Field Observation Reflection Paper

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EDUC 111: Introduction to Teaching
The best way for someone to determine if they really would like to go into a certain field is to observe and talk to others who are already in the discipline. This is especially important for prospective teachers because although you do not realize it as a student, teaching is a very taxing job that requires patience and determination. With a diverse classroom of students who have various levels of knowledge on the subjects being taught and how they grasp those subjects a teacher must be able to meet the needs of these pupils. To meet those requirements the educator must be able to inspire students and have a curriculum that reflects the learning styles of all students. This semester has been helpful in providing me with various ideas for my own classroom and teaching methods.

During this semester I was able to observe in a wide variety of classrooms, each visit being at a different school within the Manchester Community School Corporation. The classes I observed were fourth grade, fifth grade, seventh grade World Geography, high school Geometry, and special education class. I felt that the experience helped me determine whether or not I was truly on the right path. I still felt a pull toward the high school mathematics class which is what I originally planned to teach. Although I now feel like I would be able to handle elementary level students; whereas, I was not sure if I would beforehand. I still have no desire to teach at the middle school level or a special education class.

Although I had the realization that I would not mind teaching elementary students I still plan on teaching mathematics because that is where my true passion lies. I find joy in helping students learn in mathematics. In the past and currently I help friends with their math homework and whenever they understand what I am explaining to them or they solve a problem on their own I become very excited because they learned something new. I believe that happiness is the teacher in me that finds joy in helping others learn and seeing them understand what is being
taught. I would like to focus a majority of my efforts in the classroom to inspiring my students in wanting to learn.

My main goal for my time here at Manchester is going to be to work on becoming more open because I tend to be very introverted around new people. I am not a big fan of public speaking although discussing things in front of a group that I know and have a passion for is not as difficult for me. All of the teachers I observed over the semester had a natural comfort level in their classrooms and were very welcoming when I went to observe their classrooms. I want to be an inviting teacher where students feel comfortable coming to talk to me if they wish but I will still maintain the professional teacher-student relationship.

The interactions between teacher and pupils are vital to the teacher-student relationship. While observing classrooms I was able to see many interactions between students and teachers. I found it important and very nice that each of the teachers I observed talked to their students about their families and various things going on in their lives. This included the seventh grade World Geography teacher reminding a student that they still needed to turn in a project, and the fifth grade teacher talking to one of her students about collectible dolls. My teachers had done the same because it creates a bond between the two and makes the student feel welcome and important to the educator. I believe this aids in creating and stabilizing the teacher-student relationship.

As a teacher I also would like my students to feel comfortable answering questions without necessarily raising their hands. Unlike many teachers I have had in the past I will explain this to my students because it may seem awkward for the students to stop raising their hand when I ask questions. I know that there were classes for me in my high school that students would just shout out an answer and others would have their hand raised. The student waiting to
answer the question would become irritated when they were ignored or did not get the chance to
answer the question. The first educator I observed at the Manchester Elementary School had this
policy in his room as well and it seemed to work well even with a class of fourth graders.

Having a determined set of rules or guidelines for the class will be imperative to creating
a classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable. At the high school level students
should not need as many rules in the class. Unlike the special education class I observed which
had rules for visitors, my classroom will have established rules for my pupils. These rules will
consist of being respectful of everyone in the classroom, following the student handbook, and
making sure that everything is cleaned up around the desk when a student leaves. Although I did
not see any students being disrespectful during my observations I do know that high school
students have a tendency to bully other students in the class and make comments about their
teachers. I am sure that in the past I did participate in some teasing of other students or
complaining about teachers I had. I have come to realize that it is disrespectful act. As an
educator I believe there is a line that students should not cross when it comes to making fun of
others or complaining about teachers. A student should never talk about other teachers in the
building, especially in front of another educator. Respect is one thing I highly value and when
someone does not show me respect I get upset. In the same regard, I try to show others the
respect I want to receive.

Planning out lessons so they will keep the attention of students for a maximum amount of
time is another important aspect to educating children. Unfortunately many of my observations
were during times where classes did not have lectures and time for learning; therefore, I did not
get to see this aspect of teaching in action. Mathematics is not a very interesting subject which
makes it hard for students to keep their attention to what they are learning. My goal is to find
innovative ways to teach students mathematics concepts while letting them do activities, research, and not spend as much time on instruction. Lectures generally add to the boredom in a math class and students will zone out and not do well because the material was boring and lost their attention. As a first year teacher I understand that it will be hard to manage this. My observation at the high school was with a first year teacher in geometry and while he enjoyed teaching he explained to me that he felt he was just trying to teach the curriculum at first and was lecturing a majority of the time. If I am able to determine some activities now it will help me when I begin my job as an educator.

Teaching is a very diverse job that requires many skills and a lot of patience. It is important for a teacher to be able to maintain a healthy and professional relationship with their pupils, develop lesson plans that keep the attention of a majority of the students, make the atmosphere of the classroom inviting, and be a welcoming person capable of standing up in front of the class to teach. All of these become part of my goals for development as an educator over the next few years. Looking back at the experience I had in observing, I still have the determination to inspire others through a career in mathematics education.