

A Report on Classic City High

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The Institution

The format and structure of Classic City High School is labelled as an alternative high school. An alternative school is an educational setting made to accommodate educational, behavioral, and/or medical needs of students that cannot be properly addressed in a traditional school environment. A regular school day at Classic City is from 9:15 in the morning until 3:35 in the afternoon, following a block schedule which meant only four periods a day. The high school (Clarkston High School) I graduated from is also on block schedule so the setup at Classic City was normal to me besides their start time being a bit later than what I was used to; it felt extremely nostalgic for me. One major advantage of block schedule is the fact that there are only four classes to worry about. Compared to the traditional six to seven period schedule, the students at Classic City are able to spend more time in one class. With more class time, the students are able to get a better understanding of the needed curriculum instead of being rushed to learn a lesson everyday. The amount of time per class period is about an hour and twenty-five minutes which means the students have more time to work on confusing concepts with help from the teacher. Since Classic City is an alternative school, the class sizes are significantly smaller than the “average” classroom size from my experience. Each time I volunteered, the class size at Classic City would be no more than ten students on good days, around three to six on other days.

While there are benefits to having longer class periods, there are also some disadvantages. The students who did not really benefit from longer class periods were those who accelerated in the subject of the class. Another disadvantage of longer class periods make it a bit exhausting for students who simply do not want to be there. In this case, the subject happened to be English Language Arts with Ms. Johns. There were a few students I noticed who would do

work for a little and then get distracted by their phones or other classmates or a few students who just would not do the work at all. While mentoring in Ms. Johns class, I always noticed this one male student who would be there every time I mentored and he would simply not do the work despite Ms. Johns making it an option for him to finish whenever. He was always on his phone with his head down and would not take help from either mentors (including myself) and Ms. Johns. During my time there, there was never a clear, explicit reason as to why he would not want to do his work, but I believe that there were more advantages than disadvantages in Ms. Johns' classroom when it came to block schedule.

One policy I noticed around the school were the use of cell phones. There are many signs around the school with a cellphone and a big red circle around it (I think it is called a prohibition sign?) along with "NO CELLPHONES". I do not think the school enforced the cell phone policy at all because students were on it from time to time and no one, including Ms. Johns, would say anything about it unless it was a distraction or loud. Students were also able to listen to music while doing their work; Ms. Johns never really found it an issue if the students had earphones in and did not hear her because she would get their attention by tapping on their shoulder if it was important. Her cell phone sign said, "All ye who enter ye shall abandon", along with an image of a cell phone. Another technological use at the school were computers. When Classic City was introduced to the class, I took away that the classroom style would be strictly on laptops/computers only which is false, but not completely. The students did have one out of the four periods made specifically for computer use. Ms. Johns called it her "computer class". She explained to me that the computer classes were for various subjects that the students needed in order to make up a credit. The school tried to put the students with a teacher who taught the

subject, for example, Ms. Johns' computer class consisted of students who needed to work on ELA work but there would be a few students on other subjects. I personally never mentored in her third period (which was her computer class) so I do not know anything about it, but her first and second periods did use computers. The computer use in her first and second periods were mainly for Google Documents to type up their final drafts to share with her in order for her to grade it.

From my point of view, the environment of Classic City felt like any other school especially my high school. It did not feel much different from any other school settings I have been in despite that it is an alternative school. The only, I guess, "expectation" I had was the curriculum being a lot different than what I learned, but it was really similar to what I learned in high school. I think the only difference is that Classic City has a computer class period for each student.

Teachers and Administrators

The interactions I had with the faculty and staff at Classic City were with the front desk lady (I feel so bad for not knowing her name) and Ms. Johns. I have seen the principal once, but that was when she was watching Ms. Johns' class so she could run a quick errand. The front desk lady was always welcoming and always unlocked the front office door for me. She always made small talk with me and was a nice "face" of the school. By face of the school, I mean that the first person I will for sure see when entering the school. At my high school, the front desk lady was mean and always had an attitude whereas at Classic City, she was welcoming and friendly which I appreciated a ton. The main faculty member I interacted with was Ms. Johns. She was the teacher I mentored for every time I volunteered. Ms. Johns was an amazing teacher to learn from. Her decision on technology use was strictly for final drafts only. Her instructional ways were mostly paper worksheets and reading aloud with one another given that it is an English class; it was more interactive compared to what I thought the classroom would be like. She was also a kind teacher. Rather than forcing the students to finish the work and be up to a certain level at a specific time, she allowed them to take their time with their work by telling them that the work is there for them to do it whenever, just as long as they finish it. She reminded me of my twelfth-grade English teacher who inspired me to become an English teacher.

The administrative role in serving as a graduation coach for Mrs. Hamilton seems a bit tough. I never really saw her besides when I turned in my initial forms and to get a signature from her. The only person I can sort of compare her to is my high school counselor. I came from a high school where the graduation rate has been low for some time now and she had a lot of pressure to make sure everyone graduated on time, which is similar to Mrs. Hamilton's

responsibilities as a graduation coach. She was never really talked about between students so I never heard anything about her or see her since she has been a substitute for another class. I think that she really enjoys her job anyway because the students I have met at Classic City are sweethearts, want to graduate from high school, and want to go to college or get a job after high school which is not any different from my high school experience.

The Students

While mentoring at Classic City, I interacted and worked with many students in Ms. Johns' class. I worked with a different student each time I came to volunteer. As a side note, Ms. Johns told me that Classic City is a Title One school meaning the students are from low-income families and the students I have worked with has a good relationship with Ms. Johns. Another side note: I feel that another "advantage" I had (and this applies for almost all students I worked with) is that we are minoritized people. The first student I worked with in January was a new student at Classic City, I will call her Amy. Amy is black and she was very quiet and sweet. I know for sure that she hated school but her parents wanted her to finish school anyway. Around her friend (another new student), she was very talkative and funny. She made me laugh a ton even though I had just met her. I think we got along very well simply because I was able to relate with her and her thoughts. Yes, I enjoy school now hence why I am becoming a teacher, but I was once in her shoes and did not enjoy being in school all the time. I cannot really speak on Amy's educational experiences simply because it was her first day and I was mainly helping her catch up on that week's work to be on the same page as students who have a head start.

Another student I worked with that I got to know a bit better than Amy was John. John is a black student who was surprisingly very open to me. I am a bit socially awkward so to get people talking to me I ask a lot of questions. As I finished helped him finish all his work, I got to get to know him a bit more and I think my questions did not annoy him at all. He was very quiet, like how I am when I am in class, before I helped him but he seemed to enjoy me talking to him about other things outside of school. He enjoyed coming to school sometimes and he was unsure what he wanted to do when he got older. He was very smart and knowledgeable in his

assignment for class besides a few tricky questions. Overall, he was an amazing student to work with and from my time working with him, he followed the rules and preferred to work alone and sit by himself, but he is friendly to his peers as well.

The final student I want to talk about is a student, Miley. Miley is a white student who I worked with at my last day at Classic City. I only helped her with peer reviewing her rough draft before typing up her final draft, but I got to know her more than any other student I have worked with in Ms. Johns' class. She is a white, fifteen-year-old student who told me that she is graduating from Classic City this December, how exciting! She opened up to me initially with her excitement about graduating so soon. She asked me if I went to the University of Georgia and many questions any student has about college before going to college. She did not seem to be struggling at all in Ms. Johns' class and her narrative work was amazing and creative. I think she enjoyed working alone and got along with her classmates well, but she had a lot of format questions so I stuck with her and helped her when she was typing up her final draft. She told me that she definitely wants to go to college because (and these are her words), "what is the point of throwing all your education away after finishing high school-- I might as well finish it all the way". I related to her so much simply because she was sharing her anxieties and worries about college which I definitely had before going to college as well.

I think that I get along with the students a lot just because I treat them as I would want to be treated. I speak to them the same way I would want to be spoken to. I am unsure if I have "gotten through" to any student I have worked with simply because the students I have worked with are so nice and did not really hate school. Each student I have worked with felt comfortable enough to share something personal with me such as their dream jobs as kids and their future

dreams after high school. The only thing I would say is that the students in Ms. Johns' class do not really like asking for help, and even towards the end of my mentoring they still hated asking for help.

Future in Education

My time at Classic City High School really solidified my desires to become an educator because I was able to somewhat get through to students and help them with their work while enjoying it. I honestly was a little unsure if I could become a teacher at first because my patience runs a little thin but it has improved by a ton. I feel that I have reached to my students on a personal level where they are comfortable enough to discuss with me about things if I make the initiative to ask them about it. I think they do not hate my curiousness and my questions about them in order to get to know them because if they did I do not think they would even talk to me at all. I noticed that my tutoring helps the students I have worked with get a better understanding of their work. I try to explain what they need to know in another way that they can easily remember such as using metaphors or an easier example that they can use as a model to help guide them with their work.

I really enjoyed my time at Classic City and I feel that it has definitely impacted me as a future educator. My mentorship allowed me to meet another amazing English teacher who can get through to any student, even the hard ones. I feel that the diversity at my high school allowed me to easily fit in and get along with the students at Classic City. I learned that rather than forcing the student to finish the work at a certain time, I should make it known that the work is there for them to finish when they want to, which from what I have seen works the best because the students end up finishing the work before the end of class anyway. I also have learned that as a future educator, I should not act like the superior one in the classroom. Instead, I should just treat the students like how I would want to be treated in order to receive the respect/love I would want from my future students so I can reach to them on a higher level, but professional of course.