

The semester I have spent at Thompson Valley High School has been eye-opening and enjoyable. I have learned a lot about myself as a future teacher, and have become even more excited about teaching in general. The opportunity to interact with students on a weekly bases and implement lessons that I created has helped me to develop skills that I will need in the future while also allowing me to become more comfortable in the classroom in general.

The first lesson that I taught to my AP Calculus class this semester was my favorite, and also felt the most effective. I taught slope fields, and believe that I successfully incorporated all the important elements of a lesson. The warm-up was relevant and got the students thinking about the material, the lecture was clear and information was understood by students, and the activity helped to extend their knowledge. My cooperating teacher, Bryan Eisele, told me the next day that he had taken a poll of his class and that they all said that I had been a good teacher and had explained the content really well. This was really gratifying to hear. My second lesson was good as well, but it consisted more of a review activity because it took place the week before AP exams. Although I was only able to teach twice, I spent most other days working one-on-one with students during activities and on worksheets and homework. Because of this I was able to get to know the class quite well.

Teaching these lessons taught me a lot about the way I handle classroom time and situations that arise. I have discovered that I will like having a routine in my class. For example, I liked having students come in, know where to turn in their homework and sit down, and then having a short, introductory warm-up. I liked directly instructing the students about the day's lesson in

the first half of class, and then spending the second half of class on both guided and independent practice. It was neat being in Mr. Eisele's class because he incorporates a lot of student work time into his lessons. I have never been in a math class where students are able to get out of their seats and move around as much as they did in his classroom, which I thought was very effective (especially because TVHS is on a block schedule and it is difficult for students to stay seated for over an hour and a half). It will be very important to apply a variety of teaching methods in my classes in order to keep students engaged. Something else I learned about myself is that I am good at adapting/being flexible in different situations. When I arrived to teach my first lesson I found that both the assistant principal and a camera crew were walking around the classroom. Apparently one student had won a large scholarship and was being filmed throughout the day. This definitely was not what I was expecting; however, I still jumped right in and began my lesson. It was easy to forget about everyone else, and just concentrate on the content and the students. As I will be observed often in the future, it was good to learn this about myself. A final realization I have reached is that I still get nervous when preparing to teach a classroom. I think that this is natural though, and know that with time and more experience, I will become much more comfortable instructing the class.

This semester, I have really appreciated the times I was able to work one-on-one with students. I believe that this allows the teacher to not only get to know their students individually, but helps them see areas where specific kids struggle and excel. It also provides the chance to explain difficult concepts in different ways. After observing Bryan's teaching methods, I have realized the importance of multiple representations; for instance, lecturing, using visuals, etc. An additional discovery that I made this semester is that I believe I want to teach middle school.

As a result, I am so excited to be at Webber Middle School teaching 6th Graders this fall.

I continue to believe that having effective classroom management skills is one of the most important techniques that a teacher can master. The difference that classroom management can make on the overall classroom environment and learning process is astounding. Systems for everyday activities, such as collecting homework and taking attendance, can greatly help teachers with this task. I also plan on spending time in the beginning of the year helping my students get to know each other and myself, so that they feel safe. I want my students to feel comfortable with one another, but also understand that the classroom is a place of learning and respect. This means that they do not disrupt class, or act inappropriately. Part of classroom management also includes student engagement. It seems that this is becoming more and more of a struggle for teachers every year, but I plan on motivating students a variety of ways. It was really neat for me to find out this semester how much students opened up to me once I asked them a couple questions about their lives. I noticed that these students were much more likely to ask me questions about math once I had done this. Relationships are key to an effective classroom environment.

After creating and teaching lessons, I have realized that I am an extremely detailed planner. It makes me very anxious to show up unprepared, and as a result I not only made my complete lesson plans before I taught but went through every problem to make sure I understood it, made sure all my materials were in order, and thought about questions I could ask while teaching. It was really helpful that Bryan provided me with a brief template of each lesson that I taught to his class. Being prepared is a part of me that I apply in all areas of my life, but that will help a lot as a teacher. The downside to this is that I need to understand that not everything will always go as

planned in the classroom, and that that is ok. I am nervous, but really excited, to explore creating lessons and even units completely by myself next semester.

The Data Analysis project that we completed in Ed450 was one of my favorites. I had never looked at testing data before, and it was so neat to discover different trends that existed between students and their grades. It helped me to see the importance of reviewing this data while teaching. Only by doing this will I be able to target areas for improvement among my students. Frequent assessments are essential in all classes, and (I believe) especially in math. It is so easy for students to fall behind in math classes and then never catch up. As soon as I notice a student having trouble, I plan on making the effort to help them understand the material. Formative assessments will help to assess students' day to day comprehension, while summative assessments will measure their overall knowledge of a topic.

One of my beliefs about education is that every student can learn and achieve in every subject. It is easy for teachers to dismiss the "difficult kids" because they take more time and energy, and it can sometimes seem overwhelming to make any sort of difference in their lives. Although I completely understand this, it is a personal goal of mine to always strive to go that extra mile with every student individually. Teachers can make the difference between a student falling through the cracks and never getting back on track, and a student becoming inspired to learn everything they can. This includes students of all financial and cultural backgrounds, and learning styles and impairments. Even this semester in an AP Calculus class, I have noticed which students are probably being left behind in all of their classes because they are unmotivated, uninvested, and doing poorly academically. It is the teacher's choice as to how far they will go to meet the needs of these kids, and I plan on doing all that I can in my classroom.

I have had a great semester at Thompson Valley High School this spring. It is a great school with many wonderful teachers, and I learned a lot while working in Mr. Eisele's Calculus class. I am learning more about myself as a teacher with every experience I gain in the school environment, and am so excited for the opportunity to student teach. Before this class, I felt unprepared and anxious about student teaching, but now feel that I have learned skills that will help me be a great and effective teacher in my own classroom.