one. I was surprised to see so many male teachers, because of the scarcity of them here in schools at the elementary level. I had a great time getting to know the faculty at the school. They were all very welcoming and treated us like honored guests. There were also four young ladies from BYU-Provo doing their student teaching at LDS Primary the same time Mita and I were there. We got to know them well and enjoyed sharing experiences from class in Fiji and comparing it to experiences from the states.

Sister Qovu was amazing. She retired three years ago from teaching at Veiuoto Primary School when she was asked to come teach the Recovery class at LDS. Her classroom was very small with a few tables, but plenty of reading material and resources for practice. Students came in the morning for reading and afternoons for math and typically spent about thirty minutes each session before a different class would come in. It was a very similar setup to the pull-out programs here. These students had minor learning disabilities and ranged in age from Class 2 to Class 4. The average class size was eight students, usually including the same number of boys and girls. Sister Qovu had kept good records of her students work and progress over the year. The first week Mita and I arrived, the school was doing parent/teacher conferences so we helped get the students' packets organized. Unfortunately, Sister Qovu told us later that only a handful of parents actually came to see her about their students' progress. In regards to reading, we used a lot of flashcards and reading aloud together from the books in class. Mita and I also made some flashcards for the students to keep and they loved playing games with them. The main problem I encountered working with the students was the different way I spoke and pronounced the sounds. I found that the students would try to imitate my American "accent." For example, some would emphasize the letter r to sound like "are." Most of the time they giggled when I was trying to sound out words for them because of my "accent" but they got the basics. When the students would come in, Mita and I would split them in half and take about four students each. We really got to know the students well and quickly discerned their strengths and weaknesses. One of the most common mistakes these kids would make is confusing their p, d, q and b's. Another common problem was guessing. One little girl, Sesiman, would look at the first couple letters of

the word and then just start guessing words she knew that sounded similar. I would give her flashcards and have her point to each letter individually, make the sound and then put it all together. At first, she still kept guessing but by the time I left a month later, she was much more patient and put forth more effort to get all the sounds before taking a shot. There were so many awesome kids and I had a blast working with them. They were very respectful and worked hard. Overall, the Recovery program is doing great work. They do the best with what they have and just the short time I was there, I saw students progress in small but meaningful ways.

We also spent some time helping out in the school library. They were doing some renovations so we got to help clean up, catalog and organize the library. The principal also asked us to help coach the school basketball team. We really just had a blast with these kids. They were so open and loving to us in every aspect. I learned so much in regards to various learning styles and cultural differences. I also got my first real vision of a teachers' reality and what it's like to prepare, plan and organize things. I really enjoyed my time at LDS Primary and truly hope to go back some day and teach there. I miss the students and faculty very much. The greatest lesson I've learned from my experience is to always keep trying with each student. Some methods and approaches will work with some students, but not with others. It takes a lot more time, effort and creativity to reach each student, but in the long run it's always worth it.