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Start of School Reflection

09-10-2010

The Classroom Mailbox

“My name is Miss Davenport and my goal for this class is to succeed and give all of you the chance to succeed with me. Some of my favorite things to do are read and create collages. When I grow up I want to be the Teacher of the Year”. This was how I introduced myself to my third grade class. Prior to that day, I had made a shoebox into a mailbox and decorated it with magazine clippings. I then presented the box to the class and explained how they could put anonymous notes for delivery to the teacher inside the box whenever they wanted. The notes could be about anything: how class was going, they saw somebody do something well, they liked the lesson, what to change about the lesson, or happenings at home; all of which would be delivered to the teacher throughout the year. I started them out with making their own introductory cards with their name, goal for this year, favorite thing to do, and what they wanted to be when they grew up; all to be written in their favorite color of marker or colored pencil.

I made myself available by walking around the room while they worked on their cards. I got asked several questions on spelling of words and most of the class didn't know what a goal was. Having been asked several time what a goal was I finally told the whole class that it is something you wish to do for this year and I followed with some examples. After collecting the cards, I realized I should have had students come up with examples because the majority of the class either copied what I had put as a goal on the board or used one of the examples I had said earlier. Thinking of a different word that third graders

might understand better than goal, I realized that ambition or objective were even more difficult to understand than goal.

Having spent ten minutes or so on this activity I noticed some were finishing up while a select few hadn't really even started. I had thought that this might happen and so I announced to the class that if they were finished then they could turn the card over and draw themselves or them doing what they want to do as they grow up. I could feel the excitement and hum of voices as they got started on their drawings. While the class was busy with the next step, I approached the few that were distracted and not completing the card. I stood next to them almost the entire remaining time to make sure they had completed the activity.

Looking through the cards afterwards, I took note of several different things. First, that most of the class had copied my examples of goals. Second, that the majority of occupations the class picked was either a police officer or a veterinarian with a few singers and race car drivers thrown in there. One student who has difficulty seeing certain colors wrote that he just wanted to be a normal person when he grew up; I showed my teacher the card because it threw me off a little. Third, the different stages of their writing and artwork were across the board. Some wrote almost as well as I did and some were difficult to read and divide into different words instead of one long string of letters. The artworks ranged from circle bodies with stick arms (some had a few fingers) to realistic drawings of animals and cars. This third observation told me a lot of where each student was developmentally which I will use later on.

I feel as if the activity was a success and the students enjoyed it. I have been using their introductory cards as flash cards so I can get to know them personally. I first found the classroom mailbox idea from our First Days of School textbook and added the introductory cards to create my activity. I also realized that I often use proximity with students which I probably gathered from watching so many other teachers do the same thing throughout my observations. Also, I wore my Manchester College nametag throughout my entire Start of School experience so as to look professional. I remembered reading about having more control of a classroom when presented as a professional and so I did my best to do just that.

I gathered a collection of ideas from reading the First Days of School textbook and I am going to try to incorporate them into my teaching. The Start of School days were just the first three days of the rest of my career and I believe I have what it takes to eventually reach my goal and be the Teacher of the Year.