

CHRONICLES OF A STUDENT TEACHER

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CHRONICLES OF A STUDENT TEACHER

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ABSTRACT

Student teaching is the culminating phase of a teacher certification program. This thesis is a pedagogical narrative of that journey in a 5th grade math and science class. This self-study documents and analyzes my experiences as an aspiring teacher to better understand the connection between theory and practice through a critical lens.

VITA

Rhonda Martinez was born in San Marcos, Texas, on September 11, 1988, the daughter of Rosa Garcia Martinez and Robert Santos Martinez. After completing her work at San Marcos High School, San Marcos, Texas, in 2007, she entered Texas State University-San Marcos. She received the degree of Bachelor of Science from Texas State in May 2012.

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CHAPTER 1
BEFORE TEACHING

Teachers

One always remembers something about their school teachers. Even my parents, at 50 years old, would tell me stories of their school days. I remember smelling coffee when an elementary teacher leaned over to guide me, when one would sing “Help me, Rhonda,” and of course the teacher that I was afraid to ask questions.

We remember these teachers and they have an influence on us. Sometimes they push buttons for reasons that our adolescent minds can’t understand. Other times, you thank the heavens for having such a wonderful person for your teacher.

My favorite teachers were the ones who cared that I worked hard in approaching a problem, not finding the right answer. Mrs. F and Ms. C-- I looked up to these women in my school days and I still do. I felt like I was somebody when I was in their class. Not only because they told me “Good Job,” but because they took the time to tell me what I was and was not doing well to guide me into becoming a person who thinks about their work and not just completing another assignment

The teachers that I didn’t like were the ones that were concerned about following their specific steps to find the right answers. They were also the ones that yelled a lot at the students and never seemed to genuinely smile. I remember my middle school math teacher. She would huff as she rolled her eyes when a student asked for a re-explanation.

The teachers I had in public education either pushed me away or towards learning. I came from a family where “education was important to complete.” For the longest time I perceived this to mean getting your high school diploma. As I progressed from grade to grade I realized that I loved to explore the learning opportunities the universe offers us.

Reflection:

Throughout my student teaching experience, I was able to observe several classrooms. It was interesting to see how different teachers instructed and managed their classroom. With recently being in education classes and constant feedback from my professor on my student teaching progress, I was aware of effective and non-effective classroom management. For example, one teacher repeated her instructions to her class as often as two or three times. Repeating instructions signals to students that that you don't have to listen to you the first time because you will repeat them again.

I was able to tell which teachers created a classroom for learning and how others created a classroom for tasks. I believe that the best teachers are the ones who helped who helped you learn independent thinkers. This was a greater gift than just teaching to the standards of preparing students for tests.

I feel that teachers should take more time to observe other current classrooms to compare and contrast to their classroom and management. It was enlightening when I would see how my CT would teach the same topic as me in a different way. CT stands for cooperating Teacher. This is the teacher that I was paired with for my student teaching experience. Educators should be learning constantly about the education field other than professional development day to stay informed of how the education field is currently.

Why I Went Into Education

When I was young I would play school with my older sisters. We would pretend to be teachers while leading a lesson, producing worksheets and grading work. I vividly remember sitting at our desks that our dad refurbished in our old room quizzing each other on multiplication. It felt a sensation that I got from learning and teaching.

At a young age I embraced the phenomenon of learning and sharing knowledge with others. It was at the elementary school level that I knew I wanted to become an educator. I found gratification in being able to have an assortment of knowledge to teach others, in how patient a teacher must be to accommodate to the students and how I would be having an impact on students' lives. My favorite teachers that lead me to learning and caring about the world around me were the ones that inspired me to follow in those footsteps.

I also had the not-so-great teachers that made me want to crawl in the corner or skip class. I remembering feeling traumatizing when was pushed to be an extrovert when I was an introvert in class. I remember going through countless math classes in public education without understanding why I was completing the steps my instructor provided. I attended science classes without realizing the beauty of the planet we live on. These teachers made me feel confused, lost and not good enough.

From these experiences, I knew that I wanted to mold whole mind thinkers. I wanted to make learning hands-on, interactive, and engaging. I wanted to share my love for math and science with those around me.

Reflection:

I had not thought about why I went into education since my education classes at the beginning of my undergraduate career. A student asked me this semester why I went into education. It was interesting explaining to a 5th grader that I love to learn and teach math and science. The fact that I say “I love math and science” was funny for students to hear. Jaws dropped for others when I named examples of the college classes I took to becoming an educator. Students didn’t realize that not only do you have to study the area of focus for your degree, but you also have to know other academic areas. Being a teacher sounds easy for most 11 year olds, but me talking about classes and how long it takes gave students more of a respect for me being their teacher.

I remember one day students were pretending to be the teacher, while I was the student. This reminded me of how when I used to play school with my sisters. They made multiplication and division problems for me to solve. I solved them taking my time then handed back my solutions with all the work shown. They then realized that they have to solve the problems themselves and to check my work. Out of the three students who said they wanted to be a teacher, only one actually took the time to go through my work like a teacher. I hope they keep this insight about educators in their future. Teachers do more than just checking for the right answer.

5th graders like math and science, right?

When I found out that I would be student teaching in a 5th grade math and science class I started to think of myself in 5th grade. Did I like math and science at fifth grade? Honestly, I started to dislike math and science and was more into language arts. Subjects other than math and science felt more adventurous at the time.

It wasn't until my first semester at Texas State that I realized how amazing math was and how much I actually liked it. I took an Honors class called Elementary Number Theory and afterwards tweaked my major from EC-6 to 4-8 math and science education. The factor that got my attention was in how math was approached in child-like fashion—simple, mistakes allowed and a lot of discussions. In 5th grade we would learn the right way to approach a problem and that math was about finding the right answer. I immediately knew that I wanted to do justice in teaching math and science in public education by allowing explorative and investigative learning.

Reflection:

At the beginning of my student teaching semester I was told of a student's special needs such as emotional disorders, ADHD, ADD, Autism, and poverty level. One student had dysgraphia and she always struggled in math. I assumed that she didn't like math. About a month into student teaching, she told me that she liked math—even though she had to try harder than everyone else due to her disability. I was moved when I heard her say this because instead of ignoring math due to her disability, she embraced the challenge to in learning to personal struggles. This reminded me of how important

teaching is to all students and how much students are willing to learn. I was motivated even more after this experience to be teaching math and science.

I sometimes forget that everyone doesn't love math as much as I do, but I always try to share that joy. I was surprised to find out that, most students don't like math. After a month a half of student teaching, a student told me he didn't like math and liked reading better. If he had never told me, I never would have noticed. He doesn't show this dislike in class. This student would make his lack of understanding known to me and would always ask for guidance when it was needed. I never took it as disliking math. Since then, I began to focus on making math and science more applicable to all students to shift their perspective of math and science.

Jitters

I had jitters the first week I started student teaching and even more when I had my first lesson to teach. I had trouble going to sleep every night and was waking up way too early. I worried about my attire too much. I wondered if I looked professional enough. I tried rereading my lesson plans but all I could comprehend was jumbled letters. I felt so much pressure on me because these were my CT's students that I was teaching. How well I taught reflected her classroom grades. Fortunately, I was able to teach the morning class and then after lunch the afternoon class the same lesson— allowing for adjustments if needed.

The best piece of advice that I received from my education professors about attitude was that sometimes teachers need to be their own cheerleader. He advised that if you feel troubled, anxious, upset, or sad, look in the mirror and give yourself an attitude check. My professor told us that even at a collegiate level he would still do this routine when he wasn't feeling his best. This professor was always full of energy, positive vibes and encouragement. I never would have known that he had a hard time teaching unless he told our class. I began to do this routine to help overcome my jitters.

Reflection:

As I continued my student teaching, I overcame these jitters by understanding student's needs so that I was teaching to individual needs. After Spring Break I found that I was walking taller, speaking louder, giving clear expectations, not second guessing my actions and stepping in more as the co-teacher for the classroom. Lessons would flow better because I was used to routines and student's responses. Students were seeing this

and recognized it. In fact, I did not realize my transformation until I would hear and see my students reacting to me the same way they react with their teacher. Being away from the classroom for a week helped me realize how drastic my behavior had changed after a month and a half of student teaching.

The first week back I heard, “Miss, you’re mean,” “But Miss, you would let me do that before,” and “Yes, mam.” It was feeling of assurance when students would give me the same respect as my cooperating teacher. As the weeks continued I found students responding to my directions better. The advice I was given after my first weeks of student teaching was to be strict and then loosen up to ensure that students respect you, and each other. I didn’t embrace clear and high expectations in the beginning of my student teaching, so it’s understandable that students suddenly viewed me as “mean.” My expectations were always the same as the school’s and my cooperating teacher’s. This way I was not “mean,” but rather I had the same expectations as the ones they were familiar with and was not introducing new expectations to follow.

I felt comfortable in the classroom after spring break. As soon as I walked in through the doors, I started the morning routine as if there wasn’t a week break. Not only did I physically feel comfortable with the setting, but also with the environment of the students. I was now familiar with the student’s behaviors such as who needed a visual reminder of what to do to stay on task. For example, one student was constantly getting behavior marks. Instead of calling him out 5 times during a lesson to redirect him, I would leave a new post it note everyday on his desk that had two columns; not following directions and not seated at desk. After three marks on either column, he was

immediately given a write up. This helped enhance instruction because there were fewer interruptions and he was more focused.

CHAPTER 2
ENVIRONMENT

First Impressions

As soon as I walked into the school I felt welcomed. The front office staff was patient and respectful to the new student teachers. The staff in general was friendly and understanding of the concerns of each student. From walking down the halls of the school you could tell that there was a joy of working with students from the front office staff, nurse, custodians, cafeteria staff, teachers and teacher assistants.

Each room in the building had a colorful wall. I had never seen a classroom before that didn't have all white walls. My favorite part of the colored wall was the sign "Class of 2019" that was painted in all the 5th grade classroom's doors. My teachers in the past would always decorate the classroom with large amounts of butcher paper and posters, but at this school's colorful walls added so much more life than those butcher papers. It was empowering with the presence of a colorful wall because it brought the room to life. Colorful walls and positive vibes made the school feel welcoming and inviting.

As I walked the hallways I noticed mathematical vocabulary and examples of this in the hallway. This means that students in the hallway are reminded of math outside the classroom.

Another reminder in the hallway was expectations of the appropriate voice levels and behaviors that should be followed throughout the school.



I envisioned the 5th students of this school on the edge of their seats willing to take on an adventure and exploring the unknown. It turns out that not all the students were as eager and excited to be at school, but a majority of the students seemed glad to be in this particular school environment. It might have been because the students were in 5th grade, but student's physical behaviors showed that they didn't want to be there. Students would put their head down in class, slouch in chairs, talk to friends across the room during instruction, would avoid starting tasks, and not following school expectations such as hallway expectations. It seemed that students were trying to do everything they weren't supposed to be doing to avoid their expectations.

Reflection:

Entering this school at a 5th grade level placement had me thinking of myself in 5th grade. At fifth grade I never would have imagined myself graduating from high school, let alone know the year I would graduate. This is why I immediately felt drawn to the colored walls with the class graduating year on it. This wall showed the future of the students to be bright and that the school believed in them graduating.

A lot of times students come in with a lot of emotional baggage. This is one of the main reasons that students are not excited to learn. It's not that they are not interested in the subject. Rather, students are distracted with the personal problems with their peers and family. This means that students need to be constantly reminded that school is a positive environment through verbal reinforcement. This school always does a great job on initiating and continuing encouraging and positive impressions.

The district has training for teachers that involved how to talk to students. This approach has the teacher tell the student their observations and ask how they are feeling, why, their plan of action, if it's a responsible plan, and if they could follow the teacher up on how the plan worked out. For example, if a student's face is red and is not participating in a group, a teacher should state "I see you are not working with your group members and your face is red. This is unlike you. How are you feeling?" From there, the teacher would continue the call of action steps to help the student feel in control of their situation.

One student had a hard home life and had a hard time concentrating in school because of this. I knew something was distracting for this student, but I wasn't able to understand him until I asked him directly how he was feeling based on my observations. So, I would make an effort to remind students of how proud I am of their hard work. At times, students are ignored at home and in this case, this student was. Taking the time to recognize student's achievements on a regular basis reminds students that you care about them as a student and learner. This idea of having the student's well being as the focus for the school is exhibited on a daily basis.

Acclimating to the school culture

A lot of teachers dressed casually at this school. This seemed appropriate for teaching at the elementary level, but it was shocking for me at first to see a professional dressed in casual clothing such as khakis, flip flops and a basic tee. I had this expectation that teachers dressed business attire in the school. That's not to say that all the staff members dressed like this. It seemed like most of staff members dressed business casual and few dressed casually.

The end of the week is casual Friday. This means that staff and student teachers were allowed to wear a school with jeans. I missed the school orientation that covered casual Friday. So on the first Friday of my student teaching, I was one of the very few staff members not wearing jeans and a school t-shirt. Staff members were wearing a school shirt, and student teachers wearing university shirts. Even though I looked professional, I didn't look like a school team member.

Reflection:

At first I was glad that I looked professional when the other student teachers didn't on Fridays. I felt ahead of the game. In education block classes and meetings before student teaching, it is ingrained for student teachers to always look professional every day. That sometimes we would be better dressed than our cooperating teacher and staff, but since we are being interviewed everyday by staff we need to look the part of a professional educator.

I was hoping to continue this routine, but after awhile I felt separated from the culture of school spirit Fridays. On Fridays the students were all gathered into the

cafeteria to start the day instead of classroom locations to start the day. Students received announcements, conducted pledges, sang school song, and recited school expectations before leaving with teacher to classrooms to start the day.

One Friday a student asked me “Why aren’t you wearing a school shirt like the other teachers?” It was an innocent question, but it made me rethink my attire the whole day. I felt separated because I did not look and feel like a school team member. Wearing the common casual Friday attire shows unity for the teachers and support in the school. I quickly found myself purchasing a school shirt and blending into the attire of school shirt and blue jeans day. I did this to become a fellow staff member at my school. When wearing a school shirt, I felt and looked like a team member. Students recognized my new Friday staff attire immediately. One student asked why I was wearing the school shirt. I responded that I care about the school like the staff members and students. Wearing the school shirt showed students that I was proud to be working with them. Students would give me a huge smile and say “I like you’re shirt, Miss Martinez,” when they would see my Friday casual attire. I had to blend into this school culture to understand it better and be feel like a team member. I was now a part of the “Hey, nice shirt” jokes with staff members and students who were wearing the same shirt. It’s the building of these connections that has helped me adapt to the school environment as an educator in this school.

Fitting into the classroom

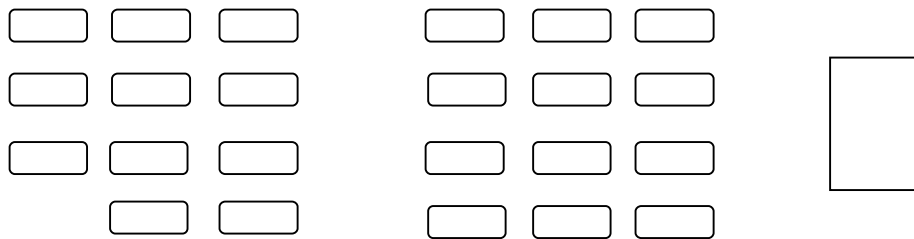
Before I started student teaching I did a few substitute jobs. As a substitute, the teacher leaves a schedule of what is to be followed throughout the day and situations that might occur. It's a fairly easy job because there's either a yes or a no to what is allowed in the classroom. Since the substitute is the temporary teacher, they are not aware of the adjustments to the schedule. Fitting into the classroom as a substitute is fairly easy to slip into because of the schedule and notes provided by the teacher.

My first week consisted of my mostly taking notes on the teacher's routines, management. During these beginning transitions, my CT had me assisting my cooperating teacher with helping students to check progress of material. As the semester continued, I moved from the position of assistant to the class by giving individualized help to students to co-teacher where I taught groups, and then full control where my CT let me run her classroom for two and a half weeks.

Student teaching had me constantly changing my routines to adjust to the classroom environment due to small groups that were pulled out during instruction or school wide events. This meant that the CT and I had to be flexible with the daily schedule, allowing at least one day out of the week with less work planned.

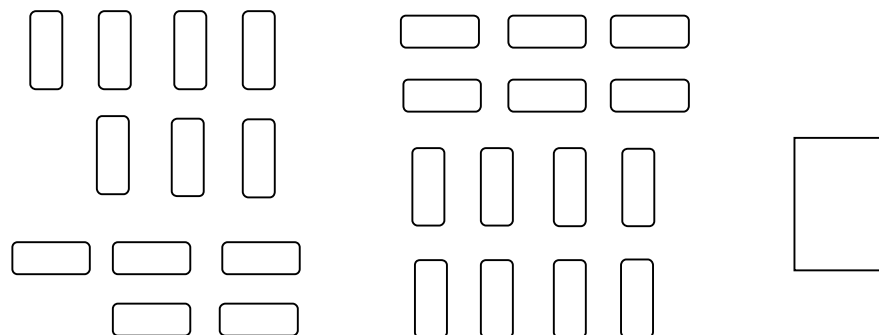
Learning the routines of the classroom was the first part to fitting in the classroom. For example, we had a daily schedule for math and science as well as a schedule of specials for different days of the week. Since there isn't a bell schedule in elementary school, this meant that the 5th grade teachers who switch classes have to be mindful of the clock. On Thursdays we had rotations. This is where the teacher sets up activities at five different tables consisting of a foldable, word problem worksheets,

practicing vocabulary, and the last group working with the teacher one-on-one. Coming into my CT's classroom, there was already a set up of assigned seats and a number for each student. Each desk had a number and name on the right hand side for the morning class, and one the left hand side was the same information for the afternoon class. The students were arranged in the following manner when I first started my student teaching. The side table was used for as the teacher table for small groups. The desks were not side by side in this class. The students had trouble being neighbors with peers, so desks in the rows always had spaces.

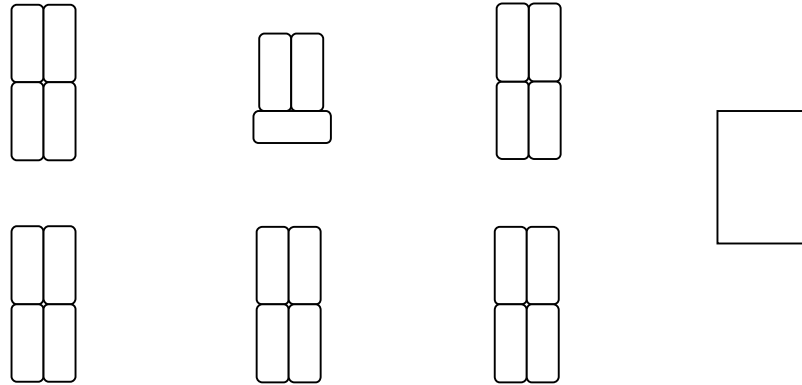


As the semester continued, we stitched desks around to place depending on their individual needs. For example one girl who sat between two students was constantly moving around, so we had to move her to an outside desk. A few students were constantly standing up during instruction because when sitting down they could not stay focused and engaged. We moved them to the back rows so that they did not block others behind them when standing up.

On the days we did rotations, we rearranged desks in the following manner:



At the beginning of the semester I taught more of the math lessons and as the semester continued I was able to teach science. My CT noticed that I did a lot of collaborative thinking and group projects, so we rearranged the desks in pods:



The homeroom class had a number that matched to their mailbox at the back of the room. In their mailbox was homework, graded papers and school notes distributed ahead of time so that at the end of the day students gather mail.

The hardest part of adjusting to the classroom was the authority that came with classroom management. I wasn't sure if I was allowed to say yes or no to requests, instructions and directions. In the beginning I would redirect students to my CT for questions.

Learning how to work the technology was the easiest part of adjusting to the classroom because I was familiar with using computer technology. My CT was fortunate enough to have a smart board in the classroom. After observing my CT using this board and an afternoon to play with the board, I was able to work the program smoothly.

Reflection:

When I first entered the classroom, I was introduced as the student teacher from Texas State University, but that was it. Since I had to observe my CT most of the first week to get a feel of her classroom, there were a lot of things that I was uncertain about when students asked. For example, one student asked to take a reading test when we had extra time in class or to get up from instruction and use the bathroom. Since I had to ask my CT a lot of questions for reassurance in my directions and helped students on an individual level, I was seen as an assistant to the students the first few weeks.

After the second week, I started to teach math lessons to the class or to small groups at the teacher table, giving student either positive or negative behavior marks and reinforcing expectations. This is when I started to feel like a co-teacher with my CT.

The last weeks of student teaching is when the CT hands over her classroom to the student teacher to lead instruction and management. The students before recognized me as a student teacher, but once I was in this position, I was another teacher. It took a lot to get to this point because of my student teaching position. By the end of the semester, I got to the position that I needed—which is recognition as a teacher.

The classroom routines and expectations were given at the beginning of school year and they weren't visual reminders of routines in the classroom, so I had to observe the classroom to understand them. At first it was shocking to see a student just walk out of class to use the restroom. My CT allowed students to get up and use the restroom with a silent nod without taking a hallway pass or having a record of where the student went. Since students would ask both of us teachers for restroom permission and because I needed hardcopy accountability record of student's out of class time permissions, we assigned a sign out sheet. This helped us realize that too many students were leaving

instruction time. So, this system helped me keep track of students and it helped me pick up patterns of students who didn't want to be in class.

The desk arrangements were originally in pods at the beginning of the school year but quickly had to be sectioned into rows. I am glad that I was able to experience the different desk arrangements during my time in this classroom. This helped me to see the strengths and weaknesses for having different desk arrangements. The rows when I first entered helped me to walk up and down the aisle and to remember student's names. As the semester continued, I started to like the pod desks. The pods helped create a sense of community for the students in the pods because they students would be rewarded a point for their table staying engaged and working together during collaboration time.

Gaining authority was hard for me at first because there was not a set of classroom guidelines outlined. This was an uneasy feeling for me because I felt like there were not clear expectations. I felt limited to strictly saying yes/no or just sending the student to the CT because I was unsure of how to respond to specific questions students asked. After the first few weeks I picked up from my CT and other staff members on what was and was not allowed on this campus. I would verbally recognize student's behaviors and mark in their folders for either good or bad behavior marks. This helped me to gain a sense of respect from students because they noticed that I was officially in a position as their CT.

Having a smart board made a huge difference in my student teaching experience. Adjusting to using this resource as a tool meant taking the time to go through pre-made smart board subject activities online and being familiar with the different functions to

incorporate during instruction. Having a smart board in the room helped the classroom instruction be more engaging.

Contributing Member

A contributing member of the school aids in every moment of the school day. You are constantly monitoring and enforcing rules to ensure that there is a respectful climate and sense of community. Recess duty is one of the many duties a teacher must be engaged in. During this 15 minute free time students were limitless in what they could do. By limitless I mean that students can write letters to pass in class, bully another student, physically attack another student, kick sometime “accidentally”, get too violent in tag game, and tease a student. You constantly have to make sure that students are safe physically and emotionally. This safety ensures that they are able to continue the rest of their day to learn. If a student had an emotional recess, then they will not be able to continue their day at school in a healthy way that allows them to learn and get along with their peers.

Another contribution is hallway duty. A teacher walking down the hallway will not allow students to run, yell, or talk loudly in the hallway. Rather it is a teacher’s job to constantly have the hallway expectations enforced at all times with all students.

The fifth graders would dislike walking in a single file with no talking on the right hand side and their hands to their self. A lot of times they would forget in the excitement or anger of the day or situation and ignore hallway expectations. I found a lot of the teachers yelling at their students. I found myself giving reminders to my students, but it wasn’t very effective. I found that this wasn’t very effective when I was in total control of my cooperating teacher’s class for two weeks. In fact, I found myself yelling at my students like the other teachers. The students were not used to hearing me shout so they responded to me raising my voice but I didn’t like that I had to shout in the hallway to 5th

graders when a 2nd grade class was doing a phenomenal job with the hallway expectations.

I then started to give one verbal warning in the morning of hallway expectations. After that, each reminder of hallway expectations was a write up. I finally found the right formula. Students responded quickly to the hallway expectations and I did not have to shout anymore. The only reminders I would give students is an eye contact look and an arm movement of a straight line.

Reflection:

Hallway expectations sound trivial at first. But, when you have hundreds of students in an elementary school, you need a basic structure like this for all levels to follow. This means that not only do you remind your students but you remind the other students in the hallway. You verbally remind them, ask for their name and where they are going. That's enough to ensure that they will be following the hallway expectations from there on out.

Setting these expectations was one of hardest things for me to get down as a teacher. Maintaining a group of 24 11-year olds is manageable in a classroom setting. But, having them walk in a single file line at no talking level was a constant battle. When I was co-teaching with my cooperating teacher it was manageable because one of us would monitor the front and the other the back of the line.

When it was just me total teaching, I quickly noticed that not all of my ducks were in a row. Other faculty members noticed as well and twice within a month time

period. A teacher had to walk outside of their classroom and remind my students of hallway expectations. It was embarrassing.

After that I quickly knew that I needed another method so that students would be sure to follow my expectations and for them to show me respect in all settings. After I started giving students my one verbal warning in the morning of hallway expectations, I soon became a teacher who could walk tall with confidence and respect that my class was following expectations not only in the classroom, but also in the hallway.

CHAPTER 3
THE REALITY OF TEACHING

Physical Demands

Week one was supposed to be just observing, but I couldn't be in the classroom without interacting and helping the students so I used a lot of energy that my body was not physically used to. I didn't teach at all the first two weeks but I did work one-on-one with students, pace the classroom to observe student behaviors and followed them to other classes throughout the day.

Being a teacher physically means to be able to react to multiple situations with multiple senses. An example of this is that while looking forward, you need to be able to see objects or movements that are off to the side. While my CT would be working one-on-one with a student on a math problem, she would also have to position herself so that she had a wide viewing range of the classroom. This also goes with being able to see details of objects whether they are nearby or far away

Before entering the classrooms, it was a requirement to sign up with at least one education insurance. In fact, a lawyer talked to the student teachers about how we should always be cautious of objects and student's positions in the classroom because it can turn into a safety hazard for you and your students.

As a student teacher, it is a physical demand by our university to dress business casual on a daily basis. This is because we are representing the university and ourselves on another school's campus. When I started student teaching my goal was to not fall into the stereotypical wardrobe routine of black slacks, blouse top and black sweater. It got repetitive and boring seeing so many teachers in the same attire. This was not just a trend at my school, but schools on a national scale. This trend was mentioned by teachers who blogged on Tumblr. Tumblr is a blogging forum where anyone can blog, follow other

bloggers and can repost other blogs. A few months before student teaching I started tumbling on Tumblr to follow other educators on the global scale.

These Tumblr teachers posted pictures to help stay reasonably fashionable as an educator. Through this blogger's posts, I was able to maintain a balance between looking professional as a teacher while feeling comfortable. At the beginning of this experience, I tried to be as fashionable and professional with heels. As the semester continued, I was quickly wearing comfortable flats just about every day.



Reflection:

Other than teachers constantly being on their feet all day, it seems silly to think of a teacher's position to be physically demanding. I tried explaining this concept to someone and they asked if physically demanding meant moving desks and chairs all day. Although we constantly did do this activity to accommodate to the classroom environment and student's learning styles, this was a small fraction of what we meant. The bigger portion was being able to maneuver between desks to get to another student in a successful fashion and to constantly bend and crouch the body to have better communication with students.

As teachers, we are the leaders of our classrooms. This means being able to raise your voice when needed. And yes, it is needed. This doesn't mean that a teacher should yell at her teachers all the time, but the teacher should feel comfortable raising their voice to give clear expectations to students when other classroom management has not worked successfully. This is also important when in a large open space, such as a gymnasium or playground.

When I say that it is physically demanding when I tried being fashionable at the beginning of the semester, I meant that I went through several trial and errors with different outfits and shoes to be able to look professional enough and at the same time feel comfortable in my clothing. Since our classroom was on the second floor, I would wear heels every other week.

The reason I strived to be fashionable during the semester was because there was a challenge by the education bloggers on Tumblr to break the stereotype image of a teacher in clothes that are strictly for teaching attire. This meant that clothes should be

versatile for after work adventures and to also to show something unique about the teacher. As the work load increased, I found myself wearing neutral colors often such back, white and gray. Students would notice when I fell into a pattern of not having clothes that did not reflect personality. With student reminders, I made sure to keep up with my appearance. Reading Tumblr education postings on grooming reminded me to keep up the energy and self pride of dressing up every day to be more than just a teacher in a uniform.

Grooming is important because the teacher is seen by both the students and fellow teachers as a team member who is a leader. If the teacher does not look put together, then the student will not have confidence in the teacher's teaching and management. This is true for most jobs. You respect a person more based on their appearance. Your appearance shows others how serious and prepared you are for that field you are in. I made sure my clothes were professional and respectful enough as a teacher, and also able to be worn after school as a casual outfit with friends. Clothes included button up shirts, bright colored blouses, casual dresses, skirts, and professional dress pants in neutral colors. Not only were clothes and shoes important, but I also carried a professional shoulder bag instead of a backpack like a college student. This helped me and school members visually understand that I took my teaching position seriously. These changes had me make the adjustment of Rhonda to Miss Martinez. With respectful, comfortable teaching attire, I was a teacher leading students to learn.

Wearing certain colors and patterns has an effect on a person's attitude and how other's perception of them. It shows students that you care about your profession enough to put effort everyday not only into the lessons and management for the students but also

that you care about yourself. Being able to show that you are able to wear unique clothes as a professional, but not a uniform shows that the teacher has confidence.

Emotional Demands

Teachers are role models, they can't be sad and they have to be strong. There have been a lot more downs and very few ups during student teaching. I refused to let my students to see that. I wanted to continue smiling at them, encouraging them and leading them strong. Things would happen, but I try to put the students first before my problems. While in school, I was a leader for staff and student's.

I remember a day when a student was crying in the corner of the hallway while switching from morning and afternoon classes. I immediately wanted to sit next to the student and hear his story. Since I was in the process of switching classes and needed to start the lesson, I couldn't. Instead, I directed all students inside so that they could take out their homework and then briefly stepped into hallway with the student. I ask if the student is hurt in any way. Once he replies "no, only upset," I tell him to take two minutes to clear his head, walk to the restroom to clean his face and then walk into class with a smile. The look in his eyes after I said that was priceless. He knew that I understood him and that he needed space.

Another example is when a student was being uncooperative because of his emotions. When his emotions take over, he would shut down completely, avoid eye contact and block out my voice. When he was completely uncooperative, I would direct him outside to do his work alone. At times, I had to write a misbehavior mark in his binder for being uncooperative. He was an intelligent student, but his emotions would get the best of him. One time, I asked him to work in the hallway, but he refused to do anything. I asked if he wanted to talk to me in the hallway because I would tell something was wrong by his face color and slouched posture. After he refused to talk to me he was

sent to the counselor. It turns out that there were things happening outside of our class and outside of school. When he got to my class, he was triggered by a class situation, so he shut down.

After school, I gave this student a side hug and said “I don’t know what’s going on in or outside of school but I care about you and expect a better attitude because you’re better than that.” I should have said these words before to him and maybe I need to say them more. The point is that students are a ball of emotions building up. Students need to be constantly reminded that WE care about them as a person as well as a student. Teachers are role models for students. We do more than teach- we encourage through love.

Reflection:

While on campus one day, I met a student who told me she was studying to be a school counselor. When I asked her why she was interested in this field, she replied that “A student can’t learn with a half of a heart, but a whole hearted student can have full attention in a classroom.”

I’ve had a handful of days that started horribly for personal reasons. At times I got to school and a handful of things went so wrong that I had to go to the restroom, cry and count to a 100. In the end, I had to push my personal obstacles aside. Teachers are leaders of students every day. That means teachers need to constantly be the support for the students.

Sometimes students need just one phrase of encouragement or positive reinforcement to help get them through their day. For many students, a teacher smile

may be the only smile a student receives. Teachers can be very empowering or discouraging without realizing the influence on students. For this reason, teachers have to be emotionally prepared to deal with students on an emotional level.

Multitasking Master

I used to think babysitting or waitressing was multi-tasking. Teaching requires one to be a multi-tasking master. I use the word master because a teacher is responsible for helping each individual student in a class of 25 for every minute of the entire school day. This means that every day one teaches examples and non-examples, catches flying objects, referees students in conflict and is able to pull apart student's individualized misconceptions.

Even a waitress gets a break, but teachers don't. For example, during lunch, the teacher tidies the room, prepares for the next class, grades homework, uses the restroom, make copies and eats lunch while still leaving time to walk and pick up the students from the cafeteria. This doesn't happen all the time, but I see a lot of teachers, including my CT do this routine during lunch break.

To aid in multi-tasking, a daily warm up for the beginning of class was incorporating so the teacher can complete tasks to start the day such as picking up homework or attendance. My CT had a folder assigned to each student at the beginning of the school year full of math problems with models, with at least 15 problems on each page. The routine for the class was to work on least on problems from this folder for the first 20 minutes of class as the teacher picked up homework, marked in student's behavior log for not having homework, and organizing own materials for the day. After 20 minutes, it was time to line up for specials. Most students would do at least problem instead of doing as many as they could.

During my student teaching, I noticed that a lot of students had trouble with their multiplication facts. When I started my total teach, I had students work on their

multiplication facts instead of their folder full of problems. Students would get a blank 12x12 grid paper sheet to make a multiplication chart.

After 20 minutes, the chart should be mostly filled, if not completely.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24
3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36
4	8	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48
5	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55
6	12	18	24	30	36	42	48	54	60	66	72
7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84
8	16	24	32	40	48	56	64	72	80	88	96
9	18	27	36	45	54	65	72	81	90	99	108
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	110	120
11	22	33	44	55	66	77	88	99	110	121	132
12	24	36	48	60	72	84	96	108	120	132	144

Reflection:

Being a multi-tasking master doesn't mean that the teacher has to constantly be giving directions and watching the students. Instead, the teacher should have expectations for daily routines so that students are independent. This comes with the teacher having organization of the classroom, understanding the strengths and capability of students in tasks, and holding responsibility not only for the teacher but also for the student.

Knowing when to start an activity creates an independent mindset for students, which is

key for them to gain as a individual of their community. The teacher must be organized enough to lead students to be organized, accountable and responsible. This ensures that the students start to gain independence and are able to follow expectations without instructions for every step of the day.

I felt the pressure of multi-tasking was when I was leading a small group of five students. Students were to read a math problem from a list of 16 and then write out the math equation as well as their plan on how to solve the problem. After checking that the student was on the right thinking path, I would pass out the answer choices for that particular problem so that the student would match the word sentence to the equation he/she just wrote. I had to ensure that students were on the right thinking path, pull the answer choices that aligned with the problem stated, check the final answer, and make sure that all the needs of the students are met. To organization for this process, I made sure students carried out their responsibility to show all thinking process before I could check their work.

Although I used the multiplication chart for a warm up, it was a good tool for students to practice because they needed to work on their facts that have not improved over the school year. Another option for a warm up for math is for students to be given a conclusion of a math problem and the students have to make up the problem. For example: The answer is 7 penguins. Make a math question that goes with this answer using knowledge that we have learned recently.

Teaching versus Standards

The 5th graders were given four hours, with a break for lunch, to take a 50 question practice test. This is one of the multiple test preparations that students complete in order to train for the state standardized test that will be given by the state at the end of the year. After a student is done completing and checking their work, he/she sits quietly until the four hours is finished. Teachers and students alike don't like these days. This happens multiple times a year depending on how many different tests there are for that grade level. That's a lot of practice tests, a lot of wasted time, and a lot of preparation for taking a test in the classroom.

Standardized tests are horrible. Most of us know this. A student should not be recognized by how well they he/she can choose A, B, C, or D. It leaves no room for measuring creativity. What's worse than not seeing improvements in "comprehension" though test results year after year? That student's view of education is learning how to take a test, not for self learning of the world they live in. No wonder so many people lose on the *Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader* TV show.

My units for my student teaching experience consisted of re-teaching the 5th grade math and science state standards. My professor was upset at this arrangement but I did not mind. Since this is the education style for Texas currently and in the near future, I accepted this assignment and learned how to teach with state standards. I did make sure that students were learning more than terms during a lesson. Examples of teaching more than just vocabulary terms is when I would let students draw a picture, tell a story, or consult peers in explorative activities. For example, students created a poster about a

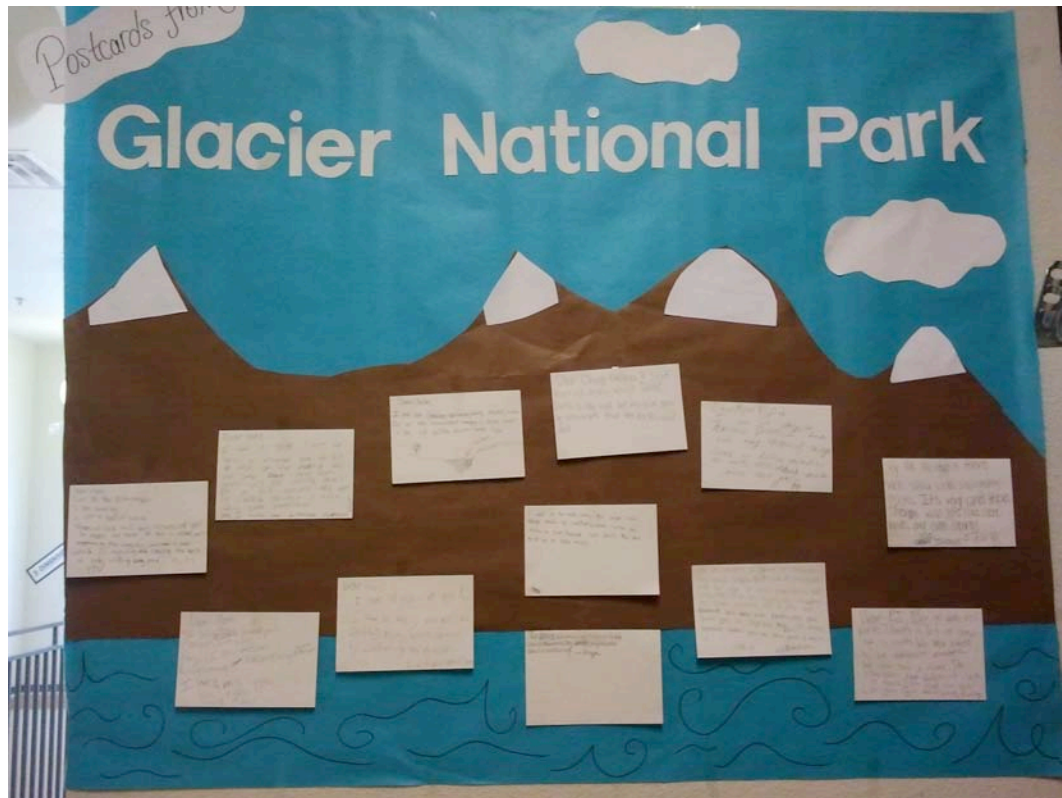
fossil energy to display in the hallway. In these activities students would have to apply their knowledge of terms and definitions to activities instead of circling answer choices.

The state test has affected the everyday learning schedule so much that students see studying for a test as normal. My 5th grade class had its own math camp, where the math TEKS were reviewed in stations before the upcoming state test. The 5th graders as a whole had a science camp to study for the upcoming state science test. This is where all the 5th graders were brought to the cafeteria to be re-taught the science vocabulary and definitions for 2 hours for 2 weeks before the state test. Students would drag themselves to this science session. It was repeated over and over again that this was preparation for the state test and that everything they are learning is for the state test. I heard this said so much that I myself started to use the phrase “When you take your test.” Immediately students would groan and make boo noises. When they responded verbally in this manner, I remembered that I needed to also remind them that I am teaching them because I like learning and teaching about science and math because I wanted them to be independent thinkers.

When making lesson plans, I would make engaging and explorative activities in lesson plans so that students would understand the relevance of information other than seeing multiple choice questions on a test.

For example, when studying about and the day and night cycle, I had students write a short story about the day and night cycle from Earth’s point of view with an illustration. This showed that students not only need to know the terms and definitions, but they should also be able to explain them in a storytelling verbal and drawing format.

Another example in how to make learning engaging is to make the information personal to the student. When studying how landforms change due to weathering and erosion, I had students make postcards that described how they described how the landform of Glacier National Park came to be as if they visited the park.



Also, in math all the lessons were hands on learning experiences so that the student could talk to others about their thinking process, actually move the objects to understand how math works, or to hear how classmates' different perspective.

For example, when covering proper fractions, improper fractions and mixed numbers, students cut out circles of different fractions to make a mixed number and improper fraction. The students would decide on what they wanted their improper fraction to be first, then they would make that image into a mixed number.



Reflection:

The standards that the state enforces had my CT tying the classroom objectives to how the problem might appear on the test. Within a few weeks, I found myself also guiding students to “be prepared to show all work just like they would on the test.” How horrible was that? I fell into the hole of teaching students to the test. I did not go into education to teach students how to take a test.

Texas State has its education department implement a 5E format for instruction. This guides the teacher to keep learning engaging to teach more than just the basics. When I would design lessons, I would make sure that the material tied directly to the TEKS, while supplementing material that I thought was important for students in the subject manner to learn. The important factor of this teaching method was to have all activities be relatable to the student. In the science activities, students should be able to

see examples of how Earth works in model forms. In math students should be moving objects to understand the process of math. For example, taking things apart and distributing equally into containers by physically acting it out division.

State standards ensure that all students are equipped with learning information that explains the world we live in. It also helps our country know how our education system is doing. Both make sense. However, the materials and resources are not the same for every state and each state has its not test. So, even though one state has a good rate of passing, this cannot be compared to another state due to different tests and unequal resources.

As of now, Texas is still administering standard test. So, even though educators teach about the how the information is applicable, the student is judged at the end of the year if they can take a timed test in good standing. This means teachers also have to guide students on how to take a test. At 10 years old, taking a state standardized test puts a lot of students under pressure from the first day they enter the classroom because it's a big deal talked about by teachers and parents alike. I would see this on a daily basis with the 5th graders I worked with this semester.

Will Texas have standardized testing in 20 years? Maybe, maybe not. As of now, it seems as if the state wants teachers to just do the minimum teaching vocabulary and terms while student's value is not recognized. It seems more reasonable to have students make community projects outside of the classroom then to be learning about the world around them inside a room preparing for a test.

Thinking vs. Answers

While student teaching I noticed how students would strive for the right answer instead of thinking about the question itself. Students would even restate the problem if they don't know how to start or understand the question.

Most of the time students would raise their hand and say "I don't get it, help me!" when really they didn't read the whole problem and wanted me to help them step by step. It's hard to teach with some students because they whine or yell "I don't get it! It doesn't make sense! Okay, fine, whatever! Is that the right answer or not!?" As I started to be with familiar with students need, I was able to pull them to the side table to work on problems. This was helpful for the students, but often was a distraction for the direct teach.

One day when students were working on math problems as a class a student fell into wanting right answer. A student insisted that she didn't understand the problem and that she needed help— this was her favorite phrase. I told her I was busy with another student's work, couldn't help her right now, and told her to try her best. I then continued to give her time to think. Five minutes later, she completed the problem all by herself. So, you can only help a student with so much. Most of the time they need independent thinking time when working on problems. Most importantly, they need someone to recognize this for them and tell them.

Reflection:

It's so easy to give in to a student right away to helping students. When I first stepped into the classroom, I thought students were being nice and open when asking for

help. It turns out they knew that the new teacher would help them get to the right answer so that they could skip the thinking process.

I soon realized this, so I incorporated extended waiting time. In education classes, we learned that an extended waiting time allows students time to think about a problem. Students often take advantage of knowing that a teacher will always give hints to help them to the right answer. It took me awhile, but after a month, I started to not ignore, but rather brush students aside and challenge them to try and really think on their own without my aid again. I would say, “You should use your strategies before asking me; only then, will I help you.”

Teaching students often means helping students to be self-guided. A student should use all of their strategies and approach a problem first before asking for help. This ensures that the student is critically thinking about a problem rather than searching for the right answer. This expectation should be made clear to students as soon as possible to ensure that they are learning the process of why things work instead of figuring out the end result. The end result shows no value in knowledge. Knowing the process of a problem shows knowledge being understood because it is applied and explained.

U	P
S	√

Instead of saying yes or no, I would not even look at a student's paper unless they had a problem solving strategy on their paper called UPS[✓]. UPScheck stands for: Understand what the problem is asking you, Plan out how you are going to solve it, Solve the problem, and Check your work. This helped g with making sure that students were thinking about thinking before I helped them. This was a guideline that my CT enforced in her class and it helped students to be cognitive thinkers.

To keep students from going to the right answer right I would have them tell me their thinking process verbally, in words, in pictures or in a story. I made sure students would start from what they do know. For example, if they were struggling with a division process, I would ask them what key words are in the problem or stick out to the student and what does it mean. From there the student should say that a product is being equally divided and equally shared means to make smaller and divide. Using the UPScheck chart helps student's see the thinking process of problems they are working on.

The student who used to ask for help constantly was able to slow down her thinking and was able to discover the thinking process ability she processed. It was an amazing transformation to see. This slowing down allows students to see the process of thinking and not needing to know the answer.

CHAPTER 4
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Guidelines for Success

In education classes it was repeated over and over again that guidelines are essential for having a classroom move smoothly both for you and the students.

The first thing that I noticed when I entered my CT's classroom was that she didn't have classroom expectations listed. I immediately felt as if I couldn't breathe. I felt as if I was thrown into a classroom without knowing what was okay and what not okay. Within the first month, it was hard keeping up with what exactly the expectations were without written or visual guidelines.

Although my CT did not have classroom expectations, the school did. In fact, the school posted hallways expectations in every hallway and stated the expectations everyday during morning announcements. The expectations for the school were The Four-Way Test by The Rotary International. It states that the things students should say, think or do:

- 1) Is it the TRUTH?
- 2) Is it FAIR to all concerned?
- 3) Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
- 4) Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?



When I started to write students up for misbehavior marks, they made a trend where they would request to have a “talk” with me during recess about the situation. The student would make excuses and loopholes. At first I would explain the situation to the student and how it went against school expectations for a student. After a week of these talks, my only response would be “school expectations.” Students quickly understood that these talks were not for arguing.. Once students understood that the expectations of the school were for every environment setting, they knew not to try to talk their way out of a misbehavior mark.

Reflection:

As the semester continued I found my own guidelines blending with the CT’s. Most were reworded. For example, when a student is “done,” I would ask for complete work to be shown to ensure that that the student’s thoughts and writing agree. I would ask student “is this your best work?” because my CT would only accept a student’s work if it is his/her best.

Another guideline I quickly identified that needed clarification was tattle-telling. Yes, 5th graders still do this. If a student had a problem the student was not to tell to the teacher unless the student was in danger. In the lower level classes, some of the teacher’s have tattle monsters where students put their tattles in box for the teacher to read later instead of disrupting the class. The only tattle a teacher can talk about is if someone is in danger. I would use this method for a lower grade level such as 2nd but not 5th grade

because they should learn to know the difference between tattling and informing since they will be go 6th grade at a new school the next year.

The guidelines for success announced during morning announcements helped maintain a supportive environment for both the students and myself and helped to build a learning environment where both the student and I were respected.

Managing Behavior Problems

I know you're not supposed to ask a student why they did something wrong. It lets the student be on the same footing with you and it turns the classroom into a battle field. I accidentally did this a few times when I started student teaching. I would catch myself in time and start to say instead how I felt and how it affects the classroom as a whole.

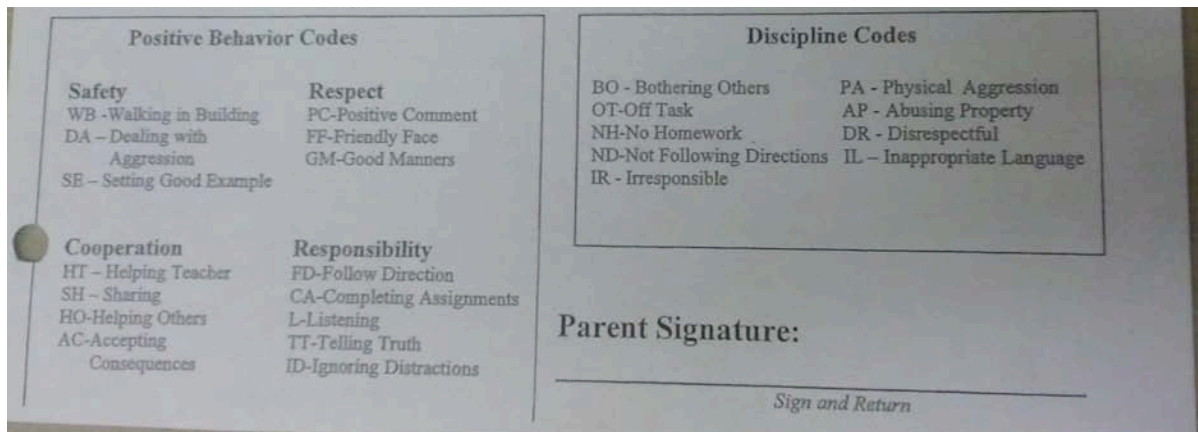
It was harder to catch myself as the semester continued as the difficult students continued to be difficult. By difficult, I don't mean that they were terrible students. I mean that the students would get distracted easily, fidget in their desk frequently, tend not to do anything in group projects, and would distract others from learning. I would try not to hold that against them though every day. I always give them a second chance. But, once they messed up for the day, that was it. I'm not saying I don't like them— they definitely have character and they always found ways to make me smile and laugh. But, they just need to be treated differently to be on the same level as everyone else. Everyone doesn't have to be treated exactly the same. Some students have different needs. This is extremely true for the students who constantly misbehave.

Going into student teaching, I had strategies learned from education classes to help with difficult students. For example, if there is a disruption or conflict in the classroom, then it needs to be approached as soon as possible. Or if a student is being a distraction to others, move the student to an area of the room so that the distraction reduces.

A lot of times the class had interruptions because students would finish their work really fast and do things to distract the class. Most of the time, the work was incorrect,

but complete. The best classroom management advice I received from my education classes was from my Special Education professor. She stated that the closer you are to students, the less disruption there will be in the class. I used this classroom management technique in the classroom a lot to help keep students be engaged in instruction. Students realize that the teacher is not only looking for work to be completed, but also respectful and on-task behavior. This means that there is no room for misbehavior or disruptions in the classroom and that the student should be consistent in their behavior to learn rather than disrupt the class.

The following is an example of the codes in student’s individual behavior logs. They were sent home to be signed by parents once a week. I used this to manage classroom expectations by aiming to give more positive than negative marks in behavior log.



As I continued my student teaching, I found a lot of online resources and talked to others about how to deal with difficult students. I found an article about a high school in Washington that shifted their approach on how to deal with difficult students recently. It was found that a lot of students were being “disruptive” and “difficult” in school because

of problems that they were not talking to others to distress or for aid. So, instead of suspending students or giving students immediate consequences, students were asked questions such as “Are you okay? Did something happen to you that’s bothering you? Do you want to talk about it?” The student would still have consequences, but the school would make sure that the student would know that someone cares about them.

Reflection:

Talking to others, it made more sense to talk with the student about how to help them rather than talking to the student on what to do to be better. I believe that the best way to approach difficult students was not only to hear what they had to say, but to tell them uplifting positive words that they probably don’t hear enough. For example, when a student was being disrespectful in class to either me or a classmate, I would talk to the student. At the end of the conversation I would mention that “I care about you, this is not who they are, you know better than that, and I believe in you.” I would say positive words to these difficult students because they probably only hear the negative and not how they are worthy and respected.

Using the same approach, I would talk to students about how well their behavior and attitude was improving from previously. It would catch my eye when a student redirected classmates in class or set a good example for others to follow in the hallway. I would immediately write a positive misbehavior mark in their folder and verbally let them know that I recognized their positive actions. For example, if a student was recently written up for not following hallway expectations but improved, I would tell the student

privately “I’m proud of improving your hallway behavior. That’s how you do it. Continue being great.”

Students are constantly told what not to do, but do not hear enough of what they are doing right. My CT would praise students for being ready to learn. I continued this classroom management but letting students know in every situation of how I care about individually.

Class Momentum

To decrease misbehaviors and students getting distracted, the lessons should have a constant momentum. These lessons should be planned so that students are not sitting in a chair for too long just listening. Rather, students should be doing activities to learn why and how things work. The Texas State education department calls this the “20 minute rule.” This means that every 20 minutes the students should be redirected to do another activity and students should not be doing an activity for more than 20 minutes. If not, this leads students to be bored and not listen. Students need to be actively learning by doing activities.

Knowing how to keep the class flowing is just as important as setting up the learning environment. When a class gets off task, you use attention grabbers to bring back students to focus. This is easier with lower grade level students. There’s the clean up song or cute jingles. With upper level students you can flick the lights on and off or wait in front of the classroom silently to get students’ attention.

Since I taught 5th grade and don’t like yelling, I started off with writing “I’m waiting” on the smart board to get students attention the first time I taught and it worked. Another strategy I used was “one, two, three, eyes on me” and “eyes on who?” in which students would respond “you, mam.” I used this for when students were doing group activities or stations.

The one I used most often was announcing “Class?” in a normal level voice when starting or continuing a lesson. Students would then respond with “yes, mam.” This was important for students to respond back with “yes, mam” because it was not “yeah” or just

a “yes,” it was a “yes mam.” Having “mam” at the end means that students recognized that I was a respectful figure.

To help the class stay in the flow of the learning process, I would randomly call on students for opinions or questions. From there, I would ask the rest of the class if they agreed with their peer by giving a “thumbs up” after they gave a response. I did this to ensure that all students are engaged and that the students feel like they are contributing to the class discussion.

Reflection:

Preparing lessons and an environment that has momentum helped to create a community of instruction that enhances student’s attention and learning. Students would be excited to learn when they noticed that there were materials in the classroom that were going to be used for an activity.

When I started teaching my first lessons, I made sure that they were engaging and stuck to the 20 minute rule. When I stepped away from this style the students noticed. During a science lesson with rotations of hands on activities, students got off task and did not take the investigations seriously, so when the next lesson was not hands on and was all lecture. After 30 minutes of explaining a topic, a student raised his hand and asked, “Are we almost done?” This student was used to constantly being engaged and so was the class. I used this lecture lesson to remind them that I create lessons that are engaging for them to learn better. I also mentioned that if they wanted to continue the lessons I normally do then I need students to be actively investigating and learning. After they agreed, I went back to my normal lessons that were engaging and hands on activities.

I made sure to create an environment where students would always listen to me when I was speaking because I would need their attention to go to the next activity or I would call on them for a question. This made sure I had student's attention when they were working on activities individually and in groups.

CHAPTER 5
SPECIAL NEEDS

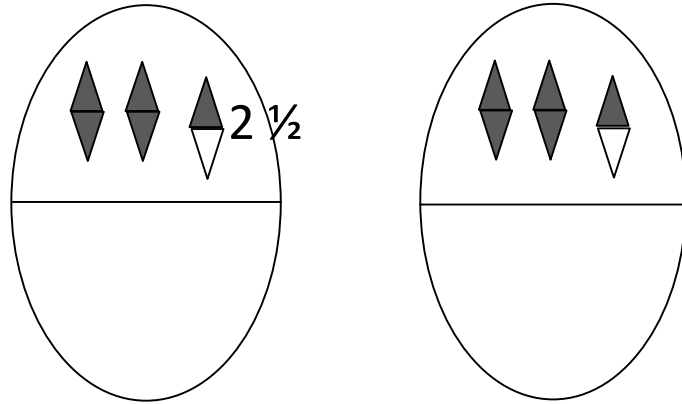
Individualized attention

My school had inclusive classrooms, so I had to ensure that students at all levels and their needs were met while student teaching. Some students had a monitor in the classroom for most of the time to aid them and were also pulled out at time during the day to work with a specialist.

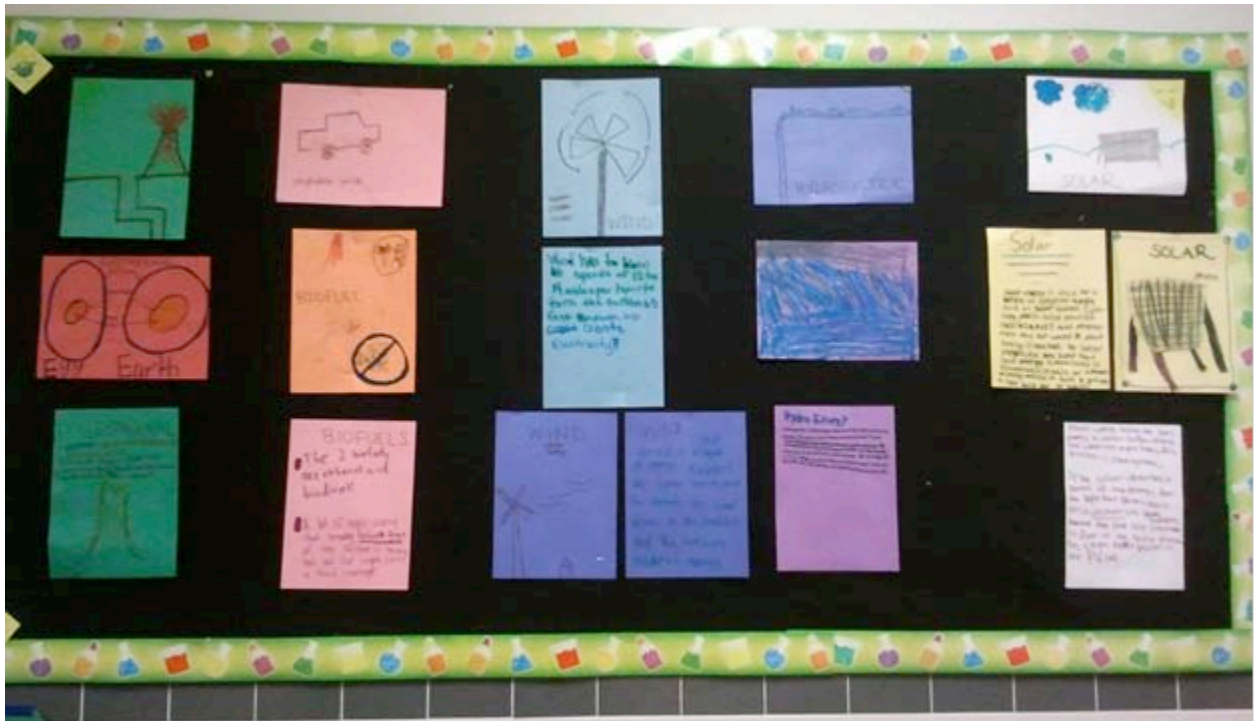
This also meant that lessons had to be planned so that it can be accessible for all students to learn. If a student had dyslexia, most likely he would will not be as comfortable reading aloud for the class as his peers. If a student has dysgraphia, she probably would not be comfortable writing their work on the board for others to see. If a student has problems lining up their math equations, they would need graph paper for every single math problem and especially during tests. If a student finishes work twice as fast as their peers, then they will immediately want their work checked and ask for something else to do.

Since students had different needs, I made sure that the exploring and evaluation of learning was approached in different ways. For example, when learning how improper fractions and mixed numbers, I used plastic eggs to express these special numbers. The top part of the egg was the picture of the improper fraction and the denominator was the improper fraction or mixed number of the model. Students received three eggs that were separated before given and they had to match the model to the appropriate improper fraction. For example, an egg with three groups of two parts and only five parts shaded would be matched to $5/2$. Another possible match for the same model would be $2 \frac{1}{2}$. These helped students who were visual learners understand math in a different form.

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Another way that students' learning was individualized was when students were able to show their knowledge in other ways than just circling a right answer. When learning about alternative energy, students expressed their learning in either words or illustrations. This allowed students to choose how they wanted to best express their knowledge.



Reflection:

A few students in each class had a teacher aide to help them with their needs. Without the aides in the room, it was hard to work with the class as a whole because these students were used to having an aid in the classroom for assistance such as reading a paragraph to them. So, instead of reading to multiple individuals, I would read or ask a student to read aloud passages.

The students who had difficulty writing, often found it easier to draw a picture so I was glad that I let students do illustrations. This ensured me that they understood the information. There were a handful of boys who loved to draw, so when their homework was to illustrate about electricity, they showed me that they knew electrical processes more than the in class work we did. The gifted and talent students were tickled pink when I let students be creative in showing how they understood information through drawings. It was as if I had given them freedom to express their individuality. Other students found hard to draw learned information because they were used to identifying the right answer from a list of choices. I feel that these activities helped these students to understand learning in a different way.

It was hard to have a classroom that flowed well in the morning when students left to their individualized classrooms and then joined again at the end of the lesson. Students would start their work for 10-15 minutes before they left. Often, the students did not want to put effort into their work because they knew they would just throw it away on their way out of the classroom.

If a student finished an assignment ahead of time, I would ask the student to expand on their learning or have another assignment on the same topic ready. Most of the time, I would ask the student to illustrate what they just wrote for math or science. This should show that I cared about the student learning the material by letting them express their knowledge in a different way.

FOCUS

FOCUS is a program that is for students who have emotional and behavioral problems. Most of the students in this program need extra guidance on how to react with peers, feelings and dealing with family situations.

I have a few students in my class who are in FOCUS. The student has a counselor that escorts them if needed, pulls out of class to talk to them about what's going on and is there for the teacher in case a situation arises in which the student is not able to respond in a respectful and responsible manner with peers and teacher.

Without knowing which students were in the FOCUS program, I immediately knew by their spur of the moment actions and emotions released like a bullet. I found these students the most interesting. They had a way of being able to observe so much around them, but just couldn't focus on the academics on their desk.

Reflection:

This program is essential for those students who need the extra nudge of encouragement, hope and reasoning. These students a lot of times would not want to talk to their teacher and would only be able to communicate with their FOCUS aid. These aids are trained professionals and are available full time to talk to students about their emotions when the teacher cannot. These emotions often hinder the student from learning by avoiding a problem or reacting in an irresponsible manner.

The students at this particular elementary would not have the same FOCUS services at the junior high school they will be attending next year, so towards the end of my student teaching the aides began to distance themselves from the students so that they can be more independent. This was hard for me because the student would still have irresponsible and disrespectful actions during instruction. A few times I had to call this student's aid for assistance.

For example, a student was caught lying before she came into my class and so she expressed her anger by drawing all over her face. The class laughed at her for doing such a rash and childish action, so she stormed out of class and into the restroom. I was unable to leave the class to attend to her. At that moment, the student needed someone to take the time immediately and remind the student that they care about them and their actions that affect them. I immediately contacted the office and asked for her FOCUS aid. After the aid found her and talked to her, she was able to understand how she acted and was able to apologize to me and accept her consequences for leaving class without permission.

For situations like this, the FOCUS program is essential for students to get help with their special need. I would not have been able to attend to both the girl who ran out of class and my class at the same time. This program helped students like this girl with their attitude and behavior throughout the school days that I was not able to handle.

This was my weakness in teaching. I feel that if I had been around longer I would have seen major improvements with the student who stormed out of class. Since the time I started working with her, there was some progress. She was able to recognize the

consequences that would be enforced from behavior that did not agree with expectations and act respectfully.

CHAPTER 6

CONFLICT

Gender Drama

Since the beginning of the school year there have been multiple dramas between students that's been building up. I immediately noticed the girl cliques. You would think that with a teacher and student teacher, we would notice the conflicts that were occurring between students. Nope. When I'm teaching for the day my focus is making sure students are engaged and learning the concepts. So, I'm constantly checking for understanding.

But kids are human. They get distracted by their peers. I do the same thing. I brush it off. It's not easy, but it's something you learn to do as a part of self growth. When I'm checking for understanding, I can't catch the little things that the students would do behind my back— like pointing, teasing, rolling of eyes, throwing things, snickering and making ugly faces to each other that's all done silently by students.

Whenever I call on a random student to read aloud in class, I try to remind students that we're being respectful to our peers and listening to them. I feel like these students don't really understand respect. When I do catch something and if I'm able to discuss the problem then I do. This is rare. Most of the time it's just me talking and them listening.

Reflection:

The group members of girl cliques shifted at least twice throughout the semester. Most of the time, the girls preferred not be in the same group as their rival, but it was something that they had to deal with it when it came to random selection. When a conflict would arise between the students I would make sure to remind them that their peers deserve the same amount of respect as them. That at times, you're going to have to work

with others that you don't want to, but that person's ideas and perspectives should be valued just as much as yours.

At the end of my student teaching experience, the girls' cliques seemed to be less distinct and more entwined with each other. So, when things seem like they will never resolve, it will. It seemed like the girls in my class just needed time apart. Eventually they came back together to talk to each other in a respectful way. Who knows, they might even become friends again.

When my CT or I would catch students being disrespectful, we would immediately address how their behavior was not following expectations. Usually this would embarrass and upset the student because it was addressed in front of the class. Looking back at this now, I feel like I approached this the wrong way. I should not have addressed disrespecting problem during free time as a general topic or put a post it note addressing the situation so that the student doesn't get embarrassed.

Bullying

The kind of disrespect and hurt that is often overlooked in schools is bullying. This occurred when students didn't like other students to the extreme that it was obvious and disrespectful. It's overlooked because teachers can not catch every sneer or rude whispered remarks students make to each other.

For example, three students were handing back papers. When they get to one student's paper, they all tossed the paper to each other's stack so that they didn't have to touch it. It then landed on the floor. I had to pick up and hand the paper to one student. She said "Oh, I dropped it" as she tried to act busy. It hurts how kids don't see how cruel they are! My cooperating teacher immediately would point it out this disrespect, but it's heard so many times that I can tell that the students ignore the CT.

I remember the same thing happened on Valentine's Day. The same disliked student had a valentine for each one of his class members. There were way too many of his valentines on the floor and in the trashcan by accident. The student as well as I could tell that there was something not right. I always tried to stand up for the above student. I really liked him. He was listed as special education and was on the lower side of grades, but this student had a way of thinking. He was always one step ahead of the game in understanding academic and social areas.

Towards the end of the semester, this student moved to another school for reasons I don't know. On his last day when his parents came in our class to have his transfer paper signed and for him to pick up his belongings, the other students didn't care. In fact, a lot of students smiled. I was caught up in redirecting the class while my CT was managing this situation with the parent that I didn't get to tell him goodbye or even have the class

tell him. I hope he finally gets the respect and recognition he deserves as a wonderful person at his new school.

Another example is when students would make fun of the boy who had autism. When lining up or seating at the lunch table, students would not want to stand or sit next to him because he had mannerisms that were not normal to other 5th graders. These mannerisms included not understanding social settings and talking to himself.

At times he would make remarks that did make sense or seem normal to his peers. One time the CT called all boys to line up first, then she announced for girls to line up. One of the girls immediately goes to the beginning of the line. My CT then asks this girl “Are you are girl or a boy?” so that she would line up in the appropriate position in line. The boy then stated “I want to be a girl” when he heard the teacher compare the difference between a girl and a boy. The girls behind him immediately asked “You want to be girl?” in a condescending way. The boy innocently answered yes, while the girls snickered. I overheard this conversation and asked the three girls to stay behind in the class while the other students walked out of the classroom. I then told them that picking on others whether they realize or not is the same. That it was disrespectful to talk down to a peer. Maybe these students didn’t talk about respect enough or understand it clearly. When I talked to them I made sure they understand what respect is and not is.

Reflection:

These stories show that incorporating a culture of learning and environment of respect is important for all students to understand and accept. A person’s pride is

everything. Having someone hurting you with words can crush someone's pride more than you can imagine.

At the previous school I interned at, all students had to sign an agreement at the beginning of the school year that stated to be respectful of faculty, peers and school property. This agreement was then displayed in the classroom. For my future classroom, I would like to do something similar to this. I would talk to students as class in the beginning of the school year about respect and agree on what they think is respectful.

When students understand that everyone has feelings and deserved to be respected, a different atmosphere is created. I would see this difference between my two classes. My morning class had a strong bond of understanding each other's differences. Their homeroom teacher established clear expectations of respect. This was seen in how they interacted with each other on a daily basis. The homeroom teacher for the afternoon class did not talk to her students enough about respect, so there was a lack of respect in the interactions of the students. There was a lack of unity and this often led to disruptions and bullying in the classroom.

Bullying and respect go hand in hand. Even though respect was a main expectation of the school, it seemed as if it wasn't incorporated enough in the classroom. Creating a respectful environment leads to less bullying and more motivation to learning. I feel like the school expectations should have been in every classroom wall or doorway as a reminder.

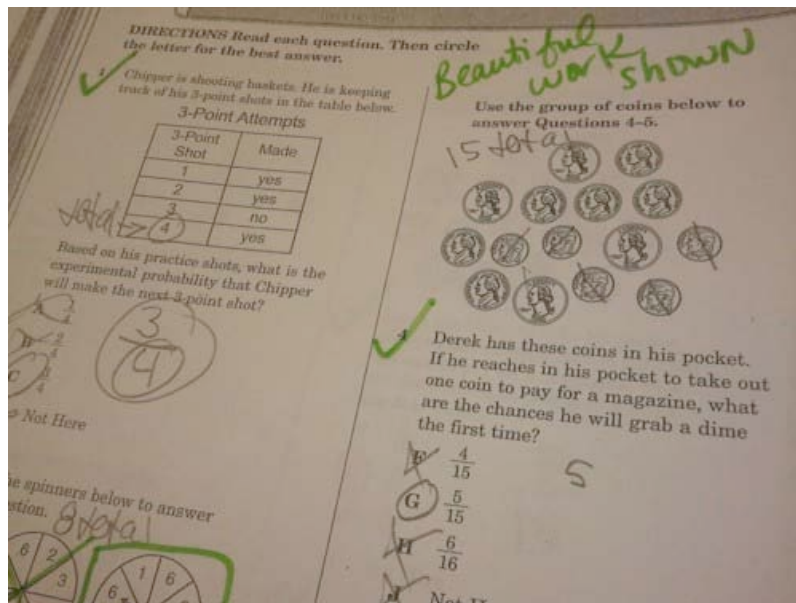
CHAPTER 7

RAPPORT

Beauty in Words

How you address your student shows your relationship with them. I would implement positive words in the school setting, to show students that I care about them and was not just demanding actions from them.

For example, in math, I would stress that writing out your math thoughts is beautiful work when I'm grading because I wanted to see their thinking process. Student showing their work meant that they understood the math process of the problem and didn't just get the right answer. When students would ask why I wrote beautiful, I would explain to them that math is beautiful and it was shown when I saw them explain their thinking process.



I would write “beautiful work” because I was trying to also instill a growth mindset for students. That the answer they submit to me is useless unless I can see their thinking process. Having a growth mindset allows for students to realize that hard work is what helps you to learn, not circling the right answer. The same thing applies to the student gets a 100 on everything and shows no work. I will comment that I cannot see

their hard work, so that they would understand that knowledge is not something fixed, but rather learned from by working hard and showing it.

Another example of encouraging positivity in the school environment was stating “Thank you walking in a straight beautiful line” and “Straight beautiful line please” to encourage students to follow school expectations. This sounds more positive than demanding “Straight line now,” and when asking “Why are you not in a straight line?”

Reflection:

Students would come up to me when I was grading and wait for me to see that they showed all their work on their homework. Once I saw this, I would write “beautiful” on their paper. Students found it rewarding when I appreciated their hard work in math and science. I could see that it was motivational for them to see me make a positive mark about their work. Often the marks were on the papers of students who did not make A’s and who were not viewed as “gifted and talented.” When I graded papers, I made sure students were valued for showing that they knew their background in a topic, even if the answer wasn’t right.

This same kind of positivity that was carried out for expectations had students responding to me better than when I was demanding them in the beginning to be a straight line. I remember one day when I went to pick up students from the cafeteria to walk back to class. I was about to demand the class to be in a straight in a loud booking voice because the cafeteria was full of students. Instead a student announced, “Beautiful straight line everyone!” as she me. The class immediately got in a straight line. It was satisfying to know that my students knew their expectations of me and this student

directed her peers in a positive manner. I hope this positivity carries out with them.

Having a positive attitude makes a difference in life.

Beyond academics

Conversations with students beyond academics are just as important as the academics we teach. These conversations show students that we are human just like them and can relate to their experiences and are about them.

For example, I had a conversation with two students about how I am a first generation student. I was talking to two fifth graders from a low income background this week about the university I come from, my major, how I'm almost done and how I'm a first generation student. They immediately ask each other about college:

Boy: I'm not going to college.

Girl: I am.

Boy: Well my parents dropped out of high school so I'll just pass high school.

Girl: My parents dropped out too.

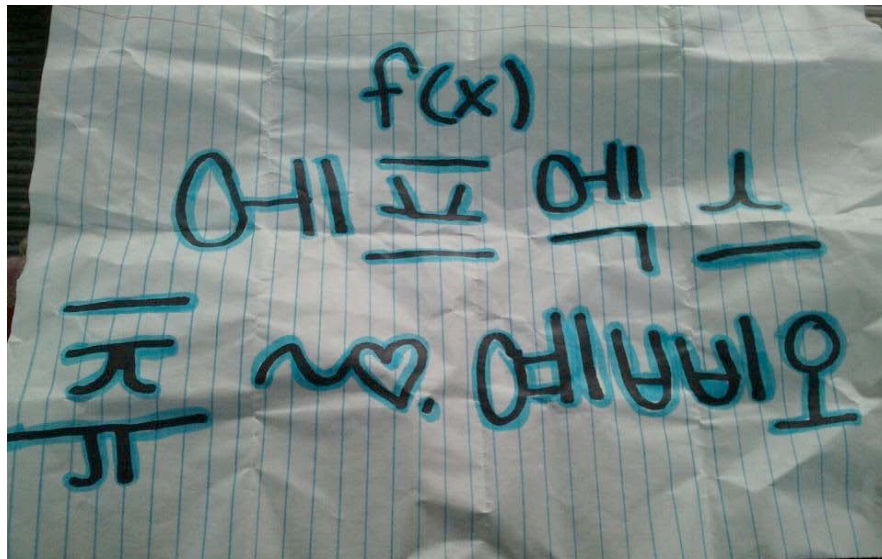
Me: My parents dropped out of high school as well.

Boy and girl's jaw drop

Me: Yeah, I'm a first generation student for my family. My parents didn't complete high school and my 3 older siblings completed high school but didn't go to college. So that makes me the first of my family to be a college graduate.

I enjoy moments like these. These students I worked with shared the same hardships as I did growing up from a low income family. I hope these insights and stories spark hope and inspiration for them to continue education in life.

Another way teachers relate to their students is to show concern in their interests. I occasionally would write in Korean on the board because I am interested in the Korean language and culture. In fact, quite a few students are interested in Korean music as well. All students were excited when I taught them a new phrase. One day a student handed me a note shown below. I felt much more respected from the students when they felt like they could relate to me.



Reflection:

Although taking interest in your student's life, a teacher should never push academics aside to talk about other topics. There have been moments when students will start to ask me non-academic questions or tell me a story, but I would often cut them off and instruct them to tell me a recess or during recess and to please stay on task with the rest of the class. I made sure the student understood that yes, I care about them, but I also need them to learn in class and wait to talk to me about non-academics during free time.

Students need to be heard and understood so that you can adjust your lessons to their interests. For example, once I found out that my students wanted to learn about what I knew about Korea, I would implement my knowledge of Korea in science when talking about difference climates of the world. I would also teach my students Korean words to show them that I had a similar interest in language as them.

Overall, there has to be a ground of understanding between yourself and the students. There was a huge difference in students respect and attention towards me once I established rapport with them.

CHAPTER 8
LEARNING ON THE JOB

School Culture

There are things that you don't know about the school unless you ask a current employee such as the office administrators, custodians, or cafeteria cooks. These "invisible rules" help guide those who are new into the norms of the school.

For example, one day I was taking students to the restroom on the way to lunch. A veteran teacher passes by me in the hallway and asks why half of the class is waiting by the restroom. I reply that the others are in the restroom still. She tells me to go in the girl's room since I was the same sex and yell for them and to stand near the opening of the boys to do the same.

I then asked a teacher at a different campus on the same topic, and she said that just to be safe it would be better to stand a few feet from the entrance of both gender's restroom so that there would not be any conflict of privacy issues. Each school has its own norms of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Being aware of these conducts as a staff member meant that I had to ask about these situations.

Another school culture is having casual dress attire on a daily basis on just on Fridays. The school that I was at had casual Fridays, so it was expected for teachers to wear a school shirt on this day to show unity and pride for their school. A previous school I interned at didn't have casual days, so this was something that I had to adjust to during student teaching.

This school would also have pep rallies before state tests to encourage students for their upcoming battle. Although some teachers were not fans of celebrating these standardized tests and the effects on the education system, it was normal to celebrate it at

this school. This meant that grabbing a pom-pom and chanting cheers in encouragement for defeating the state standardized test was normal.

Reflection:

Knowing these invisible rules was not something that can be read in the school manual or answered by my state education department. These rules are guidelines and informalities that the faculty members do on a routine basis without identifying them directly.

When I was not participating in casual Fridays at first, it wasn't because I didn't want to. Rather, I didn't know this was the culture of the school. I had to be informed and ask others about these cultures to fit in with the school community.

This also means that when interviewing for a school, one should be weary of the school culture of the school. These are questions you should ask the school when it's the interviewee's turn to ask questions. This could be a main factor in whether or not you want to sign a contract with a school.

Professional Development

Professional Development day reminded me of the recent education classes I just went through before student teaching. It's a day dedicated for teachers to inform of current education methods and how to apply to their classrooms.

Teachers started out the day by being grouped into grade levels. Then, a project was given to accurately place examples and non-examples of the 5E model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate) with a given t-chart and examples. This task was really hard for the current teachers; the student teachers filled out the t-chart right away.

After talking about the exploration of the 5E model, a professor from a nearby university shared how to implement 5E lessons in the classroom. I already knew about engaging, hands on, explorative lessons that education innovators are trying to incorporate from my undergraduate classes, so this was something that seemed natural for me to hear. It was hard for a lot of the current teachers to accept that this kind of learning could be incorporated with state standardized testing.

Reflection:

On the first class day of student teaching class, my adviser engaged our class in how standards conflict with explorative, hands on learning suggested by the 5E model. We then discussed how to lead a class that did not focus on TEKS, but rather learning while engaged. In our education classes we were warned that a lot of current teachers would be reluctant or changing their teaching methods that were not strictly bound to state standards. I felt that because of professional development days, there would be less

reluctant. It turns out that although a lot of teachers felt reluctant towards shifting their lesson method, they would just nod their head in agreement and not voice their opinion.

It seems as if teachers have accepted that new methods are not needed. With technology being increased more into schools, teachers will have to change how they are teaching. Teaching cannot be strictly bound to teaching the minimum of state standards.

Some teachers had a hard time understanding how to incorporate a 5E model in their classroom, so I made sure to share my lesson plans with fellow faculty members. I would do this to show that these engaging and student centered lessons could be achieved. I feel that professional development day would have been more productive if teachers visited classrooms in other schools in either same or different district to see how others are teaching. It's one thing to talk about what others are doing in the education system and it's another to see how student centered lessons are being incorporated.

CHAPTER 9
LESSONS LEARNED

Teacher Belt Buckle

This semester I accumulated more tools that I would like to implement in my future classroom:

- My favorite No” – I saw this strategy posted on Tumblr for a math class, but I am sure it could be used with any subject. The teacher posted a warm-up problem at the beginning of class. Students solve problem on index card, then hands them in after a few minutes. The teacher then sorts through the cards to search for her “favorite no.” A favorite no is the favorite wrong answer. The teacher would then rewrite the students work and the class would discuss what was right and wrong with the problem.
- Mailboxes- My CT had a number and mailbox assigned to each student. Homework and important papers would be placed in students’ mailbox. Then, at the end of the day she would call out mailbox numbers in a manner that implemented mathematical vocabulary. For example: “All prime numbers you may go to your mailbox and pack up, Multiples of 3 you may....” This helped with classroom management and organization for both the students and I.
- Expectations- attitudes, behavior and effort expectations should be posted in classroom. Also as a class, expectations should be discussed. After agreement of expectations, expectations for the class would be posted on the wall. This way the teacher and student understand the expectations in the classroom from each other.
- Establish appropriate and non-appropriate behavior such as losing/winning as well as clapping for a peer.

- View tests as celebrations of knowledge to help relieve the stress of the grade that usually comes to mind. I learned this from a great math professor at Texas State University - San Marcos.

The End and The Beginning

My student teaching class had requirements to make detailed lesson plans, file all materials and assessments, record observations, have at least three evaluations and an exit interview. I feel that my full three-ring binder full of perfectly typed lessons and materials are valued less than the analysis of myself through this thesis. I not only recorded my progress but I also reflected on it in detail. I feel that more student teaching programs should have an incorporation of self-analysis of the student teaching experience in a presentation form because I have learned a lot about my behaviors as a teacher.

In the end, student teaching was an amazing experience. I had to borrow a teacher's classroom, with her there, so that I could fully understand how to manage a classroom as well as successfully teach. I could sum up my student teaching experience with accepting that my friends view me as playing with 11 year olds all day, that my mom thinks I'm Albert Einstein teaching the quantum theory, that society thinks I sit in my chair as a babysitter all day while I pass out worksheets, that students view me as Severus Snape who takes the fun and joy every school day, that I think I am changing student's lives in a Goodwill Hunting manner, and then realizing that really I am a pedagogy, Bloom's Taxonomy, Scaffolding, KWL, ELL, IEP, 5E, 504, intervention, counselor, patrol officer and encourager master.

As I ended my student teaching experience and undergraduate career, I also began my career as a professional educator. My student teaching was not the beginning of my journey of a teacher. I was learning to be an educator when I realized I wanted to be one. This is neither the end of my journey. From here, I will continue to learn about how to become a better speaker, leader, and education team member.

VITA

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