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| Date/time | Reflection |
| Mon, 2/10  12:20-3:20  (3 hours) | The kids were so excited to see me again! It made me really happy. In 7th hour, we were getting everything organized for teacher conferences. I passed back graded work and the kids stapled everything together in a bundle to give to their parents at conferences. Ms. Ledesma had them do a self-evaluation worksheet to go on top of their packets. The worksheet really helped the students self-assess their learning, reflect on their academic strengths and weaknesses, and pushed them to make a plan for success. In reading seminar, we talked about genre and how different genres require us to ask different questions of the text. The students read an article about MLK and wrote a biography summery in their journals. In homeroom, I witnessed an older student make a derogatory racial comment toward my students as they were studying in the hallway. It was shocking to me and deeply troubling to my students. But as I helped calm them down, I was really proud of the level of maturity that my kids showed in dealing with racism. It’s sad that this is a reality that these kids have to deal with. And as teachers, we can’t always control what happens outside of our classroom, but we have influence and we must create a positive environment for learning in every aspect that we do have control over. |
| Wed, 2/19  12:40-2:40  (2 hours) | Ms. Ledesma has so many great resources! Every time I come to class she is using a new handout that is perfect for the students. I have been getting copies and websites from her. I feel so thankful for being able to spend time with and learn from her experience. We have been talking a lot about reading strategies in this social studies unit. Today the kids filled out a worksheet called “About point” that is really helping them with summary skills. They had to read a subsection and then summarize in one sentence what the section is about and then in another sentence tell the reason why this section is in the chapter, what the point of know the information is. I think it’s really great.  In reading seminar, we are working on independent reading of books that the students chose. The books are all biographies, and half the students are reading about rappers or athletes. But it is amazing to me how much more motivated they are to read about a topic they themselves chose. I monitored the classroom while Ms. Ledesma pulled individuals out to listen to their reading and check their comprehension. She said that she tries to check in on the student’s reading fluency in an intentional way like that as often as she can. |
| Fri, 2/21  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | The kids took a chapter test in social studies today. Ms. Ledesma made the test herself. We were a little disappointed in how poorly some students did. She is going to reteach some of the material based on the results of the assessment. During the test, she and I went around and read aloud questions and answers to students as needed. I helped her grade the paragraph response questions, and we had a good conversation about how to differentiate between content knowledge and language ability. Some of the students’ writing skills are very low. I’m surprised because they can speak very well, and they read well. But writing is a very difficult domain for them. The spelling, penmanship, word choice, and verb agreement in some of the writing was horrible. But in this case, we were more interested in content area knowledge. She said that at times it is very hard to objectively assess students because the language deficiencies mask their content knowledge.  In every class we have been talking about upcoming assessments. Ms. Ledesma has been using practice questions from standardized test reading samples as bell work in Reading Seminar. We are still teaching the content, but we are also trying to give the students test taking strategies. We had a fire drill that took up most of 7th period.  I got a chance to look through the IPT for 7-12 grade. I was impressed with how they didn’t make it seem babyish for the older kids, but it was still assessing the most basic language skills. Ms. Ledesma and I talked about some of the drawbacks of the test. For example, one whole section is based on a picture of kids playing in the snow. She said that a lot of kids coming from Mexico have zero experience with snow, so it is hard for them to perform well on those questions. She said that the test is hard because there isn’t flexibility in responses. You can only accept the expected answer, so even if kids say something true, it could still be wrong. It was a good conversation to get the teacher perspective. |
| Mon, 2/24  1:00-3:00  (2 hrs) | We did a pre-reading vocab building activity today in social studies. I didn’t really like the activity because it seemed like students were mostly just guessing at the meaning of words. They weren’t really using their strategies to make educated guesses. She talked to them about upcoming assessments and their need to practice using context clues to discern meaning of unknown vocabulary. I think the lesson was a miss though. The kids were not fully engaged or giving adequate effort. She assigned some homework for them to look up the meaning of some of the words and write a definition in their own words. She said that she intended to re-teach all the words on Tuesday before their reading activities.  In reading seminar, we did a different activity with a similar purpose – to use context to discern meaning of unknown words. The articles she had for them were about Jim Crow laws in the South during segregation. The students were very interested in the topic and it engage their personal experiences and background knowledge in a way that provided high motivation. And I feel like that motivation helped the activity to really be meaningful to the students. They learned a lot of vocab, but they also learned a lot about the topic of the article.  During homeroom, Ms. Ledesma was pulling some kids aside for one on one conferences about their grades and progress. There is a girl named, Chloe who is not in 6th or 7th period, but is in Ms. Ledesma’s homeroom. I don’t know her as well as the other kids who I’ve spent more time with, but she really struggles with math. I spent homeroom helping her with her homework. She really responded well to me. I was basically re-teaching the concept, and guiding her through practice. By the end of homeroom, she was doing the problems on her own with success. It was really rewarding to see how she progressed even in just 20 minutes. |
| Fri, 2/28  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | We did review games in Social Studies. It was good – controlled chaos, but it was good for the kids.  In reading seminar, the kids did book report presentations over their biography. The kids were able to choose from among a list of options for their book report. They could do a powerpoint, make a scrapbook, make a timeline, dress as their character and do an interview with the class, or write a paper and give an oral presentation. I thought it was a really good example of multiple means of representation and flexibility in assessment. Several of the students choose the interview set up, and it was really cool. You could tell that they had researched so that they could answer questions on behalf of their people. I thought it was a great authentic assessment.  I went with the class to a pep assembly. Ms. Ledesma got chosen to play basketball on a teachers vs students game. It was pretty fun. I really like the school spirit at SFT. All the students were sitting with their friends – and I just noticed that all the ELL kids were pretty much sticking together. I think it’s good that they feel a sense of community, but it is also a little sad that they aren’t more integrated in the whole student body. |
| Fri, 3/7  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | Today was a really full day somehow. There are two new students who just came into the country. One is a Spanish speaking girl named Yismin and the other is an Ethiopian boy named Sam. Neither of them speak any English. I was helping to translate for Yismin (and all the Spanish speaking kids were also jumping in), and Hawani speaks the same native language as Sam so she was helping to host him. But they both looked so overwhelmed and Sam especially looked pretty scared. A para was going around with them and trying to get their schedules arranged and lockers sorted out. But the kids were using mostly sign language and gestures to communicate. Sam was silent, and Yismin would sometimes ask questions in Spanish, but she was frustrated that we couldn’t always understand her. They came in during 7th period and were looking at picture books and doodling. Ms. Ledesma said she did some of the initial tests on them yesterday and neither could pass through the very first level. I just felt so bad for them and the trauma and fear of being in a new school where they don’t speak the language. The culture shock aspect really hit home watching the two of them sitting there totally out of it – they were signing to each other because they can’t even communicate to one another.  6th hour was more reading and vocabulary building on Ancient Greece. Ms. Ledesma is really holding them to higher accountability for NHI’s and so every Friday she is handing out updated grade sheets and they have until Monday to turn in late work it will not be credited to them. I think the kids need that kind of structure and accountability.  7th hour they are beginning to read a novel called *Touching Spirit Bear*. Her 7th hour class is reinforcing a lot of what I’m learning in Teaching Young Adult Lit. She stepped out to get some copies for a minute and in that short time she was gone one of the boys started punching another boy in the back. So I had to break that up and Ms. Ledesma and I wrote up an incident report. I’m really surprised because we have been having a lot of problems with this one student and I feel like something must be going on at home because he is intentionally acting out. He has had ISS 3 times this semester already. It’s sad because I feel like he is building a reputation that is going to hurt him in the long run.  Ms. Ledesma gave me a very high compliment today. After school she was saying how one of the ELL teachers is pregnant and thinking about not coming back to school after the baby. She said that two other teachers were asking her at the team meeting if I could fill that open position next year. They have apparently seen me with the students and heard from Ms. Ledesma how I am in class, and they all thought I would be a perfect fit for their school. It makes me sad that I’m ready to take a job. I would love to work at SFT. But it also makes me really proud of the work I’ve done at the school and confident that I will get a job when this is over. Right now, I need that hope. |
| Mon, 3/10  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | In social studies, the kids are working making cards that highlight the characteristics of a Greek god or goddess. The kids are really engaged with mythology, and Ms. Ledesma gave them some great resources. The lesson was more about descriptive language and character traits than it was a pure social studies lesson. The kids were bouncing off the walls today, but Ms. Ledesma powered through. She did some spontaneous move around activities that really helped overcome the fidgeting.  In 7th hour, we read ch. 2 of *Touching Spirit Bear.* Even the kids who would say they hate reading are engaged in the story. I have been really impressed with the book and with the student’s response.  In homeroom, I worked with Sam and Yismin. Sam is adjusting really well. He was much more comfortable today. I looked through his book with him. He was so eager to show me what he learned and what he could do – I was amazed because he could read very well. He did not understand all that he read, but he was able to read a whole passage about Jupiter’s Great Red Spot. I couldn’t believe it. He will be okay. Yismin is getting a lot of attention from the other Spanish speaking students. They have all been really nice to her. She and I spoke in Spanish for quite a while. She said she is not happy and she hates this school and hates that her family brought her here. She was very negative and showed no desire to learn. I can’t imagine how hard it must be for her to make this transition. But I really hope that she will be able to get a more positive attitude. Ms. Ledesma said she told her she was angry in Spanish and slept in English class during 2nd period. It is so normal. I hope she will make a turn around. |
| Fri, 3/28  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | We had a sub today. She was a nice lady, but really horrible with ELL students. One section of the lesson was about idioms, and she was talking down to the kids for not knowing the meanings of obscure idioms. She gave no time for the students to think before asking for answers. She put kids on the spot. She yelled at them for not answering fast enough, and then yelled at them for answering out. And she didn’t want me to help at all. I feel like she was threatened by me a little. I tried to be so respectful to her. But she was being unreasonable with the students. It was really bad. But I was so proud of my students. Their behavior was excellent. They were polite and stayed engaged even after being unfairly chastised. I was really proud of them.  Also, we had a fire drill…and a kid got a massive nose bleed. So it was an exciting day! |
| Mon, 3/31  12:45-1:45  (1 hour) | I observed KELPA Listening test today. It was really interesting. The whole testing process is so time-consuming. You could see how drained the students and teachers were by the end of the day. Sam and Yismin had to take the test. I felt so bad for Sam. He just closed his test book at one point. He understands almost no English at all. |
| Fri, 4/4  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | We had a sub again today, but it was a totally different experience. She wanted me to take the lead, so I taught both classes. It was really good. The kids tried to take advantage, but I feel like my classroom management was up to the challenge. |
| Mon, 4/7  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | Today was good. Everyone was pleased to have Ms. Ledesma back. Routine is so important. We practiced more reading strategies. The kids are really interested in *Touching Spirit Bear*. I am so excited to teach on Friday. |
| Fri, 4/11  12:30-3:00  (2.5 hours) | Today was my lesson on conflict. I think it went really well. The kids were so good. Juan Carlos was hilarious. He was like a different child, on task, answering every question. He told me right before class that he was going to do his best work because he thinks I’m a great person. And he was so serious about that. That personal connection is so important for the teacher to most effectively influence the students. |
| Mon, 4/14  12:40-3:10  (2.5 hours) | Today I was so touched by the students. They all made birthday cards/posters for me and I brought cupcakes. I felt so loved. Reading the cards, I was so pleased to see the depth of relationship that we have developed. Some of the notes were very specific about ways that I have helped them. They had assessments all morning, so we played board games and had a more low key class. It was really fun. I love these kids, and I want to be a teacher! |
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