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Journalism 1

Professor Tropin

St. Mary's Homework Help

As I walk into the cafeteria of St. Mary's on the first day of the Homework Help club, I am confronted with the faces of over 30 students. Most are smiling, some look at us Loyola students with an expression of anticipation, while some convey looks of uncertainty. Once we each sit at our assigned tables and greet the students who we are going to help, the expressions all change to excitement as they reach for their books and notebooks from their backpacks.

"Do you know science? Can you help me?" one boy asks me with a hopeful glimmer in his eyes.

The Homework Help club at St. Mary's is one of the initiatives established by the partnership between the school and Loyola College. The partnership was created in September of 2006 and generated many in-class and after-school programs in which over 100 of Loyola's students, faculty, and staff are involved.

The Homework Help club meets Monday through Thursday from 3:00-4:15. Each day, about 15 Loyola students volunteer to assist St. Mary's students with their homework.

The Loyola students involved are enthusiastic and eager to interact with the St. Mary's students. Not only do we help them with their homework and study skills, but we also develop bonds and relationships with them. The children had great senses of humor and have me laughing with them whenever I am there. The older students ask us what

college is like and if school is still boring. The girls talk to us about clothing and cell phones while the boys talk about sports and music. The students seem to grow more comfortable with us being there as they realize we're not all that different and were their age not too long ago.

My experience with the St. Mary's students has exceeded my expectations. I was delighted to see the amount of respect with which the students treated us. I was impressed with their intelligence and awareness of what they were learning. Since the enrollment is so small, most of the students knew each other very well. They all seemed to possess close bonds with one another, regardless of age difference. They all were willing to share their pencil with another student. The laughter resonated throughout the room as they joked with one another. Their appreciation for our help was demonstrated. There is no greater pleasure than to watch a child smile, give you a huge, and be grateful for help that you have given them.

The partnership between Loyola and St. Mary's is very important for both schools. Loyola is offered an opportunity to empower this younger generation and serve as role models for our neighboring children. St. Mary's receives many benefits from the partnership, but the greatest of all is the relationships between the students.

While we were waiting for all of the children to either be picked up or sent to aftercare on my second Monday of Homework Help, a father who was picking up his son approached me. He graciously thanked me and could not believe how willing we were to be there. His son looked up at me, smiled, and said, "See you next week!" That alone was enough for me to recognize what a difference we really we making in these children's lives.