When the program first started for me it was an assignment for extra credit with an education class that I was taking at the time. We were supposed to go out to Russell Cave Model Magnet Elementary School to the H.O.S.T.S (Help One Student To Succeed) program and work with one child for a half and hour once a week. The work that we did with the child involved children who were at-risk or having trouble with their reading and reading comprehension skills.

The coordinator of the program had set up individualized education plan (IEP) for each of the students and we were to follow that with some deviation allowed. At the end of each session we were to rate the student on various factors such as behavior and progress that day. We then signed off on each day in their file. The students came each day and usually had different mentors each day but they could count on a somewhat steady routine of the same people on certain days each week. We would incorporate his or her lesson to them with different strategies for each student. Some students had to read a section aloud to the mentor then complete a worksheet of assessment of some kind. If time permitted then there could be either time left that they could choose an activity. Some chose games
that had educational contexts that reinforced some of the activities of the
day and still others who really enjoyed learning to read and understand
would choose a book off of the shelf and we could read that together.

At first I went into this thinking it would be an easy way to grab some extra credit for a course by putting in a minimum amount of one hour a week with the students. All that changed though and I really enjoyed the work that I was doing and the students really seemed to appreciate us being there and helping them. So I volunteered for more students on the same day. I also noticed that there were other students who had no mentor and the coordinator worked with them and I volunteered for more. What started out as an hour’s worth of extra credit assignment a week had turned into probably about four total hours a week. My reward came in a very unexpected way at the end of the fall school term. The last day of mentoring we had a little Christmas party and the students I had worked with had all signed a card for thanking me for what I had done. That to me was the greatest reward for the work I had done. I felt really good being able to help students with a skill that will help them throughout the rest of their life.
After completion of the full year of my first actual teaching experience I look back and see what I took away from the students. I began to realize that not all students learn in the same ways and that lessons would need to be adjusted for each one of them to accommodate their learning styles. Some were very visual and read from what they say in the pictures. They needed books with fewer pictures. That is just an example of the many different types of students I had the opportunity to come in contact with. At that point I also saw how much more I needed to learn before I could become a truly effective teacher myself. In the end I believe that students that I worked with learned as much from me as I could have from them. It was a great experience that I will carry with me and use as a motivator to be the best possible teacher that I can possibly be.