

## Embracing the Unexpected: My Journey in the Classroom

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**Year of Study and Program:** Third-Year, French for Teaching

**Internship Details:** September to December 2024, Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School, Thames Valley District School Board

**Position Title:** Teaching Assistant

**Primary Role:** Supporting a grade 8 classroom by assisting the teacher with lesson activities, working one-on-one with students, supervising small groups, and contributing to lesson planning and organization.



Hello!

I still can't quite believe my internship at Louise Arbour French Immersion Public School has already come to an end. On my first day, I remember stepping through the school's doors, feeling both excited and nervous, unsure of exactly what to expect. Now, looking back, I realize how much I've learned - about education, about community, and about myself.

Going into this internship, I imagined gaining a clearer idea of how to plan lessons and support students' language skills... Typical skills in a teaching career. And yes, I did learn those practical aspects, including how to prepare materials, guide a small group through a tricky reading passage, and communicate instructions clearly in French. But what stood out to me the most was the realization that teaching is not just about transferring knowledge; it's about uplifting students. I saw this in the way the teacher took time to genuinely listen to students' concerns, or how the entire team worked together to create an atmosphere where everyone felt empowered and motivated to learn.

There's one experience that still brings a smile to my face. I was working with a student who struggled with speaking French. Each time they tried, they'd pause, look around nervously, and settle into silence. My supervisor encouraged me to spend a few extra minutes each day engaging this student in low-pressure conversation. I started by asking simple questions - "Quel est ton sport préféré?", (What is your favorite sport) and celebrated the smallest responses. Over time, I watched this student's hesitation turn into cautious willingness. By the end of my internship, they were contributing more actively during class discussions. Witnessing that shift reminded me that

confidence often grows one small step at a time. It also taught me that I have the ability to make a difference in a student's learning experience, even if it's just through a few kind words and extra patience each day.

Personally, this internship showed me that I'm more adaptable than I thought. Before, I tended to rely heavily on plans and routines. However, in a classroom, things don't always unfold according to plan. Sometimes a lesson that seemed well organized on file needed to be modified mid-lesson, or a student asked a question that took us away from the lesson. Instead of feeling overwhelmed, I learned to embrace these moments. By the end of my placement, I actually looked forward to the unexpected: it kept me present and responsive to the students' needs. This adaptability will help me not only in future teaching roles but also in any situation where flexibility and quick thinking are required - be it graduate studies, volunteering, or navigating a new job environment.

The biggest challenge I faced was time-management. Balancing my responsibilities in assisting the teacher, supporting individual students, and organizing materials wasn't always easy. At first, I felt like I was juggling too many tasks at once. Eventually, I discovered that creating a structured routine at the start of each day made a huge difference. I would jot down my priorities, break them into manageable chunks, and tackle them one by one. By the end of the internship, I was far more comfortable finding a steady rhythm, and I know this skill will come in handy wherever I go next.

What really surprised me was how collaborative the school environment was. I knew teachers communicated with each other, but I didn't fully appreciate the depth of their teamwork. At Louise Arbour, educators swapped ideas, shared teaching resources, and supported each other's challenges. I often saw my supervisor discuss strategies with colleagues or attend mini

workshops together so everyone could learn something new. This sense of community spilled over to the students, who seemed to pick up on the cooperative spirit by supporting each other, working together in small groups, and celebrating each other's achievements. It was a wonderful reminder that teaching does not rely on one person running the entire show, but it's rather a team performance where everyone contributes to achieve a collective goal.

For any student thinking about doing an internship, I definitely recommend giving it a chance. There is something transformative about applying what you've learned in lectures and textbooks to real-life situations. Internships allow you to discover what truly resonates with you, what challenges excite you, and where you want to steer your future career. Even if you aren't entirely sure what you want to do long-term, an internship can provide invaluable clarity and confidence. It's okay to feel unsure or nervous at first. Embrace those feelings and use them as a growth opportunity.

As I put these reflections down in words, I'm filled with gratitude. I'm grateful for the students who taught me so much about patience and kindness, for the supervisor who encouraged me to find my own teaching style, and for the community that welcomed me with open arms. I left with a stronger sense of my professional identity and a more open-minded approach to learning and problem-solving.

This internship reaffirmed my passion for teaching and made me realize that a classroom is not just a place where information is exchanged. It's a space where relationships are formed, minds are nurtured, and dreams are set into motion. For me, that understanding is priceless, and I know I'll carry these lessons forward into my next steps, whether that means pursuing further training, exploring teaching opportunities, or finding new ways to contribute to an educational community.

Thank you!