

Field Experience Reflective Paper

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The Introduction to Teaching course field experiences have helped me to realize the many differences that exist in classrooms. In my cadet teaching class at Warsaw Community High School, I was placed in three different classrooms, each for a long period of time. By contrast, the quick and diverse experiences that I have had through Manchester College have really helped me to compare and contrast classrooms while shaping my personal teaching style. While I have been around teaching my whole life because of my family, this course gave me a chance to observe teachers with whom I had no personal ties. This helped me be more objective in my observations. Furthermore, I feel that I learned differently during this experience, as compared to my high school observations, because I was exposed to many different teachers and classrooms, with a wide variety of teaching styles and age groups.

My first observation was in a grade level that I have actually considered teaching. I observed a fifth grade classroom at Laketon Intermediate School. I felt completely at ease in the classroom and very much appreciated the teacher's enthusiasm for learning. This observation, however, served as my first lesson in what I do not want to do in my own classroom. While the teacher was very engaging and seemed to be well liked by his students, he did not seem to be in control of his students at all times. He wasn't very observant when students were 'drifting off' and not paying attention. This experience helped reinforce that I should always try to include all of my students, and not just focus on the small group that is paying attention.

I had a very positive field experience at Manchester Junior High, my second field experience. There I observed a low-functioning seventh grade mathematics class, and was impressed by the control the teacher had over her classroom. She was very organized, and made sure that every single student stayed on task. (This could not have been easy, because many of her students were special needs and ADHD.) She had a particularly good method for keeping

track of students' homework assignments. She had folders for each of her students and each folder had a chart attached to it. When a student completed their homework on time, the teacher would sign off on their chart. Students seemed to react well to this, perhaps because it was a visual representation of their accomplishments. There seemed to be a healthy competition between the students to see who could get all their signatures on their homework charts. I really liked this strategy. It was interesting to me, because I plan to teach special needs or low-functioning students, and I think that this could help them to become more responsible and productive.

My observation at Manchester High School showed me that I am not cut out to be a high school teacher! Not only did I feel intimidated in the classroom, but I also noted that the students were much harder to engage. I observed a World History course, and was impressed with the teacher's rapport with the students. He seemed to be an effective and engaging teacher, because he took the time to know his students individually. He was well respected, and his classroom was relaxed and comfortable. Some students though, were intimidating (to me, at least) and were not engaged in the lesson about Judaism. Perhaps I am not best suited for secondary education, because I was not very comfortable working with students of that age group. However, I acknowledge that as I continue to grow and mature, adolescents may become more appealing to me.

Although I was very excited about my observation at Manchester Elementary School, I was disappointed by the teacher I observed. She seemed more focused on disciplining students than actually teaching them. When she disciplined, it was in a public and demeaning manner. Rather than ridiculing and embarrassing students, corrections should be constructive and more private. Discipline in my classroom will most likely be my biggest challenge, because I do not

enjoy confrontation. When I do need to correct a student, I will attempt to discipline with humor and understanding and in a more private, less demeaning way. During this observation I took note of how the students reacted after being publicly scolded. The teacher seemed to have broken the students' spirits, and I think that she hurt them more than she knew. This observation has helped me to realize that while discipline is a necessary piece in classroom, it should never become the focus of the classroom. Positive, productive learning needs to be the focus.

My favorite field experience, by far, was my last observation at Laketon Intermediate School. I was placed in a classroom for students who were not indentified with special needs, yet were not passing their ISTEP+ testing and obviously needed more attention and help. The teacher helped each student individually and showed incredible amounts of patience. She created a healthy classroom environment, and the students were all engaged and excited about learning. I have never seen students so excited to get into a circle and read aloud! This classroom was such a breath of fresh air for me... this is the type of classroom I want to have.

During my freshman year at high school, I decided that I wanted to work with special needs children. However, after some consideration, I think I may want to start a program like the one that I observed at Laketon Intermediate School for children who are not identified, but need extra help. I think that this group of students is commonly overlooked and just thought to be lazy. The reality is, however, that many of these students are not succeeding in school because they are stuck in life situations that they are helpless to change or control. With my enthusiasm for learning, and my compassionate and personal way of teaching, I could really have an impact on students who need extra attention.

These field experiences have cemented my decision that teaching is most definitely my calling. I now feel more certain than ever that I am on the right career path. These experiences

have also helped me narrow down what age group I would like to teach, as well as given me more insight into what I would like to teach. I have expanded my future plans from teaching just “special education” to possibly include the broader grouping of “at risk” students. I am more excited than ever to become certified and focus my energies and enthusiasm on educating my future students.