

Internship 1 Reflection

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I had the opportunity and pleasure to work with Mrs. Schieve's and Mrs. Arrow's fifth grade class over at Colonial Elementary School. Both classes I had were just amazing but I want to focus on Mrs. Schieve's room, room 306, as they were the group I spent most of my time with. I learned a lot of things from this first internship and my first experience with being around kids and teaching them academically as opposed to coaching them in a sport.

Internship Overview and Reflection

The first thing I want to focus on is the walls and surroundings of the classroom, everywhere you looked there was something that caught your eye. Whether it was posters, art, books, or paper there was always something there which left very little open board space. With the very little board space available there needs to be something to replace it, in most modern classrooms that would be in the form of a smartboard and this entire school does not stray too far from that. Instead of the classic smartboards where they project onto a touchscreen board this school has very large touchscreen televisions that their computers directly connect to. I don't know exactly how big these screens are but the one in my classroom was about the same length as my wingspan, maybe a bit longer.

The second thing I want to focus on is how the students were seated. At the beginning of my time there the students sat in a formation similar to how the characters in *The Simpsons* eat dinner. There was someone seated at "the head of the table" and the other four people faced towards each other, this did not last long during my time there as the kids were very chatty in that configuration. More on my thoughts later. For the second

half of my time there the classroom was set up in lines all facing the front of the room, there were still groups of three to four students but they all faced the front of the classroom. This new arrangement definitely cut down on the talking during the instructional period but instances where group work or collaboration to be a bit more difficult.

For the walls and surroundings of the classroom it is exactly what you picture when you think of an elementary school. It works for the grade but I often found myself looking around the room distracted, it was often overstimulating and I could see how some students who may have issues paying attention could struggle. The seating arrangements however did make me think deeply about how I want my future classroom to be set up. In my first field log prior to the switch up of the room I wrote about how I thought the seating could be problematic. With someone at the “head of the table” that could give the idea that the person sitting there is more important or needs more attention, being there shines a spotlight on the student sitting there even if it is not realized. The other four students as I stated previously were facing each other, this works for things like group work but causes issues when it is the teachers turn. It is very easy to be distracted when you are not seated towards the teacher or the front of the room. For the second seating arrangement I think that was the best option for the circumstances. I do have to say that I am being very nitpicky when I say all of that.

All of that being said, the biggest takeaway for me was the fact that although the class was amazing I do not want to teach younger kids. I knew this prior to starting this internship but it was always up in the air, one moment cemented this though. When I taught small groups during GAIN time I taught a couple heavy topics, one of those being

slavery in the 13 colonies. I knew a great deal about the topic because I enjoy history but there were a couple students this one time that asked a lot of questions. Normally I can give a straight forward answer but these questions they were asking were surprisingly philosophical. I had good quality answers for every question they asked but I found it genuinely difficult to put the answers into a way that the students understood and could comprehend. That along with a few other things definitely confirms that I want to teach older kids.

Motivating Students

There were several things in the classroom that served as motivators for the students. Most if not all of them fall on the lines of being extrinsic motivators. Throughout all of Colonial Elementary School is a system called "Class Compliments" which I believe, if I remember correctly from when I was a student there, is when a teacher that is not their normal teachers notice their class is doing very good so they give their class a compliment. So in this case it would be a teacher that is not Mrs. Schieve or Mrs. Arrow. After the compliment is given a velcro star is put onto a chart with 10-16 spots for these stars.

Another motivator is this ticket jar, when a student does something good, excellent, amazing, etc. they are given a ticket to write their name on and they put it in a jar. There is also the 100 book challenge where after a student reads a book they put their name on a laminated picture of a library shelf. Once all of the books in the library shelf have a name then they win. All of these, while not the only motivators used, are the ones that result in a party, longer recess, pajama party, candy salad, or anything along those lines.

Some of the other motivators that are used do not result in major parties or anything like that. There is a little light up statue with the words "Good Job!" on it, this is

for when a student figures out a problem that is on the harder side. This little statue does not stay with the student all day but bounces around within the classroom. There are also these book mark tassels which I have no idea what they are for, I know it has to do something with reading but I am not exactly sure.

As I previously stated these are all extrinsic forms of motivation so other than the normal “good job”, “good answer”, etc. there are not that many motivators that are intrinsic. While traditionally having only extrinsic motivators is not good I believe that it works well for an elementary school. In a school with students at such a young age it does not do them well to be rewarded with being proud of themselves since most of them do not know how to process it. It eventually fizzles out once they get to middle school and high school which makes sense since students at our age understand more emotions.

Managing Behavior

The class I had during this time was amazing as I said previously so there were not that many times, while I was there, that the class got really out of control and rowdy. On the off chance that it did happen it was mostly reminders as to what should be happening. For example between the times of 08:50 and 09:05 was when the students came up to class from their buses, walking, car port, however they got to and from school. During that time the expectations were to sit silently and read, while Mrs. Schieve was a bit lenient on it; she still expected the class to be on the quiet side. If the class was loud then they were reminded what they were supposed to be doing.

What I previously stated was the case for most things while I was there. On the rare occasion where something was a bit more serious Mrs. Schieve had the ability to send students to Mr. Bennett who was one of the special helper teachers at Colonial

Elementary School. He helped students who may have problems with paying attention, controlling their emotions, needed help with reading, etc. Along with sending students to Mr. Bennett's, she would tell them to do a lap around the top floor where her classroom is.

Focus on a Student

I could probably name a way that every single student made an impact on me but I want to focus on one specifically. We will refer to her as Cheer, she was one of the students that was in group three during GAIN time. Side note; the groups during GAIN time were organized by how well they do reading comprehension. That does not mean that group one was the best and group three was the worst, every group was good at reading comprehension. Cheer, as I said, was in group three but was maybe one of the smartest when it came to thinking out of all of the students I taught. She was the one that asked me those hard questions that seriously made me realize I do not want to teach students this young. I may have written about this in one of my field logs but there was one day where I was teaching about the 13 Colonies to group three and there was a word, "predominant", that they were having trouble understanding. I knew what the word was so I was trying to nudge them in the right direction, out of nowhere Cheer raised her hand and spent about five minutes breaking down the word and she got it right. All of that along with her always being energetic and enthusiastic left an impression on me.

In conclusion I can not stress enough how much I loved having Mrs. Schieve as my first mentor, room 306 and 305 as my first classrooms, and everyone else in that building who supported me. I had a lot of fun during every second of my time there, even when I was doing repetitive work for Mrs. Schieve. Last thing I have to say is that while I did criticise some things I was being very nitpicky with them. It was a near perfect classroom.