

My Field Experience Reflection:

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Introduction to Teaching 111

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After concluding my field experience at Shawnee Middle School, I feel more enthusiastic about my decision to become an educator. While observing students in the classroom setting, I was able to learn more about the teaching profession as a whole. I also learned more about myself as a developing teacher. I was able to use my experiences to form goals that will help me to become the best teacher that I can be.

When I was in the classroom, I noticed new aspects of the teaching profession. I did not realize that teachers have so many responsibilities. Previous to my field experience, I viewed the teacher as the classroom monitor. However, I soon realized that there is so much more to this profession. A teacher is responsible for making sure that all students learn the required material for the subject area that corresponds with the state standard guidelines. A great amount of planning goes into each lesson in order for all requirements to be achieved. The teacher must decide what the goals are for each individual lesson and incorporate appropriate activities to aid in student learning. The teacher must also devise a way to assess student understanding, another important aspect of responsible teachers.

Teachers are not only the ring leaders for the lesson structure, but they are also the mentors for many students. Especially at the middle school age, students can feel very alone and stressed. They are going through many changes, whether it is physically, emotionally or socially. Every student has a different background that makes him or her act a certain way. Some students will be more open than others to certain ideas and the teacher is the one that has to motivate the student to get involved with classroom activities. Many students simply need a positive role

model in their life because they may not have very many trustworthy people to talk to, such as family or friends. In many instances, this becomes another hat for the teacher to wear because he or she can lead the students by hand emotionally and socially in order to achieve academic success.

In Mrs. Griffey's Spanish classes that I was observing, many of these roles and responsibilities were well demonstrated. Every day when students would arrive to class, they would begin working on what she called "Bell Work." This activity usually took up the first ten or fifteen minutes of class and it was used to get students warmed up and reviewing for the upcoming lesson. It also provided Mrs. Griffey with some time to get attendance taken and to do some last-minute lesson preparing. After the "Bell Work" was completed, she would start off with a quick review lesson, then move on to more time consuming activities. By planning out her class period so carefully, she was able to have time to involve students and build that student-teacher relationship. During lessons, she would call on students for answers or ask for their help with leading or participating in an activity. She always had a creative style of making the students want to be involved. If she saw a student not participating, she would usually ask the student why he or she wasn't taking part in the lesson. Mrs. Griffey strives to work with every student very patiently and motivate them to achieve to the highest of their ability. Another goal that she has set for herself as a teacher is to build the student-teacher relationship, based on trust and honesty. She feels that the students are more interactive with each other and feel more comfortable in the classroom setting if she is able to joke around with them or be a little playful instead of simply giving a lecture-formatted lesson. Knowing that her students are learning and

enjoying the lesson helps her to become the leader, the monitor, and the role model of her classroom.

During my observation experience at Shawnee Middle School, I also learned about myself as a developing teacher. I learned to be comfortable in the classroom setting by becoming familiar with how it feels to be in front of students and how important it is to keep their attention and focus. I have studied the different ways that students learn, but it was completely different to see these varied learning styles fall into play. I knew that as the teacher of the moment, it was my responsibility to incorporate as many different styles of learning as I could so I could engage as many students as possible. Accomplishing this task was definitely a challenge that I faced, but I handled it well. For example, when I was working with the seventh grade class and the Spanish alphabet, I involved bodily/kinesthetic learning, verbal learning, visual learning, musical/rhythmical learning, and both interpersonal and intrapersonal learning. Into my lesson plan, I incorporated Around the World, auditory repetition exercises, movies as visual aids, a CD with the alphabet song, group review, and individual writing review. I felt that after this lesson I had achieved my goal of engaging as many types of learners as I could. I found confidence in myself as a teacher when I realized how many activities fall under more than one learning style category and that planning a successful lesson is not as hard as it may seem. I feel that my strengths as a teacher are student involvement, interaction, and motivation.

As a teacher, I also have some limitations. When I was in front of the class, I realized that sometimes I talk way too fast. I become so enthused in my lesson that I do not always slow down the way I probably should to achieve adequate student comprehension. If the students that need

special modifications need a lesson slowed down for them, I certainly cannot begin to speed up my lesson. I believe that speed and excitement are good components of a lesson, but when they are used excessively, no learning can take place. I view my enthusiasm of my lessons as a gift, but in some cases it can be used against me. I need to remember that even though I may be excited about my lesson, some students may not be. Therefore, I lose my main goal of student involvement. I believe that my enthusiasm is my passion and my limitation all at once. However, it is certainly not a setback. It is a skill that I plan to develop and strengthen over time as I grow closer to becoming an excellent teacher.

Because I am approaching my goal to become a teacher, I have been setting smaller goals along the way. I know that I have some more progress to make when it comes to the teaching-learning process. I understand more of how the students teach the educator just as much as the educator teaches the students. My fervent love for learning was how I engaged myself in the teaching profession in the first place. Therefore, I plan on continuing my knowledge of this process both from the student aspect and from the teacher aspect. My goal is to continue to build onto my strengths as an educator and gain more experience and knowledge in the profession.

My field experience at Shawnee Middle School has helped me confirm that when I combine my current experience in the profession and my goals about the career, I am headed down the right path. I have gained more knowledge of the roles and responsibilities that I will take on as a teacher. I now have a better understanding of how it actually feels to be the teacher instead of just thinking about what a teacher should be doing. I know that because of my first-hand encounter with the classroom setting, I am more prepared to meet my future goal. My

ultimate goal as a Manchester College secondary education major is to gain as much experience, knowledge, and preparation as I can in order to be a successful Spanish teacher.