



David Montecucco

Student Teacher Practicum

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Classroom Observations

Lewis & Clark High School in Spokane Washington. Room 131, Ms. Spohrs' Freshman Core Algebra Class

Physical Space



Two photos have been provided, taken from opposite corners of the room so as to give two different perspectives (teachers, students). The room is carpeted and the desks are peninsular in layout which allows for the teacher to move in a U type pattern and be able to contact all students easily (see photo 2 for this path). Note that this room utilizes tables for 2 people rather than traditional desks. One reason for this is so that group work does not require much movement by the students to form groups (mostly groups of 2 are used in this class). A seating chart was used in this class. On the first day of class Ms. Spohr had all the students make identification tags using popsicle sticks, name on one side and something about themselves on the other side. These popsicle sticks were then put in a large coffee cup and labeled Period 2 - Core Math where they were drawn at random and that was the seating chart for the month of September. Ms. Spohr along with being a math teacher she is also the JV Basketball Coach. Like many of the classrooms at LC the technology available is GREAT! The desk at the head of the class contains ample power, laptop, and modern conveniences to broadcast internet on the white board, overhead projector for images, and electronic notepad with multi color options. There is also multimedia options to show DVD, and music. On the walls of the classroom there is about a 10' area devoted to previous basketball teams from years past. In the front of the classroom hangs 5 posters:

- Pistol Pete Maravich - A NBA basketball player from the 60's and under his photo is a description of particular basketball drills for young people learning to dribble.
- A 2010 calendar featuring the varsity boys & girls LC basketball teams from last season.

- The Washington State 'I CAN' statements about Algebra goals for high school freshman.
- Poster focusing on the words 'listen & silent' and how they have the same letters.
- Michael Jordan poster which focuses on the fact that he was not the tallest, not the fastest, not the smartest, but he achieved greatness through sweat and hard work (note the photo is one of those where he was leaning and he was breathing hard and someone was offering him a towel to wipe the sweat from his body)

Class Profile

Freshman Core Math (Algebra I) has several characteristics:

- smaller class size (maximum population of 15)
- all students will have 1 period of math, AND 1 period of math lab to assist them in their math development
- All students who are eligible for this class have had 1 or more of the following: poor math grades in the past, discipline issues in math prior, fallen behind in math.

I noticed that Ms. Spohr has a unique ability to gather the attention of the class. Like typical freshman the class is very antsy. They are easily distracted and lose their focus after 5 minutes. Ms. Spohr is very keen to change things up in class regularly so as to keep focus. The class has 8 boys, 7 girls. There is 2 Latino, 2 native American, 4 African American and 7 Caucasian. We do not have any IEP's in this class. One child has only 1 arm but does not require any special attention. About 4 of the kids come late to class and that 2 or 3 are absent each day. In the first week we have already had 4 kids 'skip' math lab resulting in after school detention. The terms 'challenging/compliant' has a connotation of negative/positive so I would say that these kids are compliant, even though they are challenging from a standpoint of progress I believe they are NOT bad kids. Not one time has anyone back talked the teacher. These kids just need to be taught discipline and to listen to their conscience. In some cases I think that these kids do not realize they either have a conscience or know what their conscience is for. A couple of times during the first 10 days of this student teacher practicum I feel that if I took on the role of Jiminy Cricket from Pinocchio I would be doing all these kids a favor.



Jiminy Cricket - Always let your conscience be your guide!

I think that this particular class is very social, aggressive in nature and even though negative about math and the fact that they do not like math and are forced to have math twice a day they seem to go through the motions and attempt the tasks of each class session. Ms. Spohr warned me that parent involvement is practically none in this program. Her last years Freshman Core Math class only had 2 parents even show up to open house night much less actually show interest in their students learning.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that the majority of the students will complete the class and demonstrate some comprehension of basic algebra. Ms. Spohr will not give up on them and they are aware of that . The majority respect her and will give back and try to learn.