

Top 10 Things I Learned at Practicum

1. Mornings are crazy, especially when you do not arrive early to get settled.
 - Both mornings I went in, Wednesday and Friday, Mrs. Davis dropped her daughter off at preschool. These were mornings that she arrived right before or even sometimes right after the first bell. The school knew of this and so did the other teachers. I was able to see the frantic beginnings of the school day and all the needs of the students being laid at her feet so there was little or no time to prepare for anything else going on that day.
2. Relationships are the core of good teaching.
 - Some of Mrs. Davis students really loved her and made extra efforts to come into her classroom and open up to her about things going on at home. You could tell they were very comfortable with her. Mrs. Davis never singled out any other students, but there were others that she did not have a relationship with and I am not sure how much effort was made. These students did not have as much motivation to do their work, missing work, and it affected their attitudes and behavior. I hope to never lose that zest in trying to form better relationships with my students.
3. Tone of voice and body language goes farther than the words themselves.
 - Positive attitudes and demeanor in the mornings, especially after a long week, can change the whole dynamic of the classroom and whole school day. With that said, it can go the other way with a negative attitude.
4. Get the students up and moving.
 - Lots of activities of practice problems were designed to get the students up and moving. A lot of times, it was just being creative in the methods of letting the students practice such as stations, clue stations, cut up worksheets, etc. There were multiple days of the students being able to get up and move around! Most of them loved it, and I think there is that good balance of worksheets are not bad, but to have that balance of incorporating movement and new activities.
5. Other teachers are your allies.
 - Mrs. Davis worked very closely with another 8th grade math teacher in which they shared just about everything, their PowerPoints, worksheets, tests, and even stayed on the same schedule! They both relied on one another so much and really shared the burden of teacher. Also at Watcher, there is a team of teachers and they meet together and I was able to see their positive relationships with one another and the support they all were able to give and receive.
6. Prepare well in advance.
 - Things were sent to the printer 2 weeks in advance and normally lessons were planned 2-3 weeks at least in advance. I know this may not always be possible, especially as a first year teacher while I am still gathering all of my resources, and I want to continue to add positive changes to my classroom, but it will be nice to have a library of resources to reference and use while preparing for lessons. Each day was thought out and little details of things learned from past classes and even past years were taken into account while planning.
7. Proficiency grading isn't as unbiased as one would originally think.
 - Proficiency grading to me seemed more unbiased, especially at first, that we are just assessing knowledge. I found this to not really be the case. While grading assessments, being you do not have an overall point score, we just circled what was wrong or missing,

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either in the answer or in the process to the answer, and then you look at what was done and you give it the proficiency score. I found there to be more judgment call in the grading and yes, there are some common mistakes, but there are many mistakes which are only made once and it wasn't clear how to score them. Or for example, if a student gets most answers right, but doesn't label any of their answers, I would think it would be better to give the student just a lower "A" being there is that wiggle room but in proficiency grading, that took them down a whole .5 of their score. Not all teachers may grade this way, but with there being so much "judgement" in the grading, I don't always think it allows for fair scores, especially in math. For example, Mrs. Davis was writing a score and said, oh who is this, I like this student, and gave them a higher score then she originally was thinking.

8. If structure is lost at the beginning of the year/semester, it is very hard to gain back.
 - Class was not started right at the bell and was a bit chaotic at the beginning of every class. It seemed like an uphill battle of trying to get attention and focused everyday. I hope that I am able to establish a bit more of a routine especially at the beginning of the hour and I have seen the differences now and I can see how precious those beginning moments really are.
9. There are always many tasks to be done.
 - There always seemed to be 1,000 things to do in the morning, and a lot of time it was simply answering student's questions with their homework, missing work, and students have been gone and going to be gone.
10. Pick your battles.
 - That missing work or fully completed work battle with students is quite the battle. I will take what my previous practicum teachers motto was is that fair is not every student getting the same thing, but every student getting what they need to be successful. Some battles are worth fighting, but some are not.