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Literacy Block

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Reflecting On My Observations

Over the course of roughly two months, I have had the opportunity to observe a variety of elementary schools. Four of the schools that I observed at were Manchester Elementary, Metro North Elementary, Piercton Elementary, and Laketon Intermediate. Throughout my observations, the grades I saw varied from early elementary all the way up to sixth grade at Laketon. I saw a wide variety of different methods that I have never seen before that I will someday want to implement into my own classroom. There are some ideas I took from the different teachers and some ideas that I thought did not seem to work that well. Being able to go out to these schools for two months helped me see how so much of what the teachers do connects with what we learn in our Literacy Block class.

Starting my observations off, I visited a fifth grade class at Laketon Intermediate and observed them utilizing literacy focus units. This is something that our class has talked about and emphasized how important it is to students. The teacher had the students divided up into about five students per group and provided a different job for each one that had a special task they had to complete. Some of the different jobs were discussion leader, vocabulary finder, and illustrator. Discussion leaders are basically the person who is in charge of the group and making sure that the discussion continues throughout the meeting. Here the discussion leader can create questions to generate more discussion.

With the vocabulary finder, basically what they do is look through the book or chapter they are reading and write down words they do not understand. When they write down the words, they look them up to provide a definition to the other group members. The illustrator provides a picture to the group of an important event that occurred. They need to try to be detailed as best as possible. When they present their picture to the group they need to explain what it is and tell the group why they picked it. I thought the teacher ran this literacy focus unit minus one student who did not want to read extremely well. Being a struggler in reading myself, I stepped in and sat down with this student and had him read to me so he was on task. It was an amazing feeling to hear the teacher after class say, thank you so much for helping it!

Another important class I observed that stuck out to me was a fourth grade class at Manchester Elementary school. The instructor was a male teacher who had great enthusiasm while teaching. While I was observing, the class was working on writing a diary or story independently, about a make believe character growing up from the 1800's to present. The students had a lot of freedom while writing these stories because the teacher wanted them to use their imaginations to the fullest. While they were writing I walked around the class and noticed different posters that were setup to help them with their writing. Some had guidelines about how to write topic sentences, thesis, and supporting details. Scaffolding was something that I noticed with these posters and the instructor himself in how he helped the class. He had the posters set up for a reason, to try and have the students not rely on him as much and to find the information on their own. For most of the questions he would ask the students to go up to the posters and read them carefully because they could find the answer on their own without his help. He was in the

process of weaning his students to learn more on their own which is crucial in elementary. They cannot have their teacher always hold their hand through their whole life. What I loved about this teacher so much was his passion for teaching and the manner he went about teaching his students.

The one teacher that had the biggest impact on me was a male teacher who taught third grade at Manchester Elementary. I will never forget the first time I observed in his class, I walked in and a little girl came up to me and took my jacket for me. That right there made me think wow; this guy has established a well-behaved class. Classroom management is something that we have talked about in class and this teacher explained to me how he did it so well. He said that from day one you need to enforce rules so they do not walk all over you and establish that you are in control. For most of the activities he had the class do, one that I like in particular was something called versatiles. This was an activity where the students would break up into partners and read a book together and then answer questions on it and place tiles on a board and I would walk around to check them. I liked it so much because I remember talking about in class how beneficial it is to have the students work with one another because they learn better from one another most of the time. The teacher encouraged collaboration between the partners so they could help explain why they think it is that specific answer and so they can work as a team. Another idea that I related to the book was read aloud reading. He would start reading a book to the class that they would be doing an activity on and then he would break them into groups and have them proceed with shared reading or partner reading. This was effective because he could set the tone with his voice while reading and then he gave the students the opportunity to read to one another. It is great practice when students read aloud to one

another because it helps them learn to read with clarity and fluency while reading to another person.

Throughout my experiences in all the classrooms I visited, I was able to connect a great deal of what I saw, with what I learned in our classroom. I provided just a few of the ideas that stuck out the most to me while observing. Some of the ideas that I will want to use in my own classroom are how the teacher at Laketon Intermediate used literacy focus units. I thought the way she used them was extremely effective and the students had a good vibe about them while they were doing it. Another idea I would like to use is how the fourth grade teacher at Manchester Elementary used scaffolding while having the students write. Scaffolding is something that is important to understand how to use effectively and I believe that he used it well. I also want to establish a strong sense of classroom management because in today's society many students try and walk all over their teachers. This is something that I cannot let happen and that is why I am going to ask other teachers different methods they use to help me. One trait that I will want to express to my students is my passion for teaching and my enthusiasm about it just like all the teachers did while I was observing them. Overall, I have gained a great deal knowledge that will one day, help me become the best teacher I can possibly be.