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EDUC 111

Reflective Paper for Field Experience

On five different occasions throughout the semester, we have been required to go to various area schools and do observations in the classroom setting. By doing this, we have been able to witness first-hand the techniques and strategies used by different teachers to create an effective curriculum and classroom environment. Every teacher has their own opinion as to how students learn best, and every teacher creates a unique atmosphere in order to achieve their goals and meet the needs of the students. Furthermore, I have had the opportunity to see the unique aspects that go along with teaching different ages of students, and how the changing maturity levels require teachers to alter curriculum and instruction. Basically, these field experiences gave me insight as to some of the challenges and rewards of being a teacher.

Going into these field experiences, I knew that there were several factors which I have struggled with in the past which I needed to overcome before going into the field of teaching. The first was the fact that I am usually uncomfortable around young children, from about 8 years old and younger. Since I plan on eventually being a health and physical education teacher, it will be necessary for me to feel comfortable teaching all grades, K-12. In one specific field experience, I had the opportunity to mingle with students as young as 3 years old. This particular day of observations was in the Pre-K special education setting at Manchester Elementary School. Since it was Earth Day, the teacher decided to tie together a lesson in recycling with physical education. She spread out newspaper all over the floor, and had the students wad it up and put it in a recycling container. She then had the students stomp on empty milk jug containers to flatten them out, and then throw them away. While they worked at

completing these duties, I helped and encouraged the kids with their tasks, giving them advice and further instruction. They seemed to really appreciate this, and such a simple task provided them with a lot of fun and entertainment. Furthermore, it was a great way for them to develop their motor skill function.

Another aspect of teaching which I may initially struggle with will be discipline. I have always been the student who dreaded getting into trouble, or seeing others be disciplined. However, this is an inevitable part of teaching which I will have to meet head on. In my field experience observations, I never saw anyone do anything outrageously bad or receive any kind of harsh punishment. Despite this, one of my experiences did open my eyes. The setting was an eighth grade health class at Manchester Middle School. The class did not appear to be overly misbehaved, but there were a number of students who seemed to have slightly mischievous intentions. The teacher was an older woman with many years of experience. Seeing the way she dealt with disruptive students gave me some ideas as to what worked and what did not. To begin with, she had a way of confronting students before they became too rambunctious. I felt that this was an effective strategy in maintaining order in the classroom. However, her tone was one that I felt belittled the students, which in turn caused them to lose respect for her authority. After this specific field experience, I came to the conclusion that effective discipline involves prompt action, along with mutual respect.

The field experience observations had a significant impact on my professional growth. I feel that as a result of these experiences, I am much more comfortable with the level of responsibility that is required and demanded in the teaching profession. It can be intimidating at times to think about how as a teacher, you are not only responsible for yourself, but also for the welfare and success of every student who steps foot in your classroom. This idea used to scare

me, but I am now aware of the responsibility and ways to make sure that the students are in good hands.

These field experiences have shaped my educational career by revealing to me what skills I have that will make me a proficient teacher, as well as things that I must work on. For example, when working with fourth grade students at Manchester Intermediate School, I could tell that the teacher was very passionate about physical education. This was revealed in his tone of voice, eye contact, and other mannerisms. I feel that one day I will be able to get kids excited about being active because it is something that I am very enthusiastic about as well. In these hard economic times, many schools are cutting physical education programs because they are stereotypically viewed as less important than other subject areas. However, I respectfully disagree. Physical education is important now more than ever as obesity and diabetes become growing epidemics throughout our nation. If children are taught and given the tools at an early age to live healthy, productive lifestyles, then they will be much more likely to continue these practices into adulthood.

One main goal that I have in regards to my future professional growth is being able to fulfill my role as an authority figure. During some of my field experience observations, I felt that I was not that much older than the students, and therefore would have trouble expressing my authority in those situations. Perhaps this will improve as I age. I must be ready, however, because I plan on being licensed as a K-12 health and physical education teacher, and my first job could be Advanced P.E. with juniors and seniors. In this case, it will be important for me to demand the respect needed as an authority figure and professional. Some students may want to treat me as a friend or peer, but in the quest for professional development I cannot allow this to happen. Of course this does not mean that I cannot be friendly or personable with my students. I

simply must keep all interaction professional, and maintain my position as a respected authority figure.

These field experience observations have given me much knowledge and insight that could not have been attained from a book. I had the opportunity to view multiple styles of teaching, classroom management, discipline techniques, and curriculums. I was able to determine what things were effective in stimulating enthusiasm for learning, and what things were not. These observations have enabled me to take the first steps in developing my own teaching strategies in order to best fulfill the needs of my students. I feel that the hands-on, real life experience that these observations have given me is invaluable, and has pointed me in the right direction to become an effective health and physical education teacher.