

Narrative Summary

1. Narrative Summary

Name	Greg Ennis
School	Good Hope Middle
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“Each educator will prepare a one-paged typed narrative suitable for publication in newspaper, newsletters, magazines, etc. This narrative should reflect on the experiences during the externship and how it will impact your individual curriculum during the school year.”

2. Narrative Summary

This year I was able to go to Cullman Electric Cooperative as a part of the CAWS program along with fellow teacher, Nate Ayers. We arrived at 2 p.m. on the first day and were warmly welcomed by Gail Neal, the VP of Human Resources. She did a great job of presenting the history and purpose of Cullman Electric Cooperative. After the presentation, we were able to visit the call center. This is a pretty amazing operation with every power line mapped on computer screens. The maps light up and flash automatically when a trouble call comes in. It also uses icons to track every Co-op vehicle. Dispatches for power outages are handled at this call center. Afterwards, we were able to visit the maintenance shop and learn about the construction of the service vehicles. On our second day we traveled to the Addison extension office. From this office we spent most of the day learning about power distribution and substations. We also spent time with a construction crew while they set a couple of poles at a site on the lake. It was quite interesting watching these guys work on a very steep slope. We were able to see how essential communication and teamwork are to completing such a task. On Wednesday, we spent time in the warehouse, at a safety meeting, and in the field with a line crew. In the warehouse we were able to see how each job is routed and boxed. Before a crew leaves the shop they will have all the necessary parts required to complete the job as well as detailed instructions and directions to the job site. At the safety meeting we learned how each person is regularly trained to perform his or her duty efficiently and safely. The time in the field was spent with a crew who were changing out a power pole that had become unsafe with a new pole, all while the lines were still energized! It was quite apparent that the lessons learned in training and safety meeting such as the one attended earlier are crucial for preventing serious injury or death. It was again obvious how important teamwork and communication are to performing the task at hand, safely. Thursday was a day spent learning the behind the scenes operations of the Co-op. Engineering, Accounting, Field Services, Member Services, and Information Technology were all on the agenda for the day. We were able to see how each person working behind the scenes is a vital part of the overall operation. We learned how each person has a specific responsibility maintaining the overall operation from the initial customer order to the work order for the crews to the final billing of services rendered. We also quickly learned how many customers, known as members, have difficulty paying for services. We saw how careful the Co-op is at working with these customers so that a good relationship is maintained and so that members can afford to “keep the lights on.” Our final day at the Co-op was spent learning about the accounting aspects of the Co-op at a large scale, power theft, and marketing and community relations. We learned how the Co-op works with TVA, sets rate scales, and anticipates future needs. We learned how the Co-op works with customers beyond just collecting power payments. The Co-op does a lot to help its members who may need assistance obtaining loans for energy related equipment, or who may have questions about reducing their overall energy consumption. The most interesting part of the day, however, was spent with Billy Rigsby, Power Diversion Officer. His job is to catch those who steal power. Something that is far more common than we realized. It was amazing to see the lengths to which many will go to keep from paying for electrical power. It was also amazing to see how many people find themselves with misdemeanor or felony warrants because of their deeds. Overall our visit to the Co-op was outstanding and impressive. I will be able to use a lot of information I gained during my experience inside my classroom. I can definitely use what I learned within my unit on electricity and I can relate real world examples of technology to my students. The CAWS educator exchange program is a program to which all teachers should attempt to be a part. The lessons learned were very valuable to me personally and professionally.