

During the Spring 2014 semester, my immersive course experience at South View Elementary challenged me to grow as a professional in several ways. However, my greatest growth experience this semester was learning the virtue of patience and flexibility as an elementary teacher. At the beginning of the semester, there were several school cancellations and delays due to dangerous weather conditions, which postponed our chance to begin knowing and teaching our students in our assigned classrooms. I recall being so eager to work with my students that it became stressful for me. Looking back now, I wish I had taken that time to relax more instead of being in such a hurry. By the middle of my practicum, I was exhausted and was wishing I had not spent so much time stressing over nothing at the start. I think that it is important as a teacher to understand that events that cause multiple school delays and cancellations are out of the teacher's control. Instead of feeling impatient and overwhelmed in this kind of situation, I learned that it is best to relax and do the best you can when back in the classroom.

Prior to entering the classroom at South View Elementary I wrote goals in which I hoped to achieve during the semester. One of my goals was to have a better understanding of what it was like to work with students of different family backgrounds than my own. I believe this goal is the one that I have made the greatest progress in achieving. I come from a middle class family and community. Lack of exposure to families and children who live in poverty was a personal concern for my future career because I did not want to enter the field of education being naïve to diverse economic classes. My semester at South View alleviated my fears and concerns on how to teach children living in these types of communities. I

learned that all children truly do want to be successful, despite where they come from, but encouragement, positive reinforcement, and structure is a critical facet for their academic success.

During my practicum experience an important insight I gained was the impact the attitudes of the teachers and staff had on one another. Overall, the faculty at South View had a very authoritarian approach for managing discipline and held negative expectations for many students. One of my classmates in the immersive course and I were invited to eat lunch with our 2nd grade classroom teachers every day at South View. During this time I was often appalled by their disparaging conversations between each other and with other teachers and staff in the lounge about students and sometimes other teachers even. Through my observations, I believe that this did affect the expectations and performance of the students negatively. In my future I will work hard to refrain from expressing my opinions and complaints about students and coworkers regardless of how I really feel.

One thing that I have learned about myself during my teaching practicum is that I am a very positive person and capable of maintaining positivity even on my worst days. I have discovered through working one-on-one with several students that I do have the ability to motivate even the most reluctant students to put forth effort in their learning. I am very calm and compassionate when speaking to students, but I am capable of being firm as well. I have been confirmed that teachers are tremendously influential to a child's behavior, confidence, and success.

As an educator, I still have a lot of confidence to acquire while instructing to a whole group. When working with students one-on-one or even in small groups I do

feel effective as a teacher, and the instruction feels natural. However, when I stand in front of the whole class and with other experienced teachers observing, I feel very pressured and overwhelmed. This feeling causes my teaching to be less genuine and focused more on the written lesson rather than the students' learning. Providing the class authentic instruction as whole simultaneously remains as a challenge for me, but I know that with more practice and stepping out of my comfort zone I will be able to overcome this challenge. I have knowledge and understanding of content and instructional strategies, and once I stop hesitating to apply what I have learned from my Ball State courses over the past three years, I have the potential to be an effective elementary teacher.