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SPCE 266 Koch
Summation
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My practicum placement is with Mrs. Allison Jackson, at Northside Middle School, in Muncie, Indiana. The purpose of a practicum is to help prepare a college student for the realities of student teaching. This is done by providing the student with a clear understanding of the viewpoints for being a teacher in a school. I have learned so much about what it is like being a teacher from this experience. I fully believe that my actual experience was better than anything that I could have expected

My first expectation I had for this class was that I would be more of a teacher's aid. My thought when I signed up was that I would be in a classroom where one teacher taught a single subject all day—like math, history, science, etc. I would then be doing anything that the placement teacher asked; whether that be to help grade papers, run copies, helping the children with the completion of assignments, or helping them with studying. Once I found out I would be working with Mrs. Allison Jackson in the resource room, my expectations changed. I assumed she would have a small group of four to five students she would put me in charge of. Where every Tuesday and Thursday I would work on one specific lesson for a specific subject, and run it as a remediation course (“re-teaching” what the teacher taught earlier that day).

On the first day of placement I learned that Mrs. Jackson runs her resource room as a study hall. Each one of her periods the class size ranges from seventeen to twenty-one children—every period and they work on a multiple subjects—they work on past assignments that they failed to turn in, or current assignments. The best way to describe Northside's resource room would be a catch up room. Mrs. Jackson is strict in her classroom: she makes sure each child has one or more assignments they need to work on for the entire period, she never accepts anything less than their best effort.

In Mrs. Jacksons' class I am put in charge of a different small group of students. I assist those students with a variety of different subjects ranging from 7th grade and 8th grade Math all the way to computer skills class. At the end of each period I check their ticket. A ticket is a multiple-choice question—either English or Math, that focuses on a different aspect of the subject, to prepare the students for I-Step. I check to make sure that the students have their name, date, the correct answer and the correct reason for the question. Every Tuesday and Thursday during 5th period, I go to a 7th grade science class, taught by Mrs. Moore. Here I am asked to do multiple things, such as passing back papers, playing review games with the class, being the adult leader during group work and projects, monitoring what the students are doing on their iPads, and monitoring behavior.

I was not completely thrown off when I entered that classroom. Like expected I helped the children with variety of assignments when they asked for help. I am still placed in a classroom that focuses on one specific subject everyday. The main similarity between the expectations I had and actuality—is the fact that I do whatever Mrs. Jackson or Mrs. Moore asks of me.

However there were still certain parts of this practicum that I did not expect. I did not expect that the resource room would be treated as a study hall. This is because in the resource room that I was placed in as a child, I had the experience of having one to four different resource teachers—each would work with me in a specific subject multiple times a week. I knew which subject I would be working on due to the teacher I was working with that day. I had assumed that this was how the resource room at Northside would run. Meaning that I would meet with a specific child and we would work on the

same subject every meeting—and it would work as a remediation class where I would be re-teaching the material the students learned in class to maximize their understanding of the lesson.

I learned a lot about who I am, through this experience. I learned that: I am a lot more patient than I originally thought, I was told that my kindness and smile are what make the children in my class comfortable enough to talk to me and ask me questions. One of my students after her IEP meeting was extremely upset, and I started to quickly summarize past experiences with education. She calmed down and asked what I did about it—I told her I pushed myself and proved them wrong and that just because you are in special education, that it does not define who you are. Anyone can do anything they set their minds to and when an obstacle is placed in front of you, you just work that much harder to push past it show others that you can do anything.

Professionally as a future educator I reached a better understanding that each child is different and that they all learn in a different ways. I have learned that children need to be taught in a wide range of ways. I will need to be able to explain any concept in multiple ways so each child can understand. For example, one of my students only understands can only understand verbal instructions, another one needs a visual, and a third student has to work out the problem at the same time I do—that student needs to be able to watch me go through the motions as they follow step by step in an hands on instruction. Many of the children, have to have the directions read to them multiple times before they comprehend what the instructions are.

When asked after this practicum has my career choice changed—the answer is no, it has not. My experience in my practicum placement has made me want to be a

teacher even more. I have seen children struggle, receive help and then continue to push themselves to do better in a class. One of the girls who is in both my resource class as well as my science class had an F in science, for the first two quarters then in January. Once she started to receive help in science class, she continued to push herself. She now has received and maintained an A in science class. One of the boys who is in my resource class also had an F in science—once he received help his grade raised to a B which he is still working on to maintain, but now he is genuinely interested in school and the subjects he is taking.

This class has pushed me to many levels no matter how hard and stressful those levels may be—I am starting to becoming the best person and future educator that I can be. I am learning how to work with a child, through actual experience. I love being able to help a students learn something new, I love seeing them interested in what they are learning, how much they have grown and improved. Especially, when I know how much of a struggle the class is for them. It is so amazing to see everything just click and watching them push themselves to another level they did not think that they could reach before. It has been the best experience I could have imagined.