

EIU Speech Therapy Abroad to Mico Care Centre in St. Ann's Bay Jamaica

Sunday May 11

O'Hare International Airport, Chicago IL



Sangster International Airport, Montego Bay Jamaica and Mr Simm's Bus at airport



Arrived at SeaMeYah AirBnB and walked with Robert, the caretaker of SeaMeYah, to Bamboo Blu to the beach



The BEACH!!!



MONDAY May 12

Mr. Simms picked us up. We had hugs and an enthusiastic “Welcome back!” from Ms. Smith and Ms. Westcarr as soon as we walked in the front door at Mico Care Centre. We brought in speech tx and literacy materials, games, toys, and sensory fidgets for use by us and to stay at Mico for future use. Ms. Douglas had schedules and rooms all ready. Ms. Westcarr welcomed the group and gave some Mico history. Ms. Douglas did a quick orientation and sent the group on tours of the building with Ms. Gordan and Ms. Williams.



By 8:30 we were working with kids—we worked with 16 children giving a screener and starting treatment on Monday morning.

We had a wonderful lunch of Jamaican patties and fruit.

Parents came in with 2 children in the afternoon for comprehensive speech-language assessments they had been on the wait list for. We had 2 teams of graduate clinicians and undergraduate observers.

Since this was Maggie’s first day as a grad student (following graduation Saturday) and this was her first day with clients to work with, Ms. Aiken stayed close for assistance/support on day 1 😊. Dr. T worked closely with juniors Madison, Ella, Aubrey, and Brianna as they also started working with clients directly for the first time.

The grads finishing up their first year of graduate school were our “seasoned pros” 😊 and learned a lot about literacy BEFORE their upcoming literacy course at EIU in June. Dr. Helen Mach, SLP from the Peace Corps, and Mrs. Magee kept an eye out that all was going smoothly with Heidi, Bella, and Molly on day 1.



Devonte and his mother arrived Monday afternoon, so speech therapy continued at the AirBnB house with Aubrey, Ella, Bri, and Madison, after afternoon evaluations were completed at Mico.



Then there was time for a dip in the pool. EIU students, Ms. Aiken and Devonte walked down to the beach. For supper we had food from the grocery store that we had bought on Sunday, and some left over pizza.

Assessment scoring, draft of report writing from Monday, and planning for Tuesday – finished by 9:00 p.m.

Love having Ms. Aiken and Ms. Douglas at the house with us!



TUESDAY May 13

Students were up and ready for pickup by 7:30-7:45. Molly and Ella had already had an earlier morning run to the beach and back within the gated community. We arrived to Mico CARE Centre each day before 8:00. Ms. Douglas joined in on some treatment sessions as well as a very competitive Head Shoulders Knees and Cup game with Devonte that Aubrey taught us. We saw a few new children for morning screening and treatment (13 on day 2), but all student clinicians were getting in a treatment routine on day 2.





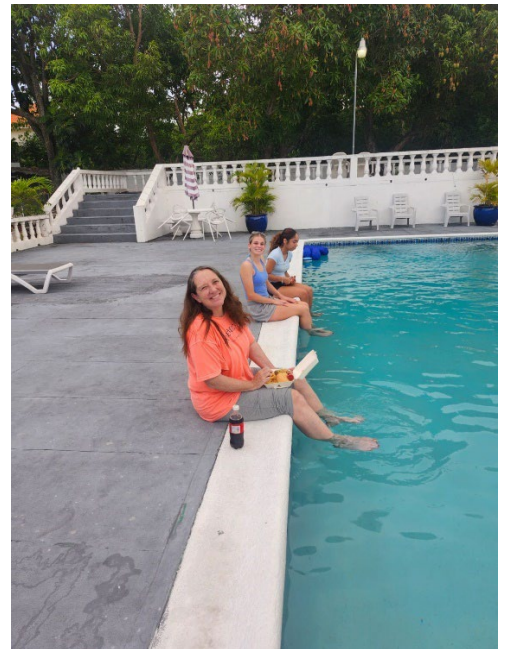
We had a cheese sandwich and some wonderful Jamaican KFC for lunch to try some different flavors available.



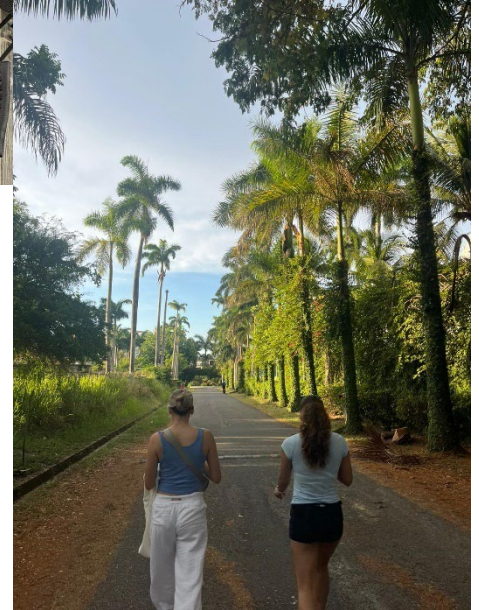
We did 2 more comprehensive speech-language evaluations in teams on Tuesday afternoon.



Tuesday afternoon when we finished at Mico, the grads (Bella, Molly, Heidi, Maggie) walked to beach with Ms. Britney Aiken and Dr. Helen Mach for ice cream or an early supper at Bamboo Blu while juniors (Aubrey, Madison, Ella & Bri) were working with Devonte (Dr T supervising and then eating supper by the pool). Devonte's end of 5 hours of speech therapy on Tuesday was poolside with chalk games and then feet in the water.



Then the juniors (Ella, Aubrey, Bri & Madison) walked to Bamboo Blu and the beach for supper with Mrs. Magee while Dr T and Britney Aiken worked on reports with the grads outside on the front porch, then continued inside. Finished by 8:30p.m.



Wednesday May 14

Had to take pictures of the motivated early morning walkers (Ella, Molly, Bri). Also Ms. Aiken, Heidi, Maggie, Bella, Molly & Mrs. Magee taking advantage of the beautiful morning on the front porch waiting for the 7:30 ride to Mico.



Also had to get some extra pictures with Ms. Aiken on Wednesday as she had to go back to Kingston at the end of the day to work with

children there on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

This is the “room with the view” at Mico- beautiful greenery AND a view of the ocean in the distance!



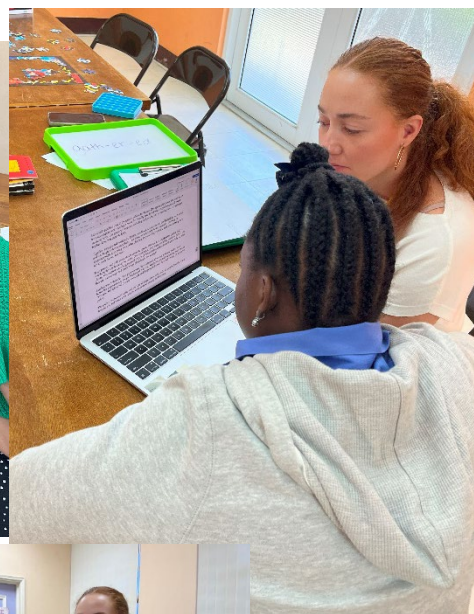
Now—Wednesday
pictures from the reason we were at Mico and in Jamaica—Working with the wonderful children!





Had a great lunch of jerk chicken and fruit before Wednesday afternoon evaluations

Teams did two more comprehensive speech-language evaluations on Wednesday afternoon before Ms. Aiken headed home to Kingston – We really missed her the rest of the week! So happy we will work with her again with on-line tx!



The end of yesterday's 5 hours of speech tx with Devonte involved chalk drawing by the pool and feet in the pool. On Wednesday, speech therapy progressed to speech practice in the pool – a first in Dr T's 30 plus years as an SLP and a first for the EIU clinicians too! Speech therapy might feel a little boring in EIU's speech clinic after this experience 😊



Fixing supper from groceries on Wednesday night.



Thursday May 15

Mr Nicky Simms picked us up for our final day going to Mico CARE Centre.



The Director of Mico CARE Centres (Kingston, St. Ann's Bay & Mandeville) Dr. Sharon Anderson-Morgan and Ms. Tisha Ewen-Smith (Educational Psychologist at Mico in Kingston) visited St. Ann's Bay on Thursday morning.

Dr T had just spent a couple weeks in April with Ms. Ewen-Smith in MO & IL on the Autism Center tour that ended at EIU

Dr. Morgan brought gifts for all of the EIU team, thanking us for our service and on-going collaborative partnership





Dr. Morgan and Ms. Ewen-Smith observed some sessions before going back to Kingston. It was some of our student-clinicians first week of doing speech therapy ever – they did great even with a big audience!!!!



A few more pictures of working with the children on final morning (Thursday)



Another wonderful lunch from Pizza Hut :)



In Jamaica, May is Children's Month. Mico Staff had planned a special lunch and movie for the children on Friday and also planned to have a game time too. In collaboration with Mico teachers and administration, EIU students had the pleasure of leading a game rotation on Thursday afternoon after lunch for about an hour and a half. The following pictures are from the game time for Children's Month with no literacy or speech targets—just pure fun!! Let the games begin!!



But then the most difficult time of the week comes, the time to say good-bye, first to the wonderful children and then the wonderful staff at Mico. The teachers and students sang a touching Bob Marley song. There were hugs, smiles, fist bumps and even a few tears from the EIU team and children. We are so very very grateful for every minute we got to spend with the wonderful people of Mico Care Centre! Definitely a memory of a lifetime for EIU students and we hope the children remember the fun and their accomplishments with a smile too!





Some last pictures of the EIU group with our partners at Mico CARE Centre.



EIU students finished up progress notes from the day and enjoyed the pool for a bit while Dr T and Mrs. Magee checked out a couple other AirBnBs in the same community to consider as options for the future if we need a different number of bedrooms.

Then we walked to the beach with Devonte and his mother on their last night.



Okay- see this little tiny lizard that's almost cute that Mrs. Magee took a picture of on the chair on the front porch. He or his friend is NOT as cute when he decides he wants to come in the house for a visit! Aubrey & Maggie tried their best to capture him with a pool net when he scrambled up high, but then Robert was successful thankfully.

(Thank-you Ms. Douglas for taking these action shots 😊)



Friday May 16

Last year EIU students chose a catamaran boat ride, snorkeling and climbing Dunn's River Falls through Trip Advisor as the excursion, which was a lot of fun. The excursion involved being picked up in a van and taken to a Sandal's Resort in Ocho Rios where the boat launched from. This year Mrs. Magee and Dr. T did some more investigation and figured out how to do the same thing from RIU next door to Mammee Bay Estates where we stayed. It cost a bit more, but students also had access to the food and amenities of the resort until 6:00 p.m. It was an amazing day of fun and highly recommended for future trips too!

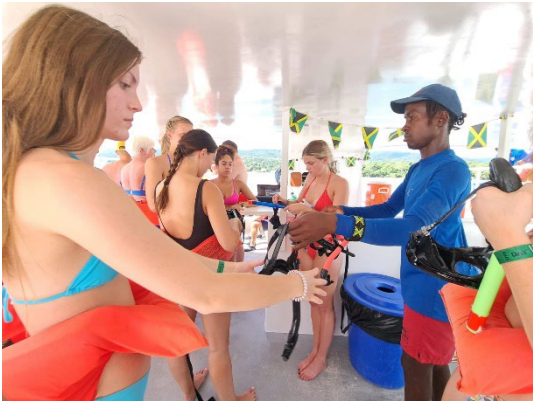


The EIU group walked from the house at 7:30 to check in at the desk at RIU for the day pass 8:00, and then enjoyed a fabulous buffet breakfast.



The catamaran boat ride and snorkeling were incredible! Jamaica's land and sea are amazingly beautiful!





Dunn's River Falls—another incredible experience with the beauty of Jamaica's nature!





Made it to the top!

Back at RIU at 12:30 Friday to enjoy the resort's amenities until the day pass ended at 6:00



The students decided to buy the video of the climb of Dunn's River Falls—we had fun watching that back at the house Friday night – Mrs. Magee commented that we had couple “slips and falls” on Dunn's River Falls 😊



Saturday May 17

A last trip to the beach on Saturday morning and early afternoon, enjoying coconut water in an actual coconut with no major sunburns this year!



Dr. T had a chance to visit with a couple more new friends from Jamaica who were on the recent Autism Center Tour in Illinois and Missouri in April - Kisha Shaw-Riley, a counselor for the Child & Family Protection Agency (in Montego Bay) and Antonica Gunter from the Early Simulation Program (in Kingston). Antonica Gunter and her daughter brought gift bags of Jamaican snacks for the EIU students.

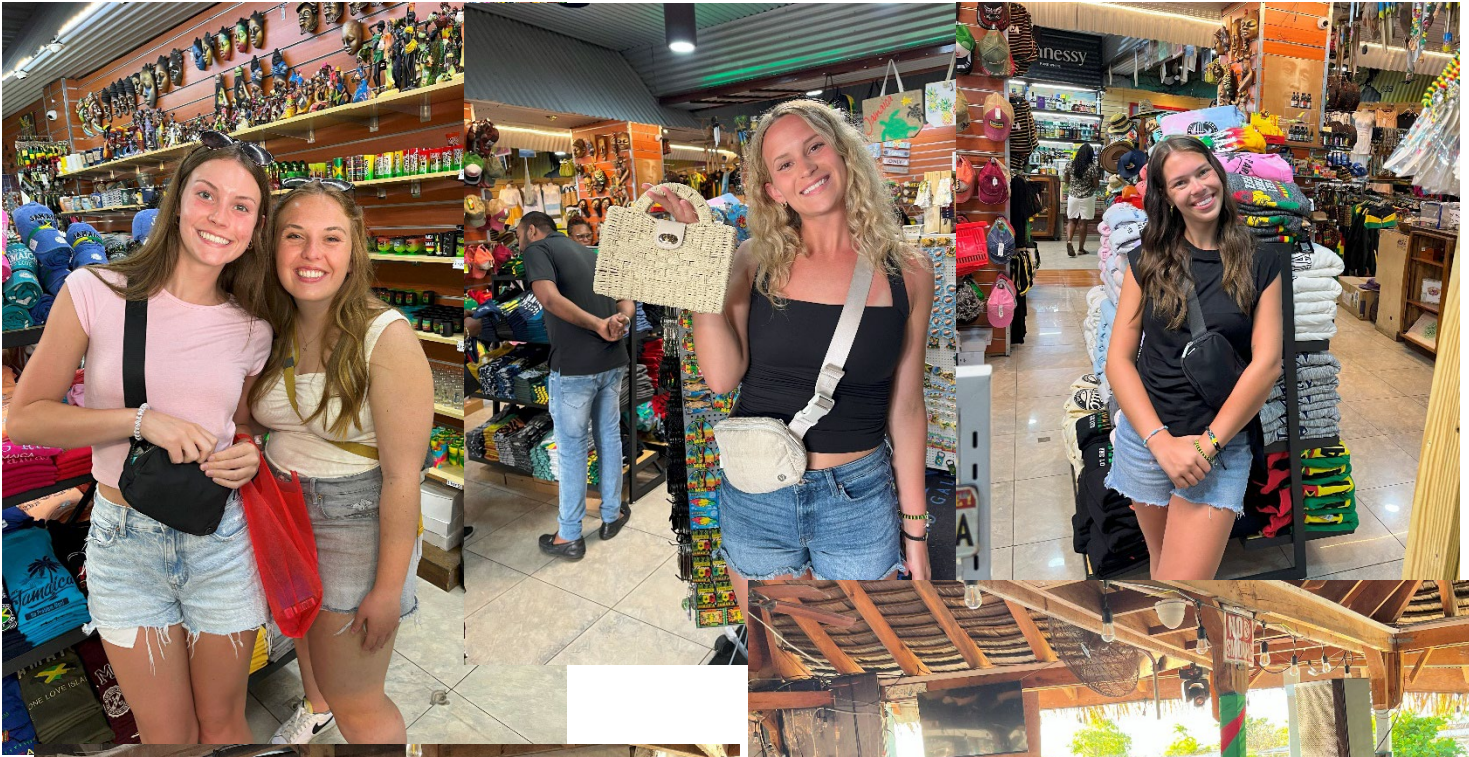


We had a wonderful time souvenir shopping and eating supper in Ocho Rios, the Island Village area on Saturday afternoon and evening. We ate at Ocean's 11.



Mr. Simms picked us up in the bus about 3:00. Mrs. Simms (teacher from Mico), their daughter, and Mrs. Brown (teacher from Mico) and her little son, also joined us on the bus for the outing. Mrs. Dorcas Myrie (teacher at Mico CARE in Kingston) and Ms. Alison Tai (Special Education instructor at Mico College University in Kingston) had been on the Autism Center Tour in April and also drove up from Kingston to join the EIU group Saturday.







Sunday May 18

We were back to the AirBnB from the Saturday outing around 9:30 pm. We finished packing Saturday night and Sunday morning. Ms. Douglas came over to see us off and we got a final picture with Robert. Mr. Simms picked us up Sunday morning at 10:00 to travel back to the airport in Montego Bay with a quick stop at Starbucks on the way out

of town. Everyone had a smooth trip home, although getting through customs, back through security, and to the gate was a little tight for the people with connecting flights to Champaign. Most people made it home by midnight, if not before.



Words cannot express how wonderful our week was in Jamaica! We want to express our heart-felt gratitude again to every single person who made this experience possible. Ms. Douglas and Ms. Aiken from Mico are such wonderful friends and so generous with their time before and during the trip to make everything happen that needs to happen. Our sincere thanks to Mico's administration, teachers and staff for being so welcoming and such an amazing partner with EIU. Thank-you also to EIU's Study Abroad program and EIU administration for allowing our continued non-traditional study abroad and wonderful collaboration with Mico. Thanks also to our families who encouraged us to go to Jamaica and were supportive during our time away.

I realize this document is too long already, but I wanted to end with some excerpts of comments from six of the EIU students who have already turned in brief glowing reflections about the therapy abroad week in Jamaica with Mico.

Student 1: Going on the therapy trip to Jamaica was hands down one of the best decisions I've ever made! I learned so much about the culture and really developed my clinical skills. Working with a different culture pushed me out of my comfort zone in the best way, and I know I'm going to be a better clinician because of it. One of the coolest parts was getting to see how schools work in another culture. I also got to work more with literacy clients, which I hadn't done before, it was a great learning experience. Doing diagnostics was eye-opening too. After just the first one, I could already tell I was giving and analyzing assessments differently and more confidently.

The Mico Care Center made us feel so welcome! The staff was amazing, and Brittany Aiken (the SLP at MICO) was super inspiring. She's a total PLS-5 expert, and I really admired the way she interacted with parents and kids. All the kids at Mico stole my heart. They were so awesome and reminded me of why I wanted to be an SLP to begin with.

The food was also delicious! Mico provided delicious lunches every day, and we got to try Jamaican dishes like patties and jerk chicken. Even though being in another country sounded a bit intimidating at first, I felt really safe the whole time. Our driver for the week, Mr. Simms, was awesome and made us feel comfortable getting around. The Airbnb we stayed at was in a gated community, and it even had a personal gate that was locked at night. Plus, every door to get inside was secured with a locked gate too.

The people I met were so kind and welcoming. I'm really grateful I got to be part of something so special, even for a short time!

Student 2: This past week has been truly an unforgettable experience. This last week has taught me so many things about all the paths that are offered out there for Speech Therapist, it has taught me about a new culture, and I was able to meet the most incredible kids, and work with the greatest people ever. Throughout the four days we spent at the school I learned more than I ever could have imagined. Talking with the other American speech therapists that are working in Jamaica, I learned so much about their different career journeys and paths, and that each person's career looks different. I was able to learn about the endless options speech therapists have nationwide and internationally. The children were the greatest joy! Jamaica is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen, and I would absolutely love to go back one day if I am able. The people truly made it what it was, Dr. Throneburg organized everything amazing, there was no times where we felt that we weren't in the loop or not being taken care of. Mrs. Magee was the best trip mom we could've asked for, she was amazing to have with us. I really loved the number of girls that went, it was 4 of us Juniors, 1 Senior, and 3 Grad Students. And it was truly the best group of girls to go on a trip together. A lot of us hardly knew each other at all, but we are absolutely bonded for life after that trip. I would not change one thing about this trip, except to make it longer because it truly was one of the greatest experiences ever. I made lifelong memories and amazing new friendships. Safe to say Jamaica stole a piece of my heart, so I have to go back. ☺

Student 3 : This has easily been one of the best weeks/experiences of my life. Working with these kids and at Mico Care Centre is so rewarding and I would do it again in a heartbeat. Throughout this past week in Jamaica, I have had the absolute best time and have learned so incredibly much. Being on this trip has allowed me to gain even more clinical experience and has taught me to be more confident when working with a client. The rest of the undergraduates and I did speech therapy with a client Monday-Thursday in the mornings and afternoons. Together we planned each session, the activities, and kept data. We also observed diagnostics every day with the graduate students and kids from Jamaica. Dr.

Throneburg and Brittney Aiken were/are amazing role models for us to watch and learn from as students. They, along with the staff at Mico Care Centre were all very helpful and welcoming the entire week. The kids have been a pleasure to work with. I already miss them so much. While staying here I have never felt unsafe. The atmosphere is so joyous and lively, and everyone that I have met has been extremely kind. Our Airbnb stay was amazing, and the caretaker Robert has gone out of his way to make us feel safe here. He has helped us with anything we may have needed, including catching a lizard in our bedroom! He always locked the doors anytime we left, and he was always a phone call away. Without a doubt I would come back to Jamaica and go on the study abroad trip here again.

Student 4: This past week has been so rewarding, and I have learned so much about myself as a clinician and as a person. This study abroad opportunity has given me so much experience working with clients of different cultures, learning to be adaptive in the moment, and seeing how a school works in another country. I learned how to accommodate each client's strengths and weaknesses, motivators, and attention spans within my plans. One of my clients really enjoyed music-based activities and art, and another client liked working on math problems during his brain breaks. For the diagnostics, I had my first experience a standardized assessment and not just shadowing one. I administered the PPVT and the GFTA as well as assisted with the PLS, LPT, and HAPP. I am so thankful for having this experience already coming into graduate school. I also got to see a variety of behaviors during the diagnostics. It is interesting to see how individuals respond to test after test. One client was very well behaved and remained motivated to complete each assessment, but the other two clients barely even sat still for more than a couple minutes, so more informal play-based observations had to be taken. Again, this helped me think on the spot and be flexible as the clients will not always cooperate! Regarding the "fun" parts of the trip outside of the speech sessions, the students really got to connect as friends, and not just clinicians! This trip is something that will bond us together! So many "firsts" happened on this trip for me: snorkeling, hiking a waterfall, drinking coconut water straight from the coconut, eating a fresh mango right off the tree, eating Jamaican patties, driving on the left side of the road, and having a lizard in my room!!! It truly was such an amazing week, so many memories were made.

Student 5: This trip to Jamaica has truly changed my life and made me a more confident clinician than I was before. The bonds I formed with the girls and the children have been more meaningful than I could have ever imagined. Everyone we met was incredibly welcoming and excited to have us there to help. We had a great balance between our clinical work and time to relax and enjoy ourselves—it was the perfect mix. Therapy here is different due to the cultural context, but learning about those differences was an incredible and an eye-opening experience. Before coming, I was a bit concerned about safety, but I've felt completely secure the entire time. Dr. T knows many people in the community, and some even stayed with us, which I really appreciated. The property is gated, with a guard who manually opens and closes the gate, and Robert, the grounds keeper, stayed with us at the Airbnb, which added an extra layer of comfort and security. I'm genuinely so glad I came on this trip and would return in a heartbeat, year after year.

Student 6: I don't think I'll ever be able to fully express everything I learned and experienced during the CDS study abroad trip to Jamaica. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—one that turned classmates into good friends and gave me some sweet memories. I went in barely knowing half the group and left with memories I wouldn't trade for anything.

As a student, I was reminded that learning doesn't stop at the classroom door. Observing diagnostics, sitting in on sessions, and soaking in wisdom from our department chair and graduate students was extremely valuable. Their insight into graduate school, clinical work, and life has made me a more focused, inspired learner with a deepened desire to serve others.

As a future clinician, I learned that growth starts with stepping out of your comfort zone. I arrived with zero clinical experience and was intimidated. But with Dr. Throneburg's guidance and encouragement, I realized this is what I'm meant to do. I think that this trip has significantly

prepared me for 3900 and allowed me to put what I have learned to practice. The students and clients at the school warmed my heart, and in many ways, they taught me more than I taught them.

As a person, I gained a broader view of the world and a deeper appreciation for the global need for Speech-Language Pathologists. The lack of access to services in some communities is heartbreaking, yet the hope we saw in families' eyes was incredibly moving. One child's progress in just four days will stay with me forever. I've questioned if I wanted to be an SLP at times, but now I'm 100% certain—I can't imagine doing anything else.