

The Insider's View of Teaching  
An Interview

Course: Introduction to Teaching 111

Professor Eastman

Interview Conducted By: Stephanie Hofer

Teacher Interviewed: Mrs. Susan Griffey, Shawnee Middle School

Date of Interview: January 20, 2009

### The Insider's View of Teaching

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I interviewed Mrs. Susan Griffey, the Spanish teacher at Shawnee Middle School. From what she told me, she has always had a deep passion for world languages. It was interesting to learn that she actually started with French, and then she picked up the Spanish language. Mrs. Griffey was not sure what to do with her language skills. She was fascinated with Washington, D.C. and thought about working there with the Central Intelligence Agency or maybe even in the White House. It was her mother that originally encouraged her to utilize her language expertise and become an educator.

Many people supported Mrs. Griffey's decision to become a world language teacher. Her mother was the one to light her teaching flame, but she had more encouragement by other family members that just seemed to make that flame grow taller. She said that everyone from family to friends was exceedingly supportive. She specifically remembers her French teacher, Miss Purvis, who helped her along the way and influenced her career choice. Mrs. Griffey believes that because she was shown such an abundance of guidance and acceptance from others, she was able to influence other individuals to become educators. This act of helpfulness displayed her talent as a natural leader and role model.

Even though she was destined to become a leader, she still had to be a student at one point in her life. Mrs. Griffey attended a parochial elementary school, due to her Catholic background. For junior and senior high, she attended public schools. Afterwards, she went to IU Purdue, where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in French. In order to receive this degree, she traveled to a university in France and took some classes there as an exchange student. Soon after, Mrs. Griffey was a graduate student at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana and she earned her master's degree in Spanish and Secondary Education. At the time that she gained her degree, she also obtained a teaching license that can be used for grades seven through twelve.

After playing the role of the student for so many years, Mrs. Griffey finally achieved her goal of being casted as the teacher. In fact, she has been in the education career field for almost thirty years. Right out of college she began teaching in 1978. She remembers taking a five year breather from teaching in order to be with her young family, but once able, she blissfully returned to her classroom. Mrs. Griffey plans to remain a teacher until she is able to retire.

However, no one wants her to retire yet because she is a teacher that clearly puts her personality into her profession. She believes that the most important thing that a Spanish teacher can do is to get students actively involved in the language. Her goals for her students are simply to understand the importance of learning the lingo of another country. She trusts that the best way to accomplish this global awareness is to have the students be very interactive and to concentrate on communication skills. Her students have partner work, writing prompts,

individual work, speaking exercises, reflection activities, and practice dialogues. Mrs. Griffey plans all of these activities and pays attention to great detail. She mentioned that she conducts both long-term and short-term planning for her classes with the aid of the immensely helpful textbook that is being used. She said that this is the first year for these new books called Realidades and that they are quite helpful when it comes to lesson planning. The only downfall is that it can be harder because the book has higher expectations, compared to the activities in the previous book. Therefore, some impromptu adjustments are made frequently because of the time frame crunch.

Not only was it easy to see that Mrs. Griffey puts her personality into her classroom management, but it is also easy to identify with her personal views and opinions about the teaching profession. Her greatest satisfaction about teaching is when she comes across a student that is enthusiastic about learning a foreign language. Sometimes when a student is skeptical or unmotivated it can turn into one of her frustrations as an educator. How can students that do not find it necessary to learn a new language open up and become motivated? When this happens, it is certainly one of Mrs. Griffey's satisfactions of being a teacher. She said that it can become frustrating when students only see the importance of English and do not see the significance of a more global society. Other frustrations according to Mrs. Griffey are: having a high number of students, balancing school and family time, differentiating teaching for different needs, and knowing what the needs and special education requirements are for certain students.

Even though teaching has its ups and downs, it is still a beneficial career. I asked Mrs. Griffey if she had to start all over again if she would still choose teaching as a career choice and she was for it. She did say that it would be nice to try something new, but that there are simply not enough funds to make that happen. She thought that it would be a phenomenal idea to make schools more accepting and geared towards teaching foreign languages. The only problem is that she does not know how to go about making this dream come alive. Mrs. Griffey is truly upset because of the way the schools are being forced to cut back on funding. However, she said that she is happy where she is teaching because public schools offer more financial help than private or parochial, and that she is overall very satisfied with her career choice.

Because of this interview with Mrs. Griffey, I have gained more insight concerning my own future career choice. I learned about one educator's views and perspectives of the teaching profession. I also was able to relate on a personal level with someone in my career of interest because I agree with some of her goals and teaching strategies. I know that I can take advice from Mrs. Griffey and apply it to my own plans and goals as a future educator.

**EDUC 111  
ANALYTICAL WRITING RUBRIC**

<b>Name:</b> <i>Stephanie H.</i>	<b>Section:</b> Teacher interview	<b>Date:</b> 01.20.09	<b>Score:</b> <u>30</u> /30	
	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Ideas &amp; Content</b> [Ex., Answers to four questions; Details and examples]	Clear, focused topic; Provides interesting and relevant details; Fresh ideas	Clear, focused topic; Shows promise; Sketchy development of expected content	No clear purpose or central theme; Reads like a collection of random thoughts	No content knowledge provided; Unclear or confusing
<b>Organization</b> [Ex., Introduction; Body of Information; Closure]	Strong introduction and conclusion obvious; Smooth transitions between ideas; Displays order as structure moves reader through text	Introduction and conclusion present; Some good transitions; Logical, yet ineffective structure	No internal structure; No clear transitions; Awkward pacing throughout; Details in random order	No order within text; Confusing pacing
<b>Word Choice</b> [Ex., Details related to grade level; Professional terms] <i>excellent</i>	Specific and accurate terms; Strong imagery; Striking, yet natural phrasing; Powerful verbs; Incorporates professional jargon	Correct, yet terms not precise; Lacks punch, yet gets message across; Few energetic verbs; May sound verbose	Limited vocabulary; Vague and abstract words used; Incorrectly uses clichés and/or jargon	Inappropriate terms throughout; Predominately slang and informal language
<b>Sentence Fluency</b> [Ex., Complete sentences; without run-ons]	Easy flow; Easily read aloud; Varied sentence structure; Sounds natural; Complex sentence contains closely related ideas	Good control of simple sentence structure; Favors one pattern; Sentences go together	Difficult to follow; Choppy, rambling, or incomplete sentences; Not natural sounding; Monotonous	Awkward to read; Incomplete sentences difficult to read.
<b>Conventions</b> [Ex., Capitalization; grammar; punctuation; spelling; paragraphing] meaning	Grammar usage correct; Smooth punctuation; Correct spelling; Sound paragraphing	Spelling usually correct; Grammar problems not serious; Acceptable paragraphing; Internal punctuation errors	Frequent spelling errors; Incorrect paragraphing; Grammar/usage errors cloud the meaning; Many punctuation errors	Errors distract from content; Need to improve writing skills
<b>Voice</b>	Writer speaks to reader	Sincere, but not engaged	Distanced from topic	Confusing; Inconsistent

Comments: