Field Experience Reflection

The time I spent in Mrs. _____’s English classes gave me a glimpse of what I will be doing in the spring during student teaching. I was able to observe how she operated the class, and I had the opportunity to teach a few lessons and answer questions about what the students were working on for her. My time there helped me begin to get to know the students, whom I will be working with soon. The experience gave me some insight about reading and writing in English that will undoubtedly be very useful later on when I begin planning lessons to teach to the class. I also got some insight on working with exceptional students. I feel that I got to see what teaching is like from a teacher’s perspective, and since this was a first for me, I feel much better about teaching in general. During my experience, I saw the ups and downs that a teacher has during the average school day. The overall experience was rewarding and uplifting and definitely prepared me more to student teach.

I was able to spend a few entire school days with Mrs. _______ English class, and I found this to be most beneficial because I was able to see how she teaches the same class multiple times in a day. I found observing her, and later when I gave my own lessons, that often the class predicts how well a lesson goes, and it is not necessarily how I teach. Upon asking Mrs._______ about this, she explained to me that teaching the same class more than once a day is often a coin-toss, because one class may understand the concepts completely while the other class needs to spend another day to meet the objective. She said that in the end, they usually balance out well and end up at the same place, but it is often a struggle to get them to this point. I
understand in the future when I am in charge of doing this myself that all students learn at a different pace and that even entire classes can be on two different levels; and when this occurs in my classroom, I can only adapt as well as I can to keep them going at similar rates.

From my field experience, I have also gained an awareness of how important time management is in the teaching profession. During one of my days doing observation, Mrs. _____ had a full schedule grading research paper drafts and meeting deadlines for the school yearbook, which she sponsors. During one class, she observed a student copying and pasting information onto their research paper. Upon seeing this, she had a moral obligation to follow through with the steps she and the school had in place for plagiarizing. She basically spent the rest of the day going through the paper with a highlighter, meeting with the student, meeting with the assistant principal, and calling the student’s parents. She had to put her other obligations on hold to follow through with discipline issues. She took everything in stride, however, and explained to me that one of the most important jobs of a teacher is being able to deal with situations as they arise and not get overwhelmed with the workload. Time management, and being able to shift around my schedule, are going to be essential skills for me in the future, as I have seen this in action during my field placement. Mrs. _____ handled the situation in a very professional way, but I could tell the situation was a stressful one. I learned this day that if I can have flexible yet precise time management this will reflect stress management as well.

Because of this experience, I have a better understanding of reading and writing in the English classroom. The two are the central components, and I saw a balance between them throughout different lessons. In order to be successful in the class, the students must demonstrate their knowledge through writing. This does pose some complications for the students with disabilities and the foreign exchange students in the classes I observed. This is because it is
difficult to tell through their writing whether they comprehend the material. The modifications Mrs. _____ makes for these students is often through her grading of their assignments. The students who are on a lower level, specifically those with I.E.P.’s, are graded for ideas and not for mechanics on most of the worksheets. This way many of the modifications are kept private from the rest of the students. She told me that when the class reads aloud, she will rarely call on the less proficient readers to read in front of the class, but they still get a chance alone with the teacher’s aide to practice reading. They may also get a reading guide to help them comprehend what they are reading, and she works one-on-one with these students often to explain concepts that they do not understand. These accommodations seem to work for her class, but I am sure they could be improved.

This field experience gave me my first view of how a teacher interacts with students with exceptionalities, which made me feel much better about doing this myself in student teaching and beyond. I feel confident in my own reading and writing skills, and I think that I will be able to help students improve their own. Mrs. Gornto taught me that being self-confident, even when I am stressed out and not sure how to handle a situation, will give me an advantage. As long as I have a passion to teach and a desire to help my students learn and understand the content, everything else will flow in its own way. I am excited to begin teaching with the classes and students I have met during this field experience. This field experience was probably the most important part of my college career so far, because I learned an extensive amount about the field of teaching from first-hand experience and observation. I know that I have a while to go before I feel completely ready to teach a class on my own for a school year, but I am confident from my field experience that I have the important thing which is a desire to help students learn, and the people around me will help me with the rest.