I get up at 5 a.m. and begin my day with a prayer to St. Francis. I listen to a guided meditation CD, do yoga for 20 minutes, eat breakfast, and drive to school, where students have been arriving since 6:30 for our before-and after-school program. I arrive around 7 and check with the health assistant to find out if there are any teacher absences. I try to find a sub for regular education classes and if I can’t, we rotate our art, music, P.E., and literacy specialists into the classrooms.

I check my e-mail and then do playground duty for around 30 minutes before making announcements and leading students in the Pledge of Allegiance. After delivering detention notices to students who have received discipline tickets, I walk through classrooms for short visits. I check my e-mail periodically during the day and answer phone calls from parents about issues related to their children.

Each Monday, I eat lunch with students who have been selected by their teachers for good behavior. For those whose behavior has not been good, I do detention duty at least once a week.

Much of my time each week is taken up by planning meetings and agendas for various school groups: a team leader group of 10; a reading leadership team of six; a school climate committee of six; a site council of six; office staff meetings of five; whole-staff meetings; and professional development meetings.

I conduct formal observations of every teacher twice a year, a process that requires three meetings: a pre-observation conference; the actual observation of 30 minutes; and a post-observation conference. If the teacher is on an improvement plan, I take the time needed to supervise intensive intervention and provide documentation.

During a typical day, there are always a few students who need to be removed from classrooms for disruptive behavior. These students must fill out a behavior reflection sheet, get a discipline ticket, and miss recess. I often have to call their parents. Students who display excessively aggressive behaviors on the playground are remanded to the front office and face in-school suspension.

Since I am the only bilingual person in the front office, I often handle questions and telephone calls from Spanish-speaking parents.

My day ends with PTO meetings, service commitments in the community, swimming, reading, and then a final period of meditation around 11 p.m. I reflect on how I have been of service to my students, parents and teachers that day, and pray that I can find ways to help those who are struggling. I also reflect on the abundance of love in my life, the gifts I have been given, and how I have used those gifts. I pray that I have used them wisely and that I may have the courage to change myself in positive ways tomorrow.

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C.W. Harris Elementary School is an urban school serving 1,095 students in grades K–6, of whom 90 percent are of Hispanic origin. It is a Title I school with 87 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch.