

Zachary Maher

EDUC 380

September 28, 2022

Prof. Dieter

Contextual Factors

The placement school I have been assigned to is Hamlin Upper Grade Center in Alsip, Illinois. Alsip, Illinois is a middle-class neighborhood that is predominantly 46% white, 22% black, and 26% Hispanic. The community is stable and seems to be strong and thriving. There are many community events going on within their city. There is also a strong support for education within the city of Alsip. This is very important because the support from the community helps the students succeed by being that helping hand in becoming a better student. According to the IL State Report Card, the school has a 23% rate of students with IEPs. In my classroom however, that percentage is about 30% of the class. So, my class is above average with the number of students who have an IEP. In the district, the ratio of students to teachers is 13:1, while the ratio of the state is 17:1. With this being said, students in my district have a greater ratio which can be beneficial because it allows students to connect with the teacher more.

Hamlin Upper Grade Center has many of the features an average middle school would have. All students do have chrome books and the classrooms all have projectors. There is a dry erase board on one side of the wall for each classroom and the rest is all old chalk board. I have noticed that none of the students use notebooks or pencils. I have a very strong opinion against this and would love if students would still take notes

using notebook and pencil. All students use there are the chrome books that have been given to them.

Classroom rules and routines go as normal for my cooperating teacher. He sets the bar high from the beginning of the year, and then the students will act as to where he originally wanted them to. There are many things that he does do that I would never do. He does discipline students aloud and make fun of them a little bit. He has also been teaching for the past twenty years and what he has been doing is working. He told me that for many of his students this is the first time having a male teacher. Since most of the elementary school is predominantly female educators, middle school is some of the first experiences with a male educator. Many of the grouping patterns he has is just who they are sitting next to, or they can choose their own person to pair with. The classroom also appears to have posters set up and many other historical flags. For that he has the don't tread on me flag and the join or die flag. He also has two military uniforms hanging up for the students to see. There are also civil war figurines in a box for the students to examine. I believe that he sets up his room just right for it to be a history class. For seating he does have students with IEPs sit in the front then the rest are behind them.

The students are all unique at Hamlin. The students are from 11 to 14 and have their own personalities, and ways they act and learn. There seems to be more females than males who attend the school based off IL Report Card. It is a diverse school with many white, Hispanic, and black students. Mostly Hispanic and white, with some black students. 23% of students have an IEP, while there are 77% non-IEP students based off IL report card. There are honors classes, and I am currently observing a math honors

class that my teacher teaches. I have noticed that many of the students in his classroom rely on technology to get all of their work done. They also don't use technology in the best ways when it comes to doing homework. Many of them plagiarize and don't notice it. While working with them I try to have them paraphrase the answers they pull up. This may be a problem because they have been learning this whole time just to copy what the source gives them. I believe that me working with them and helping them complete assignments within class they can correctly answer the questions. He noticed that since covid, many of these students who are in honors classes, shouldn't be. Since he must deal with placement for high school, he will be recommending some of the students just to take the average math class instead of honors. It will be up to the student and parents in the end if they want their child to continue in honors. There are 8% English Learners within the school based off IL report. Many of these students are interested in what any other middle schooler would be interested in. I know for the boys, many like to discuss about videogames, however I am not fully sure what the girls discuss during class, many of them are quiet. I just sometimes eavesdrop to get an understanding of the students I will be observing and teaching. All the students learn off their Chromebook and I find it to be a very difficult way of learning. Primarily because many of these students can do anything they want on them since they are not proctored. My teacher does have problems with some students who go off and play games or whatever they are more inclined to do other than learn.

The contextual factors of the community, classroom factors, and students create many suggestions on how to make the classroom a better place. For example, because 30% of my class has an IEP, that is something to be mindful of when creating lessons

and how I can help each student individually. One thing that can be done in the classroom is the students with the IEPs be put towards the front so that they can focus up close. Also, to fit their individual plan, I could modify how they take notes by providing an extra set of the slides to have at their desk or even sharing the slides with them to their chrome books. By doing this it can help them not feel overwhelmed with the normal pace of my teaching and they can move however slow they need to. Another thing to be mindful of is the different ethnicities in the classroom. The reason for this is because the class is very racially mixed, so it is important to make sure no biases are put into place within my teaching. Also, to look at things from history with different perspectives, so everyone feels heard and understood. A way to do this would be looking at different perspectives of different soldiers, for example the perspective of a white soldier compared to an African American soldier in the Civil War. This could help give the different races in the classroom an understanding that it wasn't just the one perspective and putting everyone under the same category. That different backgrounds are being introduced so that students see the many roles in the war.

I am greatly enjoying my pre student teaching at Hamlin and the school is wonderful. I have been able to teach a lesson and it went very well. My cooperating teacher is excellent and very supportive. I have been learning a lot from my observation.