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Final Reflection

People often say that you go to college to become educated, get all of your questions answered, think of it as a time to be formally trained, and a time for your life to begin. Over the past four years, I have had an excellent education that has taught me more than I ever imagined about how to become an effective teacher that I have the potential of becoming.

Recently I have been thinking a lot about my “Manchester Experience” and how the past four years have shaped me into the person that I have become. I came into Manchester as a reach for the stars, dreamer and have become a passionate teacher with a deep compassion for the students that I interact with on a daily basis. Spending time, modifying lessons, coming up with new ways to teach the old skills, and making the students an active participant in their own education.

I also have learned a valuable lesson, I do not have all the answers and that teaching is not an individual sport. There are amazing educators in every school, why not tap into these awesome resources and take each moment as a learning opportunity. I have had many people that I have encountered. One specific example that comes to mind is while student teaching, I was having trouble engaging my sixth grade math class. So during my plan period, I went downstairs to talk to another Special Education teacher, about new creative ideas that I could easily include to keep my students engaged. Another great resource to learn more about a variety of subjects is attending conferences. This is a great opportunity to meet professionals in their field, that have tested methods and new fresh ideas on teaching often times the same curriculum that you are also being instructed to teach.

It is always fun to read something that you wrote and felt strongly about at the time. That is how my teaching credo, is for me. It was fun to look back and remember the way that I used to think about teaching. I especially interesting how I made schools seem such an abstract thing. I made it seem so easy, you figure out what students need and make it happen. The only problem with this is sometimes it is not as easy as asking the students. It is important to learn your student's strengths and weaknesses, but sometimes it is not achievable for every single content area or lesson. Sometimes a teacher needs to lecture, to give the students backgrounds on a specific subject so that then the fun projects and review games can take place.

One thing that I will continue to strive for until the day that I die is being the teacher that I did not have when I needed the most. It is important to meet your students in their current life path. This can be achieved through compassion, respect, and love for each and every student that enters your classroom. Throughout my experiences I have experienced breaking up fights, students that claim their parents do not love them so they did not get any breakfast, a student being escorted from school property, and countless other events that a student is dealing with. For many of these students I was the safe space that they could come and talk to about everything that was going on and still welcomed them into my classroom. More important to that is helping these students to feel comfortable reentering a room that may or may not know about what is going on for that particular student.

Manchester education program is not only filled with professors with a variety of teaching experiences, but it also has a wide variety of classes that are important to develop a well rounded, educated teacher. Not only through the education courses, but the faculty also help students select other classes in the general education program to help them learn about a wide variety of subjects. Within the teaching program many of the classes were beneficial. This

included starting out with Intro to Teaching in an urban school. This was a great way to begin the program, spending every morning in January in an elementary classroom. Then in the afternoon I returned to my peers and we talked about what good educators do, often times reinforcing what I had experienced that morning in an actual classroom.

Then if I were to fast forward into Learners with Mild Disabilities, this was a great class in the shaping of my special education degree. It helped me to learn about a variety of disabilities, that many I had never heard of before. It was through research, class discussions, and projects that I was able to apply the various disabilities to actual students. The even more important part of this was learning how to help these students to succeed in whatever situation they may find him or her self in.

The class that I was the most worried about, but has come to be my favorite education class was Literacy Block. I was worried, because this is one area that always caused me some problems, when I was in school and well I was not sure how I was going to be able to teach it. However, I quickly came to love all the possibilities that teaching reading and writing had brought into my teaching styles. For me an ideal world has students reading and being read to at least once a day. Books help take students on adventures, without ever leaving their house. Writing is also important, because this a good glimpse inside their head and inside their world. These are also important skills that everybody needs to know and use to be an active member of society.

After learning to teach Reading and Writing, now that leaves all of the other subjects that are also important to learn how to teach. But for me the most important class included in Methods Block was classroom management. I did not know at the time, but one of the classes that I would spend a lot of time with, had no idea how a class was supposed to act. They were

constantly out of their seat, anytime that they wanted to leave the room, they would simply get up out of their seat and run around the room anytime they wanted to leave the room. With twenty-eight students trying this out it was not going to end well at all. Within this same class twenty-one of them were boys that fed off of one another's energy, once one went off, it quickly turned into a chain reaction. After about a week, I decided that I could not spend to much longer in the classroom without any changes. I was, however, able to look back to my classroom management notes and come up with a variety of things to try with my class. I was able to learn quickly what worked and what did not work for this group of students.

The Manchester College education program is based around four important categories that all teachers must meet. Together these four elements create the C.A.R.E. corp. composing of curriculum, assessment, relationships, and environment. One of the best ways to limit misbehavior is having engaging curriculum. When planning these lessons it is important to work closely with the standards as well as the needs of your students.

Another important component of learning is to constantly being assessing what students know as well as learning what the students are still struggling with. It is also important to be test linked; teachers need to evaluate standardized tests to see where the students are performing, what were their strengths and weaknesses. It is also important to explain these results to the students so they also know what is going on. With my second grade students, the teachers had a large target in the hallway and individual graphs in the classroom. This was a way for the students to be able to see where they were, also see where the classmates were, and celebrate the growth throughout the year.

Students bring their home life into the classroom every day. This is when relationships with both your students as well as their parents is the most important to have already set-up so

that when something happens the foundation for communication has already been laid. It is also important to continue to learn, you do not have all the answers, and it is alright to talk to colleagues to get new ideas. If you see a great idea, or something interesting in the hallway, talk to that teacher about and see how you can apply it to your content. Teachers and Students work together on as early as the first day to set-up a cooperative learning environment that works well for each and every student. Remember teaching is ever changing, what works with one group of students might not work with the next, so remember to be flexible.

After spending over six hundred hours in a classroom, I feel as though I have even more questions than I did coming into college. What grade do I want to teach? Do I want to teach in an elementary school? Do I want to have my own class full of students? Or do I want to be a Special Education teacher? This is one thing that I could not be more grateful for, the fact that I was put into a variety of teaching settings, and because of this I feel like my teaching possibilities are endless.