It’s 5:30 a.m. The alarm has rung once and there’s no time to wait for the second ring. My husband has started a new project at his office and needs to be there early, which means I have to drop off my son Matt at the high school.

By 6:40 we pull out of the driveway for the 2.5 miles to the high school and I then prepare for a 30-minute drive to my school. My loud rock music and a travel mug of coffee keep me alert enough to deal with the usual morning traffic.

When I arrive in the city where my elementary school is located, I drive around a couple of blocks to see which children are at the bus stops—and obeying the crossing guards. Our students are pretty streetwise, but they’re still very young!

After parking my car, and dropping my laptop and handbag in my office, I go directly outside where four teachers are on morning duty. Several students say hello or want a hug. One has a new cast and is eager to explain “the bike incident.” As the morning bell rings and everyone files into the building, I check my e-mail quickly and pull up my Palm information to confirm my schedule.

I see that I have an observation of a classroom teacher scheduled and that I need to check with our nurse about her attending a field trip with our third graders.

In the morning, I wander around the building as often as possible, peeking into classrooms, sometimes stopping to answer questions or offer support to teachers. The lesson I formally observe is a good one; it meets the state standards, includes review and possibilities for follow-up, and is differentiated. The classroom is rich with literacy choices and learning centers.

All of our students stay in school for lunch, and about half enjoy the hot lunch made by our food service staff. The brown baggers chatter happily with lunch aides, and a few children who run into the lunchroom are sent back to the door to walk in properly.

At 2:30, a classroom aide stops to inform me she is going to start preparing cookies for our after-school tutoring program. Two afternoons a week, we offer an extra hour of literacy or math to any students who wish to stay. It’s my job to provide freshly baked cookies (donated by a business associate of my husband’s) and milk to each student—and most of the faculty.

When the cookie delivery is complete and the trays washed for tomorrow, I take a call from my son, who is at an orchestra event and needs to be picked up at 8:45 instead of 8:15.

As I drive to the gym for a 5:30 class, I think about what vegetables I’ll serve with our dinner. If I’m lucky, my husband and I will be at the gym at about the same time, we’ll eat at about 7 o’clock, and then one of us will get Matt at school.

By the time we’re all home and settled in for the night, I share my day and hear about my husband’s project. Once we slow down, none of us will have trouble sleeping!

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Andover-Morris Academy is an urban school serving 250 students in grades 3–5. It is a Title I school with 60 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.