

Reflection Paper

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Introduction to Teaching

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During my first semester at Manchester College I have had the opportunity to go to five different schools and observe in the classroom. Through those observations I have gained powerful knowledge. I have been exposed to many different learning styles, teaching techniques, and I now know my strengths and weaknesses. Observing in different classrooms has given me the opportunity to experience different aspects of teaching. Through all of the observations and experiences, I am confident that I want to become a teacher.

For my first observation I visited Manchester Elementary School, and observed Mrs. McLaughlin's second grade classroom. Her classroom was very inviting with many colorful posters on the walls, books on the shelves, and learning games for the children to play when they got free time. The classroom was organized by having the desks in groups of four, scattered around the room. This allowed the children to work in small groups, when reading a book or working on math homework. The main areas they focused on the day of my visit was reading and writing. The students were reading a book, in small groups of three, scattered around the room. The children would help one another out with words or pronunciations, and I found that working in small groups helped the children, especially having their peers help out when it was needed. After reading they worked on their writing activity. This activity focused on using more details when writing stories. The activity that they did was they dissected a short story to find all the important details in it. I believe that this activity will help prepare them to add detail for writing their own stories later. I thought that Mrs. McLaughlin was a great and encouraging teacher, because all of her students were disciplined and they listened to her when they needed

to. She helped her students and she always stayed positive. Overall, she was a really good teacher to observe, because I think that she had all of the traits that a good teacher needs to have. I focused strongly on doing a thorough observation for the elementary school, because I would like to be an elementary teacher.

My second observation I went to Manchester Intermediate School, and observed Mrs. Hanback's sixth grade class. Mrs. Hanback taught reading to honor children and "low" reading children. It was a unique experience. I got to sit through two class periods, and watch how they were completely different. The first period was the honor children. These children read books quietly on their own and answered questions after finishing their reading. They enjoyed reading, and they got right down to business without distractions. The second period I got to watch were the "low" reading students. It was interesting because they got their book read aloud to them and they got distracted very easily and needed instruction to regain focus. I thought it was neat to watch at how differently each group responded to the reading activity. Mrs. Hanback had the room decorated very neat with books on the shelves for the children to read along with book posters around the room. The desks were organized in groups of six or seven, which enabled the children to read together when they were allowed. Mrs. Hanback was a great teacher, she helped her students and was confident in the classroom.

My third and fourth observations were very similar both in the classroom and the teaching aspect. I observed Mrs. Parson's eighth grade math class, and Mrs. Calaway's freshman Spanish 1 A class. In the classroom the atmosphere at Manchester Junior High and Manchester High School the students are more on their own with few teacher instruction. The teacher lectures and the students sit back and listen. In Mrs. Parson's classroom, she taught a math lesson, and then the students worked on their homework for the remaining period, while

she went around and assisted. In the room, there were many math posters and the desks were in groups of seven, so the children could work on homework with one another. On the other hand, in Mrs. Calaway's Spanish class, they reviewed for a test so she had them play a game, to review for the test. It seemed that the students really enjoyed playing a game, because it was something fun that they could focus on rather than a teacher lecturing to them the entire class period. Mrs. Calaway's classroom had a Mexican theme with a Mexican flag, and a piñata. After observing the higher grade levels, I have found that I would rather be hands on with my students, instead of standing in front of a classroom just lecturing. So I believe that teaching elementary school would suit me, so I could have more interaction with my students.

My final observation I got to return to Manchester Elementary School to focus on Special Education. I shadowed Mr. Daily and we visited three different classrooms, with three different children. Two of the children we helped needed extra attention in reading, so Mr. Daily just had them practice their reading by reading an easy short story. The third student we helped needed extra attention on writing. Mr. Daily had the student write three or four sentences using detail. Having him focus on short sentences will help him prepare on writing longer sentences in the future. The main thing I recognized with the special needs children, was not that they could not do the task given, it was more that they needed extra confidence. Having someone, a teacher, give them a little confidence I noticed that the students knew that they could accomplish the task given. It is very important that teachers work with special needs children patiently, because eventually they will catch on to what is being taught, but it might just take a little extra time. Throughout all of my observation experiences, I have gained a lot of information. Being able to observe all kinds of teachers has helped me be able to see what kind of a teacher I want to become, and what qualities a good teacher needs to carry.

During my observations I have found many assets that will help me become a good teacher. I think I would do best in an elementary school environment. I know that I am going to be a hands on teacher, meaning I will do many things that will get my students involved. Doing fun activities is important because it enables the children to want to learn rather than learning because they have to. Teaching in an elementary atmosphere will allow me to experience the ideas that I believe will make me a good teacher. Throughout the whole process I have found my strengths and weaknesses. My strength is that I believe that I will be a good teacher because I have the right mind set. I am always a positive and happy person, so that will help me connect with my students. I am also very patient. I think that it is crucial that I have a one on one relationship with all of my students. Being able to know my students will help me become a better teacher, because I will then know how to teach them the way that my students learn best. I am also willing to try new strategies and teaching techniques. Always trying new ideas will keep my students ready to learn, and it will also keep me interested in teaching, which I think is a important factor. If I do not want to learn or teach then my kids will not want to learn, and then I will not have success in my classroom. I have come across a few weaknesses while observing. One weakness is my lack of talent for arts and crafts. I have room to expand on, in this area. Having a fun and inviting classroom will help my students become excited to learn. Being able to do arts and crafts is an important role in becoming a teacher because I will always have to think of something new and creative for my students to try. Hopefully during my four years at Manchester College I will succeed in the area of arts and crafts by learning and applying neat ideas.

Finally, goals that I would like to pursue before becoming a teacher are knowing what teaching technique works best for me in the classroom. Being able to teach my students

effectively will help both myself and students. My biggest goal is to make sure I am a successful teacher and that my students are learning everything that needs to be taught, so they also have a successful year. During my observations I have gained powerful knowledge. I have been exposed to many different learning styles, teaching techniques, and I now know my strengths and weaknesses. Observing in different classrooms has given me the opportunity to experience different aspects of teaching. In conclusion, my observations have really helped me plan on becoming the best teacher that I could potentially be.