My chance to observe in different classrooms has been one of the most rewarding experiences during my time in the Manchester Education program. Each of the teachers had a slightly different teaching style, but each of them was able to be effective and helpful to their class. Throughout my visits, it was evident that the children’s passion for reading continued to increase the more they were able to participate in the literature circles, reading theatres, and other fun activities the teachers had planned. It is a rare and wonderful thing the teachers have been able to do, and hopefully this passion will stick with these students as they progress through school. It seems like in today’s society reading often takes a backseat to other activities that are less productive and educational, such as playing video games and watching television.

A sixth grade classroom that I observed at Laketon proved to be very beneficial, as the teacher was outstanding in all aspects of teaching. I learned a lot from merely watching some of her teaching strategies. One of the first things I noticed was that she had a great classroom management plan. She was able, at all times, to keep them under control and focused on the task at hand, regardless of whether she was speaking to the class as a whole or the students were broken up into groups. This, along with the teacher’s ability to always stay organized, helped contribute to a classroom climate that really helped promote learning.

The physical environment of the room was also conducive to the promotion of reading. There were many different types and skill sets of books located throughout the room. It was set up in a way that students could read individually, if needed, or in small groups when it was time to do their literature circles. At first I wondered if the frequent work in small groups would cause the kids to get distracted and get off task, but the
agenda for the day was clearly posted, so the kids knew what they needed to get done. Because of this, the students always seemed to be on task and engaged.

One of the most impressive things about this classroom was the fact that the students genuinely seemed excited and happy to be reading. By this age, students often are not excited for reading and school in general. But in this case, almost all of them seemed to enjoy time for literature circles and reader’s theatre. All of the students had access to books, and the fact that they were able to choose books that interested them helped contribute to their excitement. Besides breaking up into groups and talking about their books with other members of their literature circles, this class also did reader’s theatre. A select number of students were picked to go up to the front of the class and read dialogue from a story that involved lines and parts. This helped students connect with the character on a deeper level at the same time they honed their reading skills. After the students read, questions would be asked of the class. At some point in the semester, each student would get a turn to read in front of the class, ensuring everyone got a chance. I liked both activities very much, and plan to use them regularly in my classroom.

I also had a very rewarding experience when I was also able to observe in a first grade classroom at Manchester Elementary School. From the moment I walked in, I could tell that reading and learning words was important. One of the first things I saw was a huge word wall on one wall. Like in the sixth grade classroom I was fortunate enough to observe, there were many books located throughout the room. Once again, the kids broke up into their groups and did group reading. The main difference was that each
group of kids was reading their books aloud with a teacher. This can be easily attributed to the fact that they are first and not sixth graders, and therefore not as capable readers.

The teacher working with the students was very involved with the group. Each day one student was on the “hot seat” and was the main reader on which the teacher focused. The other children would read aloud while this was going on, allowing the teacher to make sure each student was indeed reading. After each of the children finished the book, the teacher would ask reflection questions to ensure that the students had fully understood what happened with the story. After the students would finish reading one book and had time to practice it for a couple days, they would trade that book in for a new one and put it into their bag, along with the two other books they had to practice reading. I liked all the strategies I saw in this classroom, as well.

A third classroom I had the chance to observe was a second grade classroom at Manchester Elementary. This classroom’s setup was very similar to the first grade classroom I observed, with books all around the room, and a large word wall on one of the walls. Within their reading and literature circle groups, the students, as they did in the first grade room, read out loud with one student being on the “hot seat” for the day. The teacher in this classroom asked higher level questions to ensure the students would really connect and understand what they were reading. There was also a very nice balance of talk and quiet activities in this room. I enjoyed this room, as it reminded me very much of the first grade classroom.

It is always enjoyable when future teachers get the chance to observe in classrooms while still in college. It helps foster ideas, and shows us strategies and ideas that we may or may not like to use in our classroom one day. This particular set of
observations has proven itself to be very helpful to me as a future educator. I was able to see three great teachers and learn many different ways to effectively implement reading in my classroom. It was especially helpful to observe the range of age groups, as it showed some of the techniques that work with students of different ages and ability levels. The upper elementary observation was of great help, as I feel that is the age group I want to teach and it is sometimes challenging to get them motivated to read. However, with these new strategies and ideas, I feel like I have a good start in finding ways to get them to enjoy reading again. I will definitely use the literature circles and reader’s theater in my classroom. I also will take some of the classroom management techniques the teachers had and use them in my classroom. I found no negatives from these observations and feel as if it greatly helped me develop as a professional.