

Field Experience Paper

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EDUC 2311

Bellaire High School

9th Grade

Mrs. Fry

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Fall 2010

My field work was done at Bellaire High school in Mrs. Fry’s English 1A class. This paper describes what I did and learned while completing my field work.

ACTIVITIES

I did a lot of observing while I was in Mrs. Fry’s class and it was great to be able to sit back and watch the students’ reactions to her lessons. However, I also got to participate while I was there. I was able to interact with the students during group work and grade their work and then input the grades in the grade book. During the time period I was there Mrs. Fry had her conference period, so I was lucky enough to be able to attend her planning meetings and run errands with her.

On Mondays the students do their weekly vocabulary review and on one particular Monday Mrs. Fry told them to get into small groups and come up with synonyms and antonyms for each of their ten vocabulary words. At first I was a little apprehensive to ask if anyone needed help since it was only my second week in the classroom. However, I noticed that a lot of the groups were having trouble staying focused so I began walking around and making sure they were on task. While I was walking around the classroom I noticed that one group in particular was really having trouble with the assignment. After sitting down with them, I realized they did not know the difference between a synonym and an antonym. I taught them what synonyms and antonyms were and then began to help them create their lists to go along with their vocabulary words. We came to one word and one of the girls really could not understand what it meant so I made up an example and turned it into something she would understand. As soon as I did this her eyes lit up and I could tell she really knew what it meant after that. The look on her face was priceless and knowing that I played a big part in her understanding was an absolutely amazing feeling.

I had the opportunity to grade all of the students’ quizzes and homework during my field work experience. I was surprised at how much I had forgotten while I was grading and I ended up re-teaching myself the information I had learned years ago. After I finished grading the students’ work I got to input their grades into the grade book. I was surprised to find out that everything was done electronically. There was no hard copy of the students’ grades, only the electronic grade book on the computer. Inputting the grades on the computer is a much faster and more efficient way of keeping track of the students’ grades.

During Mrs. Fry’s conference period I was able to see what teachers do during their “time off.” I was incredibly surprised to see how busy she is during her conference period. Many of the days I was there we had some sort of meeting to attend, whether it was a department meeting or a meeting explaining the administration of the Stanford testing they had one week. If we did not have a meeting to attend we usually spent the time running off copies or catching up on grading. This showed me how busy teachers are and how hard they work even during their breaks.

LEARNINGS

I learned a great number of things while I observed at Bellaire. I learned about teenagers, teaching and learning, classroom management and discipline, schools, and even myself. I am so glad I was able to do this field work because the experiences I had while at Bellaire are things I could never learn from a textbook.

Learnings about Children

Every teenager is unique in his or her own way. Although no person is great at everything, every person has something great about them. I think in order to be a good and successful teacher you have to get to know your students in order to find out what makes them great. Once you find out that special thing about them you need to show them respect and let them know you believe in them. If you, as a teacher, do these things the possibilities for that student are limitless.

I have always found it disturbing how teenagers feel the need to fit into a certain group or stereotype. I believe everyone needs friends but I do not believe all of a person’s friends should come from the same “group”. I have always had a very diverse group of friends. For example, I have friends from the sports I played, the clubs I was in, and even my academic classes. I wish more people would follow suit and be more open minded when it comes to choosing their friends. The students in Mrs. Fry’s class at Bellaire were just the same as typical students at every other high school with their set groups. The students sat in the same seats everyday next to the same people. One day, Mrs. Fry switched two students because of the excessive talking and neither of the students interacted with any of the other students in their new surroundings. This is very heart-breaking to me and something I would like to change in the future. I wish and believe everyone can be friends. The world would be a much better place if everyone could just get along and I believe it needs to start with children.

Learnings about Teaching and Learning

In Schools of Learning I learned a lot about the ways you should teach someone as well as the ways people learn. Mrs. Fry mostly uses brain compatible learning in her classroom.

Mrs. Fry used a lot of repetition, almost daily, in order to increase the students’ long term memory. Every Monday the students had a quiz over the vocabulary and grammar they learned the week before. Mrs. Fry always reviewed the material the quiz covered with the class before the quiz. This would be incredibly effective if the students would listen while she talked. Unfortunately sometimes the students would talk so much that she just gave up and handed out the quiz without any discussion. She did the same thing before their test over the Fall of Troy movie. Before their test they went over the entire plot so that it was fresh in their mind. However, many of the students did not listen while she reviewed so their grades were very low. Although Mrs. Fry used brain compatible learning while she taught it would be a lot more effective if she had better classroom management.

Mrs. Fry only attempted constructivism teaching twice while I was in her classroom. The first occurrence was when she split the class up into groups to come up with synonyms and antonyms for their vocabulary words. When she first told the class to get into groups they hardly moved a muscle. It was very obvious they do not do group work very often and once they finally got into their groups I realized why. When I looked around at the different groups it seemed as if none of the groups were on task. They were either talking about their weekends or messing around with each other. They did not gain much at all from their group work. The second time I saw constructivism in Mrs. Fry’s class was when she gave them a book report project which required them to create a visual aid to go with their project. I was really excited to see the projects on the day they were due however, only two students, out of her entire class of twenty-five students, turned in their book reports. I commend Mrs. Fry on her effort to incorporate constructivism in her teaching; however her lack of classroom management negated those efforts.

The students in Mrs. Fry’s classroom never really got to use any multiple intelligences other than their linguistic intelligence. I think it is great for teachers to know their students’ strengths and weaknesses so the students are able to strengthen their strengths and improve on their weaknesses.

Learnings about Classroom Management and Discipline

Mrs. Fry was an incredibly nice teacher who really wanted to help me have a great experience in her classroom. However, she has little to no classroom management.

Every day, the students go into her classroom and act as if they have no expectations to live by. The students have almost no respect for her and they do not take her seriously at all. It is very obvious that they do not care what she thinks of them or what she wants them to do. On one particular Wednesday, the students were supposed to turn in their homework assignment from Tuesday, and out of the entire class, which is about twenty-five students, only two students turned in the assignment. The students who did not turn in their homework were supposed to write out on a piece of paper that they did not do their homework. She then said she was going to mail the letters to their parents. This is a good strategy however, even I (and I was not in the class very long) could tell that she was not serious. Since they knew she wouldn’t really mail the letters they did not care about not turning in their work. This was incredibly surprising to me because I have always regarded my teachers with the utmost respect. I was always conscious of what the teachers thought of me. For example, I always wanted them to view me in a positive manner, but Mrs. Fry’s students simply do not care. I think a big part of that has to do with her lack of classroom management and discipline.

Before their weekly quiz on Mondays Mrs. Fry always stands up at the front of the classroom and goes over the material on the quiz with the whole class. This would be incredibly beneficial if more than a handful of students actually paid attention during these review sessions. Although most of the class was either sleeping or turned around talking to their friends, the students that were paying attention seemed to have no clue what she was talking about. It was as if they did not learn anything at all during their lessons and their quiz and test grades reflected that. In my opinion, in a class of twenty five students there should be more than one fourth of the students passing the quizzes; however this was not the case in Mrs. Fry’s classroom.

This was incredibly frustrating for me to watch because I know these students are going to be incredibly behind next year and they may become so discouraged by their senior year that they will want to give up and drop out. I believe that is a terrible thing. I also believe every student has the ability to graduate from at least high school; some just require more help than others.

I’ve noticed that as long as a person knows they have someone that believes in them, they will be more willing to work hard and strive to achieve their goals. Mrs. Fry said to me one day that her classroom was dwindling down to almost nothing. She said she just did not understand why her kids did not care about anything and she had decided they could not be successful. Even though she did not say these things in front of her students they can tell she does not believe in them and they think she does not care about them. She gave up on them behaving; however, I know they can sit quietly and do their work. This is because Mrs. Fry was absent from school one day and there was a substitute teacher in her place. He came in and immediately told the students his rules and expectations for the day. He also told them if they got all of their work done without talking they would be able to talk quietly at the end of class. Every single student completed their work that day and some of them even finished their homework. The substitute had great classroom management and since he gave the students respect he received the same respect from every one of them. If Mrs. Fry would try this I know it could work for her too.

Learnings about Schools

The goal of every high school is to educate the students. Although many schools are alike in some ways every school is unique in its own way as well. Bellaire not only focuses on educating its students but also molding them into well-rounded young adults.

Bellaire offers a huge variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities. They have something for everyone with clubs like anime, astronomy, quidditch, and just about everything in between. No student has an excuse for not being involved; Bellaire gives all of its students an hour long lunch period and during this time students are able to attend club meetings and visit their teachers for extra help or to make up missing work. This is a great thing for people who are unable to stay after school for meetings because they have to catch the bus.

Bellaire also offers a variety of men and women’s sports for its students. They have the usual sports like baseball, football, volleyball, track and basketball, but they also offer sports like lacrosse and wrestling which may not be available to students at other schools. This is not only beneficial to the students but it also benefits the teachers at Bellaire. With so many different sports a great number of coaches are needed to coach the teams. This is a great way for the teachers to get involved outside of the classroom as well.

Bellaire is not a high-poverty school but it is a Title I school based on the number of students on free/reduced lunch. Title I is a federally funded program that provides extra services, instructional materials, etc. Bellaire’s Title I program provides funding for additional staff; one twelve month Social Worker and one eleven month counselor. This year, Bellaire’s Title I coordinator is working with teachers and staff to provide help to the students who need extra help passing the TAKS.

Just like most public schools, Bellaire has students who, as described above, need extra help to achieve the standard requirements; they also have a plethora of students who are over achievers and need extra challenging courses. This is why Bellaire offers an assortment of Advanced Placement courses where students can receive college credit by passing an end of the year exam. This past year 522 Bellaire students earned Advanced Placement Scholar awards. These results are incredible and something every school should strive to achieve.

Something that is equally as impressive as Bellaire’s Advance Placement program is its Magnet Program. This program is for students who have a strong interest in studying a language. Any student may enter the program regardless of what school attendance zone they live in. Requirements for the program include taking five on-campus credits of World Language, maintaining a 75 average in all classes, an 80 average in language classes, good conduct, and good attendance. Some examples of the eleven available languages include Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, and German. This is a great opportunity for students who plan on working abroad in the future or have non-English speaking family from another country.

Learnings about Myself

This fieldwork experience taught me a lot about myself. Some things I already knew but the experience helped to bring these things further into the light. I also learned some things I did not know about myself. I learned that I have more patience with lower academic level students than higher academic level students. I already knew I enjoyed helping people but after this experience I found out helping people is something I truly love. Even though Mrs. Fry’s class was of the lowest level freshman English class, there was still a wide range of academic ability among the students. Some of the students were able to understand the material the first time they were taught it. However, some of the students needed extra help. I enjoyed working with the students who needed extra help more than working with the students who understood the material the first time it was taught to them. Sometimes I had to teach a few of the students the same thing, in different ways, multiple times before they understood it. I surprised myself with the amount of patience I had during these times.

While I was at Bellaire, I was able to help not only the students but also Mrs. Fry. It did not matter to me what it was I was doing; as long as someone benefitted from my work I was happy. It makes me feel good to hold the door open for someone, but no feeling can compare to the feeling you get when you help someone learn something. My favorite part of the entire field experience was when I saw a student’s eyes light up because they finally understood what I was helping them with. That is something you cannot be taught; that’s something you get to feel.

Finally, while I was at Bellaire I learned that there are things I want to change in the world. I want people to be friendlier with each other and I want everyone to have self-confidence. I think one of the best ways to conquer these problems is by becoming a teacher. Young minds are the easiest to mold. If you teach kids from an early age that everyone is equal, yet special in their own way they will be more apt to get along with each other. Also if you are there for a child or teenager at a young age, they will know that someone believes in them and that can change a person’s life forever.

CONCLUSION: MY DECISION ABOUT BECOMING A TEACHER

I have wanted to become a teacher for as long as I can remember and the field experience only reaffirmed my dream. I absolutely love helping people and teaching is one of the best ways to help people. I love knowing that by being a teacher I have the opportunity to influence many lives every single day. Hopefully, in my career I will be able to change someone’s life and leave a lasting impact on at least some of my students that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. I not only want to teach my students English, but I also want to teach them how to be good people. I want to show my students that everyone deserves friends and deserves to be loved. I feel that my best chance at shaping young peoples’ lives is through teaching and that is definitely something I would be more than happy to do for the rest of my life.