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Journalism 1

Professor Tropin

St. Mary's Teacher Assistants

Lauren Giglio and Joyce Higgins, both seniors at Loyola College, spend their Wednesday mornings giving back to the local community. They are teacher assistants here at St. Mary of the Assumption, and as Lauren says, they have loved every moment of it. The girls have been lending their time, patience, and skills to the school once a week for the past three semesters.

Lauren's typical day starts at 8 AM, in Ms. Stevens' class. The day begins with prayers, announcements, and the collection of the previous day's homework. She then spends the rest of the morning helping with math problems, grading papers, and working in small groups on the students' reading assignments. Occasionally, Lauren is allowed to prepare and help present the day's lesson plan.

The girls have been privileged enough to be with the same classroom of students this year, and have been able to form lasting bonds with the children in their classes. Joyce recalls the warmth she felt on the first day back to the classroom this semester, when she was greeted by a room full of energetic fourth-graders chanting, "Ms. Joyce! Ms. Joyce!" Lauren recounts seeing one of her students outside of the classroom and remarked at how excited the young girl was.

"My girlfriend doesn't like me anymore," said a boy in Ms. Stevens' class. This young man has apparently already had his share of relationship problems, but fortunately

the children at St. Mary's are able to share both their worries and triumphs with the teacher assistants five days a week. Lauren and Joyce have helped the students deal with the many complexities of grade school life, and in turn have been rewarded with their respect and friendship.

The students at St. Mary's are described as extremely cute, lovable, and very sophisticated for their age. There is, however, the occasional tiff in the classroom that requires mediation. Having “an extra pair of eyes and ears around,” as Joyce puts it, helps avoid conflicts in most cases, and tends to make the classroom environment a lot friendlier and more productive. Because of the smaller gap in age between the students and the assistants, the students tend to be less shy with Joyce and Lauren than they are with their teachers.

The St. Mary's-Loyola partnership continues to provide benefits to both institutions and foster great relationships between the communities. If you are a Loyola student looking for a valuable volunteer opportunity, or are interested in the field of education, then becoming a teacher assistant may be for you. Visit www.loyola.edu/stmarys for more information on how to take part in this successful partnership.